

January 25

Scriptures: Read Genesis 43 & 44

Key Verse: “Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers” (Gen. 44:33).

Overview

Jacob (or Israel) noticed the supply of food his sons had brought back from Egypt was almost depleted and, since the famine was still in the land, he told them to go down once more to buy food. Judah explained that because of the conditions set by the prime minister, it would be in vain for them to go without Benjamin. He promised his father he would bring him back, otherwise he would be forever guilty, implying a curse would be upon him. In need of food and to get Simeon back, Jacob agreed to let his youngest son (probably in his mid-twenties) travel to Egypt. Before they departed, he prayed to “El Shadai”, the God Almighty, a prayer of protection over them. However he, lacking faith, ended with a note of pessimism (43:14).

When Joseph saw Benjamin had come with his brothers, he put his plan into action. Once again his brother bowed down before him, fulfilling his dream of long ago. Joseph was filled with emotion when Benjamin his only full brother, came to his home. He must have longed to go and immediately embrace him but restrained himself because he first wanted to see if his other brothers were changed and repentant. In fear, they spoke with Joseph’s steward to express their innocence concerning the money that had been in their sacks on leaving after their first visit. The steward reassured them not to worry, speaking as though he were a believer in the true God. Joseph must have told the steward about the God of his fathers. The great news about our Lord is not something we should be quiet about. Others need to know!

Surprisingly, at the dinner the brothers found they were sitting in the exact order of their ages. Yet they had not figured out who the prime minister was even though he had asked them about their father several times, wondering if he was still alive. Then he showed favoritism to Benjamin, possibly to see how the others would react. Would they be jealous as they had been of him when he was shown favoritism by their father? No, they were happy and in good spirits (43:34), which might indicate a change of heart. But the real test was still to come.

Joseph, still acting, coldly replied that only the one who had the cup would be his slave and the others could “go up in peace” (44:17). They could not leave Benjamin or else their father would die. Judah, the leader and advisor for selling Joseph into slavery (37:26), had certainly changed. In Joseph’s case, they had been cold-hearted and cruel, now they showed love and concern for their father and young brother. From the shock of all that had happened to them, their sleeping consciences were awakened. They say their guilt and were sincerely repentant. Judah interceded on his young brother’s behalf and asked that he remain as a substitute in place of Benjamin (44:33). We now see in Judah the spirit of self-sacrifice and true intercession, qualities which would become most evident in his descendant, Jesus, the Messiah. Joseph now was sure his brothers were changed. They had passed that test.

God loves you and wants what is best for you, and in everything the Lord has a purpose. God may use trials to teach us, convict us, and bring us to repentance. If you are in need of repentance, do not hesitate. The Lord is merciful and kind and willing to forgive.

Prayer

Dear God, please help us to recognize that you allow testings in our lives in order to teach us important lessons for life.