

# The Road to Reconciliation

GENESIS 42-45

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## Opening Thoughts

- \* As we enter into Gen 42-45, Joseph is poised to fulfill the content of his two dreams ...
  - ◆ Having interpreted “others” he is now about to “live out” his!
- \* Now remember, God is maneuvering the family to sequester them in Egypt and protect them from entanglements as they grow, but ...
  - ◆ He can't do that until he has unified them as a family ...
- \* Thus the emphasis of Gen 42-45 is what?
  - ◆ [RECONCILIATION](#)

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## Opening Thoughts

- \* The antagonists in the reconciliation are the ten brothers who have sinned against ...
- \* The two protagonists — namely, Joseph and Jacob
- \* Remembering the parallels with Christ, Joseph is most like Christ in these chapters ...
  - ◆ Namely — Joseph will expose his brothers sin **so that** he can display his grace!
  - ◆ Which is **precisely** what Christ does ... He exposes and convicts us of sin **so that** He can display His lavish grace in salvation

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## Opening Thoughts

- \* So — while the overriding theme of these chapters is straightforward ...
  - ◆ Namely, God's sovereign actions to reconcile the family
- \* The details of the narrative — especially in Gen 42 dumbfounded me for some time!!

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# The Flow of Gen 42

- \* Verses 1-5 “Frame Narrative”
- \* Verses 6-17 take us “Back to the Future”
- \* In vv. 18-25 the “Embers of Reconciliation are Fanned”
- \* Followed by the “Embers of Recognition Dawning” in vv. 26-28
- \* Verses 29-34 record “The Journey Recounted,” and
- \* Verses 35-38 end with “The Original Eeyore”

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# The Narrative “Framed”

- \* V. 1 doesn't fully capture the humor or reprimand conveyed by the Hebrew verb form ...
  - ◆ Jacob chastises the brothers for their lack of initiative with the obvious solution “right before their eyes”
- \* Now, why do you think the brother may have been procrastinating over the obvious?
  - ◆ Because — to the best of their knowledge — Egypt is where Joseph is!
  - ◆ What if they were to encounter Joseph on their journey ?????

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## The Narrative “Framed”

- \* I think this opening verse gives us a clue to what will follow, **which is?** ...
  - ◆ To awaken the brother's consciences!!
- \* Which provides us with a good implication ...
  - ◆ A guilty conscience may be suppressed, or become dormant, but it never goes away until it is dealt with!!
- \* So, the brothers inaction is less confusion as to what to do and more a reflection of Egypt being the LAST place in the known world the brothers would want to go!

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## The Narrative “Framed”

- \* Yet this is what their father “commands” them to do — and off they go to Egypt ... **Who goes?**
  - ◆ All but Benjamin
- \* **Why does Benjamin remain?**
  - ◆ Could be favoritism rearing its head again — and this certainly plays into the reason, but ...
  - ◆ I think it is more likely that Jacob knows and has lived with the character of his 10 sons, and ... Naturally fears for Benjamin's safety
- \* Having lost Joseph he will not risk Rachel's only surviving son

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# Back to the Future

\* Now these verses gave me all kinds of consternation!!

\* Why have I labelled these verses “Back to the Future?”

- ◆ Because it is entirely possible that Joseph may be “reenacting” the events of Gen 37:18ff\*\*

\* Think about it for a moment ...

- ◆ Joseph had once before come and given a bad report

- ◆ I can envision the brothers unspoken thoughts as he arrives again in Gen 37:18, namely ...

\*\*I'm indebted to JMBoice for this idea

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# Back to the Future

- ◆ “Here comes that dreamer again” (spoken) — [to spy on us](#) (unspoken)

\* Continuing the thought line, and parallel ...

- ◆ Had this accusation been made, Joseph would have surely protested his innocence ...

- ◆ Just as the brothers do here, and ...

- ◆ Upon the brothers objection to Joseph’s “protests,” he would surely have tried to defend his innocence ...

- ◆ Just as the brothers do also

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## Back to the Future

- \* And — Joseph throwing them into prison is reminiscent of his being thrown into the pit!!
- \* Now, I cannot be dogmatic about this, but there is one convincing clue in v. 21-22 ... **What is it?**
  - ◆ The brothers conclusion w/r/t the reason for their imprisonment, namely...
  - ◆ Their sin against Joseph!!

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## Back to the Future

- \* So, whether you buy **my sanctified speculation**, or not, Joseph is clearly purposeful in v. 6-17
- \* **And that purpose is ...?**
  - ◆ Probe the condition of his brother's hearts, and ...
  - ◆ A bigger idea I'll develop — NEXT WEEK
- \* Notice how deliberately Joseph goes about it ...
  - ◆ FIRST, in v. 6-7 we get a summary overview of this section — with the details following in v. 8-17

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# Back to the Future

- \* Joseph is reintroduced in v. 6 — **What is notable about the reintroduction?**
  - ◆ It demonstrates aspects of Joseph's dreams being fulfilled!
  - ◆ Let's refresh our memories [READ Gen 37:5-11]
- \* **So, what three things about Joseph's dreams are highlighted in v. 6?**
  - ◆ Joseph had become a supreme **ruler** — Picks up on the star/moons motif of dream #2

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# Back to the Future

- ◆ Joseph had become a **food provisioner** — Picks up on agricultural provision motif of dream #1
- ◆ Joseph's brothers had become **subservient** to him — albeit unknowingly at this point ... Picks up on the reigning motif of both dreams!
- \* Verse 7 completes the introduction by telling us how Joseph is going to deal with his brothers
- \* **What is his plan?**

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# Back to the Future

- ◆ He is going to conceal himself AND deal “assertively” with them
- \* Why do you think he chooses to handle the “reunion” this way?
  - ◆ Well — Hold on, we will get the answer in v. 9, but we have to finish up verses 7 & 8 first
- \* What does Joseph’s speaking roughly produce in the brothers (note their answer in v. 7)?
  - ◆ It immediately puts them on the defensive

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# Back to the Future

- \* How do we see that in their answer?
  - ◆ He only asked where they were from, not why they were there ... this he already knows!
  - ◆ However, this gives Joseph an opening for his accusation
- \* Now in v. 8, Joseph’s “recognition” is confirmed and the brother’s “lack thereof” is stated
- \* Why is there recognition on the one hand and lack thereof on the other?

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## Back to the Future

- ◆ Joseph's recognition is likely based on:
  - Their appearance — The men are Hebrew's, and ...
  - Likely quickly did the math on how many
- ◆ The brothers lack of recognition is likely due to:
  - Joseph's NON-HEBREW appearance;
  - His "exalted" position (beyond comprehension); and
  - The 20+ year gap in time (13 years since sold plus 7 years of plenty ... and now the famine)

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## Back to the Future

- \* So — now we get the reason behind Joseph's approach to his brothers in v. 9a — **What is it?**
  - ◆ Because Joseph discerns the BIGGER PICTURE ... **Which is?**
    - GOD'S SOVEREIGN HAND IN FULFILLING HIS DREAMS!!
- \* **What, then, is the "bigger" purpose in Joseph's approach to his brothers in vv. 9b-17?**
  - ◆ To foster the same **RECOGNITION** in them, and **AWAKEN THEIR CONSCIENCES!**
  - ◆ And maybe secondarily to get news of his brother and father

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# Back to the Future

\* Why does Joseph want to bring recognition to his brothers?

- ◆ Because recognizing — and owning — their sin is the first step on the road to reconciliation
- ◆ Do you remember all of our teaching on forgiveness???

\* There are two parts — What are they?

- ◆ The unconditional releasing of the debt by the one sinned against ...
  - Which Joseph will demonstrate in the ongoing narrative, and ...

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# Back to the Future

- ◆ The pursuit of reconciliation with sinning party(ies) ...
  - Which is what Joseph initiates in vv. 9b-13

\* What means does Joseph employ to bring recognition to his brothers?

- ◆ Confrontation — vv. 9b-13
- ◆ Solitude — vv. 14-17

\* He starts with verbal confrontation in vv. 9b-13 — “You are spies”

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# Back to the Future

- \* Which the brothers vigorously defend first with logic
- \* What is the logic behind their first defense in v. 11a?
  - ◆ They try to dismiss the accusation as improbable
    - We are all sons of one man — Suggesting, it is not credible that a father would risk his entire family on a spy mission, and ...
    - Spies don't travel in packs!!
- \* What part of the brothers continued defense in v. 11 might give Joseph concern as to their heart condition?
  - ◆ "We are honest men" — they still don't recognize their depravity

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# Back to the Future

- \* Their assertion of "honesty" is likely what causes Joseph to press his charge in v. 12 ...
- \* Upon which the brothers switch from logic to "full disclosure" ... which today might be stated "can I be totally honest with you"
- \* What does Joseph learn in their reply?
  - ◆ The full composition and disposition of the family
  - ◆ They are 12 sons of one man ...
    - One has remained with his father in Canaan (so Benjamin and Jacob are alive), and ...
    - "The one, he is not" — literally translated

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# Back to the Future

- \* What is significant about “one is no more?”
  - ◆ The “lie” had become the “truth” to them, reminding us ...
  - 🕒 This is the way, and danger, with a longstanding lie — The longer it lingers, the more it becomes truth in our minds!
- \* Well — the brothers are making progress, but ...  
What little detail do they leave out?
  - ◆ Why “the one is no more!”
- \* So what should we conclude at this point?

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# Back to the Future

- ◆ That verbal confrontation has taken them part of the way to recognition, but not all the way ...
- \* This leads Joseph to step 2 in w. 14-17 — Which is?
  - ◆ To lock them up in confinement — which surely ought to get them thinking!
- \* They’ve just acknowledged “one is no more” — so Joseph and his fate must be on their minds
- \* So — maybe Joseph reasons that a little “quiet time” will quicken their consciences

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# Back to the Future

- \* Which really is quite brilliant ... and yields some good implications for us
- \* Joseph is not being “mean-spirited” — but rather ...
  - 👉 He is teaching us that we need to get alone and quiet with our sin for it to sear our consciences
  - 👉 Simply put — the mind does not naturally reflect in the midst of busyness!
- \* So Joseph locks them up for 3-days, but he’s not done yet ...

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# Embers of Reconciliation

- \* Joseph has used confrontation and solitude to bring recognition to his brothers in vv. 8-17
- \* What does he resort to in vv. 18-25?
  - ◆ A consequent trial, reminding us ...
  - 👉 That God will do whatever it takes to get our attention about persistent sin
- \* How does Joseph know that his demand in vv. 18-25 will result in a trial?
  - ◆ First because he knows they will need more food — so they will have to “come clean” with their father

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## Embers of Reconciliation

- ◆ And second, because he knows how stressful it will be for them to convince Jacob to send Benjamin
- \* After 3-days in the “clink,” Joseph brings them out and details a new plan
- \* What reason does he give for the new plan?
  - ◆ He fears God — which should have been thought provoking
  - ◆ The brothers should not have missed the implication because the Hebrew is very specific
  - ◆ It actually says ... “I fear THE God”

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## Embers of Reconciliation

- ◆ Not only that, but the word order is abnormal — indicating emphasis ... “THE God I fear”
- \* What else is Joseph doing by saying “I fear God?”
  - ◆ He is “swearing by God” that he will honor the new deal
- \* Despite this disclosure, nothing in the text indicates a reaction from the brothers ...
  - ◆ Other than their compliance at the end of v. 20
- \* The new plan will only hold one brother in custody ...

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## Embers of Reconciliation

- \* By which news, the brothers were surely heartened
- \* But then the shoe drops in v. 20 ...
- \* Joseph reconfirms and stresses the requirement to return with their brother to prove their innocence!
- \* “And they did so” at the end of v. 20 simply means they agreed to the deal
- \* Now vv. 21-22 give rise to my title for this section ...  
*Why so?*

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## Embers of Reconciliation

- ◆ For the VERY first time they openly acknowledge and confront their guilt
- \* *Why is this important?*
  - ◆ Because it moves them one step closer to full reconciliation ...
  - ◆ But they are still far from the finish line — *Why so?*
    - Because they are not yet confessing it to the one(s) who matter — Joseph, Jacob, and God
    - Nevertheless it is an important and necessary step

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## Embers of Reconciliation

- \* What else is important in owning their sin?
  - ◆ They recognize that lingering unresolved sin produces consequences!
  - ◆ Here they call it their present “distress”
- \* This recognition is important, but where do they “collectively” come up short in v. 21?
  - ◆ They “collectively” fail to recognize that unconfessed sin will ultimately lead to judgment

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## Embers of Reconciliation

- \* But this truth does not escape Reuben
- \* What does he link their sin with in v. 22?
  - ◆ A reckoning — and avenging or punishment for sin
  - ◆ The idea is that something is required for Joseph's blood — Literally in the Hebrew ...
    - “And now his blood, behold (!) a reckoning
- \* Reuben was the voice of reason then, and is the voice of recognition now!

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## Embers of Reconciliation

- \* Well, this all takes place in Joseph's hearing ...
- \* And it brought him to tears
- \* What does this say about Joseph?
  - ◆ His compassion — Joseph wept at his brothers distress, whereas they ate and rejoiced at his!!!
  - ◆ But also his patience — How hard it is to wait on God's timing!!
- \* Why does Joseph select Simeon for custody?
  - ◆ Because of what he learned in v. 22

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## Embers of Reconciliation

- ◆ As the firstborn — Reuben would have been the natural choice, but ...
- ◆ Learning that Reuben was against the brothers scheme ...
- ◆ Joseph moved on to the next oldest — Simeon
- \* Now, what is going on in v. 25?
  - \* There is a range of interpretations
    - ◆ Some say he is setting the brothers up to further accuse them as thieves

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## Embers of Reconciliation

- ◆ Others posit it to be another test — Will they return when they discover the money?
- ◆ And others say it reflects Joseph's [grace](#) driven by [compassion](#) for his brothers
- \* Which option do you like and why?
  - ◆ I like door number 3 ... Because it is consistent with Joseph's character;
  - ◆ Because the steward will reassure them in Gen 43:20-23; AND
  - ◆ Because Joseph did not pursue them — as he will in Gen 44:4

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## Embers of Reconciliation

- \* Joseph simply won't take money to care for his family ...
- \* And perhaps is trying to give them clues as to his identity ...
- \* Yet despite Joseph's grace, God, in His sovereignty, chooses to use it to accomplish His greater purpose ...
- \* Which leads us to v. 26-28

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## Embers of Recognition

\* What is of central importance in these three verses?

- ◆ The brothers FINALLY recognize God and His hand in their present distress
- ◆ This is the first time — in some time — that the brothers mention God ...
- ◆ Further highlighting how different they are from Joseph who constantly spoke of and exalted God

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## Embers of Recognition

\* Why is this important?

- ◆ Because they recognize that God will not allow their sinful actions to go unpunished, reminding us ...
  - ⚡ God is not forgetful of their sin — Like ours He has seen it, He remembers it, and He will judge it!!!
- ◆ Up to this point they have lived life as “functional pagans” ... despite the likelihood God’s name was often spoken
- ◆ They very likely “knew of” God, but their lives did not indicate that they “knew” God

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## Embers of Recognition

- \* Ironically, what Joseph meant for good, God chose to use for “conviction”
- \* The brothers are unaware of how the money “got there,” but they are not ignorant of its [providential significance!](#)
- \* YET — they are still not where they need to be as the next section will indicate ...

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## The Journey Recounted

- \* The brothers demonstrate an honesty in this section that is commendable — but for two things ... [What are they?](#)
  - ◆ They don't admit their hand in “selling” Joseph despite their confession (vv. 21-22) and recognition (v. 28), and ...
  - ◆ They add to Joseph's words — NOTE: “... [and you may trade in the land](#)” ... perhaps trying to put a positive “spin” on a bad situation, or ...
  - ◆ Maybe unintentionally “prophetic!”

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## The Original Eeyore

- \* Opening all their sacks, they now discover that “ALL” their money has been returned
- \* What is right and what is wrong with Jacob's response to this revelation?
  - ◆ **Right:** He is correctly fearful this “could” spell trouble, though we know otherwise (i.e. it reflects Joseph's grace)
  - ◆ **Wrong:** He has forgotten God's promises and prior faithfulness

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## The Original Eeyore

- \* Jacob sees nothing but doom and falls into Eeyore Mode — “Woe is me!”
- \* Yet in reality — as Rom 8:28 tells us — “God causes all things to work together for good”
- \* What do you make of Reuben's offer?
  - ◆ Probably sincere — but pitiful ...
  - ◆ How would killing two innocent children console Jacob's anticipated loss — which sentiment is evident in his reply

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# Closing Thoughts

- \* Despite all his trials, Joseph never resorts to vengeance ...
  - ◆ Not toward Potiphar's wife;
  - ◆ Not toward the cupbearer;
  - ◆ And now — Not toward his brothers
- \* Joseph is the “poster-child” of Rom 12:14-21 [READ]
- \* Don't suppose that you can hide your sin — for it “will find you out” ... Num 32:23

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