

Joseph reveals his identity



Genesis 43–45:15

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Jacob eventually had to allow his sons to travel to Egypt once more to buy grain, this time with Benjamin. Judah promised his father that he would stand surety for Benjamin's safety. The brothers were kindly received in Joseph's house. With full sacks they confidently set out on the return journey. But shortly afterwards they were accused of theft. And truly, in Benjamin's sack a silver cup was discovered which Joseph had secretly ordered to be placed there. The brothers had to return and appear before Joseph. When Judah offered to take the blame for the theft and its consequences upon himself instead of Benjamin, Joseph could no longer restrain himself. To everyone's great amazement, he told them who he was.

The children marvel at how wonderfully the Lord helped Joseph.

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he sun is still burning down mercilessly on man and beast. The grain bought in Egypt is soon used up in Jacob's house. Jacob realizes the seriousness of the situation. He speaks to his sons: "Go back to Egypt once more to buy grain!" Judah says resolutely: "Pharaoh's governor made it quite clear to us that under no circumstances are we to come back without our youngest brother. We will not travel to Egypt without Benjamin. It would be senseless." "But why did you tell him that you had another brother?" complains Jacob. Judah tries to calm him: "Father, let Benjamin go with us! I promise to bring him back safely. I will look after him especially." Jacob still hesitates, but then says sadly: "Well, if it has to be, take Benjamin with you. Also take along gifts for the nobleman in Egypt: fruit, spices, honey, almonds and anything else which we still have. Take enough money with you and also return the money to him which was in the sacks. Perhaps that was just a mistake. May God protect you on your journey and may he make the Egyptian kindly disposed towards you." The brothers take the gifts and the money and set out on the long trek to Egypt with Benjamin. Sadly Jacob watches them go.

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The brothers arrive in Egypt unharmed and immediately ask that their arrival be announced to Joseph. "Show them to my house," Joseph orders his housekeeper. "I wish to dine with them. Calm them if they are fearful and bring Simeon to them." The brothers are amazed at the kindness with which they are received. Joseph enters. The brothers bow before him. "Please get up," Joseph says kindly. "How is your father? Is he still alive," he enquires. "He is well," they reply and hand over their father's gifts. Joseph's eyes rest on Benjamin. "Is this your youngest brother you told me about?" He turns to Benjamin: "God be with you." Joseph is deeply moved. Suddenly he rushes out of the room. The brothers hold their breath and look at one another fearfully, they do not understand what this means.

Joseph weeps. But he still does not want to make himself known. He washes his face and returns to them and orders the meal to be served. At his direction the brothers are seated starting with the eldest and so on down to the youngest. They are most surprised at this. The food is served and the brothers enjoy it. They note with some surprise that Benjamin is given the best and most of everything. After the meal Joseph orders his housekeeper to fill his brothers' sacks with grain and to put each man's money on top. In Benjamin's sack he instructs him to hide a silver cup as well.

God protects his own – Joseph

All eleven brothers thank Joseph. They load the sacks onto their donkeys and happily start on the journey home. But no sooner have they left the city behind, than horsemen come chasing after them and surround them. The brothers recognize Joseph's housekeeper. He calls out: "Stop! Why are you so false? You are thieves. You have stolen my master's silver cup!" Stunned, the brothers stare at the housekeeper. Finally they stammer: "How can your good master think such a thing of us? We are no thieves. Didn't we bring back the money which was in our sacks? Please search everything!"

All the sacks are opened. In Benjamin's sack the missing cup is found. The brothers pale and Benjamin cries out despairingly: "But I did not steal it! I don't know how that cup came to be in my sack!"

"Chain him," orders the housekeeper. The soldiers arrest Benjamin and take him back to the city. The brothers return with them. They will not leave Benjamin alone.

Joseph receives his dejected brothers with the question: "Why did you do this?" Judah speaks: "What can we say? We do not understand what has happened. We have no excuse. We will all be your servants."

"Oh no," says Joseph, "only the one in whose sack the cup was found must stay behind. The others may return home."



"Our aged father would not survive such a shock," exclaims Judah. Then he tells Joseph that he has promised their father to look after Benjamin particularly well. He pleads with Joseph: "Please, let Benjamin return home with the others and let me be your servant."

Joseph can no longer control his feelings. He sees that his brothers have changed very much. They no longer behave as they did in the past. He commands his servants: "Leave the room, all of you! Only the men from the land of Canaan may remain behind."

It has become very quiet in the room, the brothers literally hold their breath. "I am Joseph, your brother!" Never in their lives have they been so shocked!

"So my father is still alive!" Joseph says and starts to weep so loudly that his weeping can be heard outside. "Yes, I am Joseph, your brother whom you sold to the traders! Believe me! Come closer, do not be afraid. I am no longer angry with you. You have treated me badly, but I have forgiven you. God has guided everything in a wonderful way. He made me ruler in Egypt so that you, our family, and many other people could be saved from the famine. God sent me here, not you." Joseph embraces and kisses all his brothers.

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When the brothers returned to Egypt with Benjamin, Joseph revealed his identity to them. The brothers were overjoyed.

- 1 Picture yourself in Jacob's position. How does he feel? What does he hope for? What does he pray for?
- 2 We look at the picture. What are the brothers' thoughts and feelings? What do they say to Joseph? What do they ask him?
- 3 How does Joseph comfort his brothers who feel so guilty?
The brothers' evil deed of selling Joseph into slavery turned out to be a blessing.