

# The Reunion

Genesis 42:8-16

- I. Act of God
  - a. The Brother sent to buy grain
    - i. Due to the famine 41:56
  - b. Joseph made Ruler 41:46
    - i. Having power
    - ii. Interpreted the dream
- II. Recognize and Remember v.9
  - a. Recognized them
    - i. What they had done
    - ii. Disguised himself
  - b. Spoke to the Harshly
    - i. That Joseph spoke “harshly” (*qāšōt*) was the prelude to his charges against the brothers; this intimidated the brothers, which they recall to Jacob (v. 30)
  - c. Remember the promise of God Genesis 37:6-9
    - i. but he is caught off balance, for some years earlier he had said, “God has made me quite forget ... all my father’s house” (41:51). Now all his memories come flooding back.
    - ii. When Joseph’s older **brothers ... bowed down before him with their faces to the ground**, they fulfilled Joseph’s prophetic dreams (37:7, 9). Joseph had not seen his brothers for twenty years,
      1. That his brothers showed proper deference to the master of the land was expected, but the act of “bowing” (*hāwā*) said far more than they realized. Their assent fulfilled the dreams of young Joseph, to whom the sheaves and stars “bowed down”
    - iii. **Joseph remembered his dreams** about his brothers and their treacherous actions against him, so he devised a test to see if they had changed during the past two decades:
- III. Their Claim 10-14
  - a. We are honest men
    - i. “We are all sons of one man” expresses more truth than they realized, for Joseph was also a son of Jacob. But by affirming their brotherhood, they hope to rebut the charge of spying, for spies would surely not travel together and risk the whole family by one of them being caught. “We are honest” or “honorable” (ן), i.e., they both tell the truth and do what is right (e.g., Num 27:7; 36:5; 2 Kgs 7:9; 17:9).
  - b. You are Spies
    - i. The term “spies” (*mēraggēlīm*) occurs here for the first of seven times in this chapter (vv. 9, 11, 14, 16, 30, 31, 34). In terse verbless clauses the parties make contrasting claims: lit., “spies [are] you” (vv. 9, 14, 16, 34) and “honest [are] we” (vv. 11, 31) and “honest [are] you” (vv. 19, 33, 34). His accusation was that they had surreptitiously come to see where the “land is unprotected,” lit., “the nakedness [*erwat*] of the land,”

- ii. “The constant repetition of the accusation is meant to unnerve the accused and break down his resistance”.
  - 1. In their helplessness the brothers can do nothing more than repeat with more detail their claim to be one family. The interrogator, who is their brother, thus learns what he wants to know.

#### IV. You Test 15-16

- a. The test pertains specifically to the “words” (claims) of the brothers (vv. 16, 20). It means to “put to the test” in the sense of discovering a person’s veracity or an item through a concrete trial or hardship (e.g., 1 Sam 17:39; 1 Kgs 10:1).
  - i. “to refine, purge” in the sense of removing impurities (e.g., Isa 1:25; Jer 6:27, 29). It is also used to indicate the discovery of a person’s fidelity
  - ii. The nature of the test may have this secondary sense, that is, refining the brothers through verifying their “words.” That their words of innocence were already known to be true shows that the test by Joseph sought more. He wanted to learn if they had been truthful about his father and brother, but he also hoped the impact of the test elicited repentance over past sins.
- b. So as to examine their claim, ostensibly Joseph proposed a test to expose the men’s veracity. The purpose of the test is explicitly stated: “to see if you are telling the truth” (v. 16). “Truth” (*’emet*) describes the veracity or dependability of the brothers’ words.
  - i. If they lied about their family, they had lied about being spies, but Joseph’s test actually sought to ensure that Benjamin would be brought to Egypt and under his protective eye. Since their lives depended now on the well being of Benjamin, Joseph probably reasoned that Benjamin’s life would be secure).
- c. This charge was a means of determining the character of his brothers, not personal retaliation. Eventually, he will put them in the same situations they once had faced and failed: the imprisonment of a brother and monetary gain (Simeon) and the opportunity to rid themselves of a rival (Benjamin). The brothers adamantly but politely (“my lord,” “your servants”) protest their innocence (v. 10). Their further response ties together their family’s state of affairs (“all the sons of one man”) and their claim as “honest men” (v. 11).
- d. The conclusion of the instruction in v. 16b repeats the beginning in v. 15a (inclusio) with the addition to the verb, “to see whether your words are reliable or not” (i.e., whether *you* are reliable in your words). This addition gives the listeners to suspect that there is much more to the test than the situation reveals.