

Lent Devotional March 11, 2026

Scripture

Genesis 45:16-28

16 When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, "Joseph's brothers have come," Pharaoh and his servants were pleased. 17 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your animals and go back to the land of Canaan. 18 Take your father and your households and come to me, so that I may give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you may enjoy the fat of the land.' 19 You are further charged to say, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. 20 Give no thought to your possessions, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.' "

21 The sons of Israel did so. Joseph gave them wagons according to the instruction of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey. 22 To each one of them he gave a set of garments, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five sets of garments. 23 To his father he sent the following: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provision for his father on the journey. 24 Then he sent his brothers on their way, and as they were leaving he said to them, "Do not quarrel along the way."

25 So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. 26 And they told him, "Joseph is still alive! He is even ruler over all the land of Egypt." He was stunned; he could not believe them. 27 But when they told him all the words of Joseph that he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. 28 Israel said, "Enough! My son Joseph is still alive. I must go and see him before I die."

Devotion

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This is not the only place in Scripture where God's people are commanded to leave behind their belongings. Jesus's disciples came to know this practice well. But here, Joseph's family is not instructed to forget about their possessions and live a life of minimalism, and they're not called to embrace a future of asceticism. Rather, they are invited to make room for something new and better to become theirs in the land of Egypt.

I'm reminded of the image of a hand gripping a cookie inside a cookie jar, stuck because the fist can't fit back out through the jar's opening. How many times have I held tightly to the thing I want because my limited imagination could not conceptualize alternative routes to joy, pleasure, peace, love, fulfillment? How many times have I clung to my idea, believing it's the only way? How many times have I let the fear of scarcity block my openness to abundance?

Joseph's family has become intimately familiar with scarcity, having lived in famine for two years up to this point. Abundance is a fever dream, the "fat of the land" something they haven't known recently. Joseph's family isn't told to simply forget about their possessions and automatically receive the best of the best; Pharaoh tells them to go get their father and come back to him. In other words, there is a reorientation that is required of Jacob and his sons in order to receive the available abundance.

I am eternally grateful that our Creator's imagination is greater than ours. When I fixate on the one cookie in the cookie jar, God is often standing behind me with a whole cookie table, waiting for me to turn around. What abundance might be available to you if only you reorient and loosen your grip?

Prayer

Creator God, divine gift-giver, holy and loving healer, thank you for Your patience and provision. When we find ourselves in seasons of famine, help us to trust that a feast will come again. When we find ourselves locked onto a particular outcome, help us to have faith in the goodness of Your unfolding narrative. And when we keep our eyes on the past, help us to hope in the future, making space for Your Spirit to creatively ignite transformation in our hearts and our minds. In Your name we humbly ask these things. Amen.