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Joseph Reunites With His Brothers

based on Genesis 42 & 45

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Note: Another version of this same story is found in the file Joseph-reconciliation. My retelling of the story leaves out the part where Joseph toys with them – hiding their money in their bags and accusing them of theft. That was simply to make the story shorter.

You never know, do you.

Life is just ticking along and nothing much is happening, and then Wham! God hits you right between the eyes.

Managing the food supply system of a country the size of Egypt is no small job, and, well, I'm a bit of a workaholic, so that's basically all I did. I suppose it helped keep my mind off my loneliness – off the residual anger that was still there against my brothers. But I was so busy I simply didn't think about them anymore.

So when my secretary came in and told me there were some men from another country here to buy food, I thought nothing of it. It happened all the time. When they came in my office I didn't even look up from my desk.

"Yes?" I said, my eyes still on the paper I was reading.

"We've come from Canaan to buy food."

Canaan? I looked up and there were my brothers.

I've trained myself not to show emotions, but they must have noticed that I could hardly breathe for awhile. "Excuse me a moment," I said and left the room. I needed a minute to think.

I never knew I had emotions. You don't get to be the top civil servant in the country by having emotions. But now I seemed to be having every emotion in the book.

All the anger at my brothers came back, all the fear of being sold as a slave, and yet I was so desperately glad to see them. Suddenly I knew how much I needed a family – how much I needed people to love – people to love me.

But God, I was angry at them. They wanted to kill me. Then they sold me for 20 pieces of silver. I went to a door and called the guards. "Take these crooks and kill them," is what I was going to say. But when the guards came, I said, "Never mind. Go back to your post."

I didn't know what I was going to say when I went back into the room where my brothers were cooling their heels. I think I was planning to scare the pants off 'em – give them a lecture on their evil ways, but all I could do was blurt out, "I'm Joseph, your brother."

Now it was their turn to hyperventilate. They were scared spitless, and I guess I let them be scared for awhile. But then I said, "It's OK, guys. What you did was wrong, but, well, God was mixed up in all of it somehow. God had a plan for me, and that wouldn't have been possible if I'd stayed in Canaan."

Then it occurred to me. God must sometimes feel just the way I felt at that moment. You get so mad at people for what they do, and you know you ought to knock their heads together, but you can't, because, well, you love them.

So there were all kinds of tears and hugs and blowing of noses and laughing and crying. And we talked, way into the night. We talked and talked. I apologized for being such a twit when I was a kid, and they apologized a hundred times for what they'd done to me. But mostly we rebuilt our family. From the ground up.

We filled that big hole in my life. "My brothers," I said. "You can have all the people in the world to manage, and you can have all the money and all the power to move things around, but if you don't have anyone to love, you have nothing. Nothing. So thank you, my brothers for coming here and giving me someone to love.

"But there's still something missing. That's Dad and my sisters and the rest of the family. Go get them. Bring them here to live for awhile so our family can all be together again."

**Ralph Milton has written a number of books,
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