

August 6, 2017 - Gen. 42:1–17 - Joseph's Brothers Go Down to Egypt

**This is the second half of the previous week's reading.
(Psalm 34 and Isaiah 11:2-10 + 16 apply to this week also).**

Genesis 42:1 - "Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?"

This is a strange phrase.

Rashi translates it as, "Why do you show yourselves," i.e. "as if you were satisfied and satiated." It can be used as a phrase to imply delay or being uncertain of what to do, while they just stand around and look at each other.

Genesis 42:2 - "And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die."

"Get you down," rather than simply "go". Why?

"Yarad" means "descend" and is used both of "Let them go down alive into Hades" (Psalm 55:16) and "Those who go down to the grave" (Proverbs 1:12). Also, Rashi notes, "Yarad" has the numerical value of 210, which points to the years Israel served as slaves in Egypt. (Genesis Rabbah 91:2, Tan. Mikeitz 8)

Going down to Egypt, a type of the world system, usually means depending on your own strength, the flesh, a descent into spiritual death.

Genesis 26:2-3 - "And the LORD appeared unto him (Isaac), and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father."

Isaiah 30:1-3 - "Woe to the rebellious children," declares the LORD, "Who execute a plan, but not Mine, And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit, In order to add sin to sin; Who proceed down to Egypt Without consulting Me, To take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh And to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt! "Therefore the safety of Pharaoh will be your shame And the shelter in the shadow of Egypt, your humiliation.

Isaiah 31:1 - "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!"

In this instance, going down to Egypt brought sorrow and bondage eventually, but it contributed to the fulfillment of the prophecy shown to Abraham:

Genesis 15:13-14 - "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land

that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions."

Genesis 42:4 - "But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him."

Of Jacob's two sons by Rachel, Benjamin was the only one remaining, Jacob assumed. Again he displayed a preference for her children over the others.

Genesis 42:8-9 - "And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come."

- "For you have entered by way of the ten gates of the city. Why did you not enter [together] through one gate?" - [from Gen. Rabbah 91:7; Tan. Buber, Mikeitz 17] The midrash says Jacob instructed his sons to enter the city by different gates, so that no objection should be made to the amount of their purchases.

Why did Joseph accuse them and cook up this elaborate ruse?

He "remembered his dream." (See **Genesis 37**)

Genesis 37:7 - "For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf."

And the other dream:

Genesis 37:9 - "And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me."

His brothers had just "bowed down themselves before him" - but in the dream, it was all his brethren and his father and mother who bowed. So the plan was to arrange for them all to come, and thus fulfill the dream as he had been shown. (Rachel presumably would be included through the presence of Benjamin). God had marked out a path for Joseph in the dream, and he didn't feel free to vary from it. Once they had all gathered to him, Joseph revealed his identity.

A Test

Genesis 42:15 - "Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither."

Joseph also needed to see if they had changed and repented. Genuine repentance could only be shown if when confronted with the identical situation, one does not succumb to temptation. Later Judah (**Genesis 44:33**) volunteers himself as hostage to ensure Benjamin would be returned. And, in the course of their mission to bring back Benjamin, they confront their sin toward Joseph and express remorse.

Genesis 42:16 - "Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies."

Originally, only one of them was supposed to return to Jacob while all the others would remain in prison.

Genesis 42:17 - "And he put them all together into ward three days."

They were now in the same pit where Joseph had spent years. "Three days" foresees Jesus' time spent in the grave.