

The Story of Joseph

About Face

Part 45 – April 28, 2013

When we left off, Joseph's brothers were in his house, bowing on behalf of their dad. Their GIFTS were reminding Joseph of home and family, as well as the ISHMAELITES he'd been sold to. I can't imagine his emotions. Loneliness. Loss. Missed years. The realization that his father hadn't forsaken him. Childhood smells of parties. The skunky smell of the spice traders. Not to mention the feast at hand. And Benjamin, his only full brother. All in one place. It's an overwhelming, real-life *This-Is-Your-Life!*



As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, [And you know there's a resemblance; their mom died giving birth to Benjamin, about a year before Joseph was sold into Egypt some 22 years earlier] he asked, "Is this your youngest brother, ["The infant I held, and embraced, and kissed, for comfort when our mother died?"] the one you told me about?" ["And separated me from; the brother I regard as a son, though turned into a stranger?"] And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son." [And then his throat cinched up and he lost it] Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. – Genesis 43:29-30a NIV

This whole scene reminds me of Jesus, as He wept over Jerusalem.



As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you ... They will not leave one stone [of the Temple (Mat 24:1-2, Mark 13:1-2, Luke 21:5-6)] on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." – Luke 19:41-44 NIV

God's Holy Temple had always *only* foreshadowed the True Temple.

He [Jesus] answered [the Pharisees], "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread [which represented Jesus, the Bread of Life] ... I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. – Matthew 12:3-4a, 6 NIV



[Back to Joseph's emotional state at his state mansion] He went into his private room and wept there. – Genesis 43:30b NIV

When was the last time he wept in a private room while his brothers prepared to eat lunch nearby? The pit! (Gen 37:24-25, 42:21) And, you know the big difference between then and now? Mascara! Eyeliner. Running down his face. A royal mess. But, he's ready to face his brothers ... *without* his Egyptian disguise.

After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, "Serve the food."
– Genesis 43:31 NIV

This is a shocking informality at a state dinner with the second most powerful man in the nation! He's treating 'em like *family!* It'd be like going to the VP's and he comes out in boxer shorts.

And, one of 'em *had* to say, "Is it just me, or does he remind you of *dad*?" "*And Benjamin!*" but, **the brothers were too distracted and self-focused**. And so, though Joseph revealed himself, he wasn't recognized.

They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him [including his Hebrew-speaking Chief Steward, who brought the brothers to Joseph's mansion, and is pretending to act as Joseph's interpreter] by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians. [Religious Egyptians felt that foreigners ritually defiled their food. "Who am I, boys? I invited you into my *house*. I'm treating you like *brothers*. My face is familiar. My steward speaks *Hebrew*. I can't eat with *Egyptians*."] The men had been *seated before him* [lit. 'before his face', indicating that he had directed them] in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; [He seats 'em from the greatest to least] and they looked at each other in *astonishment*. – Genesis 43:32-33 NIV



His ten, older, early 40s brothers were born to three moms in a six year span. *And* they have beards! They're like *deca-tuplets*! How many seating combinations for 11 men? The equation is $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7 \times 8 \times 9 \times 10 \times 11$, and it equals 39,916,800! It's 40 million to one! It's like they don't *want* to recognize him! But you see, **what we see depends on what we're seeking**. So, what do you want to see? "*Wait a minute ... he asked about dad ... he knows our birthdays ... he got all choked up when he saw Benjamin ... hmm ... uh ... I got nothin!*"

When portions were served to them from Joseph's table [It's a famine, and they're eating like kings! And this ancient gesture of hospitality assures them of their acceptance and protection. They can finally rest at ease and enjoy the banquet ... *almost*. Joseph makes the last, first, by serving the least, the greatest] ... Benjamin's portion was five times as much as anyone else's. [Making him the *favorite*. "Well, that's *odd*"] – Genesis 43:34a NIV

"Try hard now ... we're eating from my table, as *equals* ... so, why *five* portions to Benji? You can do it ... dad had two Hebrew wives, Leah and Rachel, whose lines are *equal* ... *six* of you are sons of *Leah* ... *one* son of *Rachel* has *five plates* ... use your *noggin* ... where's the *sixth plate* for Rachel's line?" But, **they're too busy enjoying his gifts to acknowledge and appreciate the true identity of the giver**. To their credit, they don't get *jealous*. And, they drop their guard, as does Joseph.

So they feasted and drank freely with him. [Toasts. Stories. Jokes. Belly laughs. Horseplay. Arm wrestling. Brothers. Drinking too much.¹ It's like they *don't even know* they're in the *Bible*! It's not a portrait of sin, but of celebration] – Genesis 43:34b NIV



Where's Norman Rockwell?! The sons of Israel/Jacob, feasting and drinking with their savior, the unrecognized, unappreciated brother they betrayed, gladly serving them from his own table! Likewise, **we are recipients of favor we cannot earn, kindness we don't deserve, and provisions we can never repay**; the only question, really, is **to what degree do you recognize and acknowledge the Giver?**

Talk about an about face! Look at Joseph, eating and drinking freely with brothers.

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and 'sinners.'" – Matthew 11:19a NIV

¹ Strong's H7937 – *shaker*: to be or become drunk or drunken, be intoxicated.

Unbeknownst to his brothers, Joseph was celebrating a reunion, 22 years in the making. And unbeknownst to *His* brothers, **Jesus was celebrating a reunion, *thousands of years in the making!*** Twice in this chapter, (Gen 43:3, 5) Joseph's brother, Judah, quotes him as saying, "You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you." The banquet is all about the face ... and the tears.

[When Joseph reveals himself his brothers are speechless] ... because they were *terrified at his presence*. – Genesis 45:3b NIV



The primary meaning of the Hebrew word for *presence*, *paniyim*,² [paw-NEEM] is *face*, conveying both intimate presence and ultimate power. Here's the same word but translated three ways:

[Adam and Eve hid] ... *from the Lord God* ... – Genesis 3:8 NIV

[Adam and Eve hid] ... *from the presence* of the Lord ... – Genesis 3:8 NAS

[Adam and Eve hid] ... *from the face* of Jehovah God ... – Genesis 3:8 YLT

You know why they hid? Had to! Either they hide from God, or God hides from them. God later hides His face from Moses, and says, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." (Ex 33:20) God prefilled Adam and Eve with His unshakable, fireproof Spirit, the absence of which acts as a vacuum. **We were so meant for intimacy with God, so deep inside, we can feel the estrangement.**

[Here's what happened: Adam and Eve took that rebellious bite] Then the eyes [of comprehension (Num 22:31, 2 Kings 6:17)] of both of them were opened, [to the consequences of their sin] and *they realized* [not saw] *they were naked*; [different Hebrew word than unclothed (Gen 2:25)]. This means utterly exposed, emptied, and unprotected.³ *This is the moment that mankind became a mist, a vapor, a shadow⁴* so they *sewed fig leaves together and made coverings* [like God pot-holders] for themselves. [In a vain, ashamed, fruitless attempt to cover their internally, spiritually, corrupted bodies; ever wonder why Jesus cursed the fig tree for only bearing leaves? It came to represent Israel's fruitless attempts to cover their unrighteous] Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden [and, for the first time they can hear the dreadful intensity of its intimacy] in the cool of the day, [yet a blast of fiery heat must've hit 'em, and instinctively terrified 'em, like a rapidly advancing forest fire] and they hid from the [here's that word: from the *face* of the] Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, [from his hiding place] "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid [God has *only* shown them kindness and love. So, why the *fear*?] because I was naked; [But, you weren't, and you're not; you put "fig leaves together and made coverings". Therefore, the naked *he's* talking about, they still are, and those fig-leaf pot-holders aren't good for anything but cursing at!] so I hid." – Genesis 3:7-10 NIV

After that, whenever, wherever the fullness of God's presence manifested, a dense black smoke accompanied it to hide His face.

Mount Sinai was *covered with smoke*, because the Lord descended on it *in fire*. The *smoke billowed up* from it *like smoke from a furnace* ... They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." – Exodus 19:18; 20:18b-19 NIV

² Strong's H6440, *paniyim*: 1) face a) face, faces; b) presence, person; c) face (of seraphim or cherubim); d) face (of animals); e) face, surface (of ground); f) before and behind, toward; g) in front of, before, in the presence/face of

³ Strong's H5903, *'eyrom*

⁴ "You are a mist" (Jas 4:14), "a mere breath ... a passing shadow" (Ps 144:4), "my days vanish like smoke" (Ps 102:3)

We have to grasp the incendiary power of His white hot holiness before we can appreciate the depth of our need for His mercy.

Then Solomon said, “The Lord has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud; I have built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever.” [Oh, but he’s wrong!] – 2 Chronicles 6:1-2 NIV

The Temple was like a temporary quarantine for the face of God, a means to an end, a holy gilded cage, not to protect God from sinners, but sinners from a holy God! It was never the end goal.

[Solomon himself said] “The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” – 2 Chronicles 6:18b NIV



The end goal was always Jesus. Paul says we were given the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Cor 4:4-6) He was shockingly informal. Like the vice president in his boxer shorts. Treating sinners like family in order to reconnect a reborn, Spirit-to-spirit umbilical cord, severed in the Garden.

Then they *spat in His face* and beat Him with their fists; and others *slapped Him*, and said, “Prophesy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?” [He turned His cheek from the Garden to the cross] – Matthew 26:67 NIV

And, in the same way that Joseph washed the black makeup from his face, Jesus cleared the black smoke from the face of God, so that we can come to the great face-to-face banquet of the Lord.

“Who among us can live with the consuming fire? Who among us can live with continual burning?” He who walks righteously and speaks with sincerity ... His refuge will be the *impregnable rock*; His bread [of life] will be given him, His [living] water will be sure. Your eyes will see the King in His beauty ... – Isaiah 33:14-17 NAS

David uses a banquet term to describe the feeling we’ll have when we awake from this lesser reality, as from a dark dream, and find ourselves in the greater reality of God’s presence.

[David writes] ... *in righteousness [through Christ] I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied [fig. filled with food (Strong’s H7646 saba`)] with seeing your likeness. [lit. face (Strong’s H6440 paniym)]* – Psalm 17:15 NIV

This is what it’s *all, always*, been about: the Great Banquet, prepared for those who don’t deserve it, where Jesus not only prepares the meal, and serves the meal, but ... *is* the meal!

The Lord said to Moses, “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight [when Passover lambs were slain for the banquet, (Ex 12:6) and when Jesus cried out, “It is finished” and died (Mark 15:34-37, John 19:30)⁵] you will eat meat, [“This is my body, given for you” (Luke 22:19)] and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’” – Exodus 16:11-12 NIV

And as morning dawns on *Joseph’s* face-to-face reunion banquet, he sends his stuffed brothers home with bags stuffed with grain ... *and* a heart-stopping surprise which is, of course ... *next week*.

⁵ The 9th hour is 3:00pm. Twilight, for the Jews, was between the suns decline and sunset (about 3:00-5:00pm). This gave a two-hour window for Jesus to die, and to be buried, before the Passover Sabbath began at sundown.