

The Reverend Theo Robinson's Sermon for August 16, 2026
Genesis 45:1-15 - "The Path to New Beginnings"

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

A colleague of mine once likened the Book of Genesis to a TV drama and I think she hit the nail on the head! The drama! The relationships! The action! All of these lead to some exciting reading, even if we don't necessarily understand it all. So as they say, here are some scenes from last week's episode.

Joseph, shunned and hated by his brothers, is beaten and thrown into a dry well. The brothers stand guard while deciding what to do with him. Will they murder him? Will they leave him to die at nature's hands? Along comes a caravan and they have their answer! They will sell him to the Egyptians!

What would you do if these were your brothers and you were the one first left to die and then sold off like a piece of old unwanted furniture? Revenge seems sweet, doesn't it?

Previous to today's readings, Joseph did start to take revenge by doing some rotten things like holding his brother Simeon hostage as well as their share of grain in exchange for having the youngest, Benjamin, brought to him. And then framing Benjamin for theft so that all the brothers travelling with Benjamin would be forced to come back to him.

Finally, Joseph couldn't handle it any longer and he ordered all the Egyptians out of the room, so he was alone with his brothers. He then revealed his true identity to them, and what was his first question of them? "How is my father?" Joseph was overwhelmed with emotion and wanted to know how his family had been doing.

Now, Joseph is the most important person in all of Egypt, save for Pharaoh himself. He could crush his brothers. He could torture them. He could really teach them a lesson. Instead, he tells them not to worry, it wasn't them who did all that to him, it was God sending him to Egypt.

What faith it takes to utter such words. I'm not sure I could muster it. What would you do if you were in Joseph's shoes, powerful enough to commit the most heinous acts of revenge? Instead of crushing them like bugs, Joseph tells his brothers that God has sent him ahead to ensure that his family, as well as others, are saved from famine.

Joseph is able to look upon the hardest days of his life and see the hand of God working for Joseph and all of God's people. He's able to look upon the awful experience of being forsaken by family, sold as a slave, and subsequently exploited and plunged into jail as God moving mightily to save God's people and all the people of that corner of the world from famine.

Those years which Joseph spent in slavery and prison could have been the occasion for a slow burn that might have ignited into an explosion of anger at the sight of his brothers. How angry Joseph could have been with God for getting him into such a situation! But Joseph recognized that God was with him in his sufferings and that these were from the loving hand of a sovereign God.

Joseph could have been angry with his brothers, who had callously sold him into slavery. Joseph had the right and the power to punish his ten half-brothers for doing what they did to him. He could have gotten his pound of flesh from them, his revenge on them, but in his mercy, Joseph forgave his brothers and wept over them when they finally reconciled.

Joseph forgives his brothers! Can you believe it?! Instead of committing vengeful acts, Joseph commits saving acts. Not only does he forgive his brothers, but he saves them from famine and poverty. He reunites his family and vows to take care of them.

The brothers, laden with treasures and food and wagonloads of gifts, were sent back to land of Canaan to get their father Jacob and all their families. All of them, all seventy of them, came to settle in the land of Goshen in Egypt where Joseph took care of them. There was a new beginning for Joseph and his family, and it was God that led them to the point where they could be reunited in love and unity.

As today's psalm states "How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!"

And how very good it is when God is the leader and the light down the path to new beginnings. The lesson today, for Joseph and for all of us, is that God will indeed lead us to new beginnings if we're just willing to follow.

I'll admit, sometimes God's instructions, signs, or whatever you'd like to call them can sometimes be so subtle that you might not see them unless looked upon retrospectively. Reflecting back over the almost-20 years since joining the Anglican Church, I've come to recognize how God worked to get me to where I am today. And it all started with new a beginning.

Many years ago, I became friends with a woman named Lola who just happened to work with someone I knew at a youth and family social services organization. Lola decided to start a project and got all her friends involved, including me. As the token accountant, I was of course asked to be the treasurer!

One of the people joining the project was this motorcycle-riding co-worker of Lola's named Helen. Turned out she was an Anglican priest! By coincidence, I was finding my way back to church after a devastating loss and a tumble into darkness. I didn't know how to go about picking a church, so I figured "why not check out Helen's church?" The motorcycle and the fact that she is a woman had me intrigued.

I attended services, I spoke with Helen, I decided to have my child baptized there, and the rest, as they say, is history. And it all started with a new beginning.

God led me to the people I needed at a time of darkness.

God led me to the decision to baptize El when I hadn't been a part of a church in more than 20 years.

God gave me my new beginning.

As God has done, and will continue to do so, for us all.

Amen.