

### Joseph Finished His Life and Expressed Hope About the Future

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the fact that Israel chose to be buried in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob gave the descendants of Israel hope, even when they later suffered in the land of Egypt. Joseph also made a choice to remind the Israelites of this hope. In this topic, we will see what happened after Joseph and his brothers returned from the land of Canaan.

Genesis 50:15-18 says, “When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him.’ So they sent *messengers* to Joseph, saying, ‘Before your father died he commanded, saying, “Thus you shall say to Joseph: ‘I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.’” Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.’ And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, ‘Behold, we *are* your servants.’” In these verses, we see a very important lesson on how fear can affect the lives of people for many years. Joseph had been in Egypt for twenty-two years before his father and brothers moved to Egypt. Then, Israel had lived an additional seventeen years in Egypt. That meant Joseph was now fifty-six years old, and it had been thirty-nine years since the brothers had sold him as a slave.

In these verses, we see that the brothers had been living in fear, from the time they found out Joseph was the ruler in Egypt, because they did not know what Joseph would do when their father died. We see that throughout that time, the brothers thought Joseph might hate them and be waiting until their father died to take revenge on them for mistreating him and selling him into slavery. They had, apparently, mentioned this fear to their father as well, because they said their father had given them a command to ask Joseph to forgive them. They came and told Joseph what their father had said and then asked Joseph to forgive them. Joseph had told them, in Genesis 45:5-8, ““But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine *has been* in the land, and *there are* still five years in which *there will be* neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now *it was* not you *who* sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”” Joseph had his faith in God and was so shocked at the fear of his brothers that he cried when they made this request.

The brothers did not understand that he was crying because of their fear. Instead, they reacted and came and fell down in front of him. Then, they said, “Behold, we are your

servants.” Here, we see the power of guilt and fear in the hearts of people. The brothers could not accept the forgiveness, given by Joseph, seventeen years earlier but had continued to live in fear and guilt throughout that time. Joseph had told them that God was the One who had sent him to Egypt so He could preserve their lives. He had provided them with food throughout the famine. He had preserved their lives, but their lives were still controlled by fear and guilt. This is a good illustration of the fact that many people continue to live in guilt long after they have come to God through Christ in repentance and faith and have been forgiven. They are unable to enjoy the peace of God – the peace that God wants them to experience.

Then, Joseph said, in Genesis 50:19-21, “Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.” Joseph had wept in sorrow because he was saddened by the fact his brothers had lived in fear and guilt throughout all those years. As a result, he wanted to give them words of comfort and peace so they would not need to live in fear and guilt any longer. The very first thing Joseph told them was, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?” Here, we see that Joseph wanted them to be able to let go of their fear and guilt. He wanted them to understand genuine forgiveness. True forgiveness has its source in the love of God. The Father showed that forgiveness when He sent His Son to die in our place and for our sin, so that when we come to Him through Christ, we can have our sins blotted out and He can choose to remember them no more.

Joseph went on to say that what they meant for evil God meant for good, because His plan was to save many alive. Romans 8:28-29 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Although these verses were written about nineteen hundred years later, they also explain what the Lord was doing in the life of Joseph, during those first thirteen years, to prepare him to save many people alive. The Lord was allowing those things to happen in the life of Joseph to develop his godly character and prepare him to depend on the wisdom of the Lord instead of his own strength. Joseph would not have been an effective leader in his own strength. The anger resulting from the ways Joseph was mistreated, both by his brothers and then in Egypt, would have controlled his heart. That would have affected his ability to follow the Lord in humility and allow the Lord to work through his life.

Joseph understood that his brothers needed personal encouragement from him as he saw how fear was still controlling their lives. He began by telling them that God was the One who was working the entire time. God had sent him to Egypt to save many people alive. Then, Joseph began to talk about their fear. He told his brothers they did not need to be afraid. Fear is the result of depending on self instead of the Lord. Joseph had learned to trust the Lord and so he wanted his brothers to know they did not need to have fear. He

went on to tell his brothers that he would provide for them and their children. His actions and his words were in agreement. The word translated “comforted” is used by David in Psalm 23:4, where we read, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” In addition, we read that Joseph spoke kindly to his brothers. The word translated “kindly” is translated *heart* five hundred and eight times of the five hundred and ninety-two times the word is used. A few times, it speaks of the heart that pumps the blood throughout our body, but most of the uses speak about the whole inner man. The very first use is in Genesis 6:5, where we read, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.” In many verses, the word is used to speak of the total inner man. In this verse, we see that Joseph spoke with such kindness that it touched the inner man of his brothers and they felt peace.

Genesis 50:22-26 concludes the book of Genesis by saying, “So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father’s household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. Joseph saw Ephraim’s children to the third *generation*. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph’s knees. And Joseph said to his brethren, ‘I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.’ Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.’ So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.” Joseph lived a total of one hundred and ten years and even had the privilege of enjoying his great-grandchildren as they grew.

We see that Joseph concluded his life by reminding his family about the promises of God as they looked toward the future. He realized that he was coming to the end of his life and so he reminded his family about the promises God had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God had told Abraham, in Genesis 15:13, “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.” God added, in Genesis 15:16, “But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” God then said, in Genesis 15:18, “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates...” Joseph wanted his family to remember that God had promised them the land of Canaan and that they would only be in Egypt for about four hundred years before God would take them back to the land He had promised them.

Joseph then showed his confidence in the promise of God by having the leaders of the developing nation of Israel take an oath and make a promise to him. That oath was made after Joseph said, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” Here, we see that Joseph showed, by his example, that he knew God would carry out the promise that had been made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Exodus 13:19 says, “And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from

here with you.” Then, Joshua 24:32 says, “The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.” This promise to Joseph was certainly an encouragement to Israel even during their time of suffering in Egypt. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how Joseph gave hope, to the people of Israel, that would continue to comfort and encourage them until the time when God brought them out of the land of Egypt and took them to the land of Canaan. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why the words of Joseph were so important to the people of Israel.