

C.L. No. 307 Jul/Aug/Sep 2024

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Once again we are sorry to say Brother Julian Shipley has had more hospital tests to see what can be done to improved his health. So we have dipped into he past and selected an Editorial by our late Brother Ernest Brady

Editorial

Another interesting editorial written by Brother Ernest Brady in June 1954. In it he is responding to a Christadelphian who had been studying our teaching concerning the Sacrifice of Christ, and he quotes Jesus' question to the scribes: "Whether is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and take up thy bed, and walk." (Mark 3:9) The Christadelphian continues, "I have always previously thought that this passage meant that sickness and disease was the direct result of sin at the beginning. What do you think?" Ernest Brady wrote in response, "I thought these words of Jesus were intended, like many others of His questions, both to reveal and conceal, to make things plain to those who were willing to see, and to make them difficult for those who were wilfully blind. The power of healing which Jesus used was not an end in itself, otherwise He would have made it His main purpose to find and heal the sick

wherever they were. It was a sign, evidence of His authority and origin, and He used it for that purpose. His power to heal was proof of His authority to forgive sins. Thus, when He was faced by hostile scribes it was immaterial whether He said, "Thy sins be forgiven," or "Arise and walk." The words and the result of the one were no more difficult than of the other, but the effect of the healing was evident, whereas no one can see when a man's sins are forgiven. On another occasion they asked Jesus, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" They also thought that sin was always the cause of disease. Jesus replied, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

I think that the chapter from which this passage comes (John 9) contains some of the very few instances in Scripture where there is an element of humour, the encounter between the man whose sight had been restored and the Pharisees. They knew that Jesus had healed the man, but they dare not face the meaning of it. They tried to find a loophole by questioning his parents, but they were wary, "He is of age, ask him." Then they tried to overawe the man himself, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." (Does this attitude of the Pharisees remind you of anyone?). But the young man had a stout heart and was not to be terrified by their pomposity, and used his commonsense. "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." After some further questioning and illogical reasoning, they got sick of the whole thing and concluded, "As for this fellow we know not from whence he is." But the young man had not yet finished; another dash of cold commonsense. "Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes"! Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings... With these and a few other biting cracks, which make as entertaining a bit of reading as there can be anywhere in literature, he showed that his mental eyes were as wide open as his literal eyes, and utterly exposed the foolish self-importance and arrogance of the Pharisees. Their last word put the finishing touch to their own defeat; "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" And they cast him out.

Their descendants are with us today. In spite of what Jesus says they still tell us that we are altogether born in sins. And when they cannot stand up to logical reasoning and the evidence of common-sense, they follow the example of the Pharisees, and cast us out.

Here is one of the gems of that chapter which is worth recalling again; “now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him he heareth.”

This is good enough proof for the poor blind man that Jesus was not a sinner, and I vote, Brothers and Sisters that it is good enough for us.

With sincere and affectionate Greetings,
Your Brother, Ernest Brady.

REBEKAH

This grand-daughter of Abraham’s brother Nahor, and daughter of his nephew Bethuel, was better as a wife for Isaac than the heathen women of Canaan. A generation below Isaac, yet suited for his age, is thus an incidental proof of the truth of the record.

When we first read of Rebekah, she came to the well and found Abraham’s servant waiting for Divine guidance regarding his next move. Rebekah, a beautiful girl, appeared, showed herself courteous, answering his request with “Drink, my lord.” Alert, she hastened, let down her pitcher and gave him drink. Then, with a sympathetic insight into the needs of another and a readiness to do all in her power to help she said “t will draw for thy camels also.”

She gave a straightforward answer to his question “Who art thou?” and readily informed him that provision for his comfort could be found in her father’s home. She ran home to tell her mother with the quick eager movements which had been seen as she ‘hasted’ to draw water.

The servant was welcomed, and so was the information he could give concerning Abraham. The family, of course, knew something of Nahor's brother, and some news travelled between the families occasionally.

Rebekah and her mother would be delighted with the gifts of Jewellery, but the whole events of that remarkable day drew from Laban and Bethuel the candid declaration "The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good."

Rebekah decided with her usual promptness "I will go." We wonder how much she knew of her great-uncle and the son of his old age - evidently enough to make her willing to leave home and family immediately. Did she think of it as a call from God, as Abraham had done long before? She was ready to go at once, no hesitation, no lengthy preparation; accompanied by her nurse she left for ever the home which had sheltered her for so long - never to return to it, as far as we know, or to see any of its inmates again.

Arriving at the journey's end the travellers saw Isaac wandering in the field, apparently lost in thought. Rebekah's quick insight showed itself in her courtesy; covering herself with a veil she slid off her camel and met face to face the man with whom the remainder of her life would be spent.

We know very little of Isaac personally; he seems to have been quiet, thoughtful and peace-loving, all of which might be expected in view of his parentage and up-bringing. All his life Sarah had cared for him, and had guided his boyish thoughts into ideals worthy of his special position. Sarah was no longer there, and there is something pathetic about the lonely figure wandering in the field waiting to meet the woman whom the Lord was sending to share his life.

Isaac took her into Sarah's tent, thus indicating to all in the camp the social position of the new-comer, and claiming for her the loyal service which was her right. One short sentence completes the picture - "Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

We read nothing more of these two until twin sons came into the home bringing with them that parental favouritism which was to cause so much sorrow. Isaac loved Esau; Rebekah loved Jacob.

These lads were very different; the hunter and the home-lover. Rebekah had been told “the elder shall serve the younger,” her loving devotion was lavished on Jacob and her greatest ambitions were for his welfare. It thus became a matter of grave concern to her when Isaac asked for a meal preparatory to giving him the blessing. She was most anxious that her younger son should have this blessing, and without waiting to see how divine promise would be fulfilled, mother and son discussed a bold plan of deceit. Jacob demurred, mentioned the difficulties, but Rebekah was ready to meet them all, and not only so, but to take full responsibility for the deception. Her orders were emphatic, “Upon me be thy curse, my son, only obey my voice and go.” The fact that Esau had sold his birthright does not seem to have any effect on the events of this particular day.

We know the success of the deceit, and how Jacob’s life was threatened by his angry brother. Resourceful Rebekah was faced with another difficult task. Jacob must be protected by some means; the safest plan would be to send him away – but suppose Isaac made inconvenient inquiries! His co-operation must be obtained, but how? A wife; Rebekah had her clue, and tactfully remarked to Isaac that the women of neighbouring tribes were not suitable. Isaac agreed, and Jacob left for a visit to his mother’s family.

Rebekah’s last recorded words to her son are just such as might be expected. “Now therefore my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother’s fury turn away - then I will send and fetch thee from thence.” This promise to send for Jacob either could not be fulfilled, or was frustrated in Padan-Aram; for Jacob and his mother never saw one another afterwards. Rebekah’s trust in God was not equal to patient waiting to see how the divine promise would be fulfilled; her impatience led to deceit, for which she was severely punished by separation from her favourite son.

Jacob, who aided in the deceit, also suffered severely, being exiled from home and family for twenty years; and the boy who had deceived his father was himself cheated by his uncle Laban. “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

Jacob was forgiven and allowed to prosper, but many of his troubles might have been avoided if he had kept nearer to the ideals of Abraham and Isaac.

Rebekah was laid to rest in the cave of Machpelah, with Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac. Other members of the family were taken there afterwards, and there they sleep waiting till the Lord shall call them to their reward.

We study their characters and profit by their example; for certainly these things were written for our learning. We admire Sarah’s trust in God, her loyalty to her husband and her constant devotion to duty. Her life had its difficulties but she met them bravely, and her name is among those of whom the writer to the Hebrews states, “God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.” Hebrews 11:16. Rebekah, too, had sterling qualities which we should do well to imitate, while avoiding any deception in our relations with others.

May the Lord grant that we, in spite of our failures, may remain true to Him; and being saved by His grace, be at last permitted to share the fulfilment of the promises made to the worthies of old.

Sister Mona Dawes.

Accounted Worthy

It is important to Christ’s followers that they be accounted worthy of a place in the Kingdom of God which He will set up at His return but sadly many will come to Him in that day saying, “Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: 26. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. 27. But he shall say, I

tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity” (Luke 13:25 to 27). Oh what a shock it will be to those who preach salvation as the reward for good works!

The explanation is that those who expect to be received by Christ for their own works have not understood what God has required of them. They have based their hope on their achievements rather than on what Christ has already accomplished for believers. But Paul in writing in 1 Corinthians 1:26, tells us - “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27. but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28. and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29. that no flesh should glory in his presence. 30. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31. that, according as it is written, He that glorifieth, let him glory in the Lord.” And in Ephesians 2:8, Paul tells us, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9. not of works, lest any man should boast. 10. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Because of their failure to see these important truths Christ will not open to them but He will turn them away, He saying “I never knew you”. Christ also said concerning the straight and narrow way, “few there be that find it.” When these truths are established in our minds it becomes clear none can work out their own salvation alone but it is vital that those coming to Christ must acknowledge that it is God that works in His children “both to will and to do His good pleasure”. With this important outlook it is both the duty and the privilege to ask God to work in us. By God so doing we shall become aware of the great value there is in taking Christ’s advice - to “ask to be accounted worthy”. Luke 21:36

Having sought we should have become aware of the importance of Christ’s exhortation to always pray that you may be accounted

worthy to escape all those things that are coming on the earth and to stand before the Son of Man. (Luk21:16)

Philippians 2:12. “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Brother O E. H. Gregory

Sacrifice in Principle & Ransom.

Two extracts from

The Sacrificial Principle In Redemption

1. Sacrifice in Principle

When a Hebrew brought an unblemished lamb as a sin-offering and its life was ended by the shedding of its blood, it was a practical demonstration of his recognition that in strict justice he himself deserved to die, because he had transgressed some point of the Law. But when he made the appropriate sacrifice and confessed his guilt, he was saved from the penalty he had incurred (Numbers 9:14) and the life of his sin-offering was accepted instead of his own. This is the principle underlying the law of sacrifice and it provides the key to an understanding of the great sacrifice of Christ which it foreshadowed.

Referring to sacrifices in the Mosaic system, the Epistle to the Hebrews (10:1-4) says, “it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin,” and the reason is evident. The life of an animal was not the equivalent of the life of a man and while it was accepted to obtain remission of personal sins, no offering of a lamb could give effective deliverance from an indebtedness in which the life of the whole race had been lost by the disobedience in the beginning.

The many ceremonial offerings made under the law and the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement were primarily part of the educational process of Israel and their purpose was to lead them to Christ, but they were of no efficacy to remove the constitutional alienation by which - for the very special purpose of making it possible for sinners to be saved - all men are regarded as in Adam. That is why it says that for salvation it needed a “better sacrifice than these” and “so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9).

When John the Baptist said of Jesus “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”, he was not referring to the general sinfulness of mankind, for this is clearly still very much with us. What Jesus took away on behalf of those who accept Him as their Saviour, is that “condemnation” by which we are all alienated from our Father in Heaven and legally dead even while we are physically living.

The life which was lost by sin was that life breathed into Adam when he became a living soul and although, reprieved from death he was able to pass on his physical life to his offspring, they were nevertheless born in the legally dead state and doomed to perish. Hope was only possible in the mercy of God and this was shown when Jesus declared the purpose of His coming into the world in the words of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

2. Ransom.

What exactly did Jesus mean by His life a ransom for many? One definitive statement which throws light on this is in the Apostle Paul’s farewell to the church at Ephesus. “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock . . . which he hath purchased with his own blood.” How were they purchased and how could His blood be the price? The answer is in the law of redemption set out in 25th Leviticus and other places. These provided that an inheritance lost by reason of the poverty or misfortune of its owner, or a person sold into bondage could

be redeemed by the payment of ransom money. In Israel, a near kinsman had not only the right, but a duty towards his brother, if he had the means, to buy back his freedom.

The principle, on a national scale, was established by the requirement that every adult person and every firstborn domestic animal, was to be ransomed for a fixed price or put to death. "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than half a shekel . . . to make an atonement for your souls." (Leviticus 30:15). Thus the Mosaic Law, in which our Christian religion has its roots, makes the recognition of man's alienated state an issue of life and death.

In his inspired exposition of the Federal Principle in the Epistle to the Romans, The Apostle Paul explains how through the one act of disobedience the many were constituted sinners - not made to be sinful but delivered into the power of SIN, or in the figure he uses, sold into bondage to sin personified as a slave-owner, from which captivity they could only be freed by someone with the necessary price in his own possession to pay the ransom.

This is what Jesus did when He gave His life for the life of the world - He purchased us back to God at the cost of His own life which was in the blood that was shed when He died on the Cross - a life for a life. In the terrible mental agony of Gethsemane, knowing what lay before Him, Jesus endured because He realised that He was indeed the Lamb of God, slain prophetically from the foundation of the world. From Moses and the Prophets He had learned that to justify the forbearance of God in passing over sins and to uphold the supremacy of Divine Law, the debt incurred by sin had to be paid and He knew that He alone could pay it and not perish. This is why He answered not a word to His false accusers, but allowed Himself to be crucified bearing a condemnation which was utterly unjust and a penalty He never deserved, in order to cancel, by the forfeit of His own life the liability which sinners could not pay themselves without perishing for ever.

The ransom principle is the only solution compatible with reason to the problem which has troubled Christians for centuries, of why

Jesus had to be the Son of God. The only alternative, that it was to endow Him with the power to resist temptation which we lack, is utterly offensive. As a child of Mary, Jesus was a man like other men, a member of the human family and capable of suffering temptation and pain like ourselves, but He was brought into existence by the miracle of the Virgin Birth. Mary bore him, and she supplied the material elements of His being. His flesh and blood, but she did not give Him life. This came direct from the source of all life, by the operation of the Holy Spirit as related in the Gospels. The crucial importance of this lies in the fact that although His mother was a descendant of Adam, Jesus did not belong to the Adamic family of God. His mother was a chosen member of a redeemed people, “the handmaid of the Lord”, herself the subject of the ransom paid under the Law, and therefore to speak, as some do, of Jesus inheriting condemnation through her or of His blood defiled by sin, is an offence against reason.

Jesus was human, not divine, but His divine origin constituted Him the only one of the human race whose life had not been forfeited by sin and who therefore had in His possession the price of redemption. He had learned that He was the near-kinsman of His brother who had sold himself into bondage under Sin, and the right of redemption pertained to Him. He alone had the “*anti-lutron*”, the ransom, a free unforfeited life, which He could pay if He chose, to redeem Adam and all who are included in him under the federal principle, purchasing them back to God. This, apart from His sinlessness, is the difference between Him and us to which Paul refers when he wrote, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” His riches were His life; our poverty was that we were without God and without hope in the world because of sin.

Those who have sought to explain His death as a vicarious punishment or as the destruction of a sinful nature have done both Him and His Father a grievous wrong. Him because if His death was in any sense necessary for His own deliverance it could not have been a

sacrifice on behalf of others, and God because it would be totally unjust to punish the innocent in order that the guilty might go free.

Jesus undoubtedly suffered for sins, as the Apostle Peter says, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God,” but the principle of The Atonement is not punishment but the redemption of sinners. The idea that the wrath of God against us was averted by inflicting upon Jesus what we deserved is a mockery of justice and abhorrent in the extreme. Seen as a sacrifice provided by God Himself and voluntarily entered into by Jesus of His own free will, it is indeed a revelation of His love and readiness to forgive and calls forth our love and gratitude.

Some may ask, “If He was not Himself in some way liable to death, why could God require such a sacrifice from Jesus?” The answer is that God never did require it, in the sense of a test of obedience. His purpose required that justice and law should be upheld and if sinners were to be saved a ransom had to be found, and this purpose was entrusted to Jesus, but He was not obliged to obey - it was with Him a free choice. “No man taketh it from me, I lay it down of myself.” (John 10:18). He submitted Himself to the will of His Father because He knew what was at stake. Even at the last hour, impaled on the Cross, He had it in His power to summon a legion of angels to deliver Him; but He endured “for the joy that was set before him” knowing that if His courage failed His Father’s plan for His creation would have failed.

By Ernest Brady

Jonah’s Confession

It matters little who wrote the book of Jonah; whoever it was he had his knowledge from the prophet who had such a searching experience. There is not a man living who is likely to make such confession if he had not repented. Would anyone be likely to tell a

friend the things that the writer of the book of Jonah was able to record if the narrator had not first of all repented in his heart? It was because he repented that he was able to reveal all that was in his heart. The fact that he repented shows clearly that he slowly and surely learnt the lesson which God intended he should.

It appears at the outset that he thought he could flee from the presence of The Lord, but his later actions and his vow when in the belly of the great fish, reveal a change of conviction which came over him, for from the fish's belly he prayed unto Jehovah and later recognised that God had heard his prayer and was indeed a merciful and gracious God to him also .

Once we acknowledge that Jonah did sincerely repent time and time again, then the message of the book of Jonah shines out with a clear light; it illuminates at least several important facts, Jonah's message not only came to the people of Nineveh but it eventually came to his own nation, for from it his own nation was able to learn of God's concern for all who repent. We too may learn God's message to the proud and His grace toward the humble of whatever nation they may be. The book of Jonah also contains a wonderful revelation of the character of God, bringing glory to The Creator of the universe. One of the searching lessons we derive from the book of Jonah penetrates many religious bodies. How often do we not see pride in various denominations, thinking that they only are God's people.

God's concern is universal. Pride in one's own understanding frequently leads to a sense of security, a security which will not endure. To glory in knowing and fearing God is vital. The knowledge that Jonah needed to learn was a knowledge of the ways of God rather than a knowledge of his own origin or descent from God's chosen race. God was teaching Jonah what life eternal was; that in knowing and fearing God Jonah needed to redirect his aim in relation to the things in which he gloried. Pride does appear to be among his failings, but by the time he had learnt what God was teaching him then he became able to glory in knowing and fearing God. At first Jonah was more concerned about his prestige as a prophet than the destiny of the Ninevites. He saw the possibility of becoming small in the eyes of

others if God did not carry out His threat of judgment but showed mercy instead.

God brought Jonah to see the importance of loving-kindness and why He should show it to those who repented. Sometimes God chooses to show that His strength can be made perfect through weakness. Many will yet be surprised when they come unto The Lord, saying - "Lord, Lord, open unto us", and they are not received by Him. Their confidence is in their works rather than in His grace. God's work with Jonah was long and arduous, but at last he became impressionable and it is surely seen that he will be numbered among the humble and the contrite who tremble at God's word. Jonah revealed all his own failings by telling the whole story to whoever wrote it. This was indeed a great confession.

Brother O. E. H. Gregory

Young People's Pages

Things are looking worse in this world than the last time I wrote to you! We have had some serious rioting in parts of the UK, as you may have heard, with racial and religious tension growing.

How terrible! But Yahweh's Kingdom is coming one day not so far away now, when Jesus will return to earth to reign as King over all, sitting on the throne of His ancestor King David of Israel, as Yahweh promised him, (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Luke 1:31-33). Jesus will bring about peace on the whole earth, and everyone will be taught about Yahweh and His wise rules for living, and there will be no more wars! (Isaiah 2:2-4). We learn about these things from the Bible, where Yahweh told His servants the prophets, to write about the future, so that we could read and learn what will happen.

That is why Jesus taught his disciples, and us, to pray to Yahweh in 'The Lord's Prayer' - "Your kingdom come! Your will

be done on earth, as it is in Heaven." (Matthew 6:9-13). We pray every day for Yahweh's Kingdom to come, because we are so sad to see what is happening in the world now, when people are disobedient to Yahweh and are causing terrible things to happen - making Yahweh very sad and often angry. But He is patient. Yahweh and His Son - the Lord Jesus Messiah - are the only ones who can make everything right again, and they have a plan.

Anyway, let us remember about the man Joseph, from long ago, who we were talking about last time. His life is interesting because there are some strong similarities between his life, and the life of the Lord Jesus! Remember that after a very low period in his life, Joseph was suddenly brought up to a very high position - almost equal to Pharaoh - the king of Egypt!

Jesus himself, after the low period in his life, with much suffering and finally death, was suddenly promoted to the very high position of being almost equal to Yahweh Himself, and is ruling with Him in Heaven, (Revelation 3:21).

Remember that the 7 years of famine were starting, and not just in the land of Egypt! A famine usually means that there is no rain, and so no vegetables will grow, and animals die because there is no water for them to drink. So there is no food for humans, except food that can last a long time, by drying or preserving somehow.

Joseph had told the Egyptians to store as much food as they could, while there was plenty - to last out in the famine. People from other countries and lands around, came to Egypt to buy food, because the famine affected them too. Joseph's old Dad -Jacob - and his brothers, were among those who were suffering in the famine back in the land of Canaan, and when Jacob heard that there was food in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Don't just waste time wondering what to do! Get down to Egypt and buy food for all of us and bring it back here so that we don't starve to death!" (Genesis 42:1,2).

So 10 of Joseph's brothers set off for Egypt - but the youngest - Benjamin - was not allowed to go with them. Jacob did not trust the older brothers to look after him. He remembered only too well, what had happened to Joseph! So he had to stay home with Jacob. Remember, that Joseph's brothers and Dad all thought that Joseph must have died long ago.

When the brothers finally arrived in Egypt, they met the new Governor - Joseph! But he was older now, he looked different, dressed differently, and he spoke the Egyptian language - so they didn't recognise him at all! Realising that he was the most powerful person under Pharaoh, they all bowed low in front of him, knowing that if they wanted food, they had better show him some proper respect! Remember those dreams that Joseph had had - all those years ago - that his family would all bow down to him? And here they were - all these years later - bowing down to him! Of course, Joseph recognised them immediately! But he didn't want them to know straight away, so he pretended he was a stranger and spoke roughly to them (v. 7). He asked them, "Where do you come from?" "From the land of Canaan, to buy food" they answered.

Joseph remembered the dreams he had had about them, and he said to them, "You are spies aren't you - come to spy out our land!" They were very surprised, and said "No my lord! We are not spies! We are your servants, and we have come to buy food. We are all sons of one man. We are honest men - not spies!" But Joseph pretended not to believe them. He had a plan - to find out whether they had changed - become better, or not, over the years. Joseph told them that he didn't believe them, and that he still believed that they were spies. The brothers were getting a bit worried about the accusation. They told Joseph, "Your servants are twelve brothers - the sons of one man in Canaan. The youngest brother (Benjamin) stayed at home, and the other is dead."

Joseph badly wanted to reveal who he was, as he still loved his brother's - but he still wanted to test them, to find out whether they had really changed or not. So he continued to speak roughly to them, telling them that to find out whether they were telling him

the truth or not, he would keep one of them as a prisoner, and let the rest go home with the food - BUT that if they came to Egypt again wanting food, they would have to bring Benjamin with them to prove that they were telling him the truth!

The brothers were very worried, and began to panic, talking to each other in the Hebrew language - not knowing that Joseph understood every word! Now the brothers were suddenly feeling very guilty about how they had treated Joseph - all those years ago - and began to feel that that, and this spot of difficulty they were in, had some connection. They felt that somehow, they were being punished for what they had done. That is the problem with guilt. You can bury it away for a long time and pretend it's not there - then one day something happens, and out it pops! The only way to deal properly with a guilty conscience, is to confess your wrong doing to Yahweh - and ask Him to forgive you! Then you can have peace.

Reuben said to the other brothers, "Didn't I tell you not to harm Joseph? But you wouldn't listen! Now we will have to pay for what we did!"

The brothers were speaking to each other in their own language, and had no idea that this Governor - Joseph - was understanding everything that they were saying! It brought back the memory of what had happened to him so very clearly! It was all too much for him. He had to turn himself away from them so that they wouldn't see him weeping!

When he had recovered, he came back to them and had Simeon bound, to be kept as a prisoner until the next time they came to Egypt for food. The brothers didn't know how they were going to tell their father what had happened - and also that if they needed to go back for more food, they would have to take Benjamin with them! They doubted that Jacob would ever let them take Benjamin! He had now become the favourite son, since Joseph was gone.

Anyway, Joseph ordered all the brothers sacks to be filled with grain, to take back to Canaan and their waiting family - and he also ordered his servants to give the brothers payment money back - to pop it into the sacks on top of the grain! Unaware of this, the brothers loaded their sacks onto the donkeys, and set off for home. But on the way, one of the brothers opened his sack to give his donkey some food - and saw his money! So he said to his brothers, "My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!" They all thought that this was very strange, and they were afraid - wondering what was going on.

When they finally arrived home, they told their father everything that had happened - how the Governor had spoken roughly to them and accused them of being spies, and they had assured him that they were honest men - all 12 brothers - sons of one man - except the youngest one had stayed at home, and one was dead (so they thought!). They also told Jacob that the Governor had insisted on keeping Simeon a prisoner there, AND that if they wanted more food, they would have to bring Benjamin with them - to prove that they had been honest - otherwise they would be turned away!

Then, as each of them opened their sacks, they discovered that they had ALL had their payment money returned - there it was! They were afraid - nothing like this had ever been heard of! Whatever could it mean?

Jacob was very unhappy about the whole thing, saying to them, "You have bereaved me: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin! All these things are against me." Poor Jacob!

Reuben tried to persuade Jacob to consider letting Benjamin go with them, saying that he could kill his own two sons if he didn't bring Benjamin safely back! But Jacob wouldn't hear of it, saying, "My son shall not go down with you! His brother is dead, and he's the only one I have left. If something was to happen to him as well, it would kill me!" Remember that both Joseph and Benjamin were the only two sons of Jacob's favourite wife Rachel, and she was

now dead. With both her, and Joseph gone, he was clinging on to Benjamin!

But the famine in the land continued. And soon the food that they had bought was beginning to run out. Jacob asked his sons to go back to Egypt to get more.

Judah spoke to Jacob, telling him that the Governor of Egypt had solemnly warned them that he would refuse to deal with them and sell them food next time, unless Benjamin was with them! Jacob scolded, "Why on earth did you tell the man that you had another brother? But the brothers told him, "He asked us a pointed question - was our father still alive? And did we have another brother? We had to answer honestly. We didn't know that he was going to insist that we brought Benjamin with us this time!"

Judah promised to guard Benjamin carefully, and urged Jacob to be quick to agree, as already the food was almost gone, and they should have already left! So very reluctantly, Jacob agreed as he felt he had no choice. But he advised the brothers to take a present for the Governor - some fruit, a little balm, and honey, spices and myrrh, and choice nuts - also double the money needed to pay for the grain, just in case it had been a mistake that their money had been returned last time. "And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin"! And he added sorrowfully, fearing the worst, "If I am bereaved, I am bereaved".

So the brothers took the present, and Benjamin, and began to make their way back to Egypt.

Here we will take a break, and next time we will learn what happened the next time the brothers met Joseph (the Governor of all Egypt) again. Will Joseph tell them who he really is - their long lost brother? If so - how will they react to that? Has Joseph really forgiven them - or will he now punish them for what they did?

I pray that Yahweh will be with YOU - just as he was with Joseph - till next time!

With love from your friend, Dawn

A rose shall bloom in the lonely place,
A wild shall echo with sounds of joy;
For heav'n's own gladness its bounds shall grace,
And forms angelic their songs employ.

And Lebanon's cedars shall rustle their boughs,
And fan their leaves in the scented air:
And Carmel and Sharon shall pay their vows,
And shout, for the glory of God is there.

O, say to the fearful, Be strong of heart;
He comes in vengeance, but not for thee;
For thee he comes, His might to impart
To the trembling heart and the feeble knee.

The dumb[mute] shall raise their notes for him;
The lame shall leap like the unharmed deer,
And the thirsty shall drink of the living stream.

The ransomed of God shall return to him
With a chorus of joy to a gladsome lay;
No eye with a tear of grief shall be dim,
For sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

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