



## Chapter 42 & 43 - Answers

These 2 chapters remind me of an old phrase my Dad used to use...  
"meanwhile, back at the ranch..."

Here's what was going on back "at the ranch" in Canaan, where a still-grieving Jacob and his 11 sons and their families lived.

1. :1&2 How desperate was the situation for the clan of Jacob?

They were so close to out of food that they had to leave their safe home in Canaan and travel over roads loaded with thieves and murderers in order to buy some grain...which they had heard about. Somehow, miraculously, Egypt had been smart enough to store up some grain during those 7 years of abundance, and now they were willing to sell from their storehouses to the surrounding nations.

I'm wondering if, also, this small clan of Jews - descendants of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob - is thinking of how humiliating this is. They, after all, are the only ones who worship the One, True God in a land full of pagans. Why didn't God warn them to load up on extra supplies during those plenteous years? Why would the idol-worshipping Egyptians seem to have the blessing of God on them? Why would they be saving the world? Why not the family of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob? Or...why were they experiencing this awful famine like everyone else? Surely the One, True God could have put a ring around Canaan and kept this area from going through famine. Why was the One, True God not protecting His special people?

It was 13 years ago that they sold Joseph into slavery....but were the 10 brothers wondering, even all these years, whether their violent act against their brother Joseph was bringing on this calamity and humiliation?

Nevertheless - they must travel to Egypt and purchase food or they will die.

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2. :3&4 How many of the brothers traveled to Egypt to try to find food? Who didn't go? Why not?

Just 10 of the brothers went - the same 10 who cast Joseph into that pit 13 years before. Benjamin was not allowed to go by his father, Jacob. Jacob's grief over Joseph's supposed death was still very painful, and he could not let Benjamin, his other favorite son, born of Rachel, face the dangers of the road.

3. :5-9 What dream does Joseph remember as his brothers bow before him, the 2<sup>nd</sup> in command in Egypt? How significant is it that this dream (prophecy) was fulfilled?

When the 10 brothers arrive in Egypt they go directly to the house of the 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command in Egypt (Joseph). Joseph recognizes them, but they have no clue of who he really is.

In order to keep himself disguised from them he talks roughly to them, even accusing them of being spies. And as they bow before him, he remembers those dreams which got him into such trouble 13 years ago.

4. How do you think Joseph felt when he recognized his brothers? Do you think he had expected this day? Why didn't his brothers recognize him?

I think Joseph had expected this day. He knew where his brothers lived. He could very possibly have heard of them from other travelers. He knew they were experiencing famine, too, like everyone else. And he knew where they would have to go in order to survive.

So I think Joseph's breath was probably taken away at the sight of them...but he maintained his composure because he had seen this day coming.

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Why didn't they recognize him? Probably because he was a grown man now - they had last seen him as a 17-year-old boy. And also because he was dressed in the regalia of an Egyptian ruler and speaking in the Egyptian language, surrounded by servants doing his every bidding - this was definitely not the way they would ever have pictured Joseph, if they thought of him at all. This was not a farmer, a shepherd, a little brother, a country boy.

5. :9-13 Why does Joseph accuse them of being spies?

I think he wanted to get them off-balance so they would tell him everything he wanted to know without realizing who he really was. He wanted to learn whether or not his father was still alive...and whether Benjamin was still alive. And how the whole clan was doing.

6. :14-20 What test does Joseph have for them? Why do you think he is putting them through this?

He is going to force them to bring Benjamin to him. But the question is...why is he making them jump through so many hoops and be so scared when all he would have to say is - "I'm Joseph, your brother!", and then he would learn everything he wanted to learn.

The question I keep asking is - Is Joseph simply wanting to make them suffer as he did? Is he wanting revenge?

7. :21-24 When the brothers realize how awful their situation is, what is the first thing they think of? What does this show you? How does Joseph react as he hears and understands their conversation?

Ah. Guess what? The guilt of their crime against Joseph has been with them all these years. It has not faded away with time, has it? The Lord has kept it fresh and painful for all of them for 13 years. They know, each of the 10 brothers, deep within themselves, that what they did was wrong - it was sin - and there is a price to pay for sin. They can only assume that the

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time has come to pay that price. They still do not realize it is Joseph toying with them - but they have no doubt that God never forgets.

8. Which brother gets left behind?

Joseph weeps as he hears his brothers talking to one another in Aramaic. They don't know he knows their language because he has been speaking to them in Egyptian.

Simeon is taken from amongst the group of 10, bound right in front of them, and the rest are sent on their way back home - and told not to return unless Benjamin is with them. Ostensibly this is so they can prove their story is true and they are not spies. In reality, of course, Joseph wants to see his only full-brother, Benjamin....the only brother who wasn't guilty of selling Joseph into slavery.

Again we might ask: is Joseph taking revenge?

9. :25-35 Why do the brothers react in fear when they see money in one of their sacks?

They had brought the money with them to Egypt to buy grain. They had purchased the grain and it was sent back with them. To see the money in their sacks was a surprise, since they had given it to the Egyptians for the grain. And it was something to be afraid of, because surely someone would assume they had stolen back the money before they left.

10. :36-38 What is old Jacob's reaction to the demand from the Commander in Egypt that the youngest son, Benjamin, go back to Egypt with the rest of the brothers?

He's pretty callous, if you ask me. He refuses to send Benjamin, even though he knows Simeon is in prison in Egypt. Old Jacob is simply not willing to suffer the loss of one more favorite son.

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So he refuses. The 9 sons who are left will not return to Egypt, they will not be taking Benjamin with them. Period.

11. What brother even offers the lives of his own sons as proof that he will come back with Benjamin? Does this change Jacob's mind?

Even though Jacob has assurances from Reuben that his own sons lives could be held as surety if they did not return with both Simeon and Benjamin, he still refuses. Of course Jacob would never take Reuben's sons lives - why would he kill his grandchildren in order to take revenge on a promise not kept?

12. 43:1-10 What finally changes Jacob's mind?

The famine continues. The whole family will die if they do not go back to Egypt.

13. What brother offers to bear the whole fault himself if things don't go well?

Judah. The one who carried the hidden seed of the Messiah. The dysfunctional scoundrel who almost cheated his daughter-in-law out of her rightful protected place in his family. The one who bought the services of a harlot by the roadside. The one who almost killed his daughter-in-law in righteous indignation when he found out she was with child out of wedlock. The one who realized his sin and turned around a ridiculously awful situation and became the father and protector to the twins he had fathered.

That one.

What has happened to Judah in the last 13 years?

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14. :11-14 What is Jacob's plan?

"Go. Take double the amount of money needed to buy grain. And take back the money you found in your sacks. Throw yourselves on the mercy of the Egyptian ruler. And may the One, True God show mercy and let us live! And if He doesn't, then so be it." He says: "If I am bereaved, then I am bereaved".

He's afraid but resigned to the fact that he must bow to the situation. He's grieving but he knows he must trust God. There is no other way.

Does this remind you of any other portion of the Old Testament? It reminds me of the story of Esther. She knew that she was the only one who could save the whole nation of Israel. In order to do that she must approach the King even though he had not sent for her. She knew that the King could easily have her killed for approaching him in that way. But there was no other choice. She must trust God. And "If I perish, I perish". (Esther chapter 4)

15. :15-18 What do the brothers think is happening when they arrive in Egypt and are invited to a personal dinner with the 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command?

They are afraid. Confused. They think he is going to arrest them all.

16. :19-34 What good things begin to happen to the brothers as we finish this chapter?

- First, they are assured that the money in their sacks on the first trip is not a problem.
- They are treated well
- Joseph, when he joins them, simply asks about the well-being of their family.
- Joseph meets Benjamin (very emotional time for Joseph) and says "God bless you my son".
- They enjoy a meal together with Joseph and the Egyptians

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- The 11 brothers are assigned seats at the table in the order of their birth - strange - since that's a fact they had never shared.
- Benjamin was specially treated - and food was plentiful - and they were well treated.

17. They have been full of fear up until now...do you think their fear is beginning to go away?

Good question. I don't think mine would.

18. Why is Joseph being so nice? What do you think Joseph is going through?

Is Joseph just setting them up for the ultimate revenge?

19. Do you think Joseph is wanting revenge? Is he struggling with knowing what is right to do? Does Joseph have any good examples from the past, from his family's past, to show him that taking vengeance is not up to him?

If Joseph remembers his family history, he might remember that his father Jacob did not take revenge on Uncle Laban even though he cheated him. Or he might remember that his Uncle Esau did not take revenge on his own father, Jacob, for all the cheating and lying he did. Or he might remember the terrible results of he and his brothers taking revenge on the people of Schechem when he defiled their sister, Dinah. Or he might remember the awful stress of a home filled with one sister, Rachel (his mother), exchanging revenge over and over again with another sister, Leah (his aunt).

If Joseph is struggling with the desire to have revenge, these memories might help him sort out his feelings and ask himself what the One, True God would have him do.

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20. Why does the Lord tell us not to get revenge? Romans 12:17-21

Although these next verses were not written until long after the time of Joseph, they are the Words of God, and God does not change. So if Joseph was seeking the face of God in this situation, here's what the One, True God would have told him:

**Proverbs 20:22** "Do not say 'I will recompense evil'; wait for the Lord, and He will save you."

**Romans 12:17-21** "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore, 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."