

JOSEPH'S BRETHREN VISIT EGYPT

BIBLE TEXT : Genesis 42 :1-38 ; 43 :1-14

LESSON 37 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Genesis 42:1-38

42:1 Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?

2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.

3 And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.

4 But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.

5 And the sons of Israel came to buy *corn* among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

6 And Joseph *was* the governor over the land, *and* he *it was* that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him *with* their faces to the earth.

7 And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.

8 And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.

9 And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye *are* spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

10 And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come.

11 We *are* all one man's sons; we

Bible References:

I The Scarcity of Food in Canaan and the First Journey to Egypt

1 Jacob's sons delay going to Egypt to obtain food, Genesis 42:1, 2

2 The ten sons of Jacob finally go to Egypt to buy food, Genesis 42:3-5;

Acts 7:9-15 (KJV)

7:9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.

12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13 And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

II The Interview with Joseph

1 The ten appear before Joseph, who is not recognized by them, Genesis 42:6

2 Joseph's childhood dream partially fulfilled, Genesis 42:6-9;

Genesis 37:7-8

37:7 For, behold, we *were* binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

3 They declare the purpose of their coming to Egypt, Genesis 42:10-13

4 Joseph replies, accusing them of being spies, probably to further conceal his true identity, Genesis 42:14-21

5 Their conscience reproves them for the evil they committed against Joseph more than 20 years before, Genesis 42:21-24;

Romans 2:14-15

2:14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

Ecclesiastes 11:9

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these *things* God will bring thee into judgment.

are true men, thy servants are no spies.

12 And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

13 And they said, Thy servants *are* twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest *is* this day with our father, and one *is* not.

14 And Joseph said unto them, That *is it* that I spake unto you, saying, Ye *are* spies:

15 Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.

16 Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether *there be any* truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye *are* spies.

17 And he put them all together into ward three days.

18 And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; *for* I fear God:

19 If ye *be* true *men*, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses:

20 But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

21 And they said one to another, We *are* verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.

22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

III The Return to Canaan

1 Nine of the brothers return to Canaan with a temporary supply of food, leaving Simeon in Egypt as a hostage, Genesis 42:19, 20, 25, 26;

Proverbs 19:5

A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that speaketh lies shall not escape.*

2 While taking food from his sack, one man discovers his purchase-money, Genesis 42:27, 28

3 The conscience-smitten brothers relate their experiences to their father, Genesis 42:29-35

4 Jacob remonstrates with them because of the conditions imposed upon them by Joseph, Genesis 42:36-38; 43:1-7

5 Judah guarantees the safe return of Benjamin. Genesis 43:8-10

6 Jacob finally submits to the conditions, that they may obtain more food, Genesis 43:11-14

Notes:

The famine that came upon the land of Egypt was not confined to that country alone, for we find that its effects were felt in Canaan, where Jacob and his sons were living. The knowledge that food could be obtained in that land beyond the Red Sea seemed to be common in Canaan, but perhaps the sons of Jacob were dilatory in their response and made no effort to go there to buy food to fill their larder. The father reminded them of their inactivity, asking them why they stayed in Canaan, looking one upon another.

Perhaps there was a reason why these sons of Jacob did not hurry to make a trip into that faraway country. The journey would be hard, that is true; but these men were used to a nomadic existence and would not hesitate because of these difficulties, even though they were intense enough to try severely the average person of our day.

Years before, they had committed sin against their younger brother, Joseph, and their father, the memory of which still haunted them; for we find several instances where they indicated that while they had wished to forget their evil deeds of 20 years before, they could not do so.

Whenever something happened that was not according to their plan or of a nature that would bring suffering or misfortune to them, they immediately felt that it was sent because of their long-standing, unconfessed, and unrepented sin. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us" (Genesis 42:21).

There is a God-ordained quality about time that is a valuable one indeed; namely, the fact that time will erase our sufferings and pains and allow us to enjoy our future days without their being marred by anything more than a memory of the unpleasant experience. We may suffer terrible pain, but when it is past it is gone forever. That is not true of joy or happiness; for, when those enjoyable moments are recalled in memory, they tend to increase our present joys. Their heart-warming influence is felt at once.

But there is one thing that time can never erase, and that is the record of our past sins and misdeeds. Those ten men realized the penalizing portion of this eternal truth many times during the years between the deliberate sin and this moment, in which they found themselves approaching the land of Egypt. But there was no sincere repentance on their part as yet. They had no idea that they would find their brother, or even see him — perhaps they had little

23 And they knew not that Joseph understood *them*; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

24 And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

25 Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them.

26 And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence.

27 And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it *was* in his sack's mouth.

28 And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, *it is* even in my sack: and their heart failed *them*, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What *is* this *that* God hath done unto us?

29 And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying,

30 The man, *who is* the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.

31 And we said unto him, We *are* true *men*; we are no spies:

32 We *be* twelve brethren, sons of our father; one *is* not, and the youngest *is* this day with our father in the land of Canaan.

33 And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye *are* true *men*; leave one of your brethren *here* with me, and take *food* for the famine of your households, and be gone:

34 And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye *are* no spies, but *that* ye *are* true *men*: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick

desire to do so. But the very name of the country into which they had sold him as a slave, brought back the memories of his pitiful pleas and entreaties as they cast him into the pit and then bargained with a group of strangers for him, as one would bargain for a better price on a head of livestock. Only one thing can remove that record of sins from us: the Blood of Jesus, which was shed for all mankind.

Conscience is the possessor of all, and is a whole court in itself, consisting of a judge, jury, witnesses, and sheriff. As we have said, it never forgets — even though the intellect, or mind of man, does. "A guilty conscience needs no accuser" is indeed a truthful statement.

The youngest son, Benjamin, was left at home. He was thought to be the only surviving son of Rachel whom Jacob dearly loved, and was jealously guarded by the father because he was the son of his dead wife. For this reason only ten of the sons made the journey, not knowing that the very person before whom they appeared was their own brother, whom they had sold into slavery years before. Joseph recognized them at once, but wisely concealed his identity, speaking roughly to them, accusing them of being spies who were there to spy out the wealth of the land and to learn what possibilities there were of overthrowing the nation. He also spoke harshly better to cover the warmth of affection which he felt toward these brothers, his own flesh and blood, and also to bring them into such a state of mind and conscience that they would realize their extreme wickedness and be willing to repent of it.

Joseph inquired about the rest of the family and their state of health, while he was examining the brothers to see if they were really what they represented themselves to be or not. He finally told them that if they were true men they would not hesitate to bring their younger brother down to substantiate their statements. He gave them some provisions for their immediate needs, and held Simeon as a hostage until they returned with Benjamin, his younger brother, whom he longed to see again. Simeon was next to the eldest son; and when Judah made the proposition that Joseph be sold into slavery, Simeon, no doubt, was the one who gave the final word on the matter, since the first-born, Reuben, was absent.

It is significant that God directed Joseph to retain Simeon as a hostage so that he could begin to suffer for his part of the sinful transaction. There is no escaping the consequence of our misdeeds. "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

On the journey homeward, when the brothers stopped for rest the first night and opened one of their sacks to get food, they found that the money they had paid for the food was in the sack's mouth. Their consciences were so smitten and their remorse was so great that they could not see the kindness behind this act. Nor had they been able to reason, as yet, that the conditions imposed upon them by Joseph could not have proved to him that they were true men and not spies. If they had been spies, and their story of being a family of eleven sons were untrue, it would have been an easy matter for them to have procured a young man to pose as their brother. Joseph would have had no way of knowing the falsity of their statements. So this was not an absolute test. But they could not see that fact, so dulled were their minds by the condemnation for their sins.

The father, Jacob, was impatient with them for having told the ruler of Egypt that they had a younger brother, and he forbade their taking Benjamin to Egypt when they returned. He was sure that if they did, he would lose his favored son and would be brought to his grave in sorrow. But finally Judah made a guarantee that was accepted by the father, in which he assumed all responsibility for the safe return of the younger son, after Reuben, the first-born, had

in the land.

35 And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money *was* in his sack: and when *both* they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

36 And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved *of my children*: Joseph *is* not, and Simeon *is* not, and ye will take Benjamin *away*: all these things are against me.

37 And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again.

38 And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Genesis 43:1-14

43:1 And the famine *was* sore in the land.

2 And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.

3 And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you.

4 If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food:

5 But if thou wilt not send *him*, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you.

6 And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye *so* ill with me, *as* to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?

7 And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our

made a similar proposition which was not accepted by the father.

Jacob had no way of knowing, as yet, of the details surrounding the supposed death of his son, Joseph. He may have suspected that his sons were not as innocent as they first made themselves appear to be; but as to the details of their discussions and the parts played by each in that cold-blooded disposal of their own brother, he could not know, for a full confession was not yet made.

But here we see the unfailing judgment of God taking effect. Simeon was the one upon whom the responsibility had rested, in the absence of Reuben, for the safe keeping of the young son — and he acquiesced to the proposition made by the others to sell Joseph into slavery. He is now beginning his suffering, as we have seen, by being held a hostage in Egypt. Judah was the one who made the suggestion to sell the lad, which, when it was adopted, prevented Reuben from doing an act of mercy in returning Joseph to the father. God ordered the whole matter so that Judah was the one who must take the great risk of assuming the responsibility of Benjamin's safe return at this time — thereby suffering for the part he had had in the disposal of Joseph. And Reuben, who as first-born was the responsible one but because of his absence was innocent of actual complicity in the crime, is allowed to go free of the actual burden.

Oh, how wonderful is our God! "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Romans 11:33-36). Incidents like this, worked out to such painstaking detail, that the just may be rewarded and the sinner punished, show us that we have nothing to fear, either in this life or in the next, if we put our trust in Him Who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What was probably behind the question that Jacob asked of his sons: "Why do ye look one upon another?"
- 2 Why did the ten sons of Jacob go to Egypt?
- 3 Why did only ten go?
- 4 Before whom did they appear when they arrived in Egypt?
- 5 In what way was Genesis 37:7 fulfilled in this lesson?
- 6 Why was Simeon held in Egypt?
- 7 What particular thing troubled them as they stopped for rest the first night on their trip homeward?
- 8 What conditions were imposed upon them that must be fulfilled before they could get more food?
- 9 Did Jacob agree to these conditions at first?
- 10 Upon what basis did Jacob agree?

kindred, saying, *Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother?* and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?

8 And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, *and* also our little ones.

9 I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever:

10 For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.

11 And their father Israel said unto them, *If it must be* so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:

12 And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry *it* again in your hand; peradventure it *was* an oversight:

13 Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man:

14 And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved *of my children*, I am bereaved.