He Lives!

Genesis 45:1-28
Key Verse: Genesis 45:28
And Israel said, "I'm convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

Today we come to the most dramatic scene in the story of Joseph. Like a good drama we were left in suspense at the end of last week's passage. Here is a recap from the previous episode: the brothers had just finished a festive meal at Joseph's house. It seemed all was well. Then, while they had just started the journey back home, they were stopped by Joseph's servant. They were charged with the theft of royal property. When a silver cup that belonged to Joseph was found in Benjamin's sack, the brother's tore their clothes in anguish. There was not much they could do or say. They had known Joseph to be a very harsh man, how could they reason with him? When Joseph appeared angry at what they had done, he threatened to take Benjamin as his lifelong slave. At this point Judah stepped up and gave the most impassioned plea in all of Genesis. He humbled himself to Joseph, and told of the great love that his father had for Benjamin. He said if anything were to happen to Benjamin, his father Jacob would die in great sorrow. Judah spoke of the responsibility he took for Benjamin's life, so he begged, for the sake of his father, and for the sake of his younger brother, he begged for Joseph to take him as a slave instead. He offered his own life as a substitute for Benjamin's. Judah was the representative of his brothers, and they all were in agreement. See now, how the brothers had all changed, and they had all repented. They were different from their younger selves, who would plot to kill their brother, sold him to slavery instead for 20 shekels of silver, and lie to their father about his disappearance. Now there was brotherly fidelity, there was respect and honor to their father, and there was sorrow over their sin. Judah poured out his soul, with an amazing change of heart, and ended his speech by saying, "Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father." Now, it is Joseph's turn to respond.

Now we come to the climactic moment. Look at v.1, "Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, 'Have everyone leave my presence!' So there was no one left with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers." For the most part, Joseph maintained his composure. After seeing them for the first time in over 20 years, he pretended not to know them, and played the part of a harsh Egyptian official. He treated them severely, but it was hurting him inside. He must have wanted to reconcile with them, but he wanted to see if they were the same heartless thugs they were in the past, or if they had changed and felt bad for what they had done. Even though Joseph played the tyrant, he wept when he saw them the first time, and wept again when he saw Benjamin. There was a deep inner affection for them. So finally when he saw the genuine display of Judah's self sacrifice, his emotions were so moved that he could no longer control himself, and cried out for all of his attendants to leave. He wept so loudly that everyone outside heard him.

©2026 IIT UBF. All rights reserved.
Downloaded: April 1, 2026
http://www.iitubf.org

Many of you know that these were tears of joy, tears of love, and tears of happiness all from a mix of events including Judah's humility and repentance, and the reunion of long estranged brothers. You know that because you might already be familiar with this story. But at this time, the brothers were confused. They could have thought, "Why did he suddenly just burst into tears? Why did he scream for everyone to leave the room? Uh oh, what is this man going to do?" Verse 3 says, "Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph! Is my father still living?'" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. They look like they have just seen a ghost. And in a sense, they did. Up to this point, the man who was before them was called Zaphenath-Paneah, the name Pharaoh gave him. But suddenly he shouts to them in Hebrew, in their own language, "I am Joseph!" Imagine how wide their eyes got. What in the world is going on here? If that is my brother, who I threw into the pit, and now he's this lord in Egypt, I am dead meat. Either that or this Egyptian guy is crazy, and he's scaring the living daylights out of me. The first question he asks is, "Is my father still living?" They had answered this question several times already, but Joseph wanted to confirm it, like someone who liked to hear good news over and over again. His brothers though, were too terrified to answer.

Verse 4 begins, "Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come close to me.'" This seems to get even scarier. But Joseph wanted to speak in a regular voice with them. He also did not want those on the outside to hear what he was about to say either, because he was about to reveal to them their dark secret. In this way he could protect them from any further discrimination or judgment, since Egyptians already disliked Hebrews. What would they think if they heard about what the brothers did to one of their own? So when they got close, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!" Notice the exclamation mark there. This was a shocking secret that only the brothers knew between them, and proof that this Joseph was that brother they had sold into slavery. It was necessary that he pointed out their sin, so that they could be healed of it. The healing begins immediately – look at v.5, "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you." It was a terrible sin they had committed, and it was natural to be distressed and angry with each other for what they had done. We said before, this might be why Judah left his father's house not long after the incident. The brothers quarreled the first time they met Joseph after that time. The lie of sin is that nobody gets hurt, and if you do it in secret, no one will know. But that is the lie. Sin will find us out, and even if we aren't accused by someone else, our own consciences will accuse and condemn us. For the brothers, this was a sin they could never reverse.

But look at the marvelous grace that Joseph gives. He said, "do not be distressed, and do not be angry with yourselves." He seems to be very liberal here. Not liberal, in the political sense it has today, but liberal, in the sense of being generous to free them from their guilt and burdens. He is forgiving them, but on what basis? The rest of v.5 tells us, "because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you." The simple truth in here is that he is forgiving them because of what God has done. This is the primary work and interest of God: to save lives. People say God is this, or God is that, or God does this, and God does that. But look at what the whole Bible is about. The Bible is God's word. And people might say the Bible says this, and the Bible says that, but if you

©2026 IIT UBF. All rights reserved.
Downloaded: April 1, 2026 http://www.iitubf.org

want to summarize what the Bible is about, it's about God's plan to save life. We get history, the creation, and story after story after story of man's sin, but you also get story after story after story of God's faithfulness, God's love, God's promises, his commitments, and their fulfillment – with this goal: to save lives.

Joseph elaborates, he wants to further assure and further comfort his brothers who have been so wounded by sin. Through this we can understand more about what this savings of life means. Look at v. 7, "But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth to save your lives by a great deliverance." A remnant on earth. That means survivors, descendants. God wants us to survive. When God wants to save us, it's more than saving us from sadness, or gloom, or despair. It's more than saving us from hopelessness or meaninglessness. It's literally saving our very lives. It is to survive, and to live and not die. The Bible is a practical book. God wants us to live. And he wants to save by a great deliverance. This means by an escape. He will provide for us an escape from death itself. Who here can escape death? No one can. Two weeks ago Sh. Bob showed us a picture of many causes of death. There was man running from a hippo. We can't even escape hippos, let alone death. But God has provided a great escape from death and from sin. This was what Joseph was alluding to in v.7. The remnant are Jacob's descendants. They are at the brink of perishing because of the famine, but through Joseph they would survive, and out of these people would come the Messiah, our great Deliverer, the one God has chosen to save us from death and from sin.

The ultimate salvation and deliverance comes through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, but we'll focus back on Joseph's story and his time. Consider again v.7, "But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth to save your lives by a great deliverance." Jacob's family at this point was a family of him, his 12 sons and their families and his grandchildren, right now around 70 people in total. But God wanted them to survive and thrive, and grow into an entire nation. God intended for the children of Jacob to multiply into the millions, to become the nation of Israel. And think about how great this deliverance was. Egypt, an established nation, and at this time perhaps the most powerful, was mindful of this one, relatively small family. But it seems that God used 7 years of abundance, and 7 years of famine, worldwide events, to deliver and save what looks like right now, only the seeds of a nation. To make this happen, he tells his brothers in v.9-11 to hurry back and bring their father to live in Goshen. He promises to provide for the whole family, and warns, that if the family does not come, they will become destitute.

Joseph continues to persuade them that he is their long lost brother. Look at v.12, "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you." He tried to remove all lingering doubts, to show them he is alive and that he is who he says he is. It is similar to the scene where Jesus shows his disciples his hands and his side, and eats a fish in front of them. Maybe it was the way he spoke in Hebrew, or his resemblances to Benjamin. He instructs them again to tell their father about all the honor he was given in Egypt, and to bring him quickly. Joseph's love for his father has never diminished in all his years away from home. Finally, he gives his brothers signs of his forgiveness and love. He threw his arms around Benjamin and

©2026 IIT UBF. All rights reserved.
Downloaded: April 1, 2026 http://www.iitubf.org

wept, and they both wept together. He also kissed all of his brothers and wept over them. Verse 15 tells us afterwards, his brothers talked with him. The reconciliation was complete. All of the fear, the anxiety, the distress, the anger, the guilt and the shame of 20 years had melted away. They had been set free of the sin that had burdened them, and now talked freely with one another. The family was restored and reunited.

News of the brother's visit reached Pharaoh's palace, and him and all his officials were pleased. You can see impact of Joseph's faithful service, so much so that the king and all the court held him in high esteem, and honored his family. Joseph had some friends in high places. This was all the work of God, who made Joseph like a father to Pharaoh, in a sense like his top and most trusted advisor. Pharaoh wholeheartedly agreed and supported the idea to move Joseph's family to Egypt. God can influence people both great and small. He really did make this great grandson of Abraham, Joseph, to be a blessing to the world, and God continued to bless him. Pharaoh first addressed the brothers, telling them to load up their animals and bring their father and their families back to Egypt. He says in v.18, "I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you can enjoy the fat of the land." Because of the famine, the nicest lands could be scarce, but Pharaoh offered the best, and they could enjoy all of the best parts of it, the fruit, the livestock, the milk and honey, and whatever was able to thrive in that time.

Pharaoh then addressed the children and wives of the brothers, and provided carts for them. They were offered to come to Egypt in comfort and first class, and they would be picked up at their door. Look at what Pharaoh says in v.20, "Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours." He really gave them nothing to worry about. They might have been worried about relocating, about their furniture, their tools, their clothes. But Pharaoh said even those will be provided for, the best of all Egypt, which I assume also means the merchandise, will be theirs. This is a glimpse of heaven. If God can provide these things for his people during a famine on earth, how much more can he provide to his people in heaven. Don't worry so much about your treasures and your belongings here on earth, because there will be treasures that are so much better in heaven. Rev 22:17 says, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let the one who hears say 'Come!' Let the one who is thirst come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life."

Look at v.21, "So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey." They were preparing to go back to bring their family back to Egypt. The fact that Pharaoh commanded this also proves that Joseph was speaking the truth. Joseph gave his brothers new clothing. These are considered gifts, but the brothers may have all needed new clothes. Remember how they tore their old clothes when Benjamin was found with the cup. Joseph gave Benjamin 300 shekels of silver, and 5 new sets of clothes, which really shows how much he loved his little brother. He also sent with the brothers 20 donkeys, all loaded with the best things of Egypt, and food for the journey to and from Canaan. They were going to need enough to feed 70 people on a journey that might last a couple of days. Verse 24 tells us, "Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them,

©2026 IIT UBF. All rights reserved.
Downloaded: April 1, 2026 http://www.iitubf.org

‘Don’t quarrel on the way!’” He knew his brothers well. He probably experienced a lot of arguments with his brothers. He saw them quarrel over who was to blame for selling Joseph. Maybe they were inclined to dispute. But Joseph warned them, so they could be mindful and keep the peace with one another as they made their way home.

The brothers finally arrived in Canaan and made it to their father Jacob. Look at v.26, “They told him, ‘Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.’ Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them.” Jacob had no emotion when he first heard this news. He may have been glad to see Simeon and Benjamin back, but he had a hard time trusting his sons, especially after Joseph had disappeared. He just couldn’t trust them. Now they bring up Joseph, who he believed to have been dead for more than 20 years. He wasn’t sure what to think, but the brothers all seem to have a different spirit. They weren’t just looking at each other anymore. Verse 27 says, “But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.” It had been a long time since Jacob was in high spirits. He had been in sorrow for decades. But they shared the words of Joseph – that God had made him lord of all Egypt, and his instructions to come to Egypt to be provided for. Then Jacob saw the carts, and the donkeys loaded with all the best things of Egypt, and provisions for the journey, and he believed. When he believed, his spirit was revived. This was good news that they shared. In the same way, to revive the spirits of sin-sick people, we should speak to them the words of Jesus, how God lifted him up on the cross to heal us, how he is alive today, sitting at the right hand of God, and show them his blessing in our lives, both physical and spiritual; how he has given us peace, comfort, joy, faith, hope and love, and these things will be given to them as well. To revive spirits: tell them Jesus’ words, and show them his blessings.

Can we all please read v.28 together, “And Israel said, ‘I’m convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.’” Notice here Jacob is called Israel. Now, the names Jacob and Israel are used interchangeably, and continue to be in later chapters, so there is not a huge significance in the name change here. I only wanted to call attention to it because it reminds us of the name Israel, and I wanted to make a small point from that. God gave Jacob the name Israel because he has “struggled with God and with humans and have overcome (Gen 32:28).” When Jacob believed his son was alive, he was able to overcome his sadness and sorrow. He wanted to go see his son before he dies, and if he saw his son, that would be enough for him to die a happy man. He didn’t need all these treasures from Egypt, but just to see the face of his son would be enough for him.

We all also need to be convinced that the Son is alive. The fact that the Son is living changes everything. The fact that Joseph was living help the brothers overcome the guilt, shame, anger, fear, anxiety and distress and receive love and peace. The fact that Joseph was living covered over their sins. That fact help Jacob overcome his sorrow, grief and despair and gave him joy and hope. Jacob said, “My son Joseph is still alive.” We should believe that “Jesus rose from the dead and is alive today.” Be convinced, Jesus is alive and well! Because he lives, we can face tomorrow. Because he lives, all fear is gone. He is the Son of God, the Son of the Creator who

©2026 IIT UBF. All rights reserved.
Downloaded: April 1, 2026 http://www.iitubf.org

knit us in the womb, the Son of the Creator who calls the stars by name. He is the king, exalted at the right hand of God, and he is able to provide for all our needs. God is able to save to the uttermost those who come to him (Heb 7:25). We are not able, but God is able to do all things. If he isn't living, then our faith is useless, and Christians are of all people most to be pitied (1 Cor 15:17-19). If he isn't living there is no reason to hope for anything better than death.

But as Paul says, "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead!" (1 Cor 15:20) Because he lives, we can overcome the guilt and shame of our sins, because of the great love of God that is alive today. God loves us, just as Joseph loved his brothers, and wept over them. Because he lives, our sins are covered over because they have all been liberally and generously and fully forgiven and paid for by his death on the cross. And because he lives, we can have hope that he will give us new garments, and take us to an inheritance, prepared in heaven just for us, that can never perish, spoil or fade. Because he lives, we will survive death, we will overcome it, and we will escape it, because when we look at Jesus, he overcame death and rose from the grave. (And by the way, his death and resurrection will be the main topics at our upcoming Easter retreat coming soon this April!) He saved us by a great deliverance. So go, go and see Jesus before you die, see him often, as you come to him in prayer, in personal worship, and in corporate worship with all your brothers and sisters. He lives forever to make intercession for you, and one day, you will see him face to face. So be convinced, take faith, and know that he lives, Christ Jesus lives today!

©2026 IIT UBF. All rights reserved.
http://www.iitubf.org