

## Genesis 43

God's intention is to save His people, His chosen family, from famine. Joseph's brothers maliciously sold him into slavery but God has worked out plans so that Joseph is now in charge of Egypt, especially the food supply. The famine has hit Canaan and Joseph's brothers have traveled to Egypt to buy food. But Joseph questions his brothers' sincerity so he tests them. He has kept Simeon in custody to see if the brothers will, in fact, return for him and Joseph gave them their money back, clandestinely. He commands them to bring their youngest brother to Egypt, Benjamin, or they will receive no more food. In this chapter, the brothers return to Egypt, with Benjamin, and Joseph works to test the brothers' loyalty toward Benjamin (chapter 44) before he finally reveals himself to them, after which Jacob and the rest of the family will immigrate to Egypt.

### TRANSLATION - 43:1-14:

**1** Now the famine [was] heavy in the land. **2** And it was just as they completed to eat the grain which they brought from Egypt that their father said to them, "Return. Buy for us a little food."

**3** Then Judah spoke to him, saying, "To admonish us, the man admonished us, saying, 'You will not see my face unless your brother [comes] with you.' **4** If there exists for you sending our brother with us, we will go down and we will buy for you food. **5** But if there is not for you sending, we will not go down because the man said to us, 'You will not see my face unless your brother [comes] with you.'"

**6** Then Israel said, "Why did you all do evil to me, to announce to the man [there was] still with you a brother?"

**7** They said, "To ask, the man asked us of our relatives saying, 'Still your father in life? Is there to you a brother?' And we reported to him. At the beginning of these words, to know could we know that he would say, 'Bring down your brother?'"

**8** Then Judah said to Israel, he father, "Send the young boy with me and let us arise and let us go and let us live and let us not die, both ourselves and you, even our little ones. **9** I will be a guarantee for him. From my hand you will seek him if I do not bring him to you. And I will present him to your face and my sin to you all the days. **10** Because perhaps we have delayed that now we could return this twice."

**11** So Israel said to them, their father, "If thus, then this do: Take from the best of the land in your bags and carry down to the man a gift, a little balm and a little honey, resin and myrrh, pistachios and almonds. **12** And a second [batch] of silver, take in your hands and the silver returned in the mouth of your sacks, return in your hands. Perhaps a mistake it [was]. **13** And your brother, take and arise. Return to the man. **14** And may El Shaddai give you all compassions before the man and will send to you your other brother and Benjamin and I myself just as I am bereaved, I am bereaved."

### WORDS:

For the word "famine" and "heavy," see at 12:10. "To admonish" (verse 3; 40x) means to "warn, admonish, be a witness, or testify." "To do evil" (verse 6; 98x) is the verb form of the adjective, "evil," we have seen often before. "Relatives" (verse 7; 22x) can mean "offspring or native lands." "To be a guarantee" (verse 9) is used 17 times and can mean to be a guarantee or to take responsibility as well as to trade or barter. "To present" (17x) means to "set, place, establish." The word "sin" here could be used in its moral sense, of evil toward his father.

"To delay" (verse 10; 10x) means to move at a slow pace, to "drag one's feet." "Gift" was first seen at Gen. 4:3-5. "Balm" is used 5 times; "honey," 54 times. "Resin" and "myrrh" are used only twice and only in Genesis (37:25; 43:11). This is the only occurrence of "pistachio." "Almonds" are found here, Num. 17:23; Jer. 1:11; Ecc. 12:5. "Mistake" (verse 12) is found only here; it is a *hapax legomenon* - a word used only once in Scripture.

“Compassions” (verses 14, 30) is a plural noun, used 40 times in Scripture. “Silver” is used in Genesis 41 times; the first was at 13:2. To “bereave” or to “mourn” (verse 14) is used five times in Genesis; it is used 24 times and means, literally, to be childless or to miscarry.

#### GRAMMAR:

“To admonish he admonished” (verse 3) translates the Hebrew emphatic construction with the infinitive absolute with the same verb in imperfect form. The same form is used twice in verse 7, “to ask, he asked” and “to know we will know.” “Sending” (verse 4) is a participle. “To do evil” (verse 6) is the *hiphil* form, causative in denotation. Verse 8 has a number of cohortatives, first person plural verbs used as entreaties: “Let us arise, let us go, let us live, let us not die!” They denote Judah’s plea to his father. “To delay” (verse 10) is a *hithpael*.

#### ARCHEOLOGY:

The honey, balm, and nuts were all native to Canaan. The spices and myrrh had been received through trade and are now sent to Joseph to trade for the life of Simeon.

#### COMMENTS:

God had revealed to Joseph, through Pharaoh’s dreams, that the famine would last seven years (41:29-31) and would be so severe that it would consume the benefits of the seven years of abundance. Only two years have passed out of that five years of famine (45:6) but Jacob and his sons do not know all this. The famine has hit Canaan hard. When they ran out of the food the brothers had bought earlier in Egypt (chapter 42), Jacob, who is referred to as Israel in the chapter, tells the boys to go back to Egypt and buy more food.

Earlier, Reuben had been the spokesman (42:37) but Judah becomes the spokesman now and will remain the spokesman through the rest of the trial (43:3, 8; 44:14, 18). Judah reminds Dad twice (43:3, 5) that “the man,” perhaps he did not know Joseph’s name or title, promised they would not see his face again, to buy grain, if they did not bring Benjamin to Egypt. Ostensibly, Joseph required this to prove they were not spies (42:16) but that accusation will not be made again. Judah states the men will go to Egypt, if Benjamin goes with them, but if not, they will not go.

Israel laments why the men told Joseph that they had another brother. In verse 7, the sons reply that Joseph questioned them particularly (evidenced by the Hebrew emphatic construction; see “Grammar.”) about their family. We do not have a record in chapter 42 of Joseph asking specifically if they had a younger brother. From that chapter, the brothers volunteered the information first. Yet, they are correct, here, that they could not have known in any way that Joseph would have required them to bring Benjamin to Egypt.

So, Judah responds again to Jacob (verse 8) that if he sends Benjamin with them, they will go down. If not, they will not go and they will all die, three generations of Hebrews. Similar to Reuben’s offer in 42:37, here Judah offers himself as a guarantee that he will be responsible for Benjamin and bring him back and Simeon. Reuben had offered the life of his two; we do not know what Judah had in mind, guaranteeing himself as responsible for the other two brothers, but especially Benjamin. Yet, he did acknowledge he would carry his blame forever (verse 9). Judah also regrets the delay for they could have made two trips to Egypt within that time frame.

Israel concedes in the face of the obvious and informs the sons they should take the best of the land, as a present, to “the man.” From the land of Canaan, they take balm, honey, pistachios and almonds. From what they had bartered, they were to take resin and myrrh. Since they had (somehow!) brought the money back from the first trip (42:35), they were to take that money back with them and a second bundle, or double. “Perhaps,” Jacob acknowledges, “it was a mistake.” Listed last among the things they were to take to Egypt, Israel adds “take your brother.”

Verse 14 is a prayerful blessing on the success of his sons. He calls on God Almighty (cf. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Exo. 6:3; Ezekiel 10:5) motivate compassion in the heart of

“the man” so that he will release their brother, Simeon, and Benjamin. Finally, Israel is resolved that if he loses his children and is bereaved, then he will just be bereaved.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - As we indicated in the last chapter, it might be Judah’s willingness to offer himself in place of Benjamin and Simeon that compelled God to bring Jesus into the world through his family (cf. 49:9-10). Otherwise, there is no reason for God to have chosen Judah as the tribe of the kings. Judah will refer to this “guarantee” promise again in 44:32.

*Contemporaries of Moses* - Canaan was a land known for its honey (Deut. 8:7-10).

*Later Hebrew writers* - After the nation of Israel splits, following the sins of King Solomon, the tribe of Benjamin will unite, in the south, with the tribe of Judah (1 Kings 12:21). From that point on, “Benjamin” and “Judah” are found together dozens of times. Perhaps this event helps explain why Job wanted someone to be a “guarantee” for him (Job 17:3). Solomon will warn his son about being a guarantee for others (Prov. 6:1; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13).

*NT writers* - Jesus, the descendant of Judah (Rev. 5:5), will become a “guarantee” for all mankind when He offers Himself for the sins of the world (Rom. 3:21-26).

#### TRANSLATION - 43:15-24:

**15** Then the men took that gift and a second [batch] of silver they took in their hand and Benjamin and they arose and went down to Egypt and they stood before Joseph. **16** Then Joseph saw with them Benjamin and he spoke to one over his house, “Bring the men to the house and slaughter a slaughter and prepare that with me the men will eat at noon.”

**17** So the man did just as Joseph said and the man brought the men to the house of Joseph. **18** Then the men saw that they were brought to the house of Joseph and they said, “On account of the silver returned in our sacks at the beginning we ourselves are being brought, to roll over us and to fall on us and to take us for servants and our donkeys.”

**19** Then they approached the man who [was] over the house of Joseph and they spoke to him at the door of the house, **20** they said, “O, my lord, to go down, we went down at the beginning to buy food **21** and it was that we came to the lodging place and we opened our sacks and, behold, silver of a man in the mouth of his sack, our silver, in its weight and we have returned it in our hand. **22** And other silver we have brought down in our hand to buy food. We did not know why there [was] our silver in our sack.”

**23** He said, “Peace to you. Do not fear. Your God and the God of your father gave to you a treasure in your sacks, your silver came to me.” And he brought out to them Simeon. **24** The man brought the men to the house of Joseph and gave water and they washed their feet and he gave fodder for their donkeys.

#### WORDS:

“Slaughter” (verse 16) is a the verbal form of the noun used with it, “slaughter.” The verb is used 11 times; the noun, 12 times. The related word “cook” or “guard” is used 32 times. “To roll over” (verse 18) is used 18 times and generally means “to roll away.” The word “weight” is the word translated for the piece of coin, *shekel*. Here, it means “weight.” “Treasure” (verse 23) is only used five times in Scripture, only here in Genesis. “Fodder” (verse 24) was found only four times in Genesis: 24:25, 32; 42:27; 43:24.

#### GRAMMAR:

“To roll over” (verse 18) is a *hithpael*. “To fall” is also a *hithpael*. “To go down, we went down” (verse 20) is the Hebrew emphatic construction, infinitive absolute with the imperfect form of the same verb.

### COMMENTS:

“The men,” a designation used of the sons of Israel, in contrast to “the man,” take Israel’s present with twice the money, along with Benjamin, and they start their journey to Egypt. Moses passes over the whole trip and presents them in front of Joseph. When Joseph sees Benjamin, Joseph tells his steward, the man over his house, to take the men to Joseph’s personal house and kill an animal (literally, “slaughter a slaughter”) and prepare a meal for they will eat at noon.

The steward begins to lead the brothers to Joseph’s house. On the way, Moses informs us that the men are afraid because they were being taken to Joseph’s house. They fear that Joseph will get retribution on them because they still had the money from their first trip. It is ironic that they fear Joseph will make them slaves (verse 18) when they sold *him* as a slave (37:28)!

As the men were approaching Joseph’s house, one of them (we are not told who) takes the lead in speaking to the steward. They remind him that they came earlier to buy food but at the lodging place, they discovered accidentally that their money was still in their bags, in its entirety. So, they inform him, they have brought it all back, in its entirety. They also brought more money to buy more food. They are simply ignorant about how the money from the first trip was not given in exchange for the food.

The steward, whom we might guess is in on the ruse with Joseph (cf. 44:1), puts the brothers’ minds at ease. He tells them not to be afraid. “Your God and the God of your father,” in the minds of the sons of Israel, would refer to Jehovah God. It does not sound, here, like the steward is referring to the gods of Egypt nor that the sons would understand him in that way. God, he says, put the money in their sacks. He actually had the money and presents the whole scenario as a blessing from God. To top off the blessings, he brings Simeon out to them, unharmed. The boys clearly must be perplexed about all that is happening to them!

The steward brought the men into Joseph’s house and further blessed them. He gave them water so they could clean their feet and he provided food for their donkeys. In the meantime, they all prepared for the meal, at noon, when the vizier would present himself.

### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - Joseph steps out of the picture, probably to handle his work as vizier. In the meanwhile, he gives his steward in charge of getting the brothers settled in. Perhaps Joseph is still thinking about how to test the brothers’ sincerity.

### TRANSLATION - 43:25-34:

**25** Then they prepared the banquet until to come Joseph at noon, because they heard that there they would eat bread. **26** And Joseph came to his house and they brought to him the gift which [was] in their hand, to his house and they bowed to him to the ground.

**27** Then he asked for them peace and said, “Peace to your father, the old man whom you said he was still in life.”

**28** They said, “Peace to your servant, to our father, still in life.” Then they knelt and bowed down.

**29** Then he lifted up his eyes and saw Benjamin, his brother, the son of his mother, and said, “This [is] your youngest brother whom you said to me?” And he said, “May God be gracious to you, my son.” **30** Then Joseph hurried because his emotions grew hot at his brother and he sought to weep and he came to his chamber and he wept there.

**31** Then he washed his face and went out and controlled himself and said, “Set out bread.”

**32** Then they served him alone and them alone and the Egyptians were eating with him alone because the Egyptians are not able to eat with the Hebrews bread because an abomination it [is] to the Egyptians.

**33** They sat before him the first born, according to birth order and the youngest according to his youth and the men looked in amazement, a man to his neighbor. **34** Then he

lifted portions from before his face to them and the portions multiplied for Benjamin, from the portions of theirs, five hands and they drank and they were merry with him.

#### WORDS:

The verb “to kneel” (verse 28) is used 15 times and, in many contexts, is a synonym for the second verb, “to bow down.” This second verb, however, is used 173 times and is most frequently translated “to worship.” That is not the connotation here. “To be gracious” (verse 29) is the verbal form of the noun “grace” or “favor.” It is used 77 times, only four in Genesis (33:5, 11; 42:21; 43:29). “To hurry” (verse 30) is used 81 times. The word “emotions” (verse 30) is the same word translated “compassions” in verse 13. Here, I have translated it in a broader sense. The verb “to grow hot” is only used four times in Scripture. “To weep” is used 114 times, whether for joy or grief. See comments on 42:24 for a list of seven passages where it is said that Joseph wept. “Room” or “chamber” is used 38 times but only here in Genesis.

“To control oneself” (verse 31) is used 7 times and means to “pull oneself together, restrain oneself, or to find courage.” It is used of Joseph again at 45:1, where Joseph could not control himself. “Abomination” (verse 32) is used here for the first time (and at 46:34). It is used 118 times and means an “abhorrence” or an “offensive thing.” In verse 33, the words “first born” and “birth order” are related words. In the same verse, “youngest” and “according to his youth” are related words. “To look with amazement” is only used eight times. It can mean to “freeze with fear, or be horrified.” “Neighbor” (verse 33; 188x) can mean “friend, companion, neighbor.” “To be merry” (verse 34) is the same verb to “be drunk,” used 18 times. The related word “beer” is used 23 times and “drunkard” is used 13 times. Here, it does not necessarily have that strong connotation but, rather, to be “merry,” that often happens under the influence of alcohol. Yet, we recognize that all the other uses of the verb refer to drunkenness.

#### GRAMMAR:

“May be gracious” (verse 29) is a jussive, which is a third-person imperative.

#### COMMENTS:

At noon, Joseph arrives at his home. At that point, his brothers present the present, gifts from Canaan, from his homeland: balm, honey, resin, pistachios, myrrh, and almonds. We wonder how much Joseph really appreciated all those gifts from home! Then, they bow down before him, again fulfilling the dreams he had had and told them (37:5-10; 42:9). So, he asked them about their health, literally “peace,” and asked if their (his) father was still alive. They respond that he is well (literally in “peace”) and still alive. Then, they knelt down and bowed to him. As explained above under “Words,” these two concepts are synonymous and are used here to denote a deep respect for Joseph in his position. Some translations translate the second verb “do homage.” It is the word which can be translated “to worship.”

Joseph lifted up his eyes from seeing them bowing and saw, again, Benjamin. Notice that Moses identifies him as “his brother” and “his mother’s son.” These two are full brothers. Joseph continues his ruse, asking if Benjamin is, in fact, their youngest brother. We know that Joseph is roughly 39 years old (41:46, 53; 45:6), Benjamin is a couple of years younger than Joseph. Then, Joseph prayed a prayer of blessing on Benjamin, that God would “be gracious” to him. As explained under “Words,” this verb is related to the word “grace” or “favor.” This is its only use in Genesis.

Joseph’s emotions, the site of seeing his brother for the first time in 22 years, overwhelm him. He had to hurry out because his emotions stirred within him and he sought a place to weep alone. See comments on 42:24 for a list of seven passages where it is said that Joseph wept. When he could control himself, he washed his face and returned to his brothers and informed the steward to serve the food.

According to Egyptian cultural practice, the brothers were sat by themselves, albeit in the same dining hall as Joseph. Joseph sat by himself and the Egyptians sat by themselves. Under Egyptian cultural practice, they did not eat with Hebrews because it was an abomination for them.

Joseph had the brothers sit in order of birth, from oldest to youngest, which amazed the men. Then, Joseph took portions of food from his table, the table of the vizier, and had it taken to the brothers. But he then took five times as much and set it before Benjamin. There are a few reasons why he may have singled out Benjamin. First, he may be expressing his love for his own, dear brother. Secondly, and it may be in addition to #1, he is providing an opportunity for the brothers to get jealous of Benjamin, as they had with Joseph decades earlier. This sets the stage for the last and final test of their sincerity in the next chapter.

APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - Later, Joseph will inform his family that because Hebrews were “keepers of livestock,” they are an abomination to the Egyptians (Gen 46:34). That will be the reason the Hebrews settle in Goshen, which was an ideal place for them as the pasturage was very fertile.

*Contemporaries of Moses* - With the Israelites segregated in the land of Goshen, it makes it easier for God to affect the Egyptians with plagues while protecting the Israelites (Exo. 8:22). “Abomination” refers to something completely abhorrent to God, often referring to idols (Lev. 18:22, 26, 29).

*Later Hebrew writers* - We will find the expression “emotions grew hot” as well in 1 Kings 3:26; cf. Lam. 5:10; Hosea 11:8.