

## GENESIS 43:15-25 (PEACE TO YOU, DO NOT BE AFRAID)

**Introduction:** Jeremiah 31:3 says this concerning Israel, "The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you."

There is the loving relationship which is seen throughout Scripture between the Lord and Israel. But there is also the truth that God cannot compromise His very nature, even for those He loves. God is not like a man where He changes or where He overlooks fault.

Every wrong must be judged, and every act of rebellion carries a cost. How God deals with these things is perfectly fair and yet it is always perfectly executed to bring about the most propitious outcome for the objects of His affection.

If we sin against God, our sin must be judged. But God has made it such that our sin can be judged in a perfect Substitute. And so our wrongs *will* either be judged in us or in Him, our Substitute, Jesus - but either way, they will be judged.

In order to bring His people Israel to the point where they realize this, He has had to refine them through the fire of time and exile. These punishments were told to them in advance, so they can't claim that their treatment has been unfair.

And during the time of exile, any Jew, just like any Gentile, has had the opportunity to seek out Christ, come outside the camp, and bear His reproach individually. But national Israel, the collective group of people who bear that name, are treated differently. Yes, each must come to Christ, but collectively they must also do so.

There must be a national awakening before He will return to them to rule among them. In preparation for that time, God is working out His plans to bring them to the point where it will actually happen. And it isn't an "if" but a "when." The Bible is already written and it says it will come about.

Joseph is working out a plan in hopes of reconciliation with his brothers. This plan, and especially the words and terms used in the Bible, give us insights into how God is doing the same thing towards those he has loved with an everlasting love.

He *is* drawing them with chords of lovingkindness, woven into the fabric of human history, to bring them back to Him.

**Text Verse:** I will give you the treasures of darkness  
And hidden riches of secret places,  
That you may know that I, the LORD,  
Who call *you* by your name,  
*Am* the God of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> For Jacob My servant's sake,  
And Israel My elect,  
I have even called you by your name;  
I have named you, though you have not known Me. Isaiah 45:3, 4

God spoke to Cyrus, the King of Persia, through the hand of Isaiah, telling him that He would give to him the treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places. But then He tells *why* He was doing this. It was for the sake of Jacob; for Israel His elect people.

He used a pagan ruler to bless His people and return them to their land. He used him to fund the rebuilding of the temple of God in Jerusalem. And how did this come about? Isaiah wrote his words, naming Cyrus by name almost 200 years before he was born.

King Cyrus was read a copy of the scroll of Isaiah and when he heard that the Lord had called him this way, he responded in stunned awe - authorizing the rebuilding of the temple, exactly as the word spoke. The letter Cyrus wrote to approve the construction is so important that it's recorded at the end of 2 Chronicles and again at the beginning of the book of Ezra.

Astonishingly, God used His word, spoken in advance of the occasion, to bring about the events of the future which His word predicted. And the

same thing is hinted at in today's passage. There is treasure in the sacks of the brothers of Joseph which points to the treasure which is hidden in God's word about Israel's future.

All they need to do is *go to the word* and search it out. When they do, *the word* will effect the changes that are predicted in the word. Yes, this is the immensity of what God has and continues to accomplish through His word. It's all to be found there and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. A Second Trip to Egypt (15-18)**

**<sup>15</sup> So the men took that present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand, and arose and went down to Egypt; and they stood before Joseph.**

It might seem trivial, but the term "the men" *ha'anashim* was never used in the previous chapter. When speaking of the sons of Israel, they are either called just that - "the sons of Israel," or pronouns are used about them like "we" or "they."

In fact, because I was curious, I went back and checked and found that the only other time they have been called "the men" was in Genesis 34 when they found out that their sister Dinah was raped. No other instance of the term is applied to them since then. That was 23 sermons ago - almost 6 months of sermons.

But in this chapter, starting with this verse, they are called "the men." They will be called this seven times before the chapter is out. It is as if the Bible is making the entire account as impersonal as possible concerning them. Every move they make is being evaluated with a cautious eye.

It's as if a time of testing is being foreshadowed before they can again be considered a part of the covenant community. If you can see the connection between them here and the people of Israel now, it explains why the impersonal term is used about them.

What did Paul say about being a true Jew or not? We read his words in Romans 2 -

<sup>28</sup>"For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; <sup>29</sup> but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God." (28, 29)

The brothers have been alienated from Joseph while he has reigned over the land of gentiles. The Jews have been alienated from Jesus as He has built His gentile church. Now, these brothers are being readied for the unveiling of Joseph's true status and Israel is being readied for the same in Jesus.

In Galatians 2, we see that God shows favoritism to no man. He is perfectly fair, perfectly righteous, and uncompromising in His very nature. The brothers are Joseph's kin, but he is not going to accept them until he knows that they have truly had a change in heart.

And the Jewish people, Israel, are God's covenant people. They are the blood kin of Jesus. But until they are right with Him, they will not be accepted by Him. This isn't a cold and uncaring God. If He were, they would have been abandoned eons ago. He is the covenant-keeping, always faithful, and loyal Lord.

But He is also just, righteous, and holy. He cares enough to allow them to choose or reject, and He cares enough to refine them in the process, leading them to repentance and leading them back to Himself.

*One is not a Jew who is one only outwardly  
Nor is circumcision that which is in the flesh of the life they trod  
He is a Jew who is one inwardly, in the heart and the Spirit  
Whose praise is not from men, but from God*

This story of Joseph is merely prefiguring the greater love story of Jesus working towards reconciliation with wayward Israel. Little terms like "the men" show us that there is an impartial evaluation going on.

In due time, they will have to prove their faithfulness as will Israel in the future. They are taking along a present and their brother Benjamin. They're also bringing restoration money and more purchase money and they are heading to Egypt. There, they now stand before Joseph.

**<sup>16</sup> When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take *these* men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for *these* men will dine with me at noon."**

"When Joseph saw Benjamin..." His eyes fixed on his younger brother. They were told to either bring Benjamin or don't come back, but they have brought him. With no comment to them at all, he simply instructs the steward to take "the men" *ha'anashim*, to his personal residence and slaughter an animal.

In Hebrew it says *teboakh tebakh* - "slay a slaying." It is to be a great feast and not just a meal. Everything will be prepared as if for a banquet and the time is set for noon. The Hebrew for noon is much a more descriptive term than in English. The word is *ba'tsahorayim* - at the double lights.

In the heat of the day, at the double lights, when the sun is the strongest, the people would break and go indoors to have a meal.

**<sup>17</sup> Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.**

At one time, this was Joseph's job. What the master of the house ordered, Joseph simply obeyed and performed his duty. Now Joseph is the one in authority, having risen from the lowly position of servant to the highest position in the land... sounds like Jesus.

And for the third time in three verses, the brothers are called *ha'anashim*, "the men." Everything is as impersonal as it can be, not just from Joseph's mouth, but from the perspective of the Bible itself. Instead of "them" or "they" we read "the men."

There is an evaluation being made and we have been allowed to participate in it. The words used are selected for us to see it and pay attention and to learn from it. The words of Zechariah 13 reflect the evaluation that will come upon Israel in the future -

<sup>8</sup>And it shall come to pass in all the land,"  
Says the LORD,  
"That two-thirds in it shall be cut off *and* die,  
But *one*-third shall be left in it:  
<sup>9</sup>I will bring the *one*-third through the fire,  
Will refine them as silver is refined,  
And test them as gold is tested.  
They will call on My name,  
And I will answer them.  
I will say, 'This *is* My people';  
And each one will say, 'The LORD *is* my God.'" (8, 9)

The brothers of Joseph are being tested, though they don't know it yet. And the people of Israel will be tested as well. They will be refined and purified. They will be taken through the fire and those who survive the ordeal will be brought out, forgiven, and spotless.

The curious thing though is that the brothers didn't know who Joseph was and they had nothing to hint to them about it, but Israel has it all clearly laid out in their Scriptures and they still don't see it. None are truly so blind as those who simply refuse to open their eyes and look more closely at what is before them.

This is the astonishing thing about Israel today. If there is any evidence that there is a God and that He is continuing to work in history, it's not the church; rather it's Israel. That's where the evidence lies. The church has divided, fallen away, and failed to live up to the great Name that established it.

On the other hand, Israel has remained throughout eons of persecution, they have had their ancient language reborn on the tongues of the people, they have been planted in God's land once again. And all of this was

predicted in advance, in detail. Even the church has in large part failed to see this.

And Israel has attributed their current state to Jewish greatness, luck, chance, whatever... but rare is the Jew who says, "The Bible showed it would happen and sure enough, the Bible was right." Until they see the God who caused these things for who He is, they will continue to face difficult ordeals that the Bible says will come.

**<sup>18</sup> Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house;**

Adam Clarke relays to us that, "A guilty conscience needs no accuser." The Geneva Bible amends that a little bit and explains just Who their accuser really is. Speaking of the brothers, their commentary says, "So the judgment of God weighed on their consciences."

God gives man a conscience and it will eat away at us slowly, but completely. The exception is the person who has allowed his conscience to become completely seared, but the sons of Israel are not at that point. Instead, they are facing the consequences of bad decisions of the past and their conscience is eating away at them.

They had considered what they did to Joseph the last time they were in Egypt and now they have the added burden that they didn't turn back when they originally found the money in their sacks as they headed home. These things have them frightened because of the importance of the place they have been brought to.

They are shepherds and had always lived as shepherds. To stand in a large home, maybe for the first time in their lives, would be intimidating and unnatural. Their life has been spent in tents and in the open fields, not in plush mansions. It is an overwhelming situation for them which is exacerbated by events...

<sup>18</sup> (con't) **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."**

The wisest course of action when they left the last time, though obviously a difficult one, would have been to return and mention the money immediately. But with Simeon in prison, they would have been scared to even do that. Here in this verse, they use a term we would be unfamiliar with.

We translate it as "he may make a case against us," but what they say is, *l'hithgolel aleinu* - "that he may roll upon us." It's a metaphor which is taken from the sport of wrestling. When one person overturns the other, he will roll on top of him to pin him down. This is essentially what they are saying now.

They're scared that because of the money, he could accuse them and leave the blame on them. In fact, as the ruler, he could turn them into slaves. Job uses this same term when speaking of his afflictions and the attitude of the people toward him -

"As through a wide breach they come: In the midst of the ruin they roll themselves upon me." Job 30:14 (ASV)

The brothers are afraid they will be pounced upon, made into slaves, and even have their donkeys taken from them. As the donkeys are the only way of transporting the grain back to their family, it would be a complete calamity for the all of the covenant people, even those back in Canaan.

*Lord, let not those who hate me roll upon me  
Be my strength in this great battle of life  
In You alone shall I trust and speak confidently  
Only You can carry me through the times of strife*

## II. Resolving the Issue of the Money (19-22)

**<sup>19</sup> When they drew near to the steward of Joseph's house, they talked with him at the door of the house,**

The Bible notes here that they talked with the steward at the door of the house. It's as if they want to convince him they've done nothing wrong, pay what they owe, and get away before Joseph comes. If they can resolve this now, even before entering the house, they could avoid what they fear when lunchtime arrives.

The door of the house is the last spot before they are consigned to their fate and so they linger there, and there they make their case.

**<sup>20</sup> and said, "O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food;**

In the Hebrew's expressive way of explaining something, this verse literally says, *bi adoni yarod yaradnu* - "O sir, coming we came." Repetitions like this are missed in the English translations and we lose some of the beauty of the dialogue.

*Coming we came, O sir, to buy food  
What transpired after that has us worried and in a fret  
It was an event which truly soured our mood  
And our conscience isn't clear of it yet*

"Coming we came to buy food when this side issue arose..."

**<sup>21</sup> 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.**

So here they are getting the chance to explain how they ended up with the money they originally paid. And each time they use the word "sack" it's a different word than what was originally used to describe the sack.

The word here is *amtakhat* and it's only used 15 times in the Bible and all in this story between Genesis 42 and Genesis 44. The word comes from a root *mathakh* which means to spread out. Just as the sack is spread out to reveal the money, the story is spread out to reveal the hearts of the brothers.

Joseph is using the unfolding events to discern the condition of his brothers' hearts, and in the same way, Jesus will use the unfolding events of the tribulation period to discern the spiritual condition of His people Israel. The Hebrew words *within the text itself* give us insights into how God deals with them.

What the brothers tell the steward now doesn't really reveal everything though. They explain that they received all their money back and that they've brought it again to Egypt to make things right, but it doesn't really prove they're honest, just that they're hungry and don't want this to interfere with getting more food.

But next they show they've gone an extra step towards making things right...

**<sup>22</sup> And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks."**

So not only did they bring the original money back, but they brought back more for the food they want to buy. And their explanation is that they have no idea how they got their original money back. They've done everything they can to convince this guy *before* Joseph shows up and holds a trial against them.

All they can do now is hope that their story will be accepted. They've told the truth and the story is so unlikely that they are either very poor liars or they are somehow actually telling the truth about what happened. This is a principle that Jesus will expand on in the New Testament. In Luke 12 He says -

<sup>58</sup> When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. <sup>59</sup> I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.” (58, 59)

### **III. Preparing For the Banquet (23-25)**

**<sup>23</sup> But he said, “Peace *be* with you, do not be afraid.**

The steward of Joseph's house has been taught both the customs of the Hebrews and to fear the true God. This verse shows us both. In response to the explanation given by the brothers, he uses the Hebrew term *shalom lakhem* - "peace to all of you."

*Shalom lekhem - Peace to you my friends - all is well  
God is in control, there is nothing you need to worry about  
The future is safe in His hands, surely you can tell  
There is no need to fret, to worry, or to pout*

The words *shalom lekhem* are given less as a greeting, which they also are, and more of a note of encouragement. In essence, he says, "Don't sweat it. Don't worry about it at all." And then he proceeds to explain why as verse 23 continues...

**<sup>23</sup> (con't) Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money.”**

In order for him to say this, he had to know who their God and the God of their father is. If nothing else, Joseph has schooled him in the matter and explained to his servant about the true God. And it is this God that has accordingly given them treasure.

In this, Joseph is an example to any believer in the true God. We can't convert people to believe the truth, but we can at least tell them what the truth is. Whether it's people we work for, work with, or who work for us.

Or whether it's simply people we see from time to time, it's our responsibility to at least let them know what we believe and why we believe it. Joseph took the time to do this for the steward in his house. With all of his other responsibilities, he took the time to share the good news.

And this steward now tells the brothers some good news, "Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks." The thing is, that when they leave again with more grain, the money will again be put in their sacks along with something else.

The silver, or "treasure" as he calls it, actually pictures something else. The word is *matmon* and is described as a word which "portrays the preciousness of an item which is greatly desired." It comes from a root word which has the "specific nuance of hiding by burial." (HAW Theological Wordbook)

If the grain is picturing the word of God as we clearly saw it is in a previous sermon, then the silver is picturing that which is hidden in the word. Remember, the brothers are picturing Israel. They have the word, but they've missed what the word points to.

The treasure they have is, as the steward says, from your God and the God of your father. He has given them this treasure in His word and the treasure is in the *amtakhat*, that unusual word for "sack." The treasure is discovered when the word is "spread out."

It is all about Jesus, and Israel has been given this treasure. It is something they cannot buy, but which is offered to them freely. The connection here shouldn't be missed. Jesus is there, everywhere in it, if they would simply look.

Since we started these Genesis sermons, we have uncovered hundreds if not thousands of hidden references to Christ; treasure in our sacks. And Israel simply needs to look, understand, and accept. God is preparing them for their meeting with the Lord. It's all seen in these unusual words that keep popping up in the story.

And so the steward finishes his explanation with the words, *kaspekhem ba elai*, "your money comes to me." This isn't a lie, he did get the money and he simply refrains from telling them that after it was received it was also returned to their sacks.

**<sup>23</sup> (con't) Then he brought Simeon out to them.**

Finally, in this verse as a tangible evidence that everything will be ok, Simeon is returned to the brothers. This had to be the biggest relief of all because if the intention was to arrest them, they would have left him in prison. But instead, he is brought out to join them.

Simeon means "He who hears." It is almost time for the brothers to hear the truth of the situation and it is almost time for Israel to hear the truth of what they have missed for so long.

**<sup>24</sup> 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.**

With the matter of the money and their brother Simeon resolved, the steward brings them into the house. But once again, the Bible calls them *ha'anashim*, "the men." The Bible is continuing to make an impersonal evaluation of them as it seeks to reveal their heart and motivations.

But, what they had only a moment ago feared and tried to stave off is now a welcome gesture as they stop to wash their feet while the steward fed their donkeys. Water is brought to them to prepare them for a relaxing and enjoyable meal in Joseph's house.

The washing of their feet is equivalent to us taking someone's hat and coat and telling them to relax. The roads were dirty and the traveling was tiring and so to have water to wash up was to make a guest welcome and comfortable for their visit.

To neglect this would be considered a breach of etiquette and is something that's actually seen in the Gospel of Luke. For a short diversion to read

some of the New Testament, let's take a moment to look at that memorable account -

<sup>36</sup> Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. <sup>37</sup> And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, <sup>38</sup> and stood at His feet behind *Him* weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped *them* with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed *them* with the fragrant oil. <sup>39</sup> Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw *this*, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman *this is* who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." <sup>40</sup> And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." <sup>41</sup> "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" <sup>43</sup> Simon answered and said, "I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." <sup>44</sup> Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. <sup>45</sup> You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. <sup>46</sup> You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. <sup>47</sup> Therefore I say to you, her sins, which *are* many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little." <sup>48</sup> Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Luke 7:36-48

**<sup>25</sup> Then they made the present ready for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there.**

The present that their father had put together before they left is brought out and made ready for the arrival of Joseph. This included balm, honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds. These were the best of the fruits of the land and would be a worthy gift even to the king.

And so they prepare for noon when they will dine with the great ruler of the land of Egypt. The waiting must have made them anxious as they tried to anticipate what would transpire in the hours ahead.

This is where the passage ends today. Next week, we'll finish chapter 43 and we will come closer to the brother's date with the destiny which Joseph is planning for them. They still have some interesting trials to go through before he is revealed to them, but the same is true with Israel.

Individually, Jews are coming to Christ daily, but as a people, it is just a small portion who have had their eyes opened. There is a future meeting coming between them when they will have their collective eyes opened to the truth. Until then, we need to continue to pray for Israel.

But Christ isn't just the Lord of a nation, He is the Lord of individuals. No country has title to Him and no denomination has a claim on Him. He is the Lord who needs to be approached individually. And it must be with empty hands and open hearts.

We cannot buy our way into heaven, nor can we earn our eternal home through good deeds. The only way to be reconciled to God is through faith in the work of Jesus.

**Closing Verse:** Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, <sup>18</sup> while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

**Next Week:** Genesis 43:26-34 (Rejoicing in the Presence of the Ruler)  
(109th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

## **Peace To You, Do Not Be Afraid**

So the men took that present and Benjamin  
And they took double money in their hand  
And arose and went down to Egypt  
And they stood before Joseph just as planned

When Joseph saw Benjamin with them  
To the steward of his house he said  
Take these men to my home  
And slaughter an animal and make ready our daily bread

For these men will dine with me at noon  
Prepare things now, the time is coming soon

The man did as Joseph ordered then  
And into Joseph's house he brought the men

Now the men were more than a bit distraught  
Because into Joseph's house they were brought

And they said, "It is because of the money we have this fuss  
Which was returned in our sacks the first time  
That we are brought in so that he may make a case against us  
To seize and take us as slaves with our donkeys for this perceived crime

When near to the steward of Joseph's house they drew  
They talked with him at the door of the house as their fear grew

And said, "O sir, we indeed came down  
The first time to buy food from here  
That it happened, when we came to the encampment  
That we opened our sacks, and behold, what did appear

And there, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack  
Our money in full weight  
So in our hand we have brought it back

And we have brought down other money  
In our hands to buy food, so we have no lacks  
And to us the matter wasn't funny  
We do not know who put our money in our sacks

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 have not gone unpaid  
I had your money, please about this matter don't bother

Then he brought out to them Sime-on  
And alleviated their worries, now there was none

So into Joseph's house he brought the men  
And gave them water as a friendly deed  
And they washed their feet there and then  
And he also 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 the time was approaching soon

The Bible continues to show in each story  
The wonderful details of redemption and grace  
Every word points to the majestic glory  
Of God's plan to restore us to the favor of His face

Lord, help each of us to want to know you more every day  
And help us to walk in the noble and righteous way

May we not depart from seeking out the treasures of Your word  
And pursuing You through fellowship and prayer  
By these things may we bring glory to our Lord  
Until we are brought to You in the heavenly palace over there

Hallelujah and Amen...