

**GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Genesis Lesson 30 (41:56 – 43:38): Some Summary Thoughts:**

**Final Chapters:** The closing chapters of Genesis take us between Canaan and Egypt. Three major scenes will emerge: The first scene opens in chapters 42 – 44. As we have begun to note in the lesson today, we are privy to the initial interaction between Joseph and his brothers, 13 or more years after they sold him into slavery. It is interesting that these other sons of Jacob, embroiled in the trauma of their own family’s troubles, including famine and death in their homeland, have now traveled to Egypt at the instigation of their father to put their trust for their future in the goodwill of a powerful viceroy of Egypt, whom they (at this point) do not know.

The second scene in chapters 45 – 47 portrays a family reunion of sorts. The pivotal passage has to be Joseph’s revelation of his identity to his brothers in 45:4-8. For them a worst-case scenario has to be unfolding. The youngest son of their father (Benjamin) is being held hostage, an innocent victim of a trumped-up charge, and all of a sudden, they now hear this vizier announcing his *true* identity! Joseph’s speech to them at this point is remarkable! In the next couple of weeks we will look at this in more detail. Finally, in 48 – 50, we get the third and final scene. Here, the final blessings are pronounced and a primary lesson from chapter 45 is reinforced in chapter 50. When we finish, we will comprehend the Providence of God more completely, and gain a fuller appreciation for reconciliation and the importance God places on it.

As we open chapter 42, Scripture reveals that Jacob’s sons, minus Benjamin, travel to Egypt to buy grain since the famine predicted by Joseph (41:28-39) has struck in Canaan also.

- Events are beginning to remind us that things are not always what they seem on the surface. God is doing the unexpected – using a famine to preserve His people!

Upon arrival, the brothers come into the Joseph’s presence. “*They bowed down to him with their faces to the ground*”, v. 6, (recalling Joseph’s earlier dream in 37:5). When they return again into Joseph’s presence, the brothers bow twice, 43: 26, 28, (recalling the double bowing in Joseph’s dream in chapter 37). On their first visit, Joseph interrogates them, remembers his dream (v. 8), and accuses them of being “spies” (vv. 8, 14). He proposes a “test” for them to prove they are not spies – to let one go to bring back the youngest brother, Benjamin, while the rest remain in prison. Claiming to “*fear God*,” (v. 16), Joseph releases all but one after 3 days confinement.

- The picture reminds us that, like Pharaoh who exercised his power of life or death over the 2 dreamers in prison in 3 days time according to Joseph’s interpretation, Joseph too holds the power of life or death over his brothers. Joseph returns life to them which has to bring to mind the 3 days Christ spent in the tomb (prison) to bring mankind life.

The famine remains so severe that the family must return to Egypt for more supplies. Jacob finally relents on Benjamin accompanying the brothers. Judah now shows his mettle, offering his life as a guarantee that Benjamin will return (43: 8). They take double the money to make up for the previous money returned to them. Jacob prays: “*God Almighty (El-Shaddai) grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you*” (43:14). As they present themselves to Joseph, they are then taken to Joseph’s house, where they now leap to the assumption that they are to be punished unjustly for taking the silver when they previously left. They confess these concerns to Joseph’s steward along with the fact they brought double the amount to cover it all. But the steward replies to their concerns with an interesting statement: “*Don’t be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.*”

- Once again, we are reminded that we all live within a Divine – human drama, one where God is sovereign and in charge, but also one where the humans are neither puppets in God’s plan, nor do they have the power to thwart His plan. Like Joseph, humans can exhibit and bring about good in the midst of evil or even when evil has been exercised against them. But, like the brothers, humans can temporarily hinder the working of good in the world. Fortunately, what is beyond dispute is the final outcome!