

## THE STORY OF JOSEPH AND HOW JACOB'S FAMILY MOVED TO EGYPT (Part 3)

After Joseph accused the ten brothers of being spies, he kept Simeon in prison and told the brothers they would have to prove their innocence by bringing back to Egypt their younger brother. Back at home they told their father about all that happened and after opening their sacks found not only their grain, but also the money they thought they paid for it. They were frightened. Jacob was very troubled. He had now lost two sons, Joseph and Simeon. He refused to let them take the youngest son, Benjamin, back to Egypt. But the famine in Canaan got worse and soon their grain ran out. When Jacob told them to go back to Egypt to buy more food, they reminded him they had to take Benjamin. He reluctantly agreed to let Benjamin go.

When they returned to Egypt, they tried to return the money they found in their sacks. However, Joseph's servants refused saying the grain had already been paid for. Their brother Simeon was sent out to them, and they were all invited to a banquet with Joseph at noon. When Joseph saw his brothers, especially Benjamin who had the same mother as he did, he began to cry and had to excuse himself until he was through crying. When the banquet was served the eleven brothers were amazed when they realized they were assigned seats in the order of their birth. They were also surprised by the large servings given to their youngest brother, Benjamin.

Joseph ordered his servants to fill the sacks with grain and again hid the money in each brother's sack. He also told them to hide his own special, silver, drinking cup in the sack of Benjamin. After the brothers left for home the next morning, he commanded his servants to chase them and say, "Why have you stolen our master's silver cup? You have done a very wicked thing."

The brothers all claimed their innocence, saying, "If one of us has done this, let him die and the rest of us will be your slaves!" The servants searched and found the cup in Benjamin's sack. The brothers tore their clothes in sorrow and were brought to Joseph. Joseph said, "Didn't you know I would find you out?"

Judah, one of Joseph's brothers asked, "How can we prove our innocence? God has found out our wickedness. We are your slaves, both we and the one in whose possessions the cup was found." But Joseph answered, "I will only punish the one in whose possession the cup was found, the rest of you can go."

Judah approached him and said, "Please, do not be angry with me for speaking a word to you for I know you are equal to the king. We have an old father and

Benjamin is the child of his old age. His brother is dead so he alone is left of his mother and his father loves him greatly. When you told us before to bring him to you we knew our father would not let him come. However, because of the famine he was forced to let Benjamin come. If our father sees us return without him, our father will surely die because his life is tied up with the lad's life. I told my father if I did not bring the lad back home I would bear the blame before my father forever. Now, therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave instead of the lad."

Joseph could control himself no longer. He went into a room by himself and cried so loudly the Egyptians heard him and told the king. Then Joseph went to his brothers and plainly told them, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?"

They were so amazed they could not answer. They came closer to him and he said, "I am Joseph who you sold into slavery over 20 years ago. Don't be angry or grieved because you did this wicked thing, for God has sent me before you to give his people a great deliverance. So, it is not you who sent me here but God, and God has made me ruler over all of Egypt. You must go back and get our father and your families and move to Egypt."

The king gave them the best of the land of Egypt and Joseph's father, his brothers, and their families came to Egypt. There were 70 people in all. Jacob got to be reunited with Joseph before he died. After Jacob died, Joseph's brothers were afraid that Joseph would kill them. They humbly went to Joseph, bowed down before him and begged his forgiveness. However, Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? As for you, you meant these things for evil, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."

So Joseph comforted them and spoke to them kindly. Joseph lived to be 110 years old and saw three generations grow up in Egypt. He made the large family promise that when they went back to Canaan (the land God promised to Abraham's people) they would take his bones for burial there. Joseph showed faith in God's promises.

This wonderful story illustrates what we call the providence of God. That is, it illustrates God's care in our lives as he works out his purpose. Joseph had many ups and downs in his life, but God was there the whole time. God can see the end when we can't. Trust him. God is working on you if you will let him. He will work things out for your good in eternity if you submit to him. He can turn the valleys of your life into mountains. Please take the time to read Romans 8:28-39.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. In whose sack did Joseph place his special silver drinking cup?
2. Which brother desired to take Benjamin's place as a slave?

3. About how many people came to live in Egypt that were ancestors of Abraham?