

### Joseph Had the Brothers Eat At His House

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why it was necessary for Joseph to test the hearts of his brothers to see if they had changed their attitudes. In this topic, we will see what happened at the home of Joseph that day after Joseph ordered his steward to prepare a feast for the brothers.

We learn what happened at the home of Joseph before he came home for dinner. Genesis 43:18-22 says, “Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph’s house; and they said, ‘*It is* because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and seize us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys.’ When they drew near to the steward of Joseph’s house, they talked with him at the door of the house, and said, ‘O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food; but it happened, when we came to the encampment, that we opened our sacks, and there, *each* man’s money *was* in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; so we have brought it back in our hand. And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks.’” Here, we see that the brothers were filled with fear as they went with their donkeys to the house of the governor.

Before the brothers even got to the house, we see that they began talking among themselves. Their hearts were filled with fear by the very fact they were being taken to the home of the governor. This fear immediately caused them to think about the reason for going to the home and they expected the worst to happen when the governor arrived. They came to the conclusion that the reason they were going to the home of the governor was due to the fact their money had been returned to them in their sacks the first time they had come to buy grain. They knew they had given that money to the governor and his helpers. However, they thought he would probably use the fact that he did not have the money, after they left to return home, as an excuse to make a case against them. In fact, they expected the governor to seize them and force them to become slaves. They also expected he would keep their donkeys. Many people are like the brothers; when something evil happens to them, they expect the worst possible consequences to happen to them.

As a result, the brothers did not even go into the house before they began to talk to the steward and told him what happened the first time they came to Egypt. The brothers said that when they had come to the first place where they camped on the way home, when each man opened his sack, each had found his money at the top of his sack. They said they had brought all of that money back so they could pay the money in full for the grain they had received the first time they had come to Egypt. They said they had also brought additional money with them for the food they were planning to buy this time. The

brothers probably hoped that by telling the steward what had happened and then giving him the money, they would not be seized and forced to become slaves. They also told the steward that they did not know who had placed that money in their sacks to make sure he did not think one of them had taken the money.

Genesis 43:23-28 says, “But he said, ‘Peace *be* with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money.’ Then he brought Simeon out to them. So the man brought the men into Joseph’s house and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed. Then they made the present ready for Joseph’s coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there. And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was in* their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth. Then he asked them about *their* well-being, and said, ‘*Is* your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? *Is* he still alive?’ And they answered, ‘Your servant our father *is* in good health; he *is* still alive.’ And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves.” The steward told the brothers they did not need to be afraid. Instead, he said that their God, and the God of their father, had given them the money in their sacks. Then, the steward said, “I had your money.” His statements were true. God had provided them with that money through Joseph. The steward had received their money and then Joseph had told him to place the money back in their sacks when the brothers were not present.

The steward also brought Simeon out of the prison and presented him to the brothers. That made it possible for them to see that he was in good health and had now been set free from the prison. Then, the steward brought the men into the house. He gave the brothers water so they could wash their feet. He also gave their donkeys feed. This kindness did not take away their fear as we see they still expected something evil to happen to them. The steward also told the brothers that they would eat bread with the governor at noon. While the steward and other servants were preparing the meal, the brothers prepared the gift they were planning to give to the governor.

Joseph arrived at noon for the feast. Immediately, the brothers brought him the present they had prepared for him. Just as they had done the first time they came to Egypt, they bowed down to the ground before Joseph. When they bowed down to him, Joseph probably remembered again the dream he had dreamed many years earlier. Genesis 37:7-8 says, “There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.’ And his brothers said to him, ‘Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?’ So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.”

Then, Joseph began to ask them a few questions. First, he asked about their well-being. The word that is translated “well-being” is usually translated *peace*. Their actions just a few minutes later showed they did not have inner peace but were still filled with fear. Next, Joseph asked them if their father was well. Joseph also asked if their father was

still alive. These two questions were very important to Joseph because he wanted to know anything he could about his father. Of course, the brothers had absolutely no idea they were talking to Joseph. Instead, they were still controlled by fear because of the things which the governor had accused them the first time, especially when he spoke roughly to them and accused them of being spies. They said that their father was in good health and then quickly bowed again and prostrated themselves. The word translated “prostrated” means to *worship, bow or bow down flat on the ground*.

While this was happening, Genesis 43:29-34 says, “Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, and said, ‘Is this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?’ And he said, ‘God be gracious to you, my son.’ Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought *somewhere* to weep. And he went into his chamber and wept there. Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, ‘Serve the bread.’ So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that *is* an abomination to the Egyptians. And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another. Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin’s serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him.” Joseph was watching as the brothers bowed before him and quickly recognized Benjamin.

Joseph asked the brothers if this was the younger brother of whom they had spoken. Then, Joseph spoke directly to Benjamin and said, “God be gracious to you, my son.” Joseph could not control his emotions any longer. He quickly turned away and walked out of the room where they would eat that day. He went to his bedroom where he could be alone for a few minutes and cried. When he had control of his emotions and was able to stop crying, he washed his face so it could not be seen that he had been crying. After washing his face, he came out of his bedroom and returned to the room where they were going to eat. Instead of saying anything more to his brothers, Joseph told his servants, “Serve the bread.”

The Egyptians felt that it was an abomination for them to eat with the Hebrews. The word translated “abomination” means a *thing of horror*. In some passages, God calls certain things an abomination, and in other passages man calls certain things an abomination. This might be something that was physical (such as eating things that were considered unclean), ritual (things that people would avoid), ethical (things such as human sacrifices or idolatry), or things like the Lord lists in Proverbs 6:16-19, where we read, “These six *things* the LORD hates, yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness *who* speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.” In these verses, the Egyptians avoided eating with Hebrews, so this would be a ritual abomination. This meant they had three different tables.

Joseph then seated his brothers according to their age from the oldest to the youngest. This caused his brothers to be amazed since, to them, he was the Egyptian governor. Joseph then served each of the brothers and purposely gave Benjamin five times as much as he gave the others. This gave him the opportunity to see how the brothers reacted to the fact that he showed favor to Benjamin. He had one more test, which we will see in the next chapter of Genesis. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Joseph did a variety of different things to test his brothers before he told them that he was their brother, Joseph. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.