

Ancient Hollywood?

Genesis 44 and 45

This story has all the makings of an ancient Hollywood blockbuster! By the end of Chapter 45, you are tempted to say, “And they all lived happily ever after...” But did they?

A silver cup in a sack (Genesis 44)

“Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of the house...” (verse 1). Joseph is up to something! Reading the story that follows (verses 1 – 17), you almost get the impression that Joseph uses devious means to control or ‘manipulate’ his brothers. Note, for example, that when Joseph mentions ‘divination’ in verse 5, he is referring to an Egyptian occult practice. From what we know of Joseph, his integrity and unwavering faith in God, it is very unlikely that he ever practised divination, so this also was a pretence and a ploy...

- What was the motive for Joseph’s treating his brothers in this way? What did Joseph want them to do?
- In verse 9 the brothers declare that whoever is found with the silver cup will die and the rest will become Joseph’s slaves. The steward (verse 10) seems to agree, but then proposes a much more lenient punishment (otherwise, if he agreed, it would be binding under Egyptian law and Joseph would have no choice but to carry it out).
- Verse 14 – notice that Judah emerges as the leader, rather than Reuben (who was the eldest). What do you notice about Judah’s speech? What are the main qualities? How have the attitudes and behaviours of the brothers changed over the past 22 years (since they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites)?

Joseph makes himself known (Genesis 45)

- In verse 1 it says that all the Egyptian attendants left, so there was no interpreter, and the ensuing conversations were in Hebrew. The (Hollywood) climax comes in verse 3: “I am Joseph!” Why do you think he asks whether his father is still living?
- What were the reasons for Joseph’s intensity of feeling (verse 2)? How much emotion is expressed in the chapter?
- Willow Creek Community Church, near Chicago, has as one of his core values: “Honour God in everything you do, and he’ll honour you.” In his speech in verses 4 – 13, in what ways did Joseph honour God?
- In verse 15, Joseph and his brothers “talked” – they had 22 years to catch up on! What do you think they talked about? Notice how, in verse 24 for example, Joseph behaves like a brother, rather than like the ruler of Egypt.
- What blessings did the restoration of family harmony bring with it?

Prayer – Lord, as we look once again at the life of Joseph, help us to honour you in all that we do. Help us to remember that people and families matter to you. Help us to care for others and to want the best for them. Amen.