

The Story of Joseph

Judah Takes Action

Part 42 – March 3, 2013



Jacob's sons return and tell Jacob, their 129-year-old father, that Egypt's Vizier is holding Jacob's #2 son, Simeon, hostage until they return with his youngest son, Benjamin. But when they empty their grain sacks, and the silver (Joseph had hidden), spills out, Jacob fears they want to *kill* Benjamin.

"If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow."

[Notice he says *you*, not *it*] – Genesis 42:38 NIV

So ends chapter 42. And chapter 43 begins, about 40 days later.¹

Now the famine was still severe in the land. – Genesis 43:1 NIV

Imagine how hard Jacob had been pleading with God to send rain! Imagine how hard Simeon's wife and six sons² had been pleading with Jacob to send Benjamin to redeem their husband and father! And, as the grain diminishes, the stress and strain intensifies.

So when they [70+ family members (Gen 46:26)] had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, [about 2,428 pounds³] their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little more food." – Genesis 43:1-2 NIV

The first time Jacob asked, he said, "So that we may live and not die." (42:2)

The way he *now* speaks shows the sensitive nature of the subject. He has adamantly rejected what they've all adamantly declared!

But Judah said to him, "The man warned us solemnly, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.' If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you. But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because [“Seriously dad, look me in the eyes”] the man said to us, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.'" – Genesis 43:3-5 NIV

Ancient rabbinical sources teach that Jacob presumed Judah to be the guiltiest in Joseph's disappearance, because Judah ran away.

¹ In 43:10, Judah says they could've gone and returned twice (from the time they got home with the grain – and wanted to return to Egypt – until the time the grain ran out). Itjtawy, the capital of the 12th Dynasty, was about 350 miles from Hebron. Traveling time, at 20 miles per day, was about 18 days, plus acquiring and loading grain.

² "The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman." (Gen 46:10)

³ 70 people needing, on average, 1,800 calories per day, would require three cups of whole grain (about 600 calories per cup). 3 cups x 70 people = 210 cups per day. Ancient grains weighed 4.625 ounces per cup. 210 cups per day x 4.625 ounces = 60.7 pounds per day x 40 days = 2428 pounds brought into the camp ... *more or less*.



When Joseph was sold, and dad deceived, Judah fled his faith and family, joined a pagan named Hirah (“Hey, dudes!”), married a nameless Canaanite woman who died young, and fathered three sons, two *so evil* God killed ‘em!⁴

And in fear of losing *his* youngest son, Judah refused to fulfill an obligation to marry him to his dead brother’s childless widow, Tamar.⁵ So, Tamar, disguised as a shrine prostitute, tricked Judah into getting her pregnant, *and* paying with the symbols of his authority.⁶ When he learned she was pregnant, he condemned her to be burned alive. *But!* When *his* many sins were publically revealed, he broke down, surrendered to God, and *finally* repented.⁷



Repentance isn’t *just* a feeling, a surrendering, a receiving, a desiring, a resolving, a choosing, or even a committing. It *is* those things; but, **repentance is incomplete until it’s an action.**

It just isn’t *fully* repentance until it’s a turning, a stopping, a starting, a serving, a stepping up and *becoming*. And, **obedient action is when becoming becomes a reality.** When we repent, we need to **ask God to show us what action we can immediately take to cement what we repent.** God told Judah to go back home to his dad ... and he did ... just as the famine came. God likely used *Judah* to persuade his brothers to go to the royal city to look for Joseph. And, now God is using Judah to relate to his dad’s pain of loss, fear of further loss, and *self-loathing*.

It’s *weird*: ask us what we want to *become*, and we shrug, “I dunno.” But, ask us what we *hate* about ourselves, and get ready for a *list!* It’s not right, but it’s what we do. So ... *make the list*. Seriously. A column. **What do you ‘hate’ about you?** Then, next to that, write whatever the *opposite* would be. And, you’ll have a clear list of what you want to become: a reflection of Jesus. And a *ton* of ideas for immediate, obedient, actions to take!

Israel [a.k.a. Jacob, opened up to Judah and] asked, “Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?” [“How would he know?! Why tell the truth if you don’t have to?! Where did I go wrong with you boys? Have you learned nothing from me?!”] – Genesis 43:6 NIV

Jacob, the deceiver, *just don’t learn!* Lying is dying! If they’d denied the existence of Joseph’s only full brother, I’m assuming they would’ve died a slow and painful death. And Jacob would be *grieving 10 more sons!* And he’d be crying out to God, as he did last week: “Everything is against me!” (42:36) But, someone has to be blamed in order to evade a personal responsibility!

Obedience is never about ability, it’s about motivation. And, do you know the one thing that chiefly brings motivation?

⁴ We covered this in the sermon: “**Lion on the Lam**” (04/19/12)

⁵ We covered this in the sermon: “**The Lion Sleeps**” (04/15/12)

⁶ We covered this in the sermon: “**The Lion Trap**” (04/22/12)

⁷ We covered this in the sermon: “**The Lion Swallows His Pride**” (05/06/12)

... Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." – John 8:31b-32 NIV

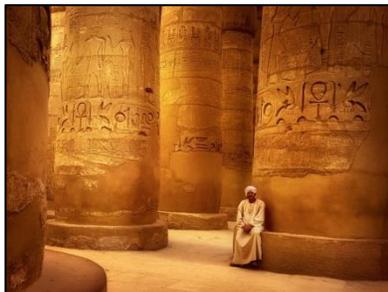
Psyching yourself up and gritting your teeth, won't cut it. **Valid motivation requires truth**; grasping, appreciating, and embracing *truth*; because, the way from bondage, to life, is through *the truth*.

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." – John 14:5-6 NIV

Jesus said, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13) And, Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17) But, truth brings pain. That's *why* people lie; why, when truth presses in, they take something, drink something, buy something, smoke something, watch something, or use someone, to numb it.

But, **it's the pain of truth that drives us to become!** Take away God anointed pain and you remove the motivation to change. **To numb yourself from pain is to numb yourself from truth.** Lying is dying! **When we numb the pain, we numb the power to repent**, because the Spirit of truth, uses the Word of truth, to empower us with truth ... and truth brings pain. So don't blame.

They replied, [speaking over the top of one another] "The man questioned us closely [a group technique to see if they'll give the same answer) they were questioned closely. YLT "diligently"; TMNT "pressed us hard"; NAB "kept asking"] about ourselves and our family. 'Is your father still living?' he asked us. 'Do you have another brother?' We [Again, as a group] simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, 'Bring your brother down here?'" – Genesis 43:7 NIV



Hypostyle Hall, Karnak, c. 1260 BC

The rabbis have long taught that Joseph tripped up his brothers with the interrogation they describe here. These questions aren't in the abbreviated account, in 42:8-14, when they went before Joseph. But, there is a very *odd response*.

If we combine the two accounts, set it up as group questions, and add in what we know their responses would've been, we can *reverse engineer* a context for their odd response!

After claiming to be honest men (which *had* to set him off), and the sons of one man, Joseph apparently said something like ...

"As a group, answer with one voice: Your father's name?" "Jacob!" "Is he alive or dead?" "Alive!" "Where's he live?" "Canaan!" "How many sons does he have?!" [Speaking all at once] **"11" / "12" / "12" / "11"**

[Look how their odd response fits in] But they replied, "Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more." Joseph said to them, "It is just as I told you: You are spies!" – Genesis 42:13-14 NIV

In a very similar fashion, Judah now uses his father's own words against *him*, and trips him up with truth.

Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die." [That's the point Jacob made to get them to go. (42:2)] – Genesis 43:8 NIV

And Judah's logic is simple: "You don't want us to take Benjamin for fear he *might* die. But we can't go without him. So, if you don't *send* him, he will *for sure* die."

But, then his tone changes; he suddenly knows what he has to do. He steps up and takes immediate, obedient, action. He's cementing what he's repenting. And, he looks a *lot* like *Jesus*.

"I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life." – Genesis 43:9 NIV

Leah's #1 son, Reuben, lost his birthright when he slept with father's concubine. Her #2 son, Simeon, and #3 son, Levi, lost their chance at the birthright with the slaughter in Shechem. Rachel's #1 son, Joseph, is thought to be dead. So, if something happens to her #2 son, Benjamin, Leah's #4 son, *Judah*, inherits the honor. So, *that's* what he trades for his father's trust.

He strips himself of his father's glory to become personally responsible, and guarantee the safety of his father's children.



Judah had a *lot* of regrets; but, what he must've hated *most* (the reason he ran away to a destructive, pain-numbing life), was that *he* was the one who talked his brothers into sending Joseph down into Egypt. Now, God arranges his second chance, so that he's the one who must talk his father into sending *Benjamin* down into Egypt.

"As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice." – Genesis 43:10 NIV

Judah is champing at the bit to become who he's supposed to be. And he'll get the chance when Joseph pretends he's going to enslave Benjamin. In fact, it's Judah's demand to be taken as a substitute sacrifice that will cause Joseph to reveal himself.

Joseph is a great foreshadow of Jesus; but, *Judah* is His fore-*father*! And, God chose the perfect forefather for the One who would be both, the Son of Man, and the Son of God! Judah's arrogance, cowardice, and selfishness doomed Joseph; but his humility, courage, and selflessness will resurrect him! And this is where we have to close God's story for today.