

GENESIS 43 | Brothers' Second Visit to Joseph

Judah Stands as Guarantor for Benjamin

1 Now the famine was severe in the land.¹ 2 And when they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them: Go again. Buy us a little food. 3 But Judah said to him,

The man solemnly warned us saying, You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you. 4 If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. 5 But if you will not send him, we will not go down. For the man said to us: You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.

6 Israel said: Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man whether you had another brother? 7 But they said:

The man questioned particularly about us and our relatives saying, Is your father still alive? Have you another brother? So we answered his questions. Could we possibly know that he would say: Bring your brother down?

8 Judah said to his father Israel:

Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones. 9 I myself will stand as a guarantor (עֵרֵב) for him. You may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame (חַטָּא) before you forever.² 10 For if we had not delayed, certainly by now we could have returned twice.

Israel Sends the Brothers to Egypt

11 Then their father Israel said to them:

If it must be so, then do this. Take some of the best products of the land in your bags and carry them down to the man as a present: a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, and pistachio nuts and almonds. 12 Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. 13 Take your brother also, arise, and return to the man. 14 And may God Almighty (אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיִם)³ give you compassion (רַחֲמִים) in the sight of the man

¹ What happened to the Abrahamic blessing? This famine is likely a type of the future Tribulation. **Ge 12:10** 10 Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. **Ge 41:54** 54 ...The seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. **Ge 41:57** 57 ...All the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

² If Judah fails, he will lose the right of the firstborn.

³ Ge 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3; 49:25.

so that he will release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

The Brothers Brought to Joseph's House

15 So the men took this present, and they took double money in their hand and Benjamin. Then they arose, went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph. 16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his house steward:⁴

Bring the men into the house, slay an animal, and make ready, for the men are to dine with me at noon.

17 So the man did as Joseph said and brought the men to Joseph's house. 18 Now the men were afraid because they were brought to Joseph's house. And they said:

It is because of the money that was returned in our sacks the first time that we are being brought in, that he may seek occasion against us, fall upon us, and take us for slaves with our donkeys.

19 So they came near to Joseph's house steward, spoke to him at the entrance of the house, 20 and said:

My lord, we indeed came down the first time to buy food, 21 and it came about when we came to the lodging place that we opened our sacks. And look, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full. So we have brought it back in our hand. 22 We have also brought down other money in our hand to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks.

23 He said:

Be at ease. Do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks.⁵ I had your money.⁶

Then he brought Simeon out to them. 24 Then the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet.⁷ And he gave their donkeys fodder. 25 So they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon, for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there.

⁴ The house steward is perhaps a type of the Church. The Church is Jesus' servant and assists him in returning Israel to himself (Ro 11:11-12).

⁵ Even since 70 ad, the Jewish people, despite all the anti-Semitism they have experienced, have been provided treasure by God.

⁶ See *God's Grace*.

⁷ **Jn 13:5** 5 ...[Jesus] poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

The Brothers Feast with Joseph

26 When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present that was in their hand and bowed to the ground before him. 27 Then he asked them about their welfare (וְשִׁלוֹם) and said: Is your old father well (וְשִׁלוֹם), of whom you spoke? Is he still alive? 28 They said: Your servant our father is well. He is still alive. They bowed down in homage.⁸ 29 As he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he said: Is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke to me? And he said: May God be gracious (חַנּוּן) to you, my son.⁹ 30 Joseph hurried out, for his compassion (רַחֲמִים) grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep. So he entered his chamber and wept there.¹⁰ 31 Then he washed his face and came out. And he controlled himself and said: Serve the food. 32 So they served him by himself, them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is disgusting¹¹ to the Egyptians. 33 Now they were seated before him, the firstborn¹² according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in astonishment. 34 He took portions to them from his own table, but Benjamin's portion¹³ was five times as much as any of theirs. So they feasted and became intoxicated¹⁴ with him.

⁸ This fulfils Joseph's prophetic dreams.

⁹ Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin. He received much grace, as his forefather Benjamin did.

¹⁰ This is probably the explanation for Jesus' weeping in the Gospels. Jesus deeply sorrows over his brothers, lost Israel.

¹¹ The Egyptians were Hamitic, while the Israelites were Semitic. It is likely God wanted Israel and Egypt for the next 400 years, where there was no chance of intermarriage. Had Israel stayed in Canaan, intermarriage with the Canaanites was inevitable. In this way God guarded the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Messianic lineage. See Ge 46:34; Ex 8:26.

¹² Was this Reuben or Judah?

¹³ Is Benjamin a type of Saul-Paul?

¹⁴ **Ge 9:21** 21 [Noah] drank of the wine, became drunk, and lay uncovered in his tent.

Commentary

1. Genesis 43.

- a. Ge 42 describes the brother's first visit to Joseph. Ge 43-45 describes their second visit, when the great revelation occurs. The third visit is when Jacob and all his descendants come (Ge 46).
- b. Despite the chapter divisions, Ge 43:1-45:28 constitutes a single unit within the Joseph story (G. J. Wenham, *WBC*, 2:419). Like chapter 42, it consists of seven scenes, with the central scene being the arrest of Joseph's brothers (Ge 44:1-13).

A Jacob sends his sons to Egypt (43:1-14)

B Arrival in Egypt; the steward and the brothers (43:15-25)

C Lunch with Joseph (43:26-34)

D The brothers arrested (44:1-13)

C' Joseph's self-disclosure (44:14-45:15)

B' Departure from Egypt; Pharaoh and the brothers (45:16-24)

A' Jacob receives his sons' report (45:25-28)¹⁵

- c. These events took place about 1875 bc.¹⁶
 - (1) Many details in Genesis 37-50 match what we know of Egypt in the early 2nd millennium bc. The Joseph story, in its broad details, is corroborated!
 - (a) The price paid for Joseph, 20 shekels, is the correct average price for a slave in the early 2nd millennium bc.¹⁷ Later the price was much higher.¹⁸
 - (b) Semites were routinely sold into slavery in Egypt.¹⁹
 - (c) Joseph's Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah (Ge 41:45) is common for Semites in Egypt in the early 2nd millennium, but not so later on.²⁰
 - (d) Other Egyptians names found in the Joseph story have Egyptian etymologies: Potiphar, Potiphara, and Asenath.²¹
 - (e) Dreams were held to be extremely important in Egypt.²²
 - (f) Joseph's age at death, 110 years, was considered ideal in Egyptian culture.²³

2. Judah Stands as Guarantor for Benjamin (Ge 43:1-10).

¹⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 418-19.

¹⁶ I. L. Jensen, *Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament*, 67.

¹⁷ Alexander, T. D., and D. W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 209.

¹⁸ Alexander, T. D., and D. W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 475.

¹⁹ Alexander, T. D., and D. W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 209.

²⁰ Alexander, T. D., and D. W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 209.

²¹ Alexander, T. D., and D. W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 475.

²² Alexander, T. D., and D. W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 209.

²³ Alexander, T. D., and D. W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 475.

- a. The famine is severe (v. 1) and Israel and his sons have no more grain (v. 2). They and their little ones will die if action is not taken (v. 8). They can no longer delay.
 - (1) The severe famine drives the brothers closer and closer to Joseph. In the same way, the future Tribulation will drive Israel closer and closer to Messiah Jesus. Today, severe life difficulties are to drive us closer and closer to Jesus.
- b. Judah understands that the brothers' return to Egypt must include Benjamin (v. 5). Before his father Israel, Judah assumes responsibility for Benjamin's life, as Benjamin's guarantor (v. 9). If he doesn't bring Benjamin back to Israel, the wrong/guilt/sin will be on Judah forever (v. 9).
 - (1) Judah takes personal responsibility for Benjamin, while Reuben didn't.
 - (a) **Ge 42:37** 37 ...Reuben said to his father, Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you.
- c. Judah is now leading and speaking for his brothers. This is because Jacob has already refused Reuben (Ge 35:22; 49:4), Simeon, and Levi (Ge 34). From this point on, Judah is the leader of Jacob's sons (Ge 49:8-10).

3. Israel Sends the Brothers to Egypt (Ge 43:11-14).

- a. Reluctantly, Israel sends the brothers, including Benjamin (v. 13), to Egypt, with presents from the land of Canaan (v. 11) and the money from their sacks (v. 12).
- b. He prays that El Shaddai will give the brothers mercy in sight of the man and that Simeon and Benjamin will be released to return, though he doesn't mention Simeon by name (v. 14). He's knows he might lose one or more of his children (v. 14).
 - (1) It's interesting that Jesus was from Judah, Peter and Judas were from Simeon, and Paul was from Benjamin.

4. The Brothers Brought to Joseph's House (Ge 43:15-25).

- a. When Joseph sees his brothers, including Benjamin, he orders a feast for them (v. 16).
- b. The brothers come closer and closer to Joseph. First, they stand before him, probably in a public hall (v. 15). Then they are brought to Joseph's house (v. 17). Next they come near to Joseph's house steward (v. 19). Then they are brought into the house (v. 24).
- c. The brothers are fearful (v. 18), yet honest with the house steward about the money in their sacks (vv. 20-22).
- d. The steward reassures the brothers not to be afraid and refers to the grace of "your God and the God of your father" (v. 23). He returns Simeon to them (v. 23), gives them water, and gives their donkeys fodder (v. 24). At noon, the man will arrive (v. 25)! Imagine the anticipation of both parties.
- e. The steward may be a type of the Gentile church, Jesus' servant, who assists him in revealing his grace toward the remnant of Israel. Like Joseph's steward, we currently understand God's gracious plan toward Israel more than most in Israel.
 - (1) **Ro 11:11-12** 11 So I [Paul] ask, did they [Israel] stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. 12 Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

5. The Brothers Feast with Joseph (Ge 43:26-34).

- a. In fulfillment of Joseph's prophetic dream (Ge 37:5-9), the brothers bow to the ground before him (v. 26) in homage (v. 28).
 - (1) **Ge 37:5-9** 5 Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. 6 He said to them, Hear this dream that I have dreamed: 7 Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf. 8 His brothers said to him, Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us? So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. 9 Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.
 - (2) The calls of hunger bring the guilty brothers to the feet of the injured Joseph (C. H. Mackintosh, *Notes on Genesis*, 329).
- b. Joseph very much cares about the welfare of Israel, his father (v. 27).
- c. Joseph is deeply stirred over his brother Benjamin and weeps privately for him. (v. 30). It is hard for Joseph to control his emotions (v. 31).
- d. Joseph, the Egyptians, and the brother dine together yet separately because of the Egyptians' caste system and their ethnicism toward Hebrews (v. 32). The Egyptians are Hamitic, while the Israelites are Semitic.
 - (1) The caste system in Egypt required that Joseph, as a member of the upper class, eat at a table separate from his Egyptian companions. The Hebrews sat at *a third table*, since they were foreigners (v. 32).
 - (2) The Egyptians believed in their own superiority because:
 - (a) The Hebrews and other foreigners ate animals they regarded as sacred.²⁴
 - (b) The Egyptians followed strict rules for the ceremonial cleansing of their food.
 - (c) The Egyptians shaved off all their body hair (Ge 41:14), and the Hebrews didn't.
 - (3) It is the Egyptian's ethnicism that served to protect Israel for the next 400 years until Moses. In Canaan, intermarriage with the Canaanites was a real threat (Ge 34). But this was not the case in Egypt. By directing Israel to Egypt, God guarded the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and therefore the Messianic lineage.
 - (4) **Ge 46:34** 34 ... You shall say, Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers, in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.
- e. Joseph seats the brothers according to birth order (v. 33) and provides portions from this own table, with Benjamin receiving five times as much (v. 34), a sign of highest privilege. Joseph does this to: (1) honour Benjamin; and (2) test the other brothers' jealousy. The big question is will the sons of Leah and the two concubines allow the last remaining son of Rachel to be honoured. Joseph's test is ingenious!
 - (1) In the Tribulation, Jesus will test the remnant of Israel for jealousy, just as Joseph tests his brothers here.
- f. The drinking and merriness indicates the brothers are passing this first test (v. 34). Another test follows in Ge 44.

²⁴ Herodotus, *Histories*, 2:18, 41.

- (1) “This episode presents the brothers in a different light than before. From Judah's kind speech to his father, in which he was willing to take the blame for any harm to the lad, to their open acknowledgment regarding the money, to their enjoyment at the feast in spite of the favouritism to Benjamin, the brothers displayed a greater maturity about their lot in life. They were aware of God's intervention more than ever before, and so they demonstrated the proper response under the testing of Joseph-but one more severe test was needed to be sure. ...In this chapter the brothers promised to take the blame for any catastrophe (responsibility); they acknowledged their culpability and made restitution for the money in their sacks (honesty); they retrieved their brother from prison in Egypt (unity); they recognized that God was at work in their midst (belief); and they rejoiced in their provisions, even when a brother was receiving more than they were (gratitude). Such is the maturity of the people of God whom God will use to bless the world. Those who would participate in God’s program must be willing to take responsibility for their actions, make restitution when they are culpable, and accept their lot gratefully and without jealousy.”²⁵
- (2) The brothers’ attitude, character, and conscience is noticeably improving. They are on their way to passing Joseph’s test in the next two chapters.
- (3) Just as Joseph tests the heart-attitude of his brothers, so also in the future Tribulation, Jesus will test the hearts of the remnant of Israel in the Tribulation. It is an attitude, character, and conscience test.
- (4) We are undergoing an attitude, character, and conscience test right now, in our “severe famine.” Like Joseph’s brothers, we are to pass this test by relying on God’s compassion/mercy (v. 14), God’s provision (v. 23), and God’s grace (v. 29).²⁶

6. Application.

- a. Understand that Genesis is the Bible in miniature. Believe Joseph is a type of Jesus.
- b. Realise how deeply Jesus cares for lost Israel. As Jesus’ stewards, share the message of God’s grace with Jewish people (and Gentiles, too).
- c. Expect Jesus to test the attitude, character, and conscience of the remnant of Israel at his second coming.
- d. Understand that the remnant of Israel will be regathered to Jesus in the end times.
- e. Allow the severe famines in your life to drive you closer to Jesus. Pass your own attitude, character, and conscience test.

²⁵ A. P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, Kindle Locations 8247-8255.

²⁶ A. P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, Kindle Locations 8184-8185.