

Sent: Wednesday, May 15, 2019 10:50 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 42-47

"I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage! Yes, wait for the Lord!" (Psalm 27:1-14)

We left Joseph last week (at the end of Genesis 41) positioned second only to Pharaoh atop the most powerful nation in the world at that time, having been delivered from slavery and an unjust prison sentence, then rightly interpreting Pharaoh's dreams of a coming famine and aptly managing the crisis that "was severe in all the earth" all in accordance with the providence of God!

And the famine had now spread, wouldn't you know, to the land of Canaan, causing Jacob to send ten of his sons (minus Benjamin, the youngest) to buy grain from "the ruler" in Egypt, who had the God-inspired wisdom, to store up grain for these lean years, and sell it to all the people of the land!"

Little could the brothers have known, or imagined in their wildest dreams, that the one before whom they now "bowed down" was, in fact, the very brother they thought was no longer in the picture! Just so happened that Joseph recognized them and "remembered his dreams" (which were now being fulfilled!), and used the occasion to learn all he could about family affairs, and string out the drama! (I want to say: "Let the games begin!")

He first accused them of being "spies" and put them into prison for three days--then insisted that they bring back their "youngest brother" (who Joseph knew was Benjamin, the only remaining son of Rachel, or so it was believed!) The brothers immediately saw their dilemma as a "reckoning" from God for their treatment of Joseph. (Constable says, "Their consciences were awakened!") Little did they know that Joseph, who was using an interpreter, understood all their clamoring, including Reuben's "I told you so" remark!

Joseph decided to keep Simeon as a hostage while the rest of the brothers returned home to bring back Benjamin! On the way back, they were greatly alarmed to discover all the money back in their sacks, and appropriately wondered, "What is God doing?"

Jacob, of course, was horrified when he heard their story--but insisted that Benjamin would not be making the journey back to Egypt! That is until the famine worsened and there was no other choice! And so, Jacob relented and prepared an elaborate "present" for "the man"--and prayed that "God Almighty would grant them compassion"!

Well, Joseph spotted Benjamin coming and arranged an elaborate dinner through his "house steward" who made all the preparations and listened to the desperate explanations of the "money in the sack" discovery! (Interestingly, it was Joseph's steward who tried to calm the brothers' fears and, with disarming insight, said that "your God and the God of your father has given you the treasure in your sacks" and that he, Joseph's steward, "had had their money"!)

Well, when Joseph finally made his appearance and spoke with Benjamin, he was "deeply stirred...and sought a place to weep"! But the "games" were not over! The brothers, to their "astonishment," just happened to be seated for the dinner according to the order of their births (undoubtedly raising more questions in their minds as to what was going on), but there was apparently a great feast! And before long they were off again, with all in tack (or so they thought), until they were tracked down by Joseph's men and, this time, accused of taking Joseph's "silver cup"--which they vehemently denied, and even declared that if it was indeed found in the sack of one of the brothers, he should die--and they should all be "my lord's slaves"! (Reminding us of Jacob's overly rash declaration about the consequences due any family member caught running off with Laban's "household idols"!)

Well, the brothers, in trouble again, were brought back to Joseph's house and it was Judah who would "step up" (in Genesis 44:18-34) with the longest speech recorded in Genesis, pleading (in prayer-like fashion) on behalf of Benjamin, and particularly about the repercussions this would bring to father! Joseph is again overcome with emotion and actually "cries" before them all! And then announces--to the great shock of all--that he was, in fact, their brother, "Joseph"! (Wow! Imagine the silence that came over the gathering!) And then utters the infamous words: "You sold me, but God sent me!" Words Arnold calls "the greatest statement of the sovereign love of God in all the Bible"! (Constable notes that "there is nothing more striking in the character of Joseph than the utter absence of revengeful feelings, whether it was against his brothers, or Potiphar, or the chief butler!")

You know the rest of the story! Joseph, with Pharaoh's consent--and "blessing"--arranged for Jacob and the entire family of 70 (plus all the household help) to come to live in the land of Goshen, the "best of all the land of Egypt"!

Imagine the shock of the news to Jacob! Genesis 45:27 says "his spirit was revived"! And imagine the upheaval throughout the household when the brothers returned to gather up the abundance of Jacob's estate and begin the move to Egypt, which would begin a special time for God to grow his people and the nation of Israel in a place away from the "promised land"! And we can't overlook the significance of Jacob's "stop-over" at Beersheba where he offered sacrifices to God, and where God appeared to him again, in a vision (like a dream!), to renew his faith, saying: "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there! I will go down with you to Egypt! I will also surely bring you up again! And Joseph will close your eyes!" (Genesis 46:3)

Genesis 47:11 says: "So Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had ordered!" And verse 27 adds: "Now Israel (that would be Jacob!) lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, and they acquired property in it and were fruitful and became numerous... and Jacob lived in the land 17 years!"

But, more significantly, the closing verses of Genesis 47 demonstrate that Jacob never lost his faith in God's promises for a "better place" (maybe remembering God appearance at Beersheba) when, as his death drew near, he "called his son Joseph" and made him swear to him that he

would "carry him (his body) back and bury him with his fathers" in the land of Canaan! The "promised land"!

Among other things, we see in this text the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, in Genesis 15:13, where God said: "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed (which will be coming!) for four hundred years!"

Well, we too, like Jacob and all the brothers, would experience despair unless we believed that we would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!

Can we respond to others with the same attitude and spirit as Joseph had, when he concluded that although his brothers had done some terrible things to him, God was in control of it all, and had actually "sent" it? Wow! For a reason yet to be seen and understood!

Men, let's wait for the Lord, and be a blessing to others this week!

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