

JOSEPH: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE FIRSTFRUITS

The fact that Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach was slain "before the foundation of the world" indicates that the plan of salvation had been completely determined before the commission of the first human sin. The Word (Yahuwah of Hosts) was to empty Himself of immortality and experience human birth and life. Since the Most High Aluhym remained immortal, it was He who, through Ruwach Ha'Kadosh, impregnated Mariam with a single cell which contained all that the Word had been. Through this act, the Most High Aluhym became Yahuwah the Father, and the Word became His Son.

After becoming the Son of the Most High Aluhym, the plan called for the Savior to live a sinless life of 33½ years and then die by shedding His blood, which He did around 3:00 Wednesday afternoon. He would then remain dead—no consciousness—for three days, after which He would be resurrected by the Father between the evenings on Sabbath, making Him the Firstborn from the dead.

COL 1:18 and He [Amanuwal] is the head of the body, the Assembly...

COL 1:18 (cont.) ...He is its origin, the first to return from the dead...(NEB)

Several hours after His resurrection, early on the first day of the week, as the firstborn from the dead, the Son of Yahuwah ascended to His Father to be accepted as the first of the harvest of the children of Yahuwah. He fulfilled the symbolism of the wavesheaf offering which represented the presentation to Yahuwah of the first cutting of the early harvest.

The purpose of our assembly on the day of Pentecost—the 50th day from the Sunday that fell during the Days of Unleavened Bread—is to focus our attention on one of the seven major steps being used by Yahuwah in order to complete His plan of salvation. The first festival events of the year—Amanuwal's Memorial, Passover and Unleavened Bread—are memorials of steps required for the accomplishment of Yahuwah's plan:

1. the shedding of the blood of the Lamb of Yahuwah for the sins of the world, and
2. the extension of Yahuwah's grace to those who have come under the blood of the Lamb of Yahuwah.

That means that at this stage of the unfolding of Yahuwah's plan, we have festivals that are memorials of events that have either occurred or are occurring, and we have five festivals still awaiting fulfillment in the future. Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks, celebrates the completion of Yahuwah's first harvest season which symbolically lasts seven full weeks from the time of the first cutting of that harvest. The presentation ceremony of that first cutting—the Wavesheaf offering—symbolized the appearance of the resurrected Son of Yahuwah before the Father in heaven. The 50th day pictures the time when many more will join the wavesheaf as literal children of Yahuwah!

LEV 23:15-19 And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave [TAN: elevation] offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering [REB: a grain offering from the new crop] to Yahuwah. You shall bring from your

JOSEPH: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE FIRSTFRUITS

habitations two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to Yahuwah. And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to Yahuwah, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to Yahuwah. Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of peace offering.

Blood was shed in offering the animal sacrifices, picturing the blood of the Lamb of Yahuwah which had to be shed to offset the leaven used in the loaves. The peace offering was always an offering of celebration. It was representative of a meal which was shared with Yahuwah.

LEV 23:20 The priest shall wave [TAN: elevate] them [sacrificed animals] with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before Yahuwah, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to Yahuwah for the priest

The focus is on the two loaves; they are holy to Yahuwah and are given to the priest once they are presented to Yahuwah. However, the peace offering is also elevated with the loaves to represent a meal shared in the very presence of Yahuwah.

LEV 23:21 And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

The ceremony of the elevated loaves symbolized the time when the third step in Yahuwah's plan will be completed:

ICO 15:20-23 But now Ha'Mashyach is risen from the dead and has become the firstfruits [MOF: first to be reaped] of those who have fallen asleep [NRS: died]. For since by [JNT: through] man came death, by [JNT: through] Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Ha'Mashyach all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Ha'Mashyach the firstfruits, afterward those who are Ha'Mashyach's at His coming.

It isn't until after Ha'Mashyach returns that the meaning of this festival is accomplished. Yahuwah has already prepared many stalks of grain for harvest, yet He has not actually harvested any of them as yet:

HEB 11:39-40 Yet though they all gained Yahuwah's approval by their faith, they, none of them, received what He had promised, for Yahuwah had resolved upon something still better for us, that they might not reach the fulfillment of their hopes except with us. (GSP)

We find here that none of the firstfruits have actually been harvested. Some have produced fruit, matured, ripened, dried out and are ready for harvest—Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul and tens of thousands of others. However, there are still quite a number of green plants—some with much ripening fruit, and some with very little fruit that still need more time before they are ready. The owner of the field patiently waits until the whole crop has sufficiently ripened before harvesting his field:

JOSEPH: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE FIRSTFRUITS

MAT 13:24-30 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' "He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' "But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

MAT 13:37-43 He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Since Pentecost represents the time the actual harvest of the firstfruits will take place, let's reflect on exactly what it means to be part of the first harvest of Yahuwah's children. To do so, let's examine one of the best examples of being a firstfruit: the story of Joseph.

As we're all aware, Joseph symbolized a savior in the account found in the book of GEN. But, the story of Joseph is also the story of what it is like to be a firstfruit. As a matter of fact, there are three major lessons applicable to the firstfruits contained within the example of Joseph:

1. Firstfruits receive a special invitation or calling.

JOH 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..."
The apostle Paul tells us why Yahuwah selects the ones He does to be included among the firstfruits:

1CO 1:26 Just look at yourselves, brothers; look at those whom Yahuwah has called! Not many of you are wise by the world's standards, not many wield power or boast noble birth. (JNT)

1CO 1:27-28 But Yahuwah has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and

Yahuwah has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised Yahuwah has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are [JNT: the world considers important],

1CO 1:29 so that no one should boast before Yahuwah. (JNT)

JOSEPH: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE FIRSTFRUITS

The invitation to be included among the firstfruits depends solely on Yahuwah's mercy!

ROM 9:6 But the present condition of Israel does not mean that the Word of Yahuwah has failed. For not everyone from [GSP: descended from] Israel is truly part of Israel; (JNT)

ROM 9:7-8 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of Yahuwah; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed [LAM: reckoned as descendants]

ROM 9:9 For this is what the promise said: "At the time set, I will come and Sarah will have a son." (JNT)

ROM 9:10-11 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived [twins] by one man, our father Isaac; for though [the twins] were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that Yahuwah's purpose according to [His] choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, (NAS)

ROM 9:12-15 it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with Yahuwah? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

ROM 9:16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on Yahuwah's mercy. (NIV)

Only those who are chosen by the Father can truly understand His purpose and plan:

1CO 2:9-11 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which Yahuwah has prepared for those who love Him." But Yahuwah has revealed them to us through His Ruwach. For the Ruwaxh searches all things, yes, the deep things of Yahuwah. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of Yahuwah except the Ruwach of Yahuwah.

1CO 2:12-13 These are the things we are talking about when we avoid the manner of speaking that human wisdom would dictate and instead use a manner of speaking taught by the spirit, by which we explain things of the spirit to people who have the spirit. (JNT)

1CO 2:14 But the natural [PHL: unspiritual] man does not receive the things of the Ruwach of Yahuwah, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Today, we can come to understand the importance of our calling through the written Word in our possession as we are helped to better understand that Word by Yahuwah's servants. The situation was different in Joseph's day. He didn't have the examples and teachings we do; in fact, his life

JOSEPH: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE FIRSTFRUITS

story is part of our teaching. Yahuwah communicated with him in a different method. Out of all of Jacob's sons, only Joseph was selected by Yahuwah to receive a position of greatness.

GEN 37:5-11 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind [REB: did not forget the incident]. (NIV)

Yahuwah revealed to Joseph that his position was to be greater than his brothers—just as Yahuwah has revealed to us how special is the privilege He has extended to us: to be included in the First Resurrection. In his youthful zeal, Joseph related his chosen status to his brothers. In one sense, it was a mistake because this led to increased animosity and eventually to the attack of his brothers against him. In another sense, it would be a witness to them of Yahuwah's great mercy when they eventually found salvation under Joseph's rule.

Throughout the example of Joseph, we are shown how he never lost sight of the special calling he had been given. He knew that Yahuwah had selected him for a special position of rulership in the future. Like Joseph, we too need to continually reflect on the fantastic privilege Yahuwah has extended to us in being part of the harvest of the firstfruits.

2. Firstfruits are required to live by faith and humility.

Those in the later harvest will have evidence they can see to substantiate Yahuwah's promises. The first harvest will have already occurred and the certainty of salvation will be all around—Ha'Mashyach ruling from Jerusalem, and resurrected biblical figures like Abraham, Moses, David, Paul, Peter, John, etc.

Joseph knew from the dreams that Yahuwah had given him that his future was fabulous, yet the next 13 years of his life never indicated that. First of all, he was sold by his own brothers into slavery.

GEN 37:23-28 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe he was wearing—and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed. So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled

JOSEPH: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE FIRSTFRUITS

Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt. (NIV)

It is important to note that Joseph was a slave in Egypt.

GEN 39:1-6 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. Yahuwah was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that Yahuwah was with him and that Yahuwah gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, Yahuwah blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of Yahuwah was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. So he left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.... (NIV)

Yahuwah intervened time and again with blessings to keep Joseph aware that He was continually with Joseph.

GEN 39:6 (cont.)-10 Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against Yahuwah?" And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. (NIV)

Joseph's faith prompted him to remain obedient to Yahuwah's law. At no point in the example of Joseph is he ever depicted transgressing the Ten Commandments. As a type of savior, the record must omit the commission of any sin. In addition, since he was also a type of all firstfruits, no sin could be attributed to him as one who had been shown Yahuwah's favor and come under Yahuwah's grace.

GEN 39:11-20 One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. (NIV)

JOSEPH: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE FIRSTFRUITS

Despite Joseph's obedience to Yahuwah he found himself again mistreated—disparaged by a liar and cast into prison.

GEN 39:20 (cont.)-23 But while Joseph was there in the prison, Yahuwah was with him; He showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because Yahuwah was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did. (NIV)

Once again, after suffering what seemed to be another setback, even worse than the one before, Yahuwah's blessings helped Joseph keep in mind that Yahuwah was continuing to fulfill His purpose for Joseph.

GEN 40:1-8 Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them. After they had been in custody for some time, each of the two men—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison—had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to Yahuwah? Tell me your dreams." (NIV)

Despite being a prisoner in Egypt, Joseph clearly identified himself as a servant of Yahuwah.

GEN 40:9-15 So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, "In my dream I saw a vine in front of me, and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and put the cup in his hand." "This is what it means," Joseph said to him. "The three branches are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."

Joseph was tiring of his continuing trials and sought help from the hand of man.

GEN 40:16-23 When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread. In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head." "This is what it means," Joseph said. "The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat away your flesh." Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He

JOSEPH: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE FIRSTFRUITS

lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand, but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation. The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him. (NIV)

Joseph learned not to put his trust in the arm of flesh—only in Yahuwah!

GEN 41:1-13 When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted-- thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream. In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him. Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged." (NIV)

Like Joseph, we never know what kind of impression we leave on people.

Joseph's faith involved seeing Yahuwah's hand in his life. It involved reflecting back to when Yahuwah first revealed His plan for Joseph—back to his initial calling. Every major event in his life involved Yahuwah's hand in propelling him toward his ultimate destiny.

GEN 41:14-16, 25 So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but Yahuwah will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."...Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. Yahuwah has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do." (NIV)

Joseph exhibited true humility. Rather than attempting to impress Pharaoh to receive favor, Joseph gave Yahuwah all the credit.

The culmination of Joseph's humility was the realization of his calling.

GEN 41:38-44, 46 So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the Ruwach of Yahuwah?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since Yahuwah has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be

JOSEPH: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE FIRSTFRUITS

greater than you." So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt."...Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. (NIV)

In all things, Joseph gave Yahuwah the credit—he never attempted to take any credit for himself. Even in naming his sons, he reflected on what Yahuwah had done for him:

GEN 41:50-51 Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because Yahuwah has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." (NIV)

Manasseh = Forgetting

Because Yahuwah helped him forget (i.e. not get bitter over all the unfairness he had experienced in Egypt and to forgive the actions of his brothers).

GEN 41:52 The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because Yahuwah has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering." (NIV)

Ephraim = Fruitful

Because Yahuwah had given him incredible blessings after he had endured so many years of injustice and suffering.

Like Joseph, we must approach the setbacks and hardships with the faith that Yahuwah is accomplishing something very important with us. Yet, at the same time we must have the humility to understand that Yahuwah could just as easily have selected someone other than us.

3. Firstfruits must learn that righteous judgment involves mercy.

GEN 42:3-9 Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also. Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food." Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected." (NIV)

JOSEPH: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE FIRSTFRUITS

Notice: the first thing that came to Joseph's mind was the time when Yahuwah revealed His intention of selecting Joseph for a special purpose—revealed to him in dreams. There was no reflection on the ill treatment and betrayal his brothers had committed against him.

Joseph exhibits righteous judgment on his brothers by mercifully overlooking the punishment they deserved. Yahuwah states that anyone who steals and sells a man shall be put to death (EXO 21:16).

Righteous judgment involves helping others to come to see themselves so that they can repent.

This is exactly what Joseph did:

GEN 42:19-22 If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do. They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us." Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood." (NIV)

The first step to repentance is to understand that sin demands a penalty. The second step is to understand that we are individually responsible for shedding the blood of our Savior and brother. The brothers had come to the point of acknowledging their mistreatment of Joseph and understood that they were guilty of his (presumed) death:

GEN 42:23-24 They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. He turned away from them and began to weep, but then turned back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes. (NIV)

Tradition says Simeon was the one who bound Joseph and put him into the pit. This decree by Joseph was to stimulate memories of their betrayal 21 years earlier —memories that should help deepen their repentance.

GEN 42:25-28 Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them, they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left. At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack. "My silver has been returned," he said to his brothers. "Here it is in my sack." Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, "What is this that Yahuwah has done to us?" (NIV)

Joseph helped them to focus on the seriousness of their sins. They began to sense Yahuwah was involved with what was happening to them.

When the grain they took back to Canaan was almost depleted, the brothers returned with Benjamin, received more provisions from Joseph and left again. But Joseph planted his cup in

JOSEPH: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE FIRSTFRUITS

Benjamin's sack and had the brothers stopped, brought back and confronted them over the matter:

GEN 44:16 "What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied. "What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? Yahuwah has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup." (NIV)

Judah acknowledged that Yahuwah had uncovered the guilt of the ten brothers who had betrayed and sold Joseph into slavery. They had hidden behind their lie to their father for 22 years: that a wild animal had killed him.

GEN 44:17-34 But Joseph said, "Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace." Then Judah went up to him and said: "Please, my lord, let your servant speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. My lord asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or a brother?' And we answered, 'We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him.' "Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.' And we said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.' But you told your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.' When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said. Then our father said, 'Go back and buy a little more food.' But we said, 'We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' Your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. One of them went away from me, and I said, "He has surely been torn to pieces." And I have not seen him since. If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.' So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!' 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 upon my father." (NIV)

Judah appealed to Joseph's mercy. His appeal revealed that the righteous judgment Joseph was using with his brothers had worked. Judah, as well as the other nine brothers had come to the point of being willing to give their lives for their brother, Benjamin.

GEN 45:1-8 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 with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. 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. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry

JOSEPH: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE FIRSTFRUITS

with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that Yahuwah sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But Yahuwah sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but Yahuwah. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.” (NIV)

Joseph exemplified the position of a firstfruit when he extended mercy and forgiveness to his brothers because he understood that what they had done was necessary to fulfill a much greater purpose that Yahuwah had in mind.

Like Joseph, once we attain a position of rulership with the firstborn from the dead, we will be required to make judgments on the peoples of all nations. Those judgments must be righteous, and to be righteous means the proper application of mercy.

Conclusion

As the green plants standing in Yahuwah's field which have not as yet fully ripened, we need to take stock of ourselves on the day of Pentecost that pictures the coming harvest of all the firstfruits. Do we fully comprehend our special calling to this harvest celebration? Are we living by faith and humility? Are we learning the fullness of mercy needed for judging righteously? Once harvested, our positions will be that of kings and priests. In order to accomplish those roles, we must have mastered all three of these areas. So, like our elder Brother who has gone before us, let's make the most of the time we have in the flesh so that we can be part of the two wave loaves lifted up and accepted by the Father after the sounding of the Last Trumpet!