

### Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers

#### Genesis 45:1-15

Genesis 45:1-15 - *"Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!" So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup> And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it.*

*<sup>3</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. <sup>4</sup> And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." So they came near. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. <sup>8</sup> 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.*

*<sup>9</sup> "Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. <sup>10</sup> You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. <sup>11</sup> There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine.'"*

*<sup>12</sup> "And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my mouth that speaks to you. <sup>13</sup> So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here."*

*<sup>14</sup> Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. <sup>15</sup> Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him."*

#### Background Notes

When Joseph's brothers first came to Egypt to buy grain, Joseph did not reveal his identity to them. In fact, he treated them roughly, even throwing them into prison for three days. At first glance, it looked like Joseph was taking revenge on them for what they had done to him, but in actuality he was testing them. More than 20 years had passed since his cruel and jealous brothers had sold him into slavery. Had they changed? How had they treated their father Jacob and Joseph's younger brother Benjamin in those 20 long years?

Joseph's brothers passed the test that Joseph had designed for them. They acknowledged their guilt, and their actions displayed a true change of heart. After Judah spoke for the brothers (chapter 44), Joseph realized that his brothers were changed men. They wanted to do what was right. As a result, Joseph was ready to reveal himself to his brothers.

The first few verses of Genesis 45 are some of the most dramatic verses in the Bible. Can you imagine the drama of that moment? When he was finally alone with his brothers, Joseph said those awesome words, “**I am Joseph!**” If we were the brothers, what would we have done at that point? I’m sure I would have been as amazed and speechless as they were!

Joseph was quick to show that he had completely forgiven them. He wept for joy - so loudly that the other people in the house heard him! He embraced his brothers, and talked with them. He told them to go back home, get their father Jacob and their families, and move to Egypt. “*You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children’s children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine*” (v10-11).

The land of Goshen, we believe, was on the east side of the delta area in Egypt. The Nile delta would have been excellent grazing land for their flocks. Goshen would have been located not far from Joseph, who was probably headquartered in Memphis.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Understanding God’s providence enables the believer to accept hard times.

In our studies of Joseph, what has impressed me the most was his unwavering faithfulness to God. Joseph was sold as a slave by his own brothers when he was only a teenager. He suffered disappointment after disappointment, and was even put in prison after doing what was right! Yet Joseph never wavered in his faith in God. How was Joseph able to be so steadfast in faith? He was able to weather the hard times because he appreciated and understood **God’s providence**.

Understanding God’s providence enables the believer to accept hard times. The doctrine of God’s providence is not only that **God is in control of all things** (including all the mundane things in your life), but that he actually works out His specific plans and purposes for our lives **through all things!** Whether it’s big things or small things, easy times or hard times, our sovereign God is in control, and He is working out His good purpose for our lives.

Do we believe that? We may know it mentally, but do we **really believe** it? If we do, why do we complain about difficult circumstances? Joseph understood this doctrine, and that’s why he could accept the hard times without wavering in his faith. Joseph understood Romans 8:28, “*We know that in all things God is working for good for those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose.*”

Believers today know much more about God’s providence than Joseph did. He didn’t have **any** Scriptures, and he certainly didn’t have Romans 8:28! Are you undergoing some hard times right now? Do you believe God is still in control? Understanding God’s providence enables the believer to accept hard times.

## 2. Understanding God's providence enables the believer to forgive hard people.

Joseph's brothers were hard men. They were responsible for the awful massacre of the entire male population of Shechem (Genesis 34). These brothers had wanted to kill Joseph, and indeed **would** have killed him if the Ishmaelite traders hadn't come along. They nearly killed their father with grief by bringing him Joseph's bloody robe, implying that he had been torn apart by wild animals.

How was Joseph able to forgive such hard and cruel men? He saw that the brothers had changed - that they had undergone a real change of heart. In fact, I think that the brothers were actually converted at this time. "Converted"? Yes, converted! Old Testament people had to be "born again" by faith to be right with God, just like New Testament people. The Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus (**before** the cross), *"Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God".... "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit"* (John 3:3&5-6). I believe that Joseph's brothers had been converted through their contacts with Joseph.

But still, how was Joseph able to completely able to forgive the brothers who had betrayed him and treated him so cruelly? Could you forgive like this? Could I? Could we forgive a family member or a fellow believer who had wronged us or betrayed us? What is the key?

The key to forgiveness is that **Joseph understood God's providence**. Joseph saw God's hand at work in all these events, and therefore he was able to forgive his brothers. In verses 5-8, notice that Joseph brought **providence** into the picture: *"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."*

Understanding God's providence enables the believer to forgive hard people. This is a tremendous concept, and it will work for you as well as it worked for Joseph - because it is the truth! Has someone wronged you? Has someone betrayed you? God allowed it to happen. God even had a purpose in allowing it to happen. Even though we may not understand His purpose right now, but God has not only allowed it - He has controlled it. God's purpose and goal is to mold us, and make us more like Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29).

Can you catch that concept? If you can catch that concept, then you can handle any situation! Even when someone betrays you, you will be enabled to forgive that person. Understanding God's providence enables the believer to forgive hard people.

### 3. Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers portrays Christ's future reconciliation with Israel.

Again and again in the story of Joseph we've seen parallels between Joseph and the Lord Jesus. In Genesis 45, in the climax of the story, there is another parallel: Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers portrays the future reconciliation of Christ with Israel. Zechariah 12:10 describes it: *"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."*

Zechariah 13:1 says, *"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."* This verse is speaking of the Jewish people. Notice: not the Church, but the Jewish people. "In that day" refers to the future. The "fountain that will be opened" speaks of a future forgiveness and reconciliation with Israel.

In Zechariah, the Bible is teaching two things about Israel in the future. First, Israel will continue to go through hard times with the international community. Zechariah 12:9 makes that clear. Second, there will be a future spiritual revival in Israel. This will culminate in the return of the Lord to this earth, and reconciliation between Israel and the Messiah that she once rejected. They will look on Him whom they pierced! What an awesome moment that will be! That future event is pictured in Genesis 45. Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers portrays the future reconciliation of Christ with Israel.

## Practical Application

### It's OK for a man to cry!

Several times in the account of his life, Joseph wept. Before Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he cried in secret. But on this occasion he wept openly: *"And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it"* (v2). And, *"he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him"* (v14-15). Crying is a release of the emotions. Imagine the emotional release that Joseph experienced on that momentous occasion!

Joseph is a superb example of a man who wept, but had his emotions under control. God has designed us as emotional people. Crying is natural; it is the natural release of emotional tension. Jesus wept on more than one occasion. He wept with grief over death at his friend Lazarus' grave. He wept with sorrow over Jerusalem, when its people had rejected Him as their Messiah.

The idea that "Crying is not 'manly'" is **unbiblical**. Parents, be careful not to teach your sons the lie that "strong men don't cry." Teach them when it's proper to cry. Teach them to properly control their emotions. But don't teach them that it's shameful for a man to cry! There are times when men should be able to weep. In fact - it's OK for a man to cry.