

# Genesis

## Chapter 43



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### **Jewish Study Bible Introduction: The brothers' second trip to Egypt.**

Chapters 43-45 repeat the pattern of chapter 42, only with variations, greater detail, and much greater emotional tension. Once again, the brothers depart for Egypt, approach Joseph fearfully, find themselves subjected to a frightening test of their honesty as well as accusations of deceit, and once again they return to their father. Chapter 43 records, first, Judah's persuasion of a reluctant Jacob to release his beloved Benjamin and second, the ensuing encounter of Joseph and his brothers – this time all eleven of them.<sup>1</sup>

### **Genesis 43:1**

**And the famine was sore in the land.**

#### **Thirteen Famines in Scripture**

1. In Canaan in Abraham's day (Genesis 12:10)
2. In Canaan in Isaac's day (Genesis 26:1)
3. In Canaan in Jacob's day (Genesis 41:54-57)
4. In Canaan during the judges (Ruth 1:1)
5. In Canaan in David's day (2 Samuel 21:1)
6. In Canaan in Elijah's day (1 Kings 17:1)
7. In Canaan in Elisha's day (2 Kings 4:38)
8. In Samaria in Elisha's day (2 Kings 6:25)
9. In Canaan in Elisha's day (2 Kings 8:1)
10. In Jerusalem in Zedekiah's day (2 Kings 25:3; Jeremiah 14)
11. In Canaan in Nehemiah's day (Neh. 5:3)
12. In an unknown land (Luke 15:14)
13. In the Roman Empire in Paul's day (Acts 11:28)

**[the land]** The land of Canaan.

Jacob and his sons had no relief from the famine. They could not see God's overall plan of sending them to Egypt to be reunited with Joseph and fed from Egypt's storehouses. If you are praying for relief from suffering or pressure and God is not bringing it as quickly as you would like, remember that God may be leading you to special treasures.<sup>2</sup>

### **Genesis 43:2**

**And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.**

**[when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt]** About a year after the first visit, or two years after the famine began (Genesis 45:6).

**[Go again, buy us a little food]** Jacob said nothing of Joseph's terms, hoping he could avoid meeting them.

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<sup>1</sup> The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

<sup>2</sup> Life Application Notes

**[their father said, . . . Go again, buy us a little food]** It was no easy matter to bring Jacob to agree to the only conditions on which his sons could return to Egypt (Genesis 42:15). The necessity of immediately procuring fresh supplies for the maintenance of themselves and their families overcame every other consideration and extorted his consent to Benjamin joining in a journey, which his sons entered on with mingled feelings of hope and anxiety—of hope, because having now complied with the governor's demand to bring down their youngest brother, they flattered themselves that the alleged ground of suspecting them would be removed; and of apprehension that some ill designs were meditated against them.<sup>3</sup>

**Torah Class:** A little time passes, and the famine does not let up. The grain supply purchased and brought back from Egypt is exhausted. Apparently, the 9 sons of Jacob (Simeon is still back in Egypt held hostage) who had earlier sat in a depressed state and did nothing to try and save their clan from starvation are once again completely passive. So, Jacob tells them to go back to Egypt and get more grain. Of course, Jacob is reminded by his sons that they cannot go without Benjamin. Jacob is still unconvinced to hand over Benjamin to his treacherous sons.<sup>4</sup>

### **Genesis 43:3**

**And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you.**

**[Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you]** Judah became the spokesman and reminded his father of the only conditions on which they could return to Egypt. He offered himself as security as Reuben did a year earlier (Genesis 43:9; Genesis 42:37), and rebelled against going if the terms weren't met (Genesis 43:5).<sup>5</sup>

### **Genesis 43:4**

**If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food:**

### **Genesis 43:5**

**But if thou wilt not send *him*, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you.**

Cf. 39:13-20, note. Joseph recognized the overriding providence of God in all that had befallen him. He did not fail to acknowledge that his brothers had sinned and were

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<sup>3</sup> JFB Commentary

<sup>4</sup> Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

<sup>5</sup> Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

responsible for it, but he saw that God's plans for good had taken their sin into account and used it (cf. Rom 8:28).<sup>6</sup>

### **Genesis 43:6**

**And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye *so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?***

Jacob was, of course, reluctant; his scolding (“why did you tell the man you had another brother?”) was an effort to escape the decision he dreaded to make. Yet he must release Benjamin so they could return to Egypt. Otherwise they would all die from starvation.

### **Genesis 43:7**

**And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, *Is your father yet alive? have ye *another* brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?***

[**The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred**] Many things—money in the sacks, the demand to see Benjamin, and inquiries about their family—could have caused them to suspect Joseph of knowing about their people, if not that he was their lost brother.

### **Genesis 43:8**

**And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, *and* also our little ones.**

[**lad**] Benjamin was at least thirty years old (Genesis 37:2-3). He had ten sons (Genesis 46:21), proving further that Jacob's sons married at fifteen to twenty years of age.

[**that we may live, and not die**] It was a matter of life and death or Jacob never would have let Benjamin go.

Jacob, to whom the brothers once lied about Joseph (37:31-35), now accuses them of telling too much of the truth. The brothers are, in fact, still lying, through with a more benign intention. For, according to 42:9-13, they volunteered the information about their youngest brother.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Believer's Study Bible

<sup>7</sup> The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

### **Genesis 43:9**

**I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever:**

**Blame** is from the Hebrew verb often translated as *sin* (see 40:1; 41:9).

Judah accepted full responsibility for Benjamin's safety. He did not know what that might mean for him, but he was determined to do his duty. In the end it was Judah's stirring words that caused Joseph to break down with emotion and reveal himself to his brothers (Genesis 44:18-34). Accepting responsibilities is difficult, but it builds character and confidence, earns others' respect, and motivates us to complete our work. When you have been given an assignment to complete or a responsibility to fulfill, commit yourself to seeing it through.<sup>8</sup>

Surely (Heb "'arav") recalls the "pledge" (*eravon*) that Judah offered Tamar in 38:17. In this speech, Judah persuades his father, who believes he has lost two sons, to surrender the third – exactly the act that he had dangerously sought to avoid in Chapter 38. The commercial terminology is especially apt on the lips of the son that suggested his brother be sold (37:26-27).

**McGee:** The brothers were really quite reasonable in their answer to their father. They told him that they hadn't intended to tell "the man" everything but that he kept probing them. He was going to get his information and wouldn't stop until he did—we know that. Then Judah comes forward as a surety for Benjamin.

Friend, you and I have a Surety today, and He came from the tribe of Judah. The Lord Jesus took that place and became my Shepherd, took my place and took my penalty. I was not able to meet His standard. I was not able to come up to His level. But the Lord Jesus stepped in and became my Surety and gave His life for me. What a picture of Christ we have here!<sup>9</sup>

### **Genesis 43:10**

**For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.**

Interestingly *Judah* was the one who had come up with the plan to sell Joseph to Egypt (37:26-27). Now he had to negotiate with his father in order to get Benjamin to see Joseph.

**[lingered]** Jacob was holding out as long as possible.

**Torah Class:** Then, Judah speaks. Judah, humbled by life, humbled by his daughter-in-law Tamar's bold act when Judah failed to respond to her plight appropriately, now offers

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<sup>8</sup> Life Application Notes

<sup>9</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:173). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

HIMSELF as the surety bond for Benjamin. Now, one might ask, just exactly what penalty could Jacob extract from Judah should he fail on his mission to take Benjamin to Egypt and return him safely home? Well, as we discussed a while back, Judah almost certainly saw himself as the likely inheritor of the wealth and authority of the clan of Israel. He apparently knew that Rueben was no longer going to receive the first-born blessing for he had defiled his father's bed. And, of course, Jacob's 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sons were the ones who led the raid of revenge upon Shechem, killing every male and then leading the plundering of the remaining inhabitants. . . . this would have disqualified them. So, with Joseph, formerly Jacob's favorite, now thought to be dead, Judah, 4<sup>th</sup> in line, must have seen himself as that person who would soon be the leader of the tribes of Israel. Judah, by agreeing to accept all blame if something were to happen to Benjamin, had much to lose. He, too, could have been disinherited. Jacob knew that, too, and must have felt that if it were at all possible for Benjamin to be spared, Judah would do all that could humanly be done to see to it. Here, finally, was a son who could be trusted. . . . Jacob could trust Judah in this matter. But, even more, Jacob would trust God. If he was to lose all of his sons, then so be it. It is in God's hands.<sup>10</sup>

### **Genesis 43:11**

**And their father Israel said unto them, *If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:***

Jacob surrendered and planned to win favor by gifts as he did with Esau many years before (Genesis 33:8-11; Genesis 43:11).

**[fruits]** The "fruits" here were balm (rich in fragrance); honey from wild bees or syrup from dates; figs or grapes; myrrh (a gum taken from trees); nuts; almonds; and spices.

**Carry down the man a present**—From the very earliest times presents were used as means of introduction to great men. This is particularly noticed by Solomon: A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men, Proverbs 18:16. But what was the present brought to Joseph on this occasion? After all the labor of commentators, we are obliged to be contented with probabilities and conjecture. According to our translation, the gifts were balm, honey, spices, myrrh, nuts, and almonds.<sup>11</sup>

**products of the land.** The gifts that were sent by Jacob to Joseph represent the costliest and thus the most pleasing items available. Only the balm, honey/syrup and nuts would have been actual products of Canaan. The spices and myrrh were imported and thus were precious gifts intended to buy favorable treatment from Pharaoh's representative.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

<sup>11</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary

<sup>12</sup> Bible Background Commentary

**take of the best fruits . . . a present**—It is an Oriental practice never to approach a man of power without a present, and Jacob might remember how he pacified his brother (Proverbs 21:14) —balm, spices, and myrrh (see Genesis 37:25).<sup>13</sup>

**honey**—which some think was *dibs*, a syrup made from ripe dates [BOCHART]; but others, the honey of Hebron, which is still valued as far superior to that of Egypt;

**nuts**—pistachio nuts, of which Syria grows the best in the world;

**almonds**—which were most abundant in Palestine.

These gifts of balm, honey, spices, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds were highly valuable specialty items not common in Egypt. Because of the famine, they were even more rare.

As in 37:21-30, Judah's plan succeeds where Reuben's had failed (42:37-38). This is another indication that one function of the Joseph story is to explain why Joseph (the dominant tribe of the North) and Judah (the royal tribe of the South) became more important than Reuben (the first-born). See 1 Chron. 5:1-2. The balm and ladanum (a fragrant resin) recall the commodities conveyed by the Ishmaelite caravan in 37:25. Once again, Jacob's beloved son is being brought to Egypt – only this time with his father's knowledge and consent and as a sign (unknown to all but Joseph) of healing rather than estrangement.<sup>14</sup>

**McGee:** You will notice here that the thing they lacked was grain. They lacked bread, the staff of life. Apparently they had honey, nuts, and spices. So Jacob says they should send the man a gift. "Let's get on the sweet side of him" is actually what he is saying with the gift.<sup>15</sup>

### **Genesis 43:12**

**And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry *it* again in your hand; peradventure it *was* an oversight:**

Showing Jacob's honesty.

**Double money**—What was returned in their sacks, and what was farther necessary to buy another load.

**take double money**—the first sum to be returned, and another sum for a new supply. The restored money in the sacks' mouth was a perplexing circumstance. But it might have been done inadvertently by one of the servants—so Jacob persuaded himself—and happy

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<sup>13</sup> JFB Commentary

<sup>14</sup> The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

<sup>15</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:173). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

it was for his own peace and the encouragement of the travelers that he took this view. Besides the duty of restoring it, honesty in their case was clearly the best, the safest policy.

Joseph's brothers arrived home from Egypt only to find in their grain sacks the money they had used to pay for the grain (Genesis 42:35). Some months later, when it was time to return to Egypt for more food, Jacob instructed them to take extra money so they could pay for the previous purchase as well as for additional grain. Jacob did not try to get away with anything. He was a man of integrity who paid for what he bought, whether he had to or not. We should follow his example and guard our integrity. A reputation for honesty is worth far more than the money we might save by compromising it.

### **Genesis 43:13**

**Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man:**

[**the man**] The very man they'd hated, envied, and sold into slavery. Such experiences teach that it pays to be loving and just.

**Ephrem the Syrian:** "Jacob was constrained by the famine"

Then Jacob was constrained by the famine, whether he was willing or not, to send Benjamin with them. So he gave them supplies and sent them off with blessings and said, "just as I was bereaved of Rachel, so am I now bereaved of Rachel's children." Judah comforted his father and said, "If I do not bring back Benjamin and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. Then they took some of the choice fruits of the land: gum, pistachio nuts, which are berries, and so forth. They then went down and stood before Joseph. Joseph commanded his steward to give them lodging in his house. (*Commentary on Genesis 37:3*)<sup>16</sup>

### **Genesis 43:14**

**And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.**

[**God Almighty**] Hebrew: 'El (HSN-410) *Shaddai* (HSN-7706), All-Bountiful, Supplier of All Needs, emphasizing His providence over all creation. He was revealed as 'El-Shaddai when He planned and brought about the abundance of all things (Genesis 1:20-31; Genesis 8:22; Genesis 49:24; Leviticus 25:20; Leviticus 26:4; Deut. 7:13-15; Job 38:27-41; Psalm 36:6-7; Psalm 65:9-13; Psalm 103:3-5; Psalm 104:10-30; Psalm 105:14-45; Psalm 107; Psalm 135:7; Psalm 136:25; Psalm 145:15; Psalm 146:7-9; Psalm 147:8-14; Malachi 3:10-12; Matthew 6:26-33; Matthew 10:29-31; Acts 14:17; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 9:8-10).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

<sup>17</sup> Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

**God Almighty give you mercy before the man**—Jacob is here committing them all to the care of God and, resigned to what appears a heavy trial, prays that it may be overruled for good.

This is the fourth time in Genesis that **God** is called *El Shaddai* (see 17:1; 28:3; 35:11). **If I am bereaved:** Jacob finally realized there was no other option.

**Ramban, (Nachmanides)** “That he may send away your other brother and Benjamin” In line with the literal interpretation of Scripture, it would seem that Simeon was not a favorite of his father because of the Shechem affair. This was why he did not say, “My son Simeon, and Benjamin,” as he would not mention him by name, and as he left him in Egypt for a long time. Indeed, had there been food in his house, he would not yet have sent Benjamin, and he would have left him [Simeon] in Egypt.

Now Rashi wrote, “The other one: the spirit of prophecy was enkindled within Jacob so as to include Joseph.” In Bereshith Rabbah they also said: “That he may send away your brother: this refers to Joseph, The other one: this refers to Simeon.” This is correct, for at the moment of prayer, Jacob directed his heart to pray in a general manner for the other one [Joseph] also, for perhaps he is still alive.<sup>18</sup>

**Ramban, (Nachmanides)** “And as for me, as I am bereaved, I am bereaved” “And as for me, until you return I shall be bereaved because of doubt. As I am bereaved of Joseph and Simeon, I am bereaved of Benjamin.” These are the words of Rashi.

The correct interpretation is that Jacob is saying that “you can no longer add to my bereavement as I am already bereaved, “He thus consoled himself about everything that came upon him by his great suffering for Joseph. In a similar sense is the verse, And as I perish, I perish, meaning “I have already perished, and if the king will slay me he will not add to my destruction.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Chumash: Classic Questions:**

Why was Jacob concerned that Benjamin would suffer a fatality on the way?

**Midrash:** Could an accident not occur to him at home? Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob said “From here we learn that the Satan only makes accusations at a time of danger”.

**Er’er Bassadeh:** The Midrash was troubled why the verse stresses “A fatality will occur to him on the way.” (cf. Ch 42:38) This led the Midrash to conclude that the cause of Jacob’s concern must have been the dangerous journey and thus, “From here we learn that the Satan only makes accusations at a time of danger.”

In his commentary to the Torah, Rashi cites this teaching of the Midrash, not in 42:38 but here also in 43:14, where we are reading of the brother’s second trip to Egypt. This is because in these verses Rashi was already troubled by a question: Since Benjamin was travelling with all the other brothers why was Jacob concerned for his safety? Therefore, Rashi cited the Midrashic teaching that fear of the Satan’s accusations at a time of danger even applies to a person who is not travelling alone.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

<sup>19</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

<sup>20</sup> Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

**Chumash: The Last Word:** Why did Jacob say, “Now you lack nothing but prayer,” after the brothers had prepared gifts and money? Surely the correct approach would be to pray first to God for success, and then seek a natural means by which God might send salvation?

However, it could be argued that this precisely was Jacob’s complaint to his sons. Judah had suggested that returning Simeon was an entirely straightforward matter that could not possibly go wrong: “For if we had not delayed (due to your hesitation), we would have already returned by now twice in this time, and you would not have been troubled all these days by Simeon’s absence”.

Therefore, Jacob warned his sons, “Even if it is true like you say, that there is no danger here, you still need to pray to God. Don’t just pray to God when you feel it is an emergency. You need his help for a natural plan to succeed too.”

From this we can learn that a person should not only turn to God when he feels he is lacking something. He should also ask God for things which he perceives will inevitably come his way in any case. For, in truth, God is the only provider, whether the blessing comes naturally or supernaturally. (*Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz, 5745<sup>21</sup>*)

### **Genesis 43:15**

**And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.**

Jacob resigned himself to the high risk involved in possibly losing a third son—first, Joseph; then Simeon; and now perhaps Benjamin too. Before sending his sons away, Jacob prayed that God Almighty (*El Shaddai*) might keep them and supply every need.

**stood before Joseph**—We may easily imagine the delight with which, amid the crowd of other applicants, the eye of Joseph would fix on his brethren and Benjamin. But occupied with his public duties, he consigned them to the care of a confidential servant till he should have finished the business of the day.

### **Genesis 43:16**

**And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring *these* men home, and slay, and make ready; for *these* men shall dine with me at noon.**

Joseph was so busy with his duties that he couldn't pay attention to them, even though he saw Benjamin. He was also fearful of breaking down publicly and revealing himself before it was time.

**steward of the house.** A high status and large household, such as Joseph’s, would have required a staff of servants headed by a chief butler or steward. This person would have been in charge of the maintenance of the house, kept track of financial obligations and

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<sup>21</sup> Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

supervised the other servants. Joseph's use of this man as his confidant (see Genesis 44:1, 4) suggests it was a position of high trust. Apparently, he was also a person to whom supplicants could go to intercede with his master (see Genesis 43:19-23).

**ruler of his house**—In the houses of wealthy Egyptians one upper man servant was intrusted with the management of the house (compare Genesis 39:5).

**slay, and make ready**—*Hebrew*, "kill a killing"—implying preparations for a grand entertainment (compare Genesis 31:54; 1 Samuel 25:11; Proverbs 9:2; Matthew 22:4). The animals have to be killed as well as prepared at home. The heat of the climate requires that the cook should take the joints directly from the hands of the flesher, and the Oriental taste is, from habit, fond of newly killed meat. A great profusion of viands, with an inexhaustible supply of vegetables, was provided for the repasts, to which strangers were invited, the pride of Egyptian people consisting rather in the quantity and variety than in the choice or delicacy of the dishes at their table.

**dine . . . at noon**—The hour of dinner was at midday.

### **Genesis 43:17**

**And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.**

### **Genesis 43:18**

**And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses.**

[**afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house**] They didn't know what fate awaited them. They could have had many fears because of all the strange happenings. Being taken to Joseph's house was unusual, and a guilty conscience suspected he was seeking to enslave and rob them of all they had.

**And the men were afraid**—A guilty conscience needs no accuser. Every thing alarms them; they now feel that God is exacting retribution, and they know not what the degrees shall be, nor where it shall stop.<sup>22</sup>

**the men were afraid**—Their feelings of awe on entering the stately mansion, unaccustomed as they were to houses at all, their anxiety at the reasons of their being taken there, their solicitude about the restored money, their honest simplicity in communicating their distress to the steward and his assurances of having received their money in "full weight," the offering of their fruit present, which would, as usual, be done

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<sup>22</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary

with some parade, and the Oriental salutations that passed between their host and them—are all described in a graphic and animated manner.<sup>23</sup>

**McGee:** These men are really panicky now. They can't imagine him inviting them to his home for any *good* purpose. He had dealt with them so harshly before, and now he is inviting them to lunch!

Again, here is something that under ordinary circumstances would be something to brag about. Wouldn't you brag if the President of the United States had invited you to the Blue Room, or, better yet, the dining room for dinner? You would think it was a wonderful privilege. Yet, for these men, such a privilege brings no joy whatsoever. You see, they have a guilt complex. They feel guilty about everything that happens because they are the ones who sold their brother. Guilt changes joy into misery. In their fears, they wonder and begin to speculate. Could this man be plotting to take them as slaves because of the money in the sacks? Well, *they* had not hesitated to make a slave of Joseph when they sold him to the Ishmeelites for slavery in Egypt.<sup>24</sup>

**Ramban, (Nachmanides)** “And to take us for servants, and our asses.” The reason why they mention their asses in the verse is that they would feel apprehensive about them, saying, “Now they will also take our asses with their sacks, and we will not be able to send grain to our families, and thus they will all perish of famine.”<sup>25</sup>

**Ephrem the Syrian:** “It is because of the money”

But when the [brothers] saw Joseph's servants hurrying to unburden their beasts and to bring in their baggage, they said to themselves, grieving, “We have bereaved our father of Benjamin, and we shall never again see the face of our father. I was with treachery that our money was put into the openings of our packs, so that if we escape [the charge of] spying they might seize us and make us slaves [on the charge] of theft. Let us confess to the steward about the money before he begins to accuse us so that our brother Benjamin might free us from [the charge of] spying and the confession of our lips from [the charge of] theft.” (*Commentary on Genesis 37:4*).<sup>26</sup>

**Ambrose:** “They preferred to be justified by their works”

And they began to desire to plead their case to the man who was steward of the house at the door of the house. They still hesitate to enter in and prefer to be justified from their works, for they desire to prove a case rather than to receive grace, and so they are refuted at the gates. But the one who awaits the fruit of the Virgin's womb and the inheritance of the Lord is dealing in the goods of the Son and is not ashamed at the gate. Rather, at the end of his life he drives back the enemy so that the latter, who is aware of his quite serious guilt, may not hinder him as he hastens to the higher things, On this account the steward answered them in a mystical sense. And know who this is, when you read that Moses was faithful in all his house. For Moses and Peter and Paul and the other saints

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<sup>23</sup> JFB Commentary

<sup>24</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:174). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>25</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, *Commentary on the Torah, Genesis*, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

<sup>26</sup> *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis*, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

are the stewards, but Christ alone is the master. It is written, “Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant for a testimony of those things which had been said, but Christ as the Son in his own house, which house we are if we hold fast liberty and the glory of the hope. (On Joseph 9:48-49)<sup>27</sup>

### **Genesis 43:19**

**And they came near to the steward of Joseph’s house, and they communed with him at the door of the house,**

**Ephrem the Syrian:** “The truth that is found”

Then the [brothers] approached Joseph’s steward and said to him, “When we returned the first time we opened our sacks, and behold, there was each one’s money in the opening of his sack. We are now returning it to you because it is not right that we take the money for the grain together with the grain.” But when the steward saw how terrified they were, he consoled them and said, “Rest assured, do not be afraid. It is not because of the money, which I received, what we are bringing you into this house. We have eagerly awaited you because of the truth that is found among you. You are not going to be condemned for something that you did not take. You have been summoned to recline and be seated before your master, for he is just, and by the honor that he has reserved for you this second time, he wishes to make you forget the disgrace that you endured the first time.” (Commentary on Genesis 37:5)<sup>28</sup>

### **Genesis 43:20**

**And said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food:**

**[O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food ...]** They wasted no time before telling of the money found in their sacks and how they brought it back (Genesis 43:19-21). They wanted to clear themselves before Joseph came. They were learning the law of reaping for sowing.

**O sir, we came indeed—to buy food—**There is a frankness now in the conduct of Joseph’s brethren that did not exist before; they simply and honestly relate the whole circumstance of the money being found in their sacks on their return from their last journey. Afflictions from the hand of God, and under his direction, have a wonderful tendency to humble the soul. Did men know how gracious his designs are in sending such, no murmur would ever be heard against the dispensations of Divine Providence.

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<sup>27</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

<sup>28</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

### **Genesis 43:21**

**And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, *every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand.***

### **Genesis 43:22**

**And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks.**

They are beginning to apologize, explain, and plead. They even appeal to this man who is conducting them to Joseph's home—who evidently was an official.

### **Genesis 43:23**

**And he said, Peace *be* to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them.**

**[Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks]** Joseph's steward answered like a real believer and associated their God with Joseph's God, indicating he may have known who they were.

**[I had your money]** This could have been literally true. Their money could have been kept and other money put in the sacks.

**[he brought Simeon out unto them]** Joseph's steward brought Simeon out to them, proving he had full instructions to do so. This would be the first act to calm their fears.

**And he said**—The address of the steward in this verse plainly proves that the knowledge of the true God was in Egypt. It is probable that the steward himself was a Hebrew, and that Joseph had given him intimation of the whole affair; and though he was not at liberty to reveal it, yet he gives them assurances that the whole business would issue happily.

How did the money get into the sacks? Most likely, Joseph instructed his steward to replace the money and then explain it with this response. Note that the steward credited their God, not some Egyptian deity.

Joseph's steward senses the hand of the beneficent providence in these strange events. Much to their surprise, the brothers, honesty works to their advantage. It even restores one lost brother, the hostage Simeon.<sup>29</sup>

**God, Sovereignty**—Joseph attributed his own act of loving-kindness to God Himself. See 42:25. Many times God performs His own acts of grace through human

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<sup>29</sup> The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

instrumentality. That does not reduce the human element of love and generosity, for the human element is very real. It does emphasize the leadership of God as He exercises His sovereignty in human affairs to achieve His own purposes and bless His people.

The steward responded in an unexpected manner. He did not accuse them of anything; instead, he invited them into the house with a blessing of **peace. Your God and the God of your father:** Surprisingly, the steward expressed his own faith in the God of Joseph and Jacob. **I had your money:** Of course, this is not the whole truth.<sup>30</sup>

### **Genesis 43:24**

**And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender.**

**Brought the men into Joseph's house, etc.**—This is exactly the way in which a Hindoo receives a guest. As soon as he enters, one of the civilities is the presenting of water to wash his feet. So indispensable is this, that water to wash the feet makes a part of the offering to an image.

### **Genesis 43:25**

**And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there.**

### **Genesis 43:26**

**And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.**

A noon meal was prepared for Joseph's 11 guests. When they presented their gifts to Joseph they bowed down before him in fulfillment of Joseph's dream (37:7).

**[bowed themselves to him to the earth]** Here and in Genesis 43:28 Joseph's dreams were again fulfilled (Genesis 37:5-11; cp. Genesis 42:6).

**bowing to honor.** The standard method of demonstrating obeisance in the ancient Near East was to bow to the ground. Egyptian tomb art is filled with examples of servants and royal officials prostrating themselves before the Pharaoh. In the El Amarna tablets (fourteenth century B.C.), the format of each letter contains a greeting, followed by a set formula of honoring the Pharaoh by bowing seven times forward and backwards.

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<sup>30</sup> The Nelson Study Bible

### **Genesis 43:27**

**And he asked them of *their* welfare, and said, *Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?***

**[he asked them of their welfare]** This would have caused them to wonder further about such kind treatment from a total stranger.

### **Genesis 43:28**

**And they answered, Thy servant our father *is* in good health, he *is* yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.**

### **Genesis 43:29**

**And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, *Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.***

### **Genesis 43:30**

**And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought *where* to weep; and he entered into *his* chamber, and wept there.**

Joseph, seeing his brother Benjamin, could not hold back his tears of joy. Benjamin, of course, was his full brother; the others were half brothers. As before, when he talked with the 10 (42:24), he went aside and wept.

**[he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there]** The second time he sought privacy to weep (Genesis 42:24).

“His bowels did yearn upon his brother”—that is, he was deeply moved, and his heart went out to him. I suppose he said to his brothers, “Excuse me for a moment—someone wants me on the telephone,” and he got out of the room as quickly as he could. He went into his own private quarters and he wept. After all these years, he sees his own brother Benjamin. It has been about twenty-two years. Joseph is almost forty now, and Benjamin is a young man.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:175). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## **Genesis 43:31**

**And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.**

**[refrained himself]** This was hard for a tenderhearted and kind man like Joseph to do. They had done exactly as he had dreamed, even calling Jacob the servant of Joseph (Genesis 43:28). His dream of the sheaves was doubly prophetic: of his dignity and his brothers' free acknowledgment of it, and of symbolizing the circumstances under which they bowed to him—seeking corn to save their lives (Genesis 37:5-11).

**Joseph said, Set on bread**—equivalent to having dinner served, "bread" being a term inclusive of all victuals. The table was a small stool, most probably the usual round form, "since persons might even then be seated according to their rank or seniority, and the modern Egyptian table is not without its post of honor and a fixed gradation of place" [WILKINSON]. Two or at most three persons were seated at one table. But the host being the highest in rank of the company had a table to himself; while it was so arranged that an Egyptian was not placed nor obliged to eat from the same dish as a Hebrew.<sup>32</sup>

Joseph's emotion is described as more intense here than in 42:24. The harsh self-presentation of Pharaoh's vizier is rapidly yielding to the Hebrew man's love of father and brothers.<sup>33</sup>

**McGee:** This is a marvelous, wonderful picture of something that is yet to be fulfilled. I hope that you will see this. The prophet Zechariah tells us that Jesus Christ is going to make Himself known unto His brethren someday. They are going to ask Him about the piercing of His side and the nail prints in His hands. He is going to say to them in that day, "These I received in the house of My friends." Then they will recognize Him, and they will weep. He is the One who has provided salvation for them. He is the One who gave His life for their redemption. This is going to take place when the Lord Jesus comes back to the earth. He will be revealed to His brethren, the nation Israel. There will be a remnant there who will know Him. Many of His brethren did not believe on Him when He came the first time, but at that time they are going to know Him.

Likewise, the brothers of Joseph are the ones who delivered him into slavery. They sold him, got rid of him. But now he is going to make himself known to his brethren. Someday our Lord Jesus Christ is going to do just that.

My Christian friend, beware of anti-Semitism. Regardless of how blind the nation of Israel is or what they engage in today, and regardless if they are not all lovely people, it is still true that they are the brethren of our Lord. There is coming the day when He is going to make Himself known to them. It is a family affair. We had better let His family alone. No real Christian can engage in anti-Semitism.

After Joseph had gone to his private quarters to weep, he regained control of his emotions, washed his face and returned to his brothers. He said, "Let's eat."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> JFB Commentary

<sup>33</sup> The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

<sup>34</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:175). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## **Genesis 43:32**

**And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.**

The caste system was in evidence all over Egypt. Different classes of Egyptians would not eat or live together. Joseph was of the highest caste, so he had food set for himself; then food for the other Egyptians, and some for the Hebrews by themselves. Egyptians wouldn't eat with foreigners, chiefly because they ate beef. It was a crime in Egypt to kill cows which were sacred to their deity Isis. Shepherds were also abhorred by them (Genesis 46:34).<sup>35</sup>

**They set on for him by himself, etc.**—From the text it appears evident that there were three tables, one for Joseph, one for the Egyptians, and one for the eleven brethren.

**The Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews**—There might have been some political reason for this, with which we are unacquainted; but independently of this, two may be assigned. 1. The Hebrews were shepherds; and Egypt had been almost ruined by hordes of lawless wandering bandits, under the name of Hycsos, or King-shepherds, who had but a short time before this been expelled from the land by Amasis, after they had held it in subjection for 259 years, according to Manetho, committing the most wanton cruelties. 2. The Hebrews sacrificed those animals which the Egyptians held sacred, and fed on their flesh. The Egyptians were in general very superstitious, and would have no social intercourse with people of any other nation; hence we are informed that they would not even use the knife of a Greek, because they might have reason to suspect it had cut the flesh of some of those animals which they held sacred. Among the Hindoos different castes will not eat food cooked in the same vessel. If a person of another caste touch a cooking vessel, it is thrown away. Some are of opinion that the Egyptian idolatry, especially their worship of Apis under the figure of an ox, was posterior to the time of Joseph; ancient monuments are rather against this opinion, but it is impossible to decide either way. The clause in the Alexandrian Septuagint stands thus, Βδελυγμα γαρ εστιν τοις Αιγυπτιοις [πας ποιμην προβατων,] “For [every shepherd] is an abomination to the Egyptians;” but this clause is probably borrowed from Genesis 46:34, where it stands in the Hebrew as well as in the Greek.

**eating procedures.** The Egyptians considered all other peoples barbarians. Thus they would not associate with them directly by eating at the same table. Joseph's meal was also separated from both the Egyptians and the sons of Jacob because of his high rank.

Why did Joseph eat by himself? He was following the laws of the Egyptians' caste system. Egyptians considered themselves highly intelligent and sophisticated. They looked upon shepherds and nomads as uncultured and even vulgar. As a Hebrew, Joseph could not eat with Egyptians even though he outranked them. As foreigners and

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<sup>35</sup> Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

shepherds, his brothers were lower in rank than any Egyptian citizens, so they had to eat separately too.<sup>36</sup>

It is unclear why Egyptians would find it abhorrent to dine with Hebrews. The phenomenon is probably connected to the reports that Egyptians found shepherds to be “abhorrent” (46:34; cf. Exod. 8:22), a tradition lacking historical corroboration.<sup>37</sup>

**place by himself:** Joseph maintained his disguise, so he followed the Egyptian custom of eating at a table separate from the Hebrews. **abomination:** This word can indicate the strongest revulsion, something that might cause physical illness (see 46:34). The Egyptians might have been repulsed by bodily hair.<sup>38</sup>

### **Genesis 43:33**

**And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.**

[**sat before him**] Egyptians sat at meals instead of reclining as in some other countries.

[**marvelled one at another**] They marveled that Joseph knew their ages and order at meals.

**Torah Class:** Joseph sees that his brothers have returned, and with them is Benjamin. So he orders a banquet to be prepared and served at noon. He orders his servants to bring his brothers inside his house for this banquet; but the brothers think this is a trap. That they are going to be taken as slaves (as they had arranged to happen to Joseph), in retribution for the incident with the money found in their packs. Joseph’s house manager assures them that that is not the case.

Joseph arrives at his home, and the brothers present him with the gifts they had brought with them from Canaan. Joseph inquires about their, his, father’s well being, and they tell him he’s fine; then Joseph spots Benjamin. He is overwhelmed with emotion, and must leave them for a few moments to weep bittersweet tears in private.

Now composed, Joseph returns and the meal is served. What we see in these verses is a completely accurate account of the way a meal of this sort would have been served in Egypt: Joseph eats alone. The brothers eat together as a group, and the Egyptian house servants eat separately from both the brothers and from Joseph. It is well-documented Egyptian custom that the head of the house never eats with the servants. But, why didn’t the servants eat with the Israelite brothers? Well, we’re told in V32 that it was “abhorrent to Egyptians to eat with Hebrews”.

This is interesting stuff. You see Hebrews, as were many Semite tribes and people groups in this era, shepherds. The Egyptians saw shepherds as the lowest class of people, and their mere presence was offensive. An Egyptian would NEVER eat with a shepherd.

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<sup>36</sup> Life Application Notes

<sup>37</sup> The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

<sup>38</sup> The Nelson Study Bible

Egyptians valued cattle, not sheep. That's one of the reasons that the Egyptian's highest deity, Isis, was represented by a Bull. But, soon, another aspect of this Egyptian tradition would come into play: the Israelites were going to be given the land of Goshen to live in. A land where they would be away from the bulk of Egyptian society, to grow their sheep and not offend Egyptian sensibility.

As the brothers sat down to eat, each carefully seated by a servant in a place reserved specifically for each brother, they were stunned to see that they had been arranged from oldest to youngest, in perfect order of their birth. What could this mean? Even more, Benjamin was given a portion of food 5 times everyone else's. Scholars have debated the meaning of this 5 fold blessing of food upon Benjamin, and the general consensus is that in Egypt, a prince or a ruler was given 5 times as much as everyone else as a sign of royalty. Of course, that also raises the question, what was Joseph signifying with this? My personal opinion is that Joseph was honoring the brother he would have had the most affinity to, the one with which he shared a common mother. And, the one who, of the 11 brothers, was completely innocent of any wrong doing in connection with Joseph being sold into slavery. But, we should also not overlook that the very first King of Israel would be a descendant of Benjamin.<sup>39</sup>

### **Genesis 43:34**

**And he took *and sent* messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.**

At the dinner, Joseph demonstrated something ominous to them: the mysterious accuracy of the seating (from the firstborn to the youngest) would increase their uneasy sense of exposure.

**[Benjamin's mess was five time so much as any of theirs]** Perhaps this was done to see if they were still jealous and would envy their younger brother.

**took and sent messes . . . Benjamin's mess was five times**—In Egypt, as in other Oriental countries, there were, and are, two modes of paying attention to a guest whom the host wishes to honor—either by giving a choice piece from his own hand, or ordering it to be taken to the stranger. The degree of respect shown consists in the quantity, and while the ordinary rule of distinction is a double mess, it must have appeared a very distinguished mark of favor bestowed on Benjamin to have no less than five times any of his brethren.

**they drank, and were merry with him**—*Hebrew*, "drank freely" (same as Song 5:1; John 2:10). In all these cases the idea of intemperance is excluded. The painful anxieties and cares of Joseph's brethren were dispelled, and they were at ease.

Joseph no sooner reaffirms the principle of seniority – the brothers are amazed that he Egyptian vizier knows their order of birth - then he reenacts the favoritism for the

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<sup>39</sup> [Torahclass.com/index.html](http://Torahclass.com/index.html), Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

youngest that once proved so problematic to the family. This time, however, the brothers show no resentment. This meal contrast poignantly with the meal to which the brothers sat down after throwing Joseph into the pit (37:25; 42:21).<sup>40</sup>

**McGee:** Also notice that he served their plates. I wish our Authorized Version had used another word here instead of “messes” because that sounds messy, but of course it means portions. And again, he just could not refrain from showing his affection for his own brother Benjamin, so that he gave him five times as much. Now that young man had been through a famine, and this was his first real meal for a long time.

“And they drank, and were merry with him.” It was a glorious affair. And what a wonderful day it will be when Joseph finally reveals himself to his brethren.<sup>41</sup>

### **Book of Jasher: Chapter 52**

7 And in those days the famine was sore throughout the land, and all the people of the earth went and came to Egypt to buy food, for the famine prevailed greatly amongst them, and the sons of Jacob remained in Canaan a year and two months until their corn was finished.

8 And it came to pass after their corn was finished, the whole household of Jacob was pinched with hunger, and all the infants of the sons of Jacob came together and they approached Jacob, and they all surrounded him, and they said unto him, Give unto us bread, and wherefore shall we all perish through hunger in thy presence?

9 Jacob heard the words of his son's children, and he wept a great weeping, and his pity was roused for them, and Jacob called unto his sons and they all came and sat before him.

10 And Jacob said unto them, And have you not seen how your children have been weeping over me this day, saying, Give unto us bread, and there is none? now therefore return and buy for us a little food.

11 And Judah answered and said unto his father, If thou wilt send our brother with us we will go down and buy corn for thee, and if thou wilt not send him then we will not go down, for surely the king of Egypt particularly enjoined us, saying, You shall not see my face unless your brother be with you, for the king of Egypt is a strong and mighty king, and behold if we shall go to him without our brother we shall all be put to death.

12 Dost thou not know and hast thou not heard that this king is very powerful and wise, and there is not like unto him in all the earth? behold we have seen all the kings of the earth and we have not seen one like that king, the king of Egypt; surely amongst all the kings of the earth there is none greater than Abimelech king of the Philistines, yet the king of Egypt is greater and mightier than he, and Abimelech can only be compared to one of his officers.

13 Father, thou hast not seen his palace and his throne, and all his servants standing before him; thou hast not seen that king upon his throne in his pomp and royal appearance, dressed in his kingly robes with a large golden crown upon his head; thou hast not seen the honor and glory which God has given unto him, for there is not like unto him in all the earth.

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<sup>40</sup> The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

<sup>41</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:176). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

14 Father, thou hast not seen the wisdom, the understanding and the knowledge which God has given in his heart, nor heard his sweet voice when he spake unto us.

15 We know not, father, who made him acquainted with our names and all that befell us, yet he asked also after thee, saying, Is your father still living, and is it well with him?

16 Thou hast not seen the affairs of the government of Egypt regulated by him, without inquiring of Pharaoh his lord; thou hast not seen the awe and fear which he impressed upon all the Egyptians.

17 And also when we went from him, we threatened to do unto Egypt like unto the rest of the cities of the Amorites, and we were exceedingly wroth against all his words which he spoke concerning us as spies, and now when we shall again come before him his terror will fall upon us all, and not one of us will be able to speak to him either a little or a great thing.

18 Now therefore father, send we pray thee the lad with us, and we will go down and buy thee food for our support, and not die through hunger. And Jacob said, Why have you dealt so ill with me to tell the king you had a brother? what is this thing that you have done unto me?

19 And Judah said unto Jacob his father, Give the lad into my care and we will rise up and go down to Egypt and buy corn, and then return, and it shall be when we return if the lad be not with us, then let me bear thy blame forever.

20 Hast thou seen all our infants weeping over thee through hunger and there is no power in thy hand to satisfy them? now let thy pity be roused for them and send our brother with us and we will go.

21 For how will the Lord's kindness to our ancestors be manifested to thee when thou sayest that the king of Egypt will take away thy son? as the Lord liveth I will not leave him until I bring him and place him before thee; but pray for us unto the Lord, that he may deal kindly with us, to cause us to be received favorably and kindly before the king of Egypt and his men, for had we not delayed surely now we had returned a second time with thy son.

22 And Jacob said unto his sons, I trust in the Lord God that he may deliver you and give you favor in the sight of the king of Egypt, and in the sight of all his men.

23 Now therefore rise up and go to the man, and take for him in your hands a present from what can be obtained in the land and bring it before him, and may the Almighty God give you mercy before him that he may send Benjamin and Simeon your brethren with you.

24 And all the men rose up, and they took their brother Benjamin, and they took in their hands a large present of the best of the land, and they also took a double portion of silver.

25 And Jacob strictly commanded his sons concerning Benjamin, Saying, Take heed of him in the way in which you are going, and do not separate yourselves from him in the road, neither in Egypt.

26 And Jacob rose up from his sons and spread forth his hands and he prayed unto the Lord on account of his sons, saying, O Lord God of heaven and earth, remember thy covenant with our father Abraham, remember it with my father Isaac and deal kindly with my sons and deliver them not into the hands of the king of Egypt; do it I pray thee O God for the sake of thy mercies and redeem all my children and rescue them from Egyptian power, and send them their two brothers.

27 And all the wives of the sons of Jacob and their children lifted up their eyes to heaven and they all wept before the Lord, and cried unto him to deliver their fathers from the hand of the king of Egypt.

28 And Jacob wrote a record to the king of Egypt and gave it into the hand of Judah and into the hands of his sons for the king of Egypt, saying,

29 From thy servant Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham the Hebrew, the prince of God, to the powerful and wise king, the revealer of secrets, king of Egypt, greeting.

30 Be it known to my lord the king of Egypt, the famine was sore upon us in the land of Canaan, and I sent my sons to thee to buy us a little food from thee for our support.

31 For my sons surrounded me and I being very old cannot see with my eyes, for my eyes have become very heavy through age, as well as with daily weeping for my son, for Joseph who was lost from before me, and I commanded my sons that they should not enter the gates of the city when they came to Egypt, on account of the inhabitants of the land.

32 And I also commanded them to go about Egypt to seek for my son Joseph, perhaps they might find him there, and they did so, and thou didst consider them as spies of the land.

33 Have we not heard concerning thee that thou didst interpret Pharaoh's dream and didst speak truly unto him? how then dost thou not know in thy wisdom whether my sons are spies or not?

34 Now therefore, my lord and king, behold I have sent my son before thee, as thou didst speak unto my sons; I beseech thee to put thy eyes upon him until he is returned to me in peace with his brethren.

35 For dost thou not know, or hast thou not heard that which our God did unto Pharaoh when he took my mother Sarah, and what he did unto Abimelech king of the Philistines on account of her, and also what our father Abraham did unto the nine kings of Elam, how he smote them all with a few men that were with him?

36 And also what my two sons Simeon and Levi did unto the eight cities of the Amorites, how they destroyed them on account of their sister Dinah?

37 And also on account of their brother Benjamin they consoled themselves for the loss of his brother Joseph; what will they then do for him when they see the hand of any people prevailing over them, for his sake?

38 Dost thou not know, O king of Egypt, that the power of God is with us, and that also God ever heareth our prayers and forsaketh us not all the days?

39 And when my sons told me of thy dealings with them, I called not unto the Lord on account of thee, for then thou wouldst have perished with thy men before my son Benjamin came before thee, but I thought that as Simeon my son was in thy house, perhaps thou mightest deal kindly with him, therefore I did not this thing unto thee.

40 Now therefore behold Benjamin my son cometh unto thee with my sons, take heed of him and put thy eyes upon him, and then will God place his eyes over thee and throughout thy kingdom.

41 Now I have told thee all that is in my heart, and behold my sons are coming to thee with their brother, examine the face of the whole earth for their sake and send them back in peace with their brethren.

42 And Jacob gave the record to his sons into the care of Judah to give it unto the king of Egypt.

## CHAPTER 53

1 And the sons of Jacob rose up and took Benjamin and the whole of the presents, and they went and came to Egypt and they stood before Joseph.

2 And Joseph beheld his brother Benjamin with them and he saluted them, and these men came to Joseph's house.

3 And Joseph commanded the superintendent of his house to give to his brethren to eat, and he did so unto them.

4 And at noon time Joseph sent for the men to come before him with Benjamin, and the men told the superintendent of Joseph's house concerning the silver that was returned in their sacks, and he said unto them, It will be well with you, fear not, and he brought their brother Simeon unto them.

5 And Simeon said unto his brethren, The lord of the Egyptians has acted very kindly unto me, he did not keep me bound, as you saw with your eyes, for when you went out from the city he let me free and dealt kindly with me in his house.

6 And Judah took Benjamin by the hand, and they came before Joseph, and they bowed down to him to the ground.

7 And the men gave the present unto Joseph and they all sat before him, and Joseph said unto them, Is it well with you, is it well with your children, is it well with your aged father? and they said, It is well, and Judah took the record which Jacob had sent and gave it into the hand of Joseph.

8 And Joseph read the letter and knew his father's writing, and he wished to weep and he went into an inner room and he wept a great weeping; and he went out.

9 And he lifted up his eyes and beheld his brother Benjamin, and he said, Is this your brother of whom you spoke unto me? And Benjamin approached Joseph, and Joseph placed his hand upon his head and he said unto him, May God be gracious unto thee my son.

10 And when Joseph saw his brother, the son of his mother, he again wished to weep, and he entered the chamber, and he wept there, and he washed his face, and went out and refrained from weeping, and he said, Prepare food.

11 And Joseph had a cup from which he drank, and it was of silver beautifully inlaid with onyx stones and bdellium, and Joseph struck the cup in the sight of his brethren whilst they were sitting to eat with him.

12 And Joseph said unto the men, I know by this cup that Reuben the first born, Simeon and Levi and Judah, Issachar and Zebulun are children from one mother, seat yourselves to eat according to your births.

13 And he also placed the others according to their births, and he said, I know that this your youngest brother has no brother, and I, like him, have no brother, he shall therefore sit down to eat with me.

14 And Benjamin went up before Joseph and sat upon the throne, and the men beheld the acts of Joseph, and they were astonished at them; and the men ate and drank at that time with Joseph, and he then gave presents unto them, and Joseph gave one gift unto Benjamin, and Manasseh and Ephraim saw the acts of their father, and they also gave presents unto him, and Osnath gave him one present, and they were five presents in the hand of Benjamin.

15 And Joseph brought them out wine to drink, and they would not drink, and they said, From the day on which Joseph was lost we have not drunk wine, nor eaten any delicacies.

16 And Joseph swore unto them, and he pressed them hard, and they drank plentifully with him on that day, and Joseph afterward turned to his brother Benjamin to speak with him, and Benjamin was still sitting upon the throne before Joseph.

17 And Joseph said unto him, Hast thou begotten any children? and he said, Thy servant has ten sons, and these are their names, Bela, Becher, Ashbal, Gera, Naaman, Achi, Rosh, Mupim, Chupim, and Ord, and I called their names after my brother whom I have not seen.

18 And he ordered them to bring before him his map of the stars, whereby Joseph knew all the times, and Joseph said unto Benjamin, I have heard that the Hebrews are acquainted with all wisdom, dost thou know anything of this?

19 And Benjamin said, Thy servant is knowing also in all the wisdom which my father taught me, and Joseph said unto Benjamin, Look now at this instrument and understand where thy brother Joseph is in Egypt, who you said went down to Egypt.

20 And Benjamin beheld that instrument with the map of the stars of heaven, and he was wise and looked therein to know where his brother was, and Benjamin divided the whole land of Egypt into four divisions, and he found that he who was sitting upon the throne before him was his brother Joseph, and Benjamin wondered greatly, and when Joseph saw that his brother Benjamin was so much astonished, he said unto Benjamin, What hast thou seen, and why art thou astonished?

21 And Benjamin said unto Joseph, I can see by this that Joseph my brother sitteth here with me upon the throne, and Joseph said unto him, I am Joseph thy brother, reveal not this thing unto thy brethren; behold I will send thee with them when they go away, and I will command them to be brought back again into the city, and I will take thee away from them.

22 And if they dare their lives and fight for thee, then shall I know that they have repented of what they did unto me, and I will make myself known to them, and if they forsake thee when I take thee, then shalt thou remain with me, and I will wrangle with them, and they shall go away, and I will not become known to them.<sup>42</sup>

### **Eidermein: History of Old Testament**

Could he not then still further commit himself to God in well-doing, and trust Him? Nay, could he not also trust Jacob's faith to bear up under this trial? At most it would be short, and how blessed to all the fruits expected from it! Once more the event proved the correctness of his views. As the stock of provisions, which the sons of Jacob had brought, became nearly exhausted, a fresh application to the royal granaries of Egypt was absolutely necessary. This time it was Judah who offered himself in surety for Benjamin. His language was so calm, affectionate, and yet firm, as to inspire Jacob with what confidence can be derived from the earnest, good purpose of a true man. But he had higher consolation - that of prayer and faith: "God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin." Yet, even if God had otherwise appointed, - if He saw fit to take from him his children, his faith would rise to

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<sup>42</sup> The Book of Jasher, Faithfully Translated 1840, Hebrew to English, J.H.Perry & Co, Salt Lake City UT

this also: "And I, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved!" - good is the will of the Lord, and he would bow before it.

It is touching, as it were, to watch the trembling hands of the old man as he makes feeble attempts to ward off the wrath of the dreaded Egyptian. It was a famine-year, and, naturally, there would be scarcity of the luxuries which were usually exported from the East to Egypt. Let them, then, take a present of such dainties to the Egyptian - "a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds." As for the money which had been put back into their sacks, it might have been an oversight. Let them take it again with them, along with the price of what corn they were now to purchase. And so let them go forth in the name of the God of Israel - Benjamin, and all the rest. He would remain behind alone, as at the fords of Jabbok, - no, not alone; but in faith and patience awaiting the issue. Presently the ten brothers, with more anxious hearts than Joseph ever had on his way to Egypt or in the slave-market, are once more in the dreaded presence of the Egyptian. Joseph saw the new-comers, and with them what he judged to be his youngest brother, whom he had left in his home a child only a year old. Manifestly, it was neither the time nor the place to trust himself to converse with them. So he gave his steward orders to take them to his house, and that they should dine with him at noon. Joseph had spoken in Egyptian, which seems to have been unknown to the sons of Jacob. When they saw themselves brought to the house of Joseph, it immediately occurred to them that they were to be charged with theft of the former purchase-money. But the steward with kindly words allayed the fears which made them hesitate before entering "at the door of the house."

The sight of Simeon, who was at once restored to them, must have increased their confidence. Presently preparations were made for the banquet. It was a deeply trying scene for Joseph which ensued when he met his brethren on his return home. Little could they imagine what thoughts passed through his mind, as in true Oriental fashion they laid out the humble presents his father had sent, and lowly "bowed themselves to him to the earth." His language ill concealed his feelings. Again and again he inquired for his father, and as they replied: "Thy servant our father is in good health; he is yet alive," they again "bowed down their heads, and made obeisance." But when he fastened his eyes on Benjamin, his own mother's son, and had faltered it out, so unlike an Egyptian: "God be gracious unto thee, my son," he was obliged hastily to withdraw, "for his bowels did yearn upon his brother." Twenty-two years had passed since he had been parted from his brother, and Benjamin now stood before him - a youth little older than he when his bitter bondage in prison had commenced. Would they who had once sacrificed him on account of jealousy, be ready again to abandon his brother for the sake of selfishness? At the banquet a fresh surprise awaited the sons of Jacob. Of course, after the Egyptian fashion, Joseph ate by himself, and the Egyptians by themselves; he as a member of the highest caste, and they from religious scruples. We know from secular history that the Egyptians abstained from certain kinds of meat, and would not eat with the knives and forks, nor from the cooking utensils which had been used by those of any other nation. But it must have seemed unaccountable, that at the banquet their places were arranged exactly according to their ages. How could the Egyptian have known them, and what mysterious circumstances surrounded them in his presence? Yet another thing must have struck them. In their father's house the youngest of their number, the son of Rachel, had been uniformly preferred before them all. And now it was the same in the Egyptian palace! If

the Egyptian ruler "sent messes unto them from before him," "Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs." Why this mark of unusual distinction, as it was regarded in ancient times?\*

\* Among the Spartans a double, among the Cretans a fourfold portion was set before princes and rulers. In Egypt the proportion seems to have been five times.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Bible History, Old Testament, Eidermein