

Genesis

Chapter 44



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Jewish Study Bible Introduction:

The incident of the silver goblet. This passage recalls Joseph's clandestine return of his brothers' money to their sacks (42:25-38), except this time Joseph specifically targets Jacob's favored son (and Joseph's stand-in), Benjamin (absent in the prior episode). This seems to be a test: Will the older ten brothers jettison Benjamin when his presence becomes inconvenient, as they once did Joseph, or have they finally learned the painful lesson about family solidarity and filial obedience?¹

McGee Introduction:

Again, we have a wonderful and dramatic chapter before us. Joseph has something else up his sleeve when he sends his brothers away with the grain. He tests his brothers relative to their relationship and their affection to Benjamin and their father. Remember, they had sold *him* into slavery. Have they changed? Will they be willing to let Benjamin go into slavery to save themselves? He needs to satisfy his mind in this regard before he makes himself known to them. The test he uses here would give him absolute proof that his brothers would not repeat the episode that he had experienced at their hands.

Judah acts as the spokesman for the group, and he is brought into a wonderful picture here. He is willing to take the place of Benjamin, and his eloquent defense of Benjamin is one of the most moving passages in the Bible.²

Torah Class Introduction:

Genesis 44, I want you to do something: everywhere we see Joseph dealing with his brothers, mentally picture Yeshua dealing with us. As we're going to see, Joseph is a kind of Old Testament version of Jesus; in more ways than immediately meets the eye. No, I'm not in any way suggesting that Joseph was an earlier incarnation of the Word; rather I mean that he is a "type". Joseph is used, partially, to create a pattern after which the Messiah will follow. Naturally, because Joseph is but a mere man, He cannot hold a candle to the essence and nature and stature and holiness of Yeshua HaMashiach; but we can learn some valuable principles about Yeshua from what we read of Joseph. The trick is to recognize patterns while avoiding allegory.³

Genesis 44:1

And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks *with* food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth.

A repetition of what had happened before (Genesis 42:27,35; Genesis 43:12,18-23).

And Joseph commanded the steward—The design of putting the cup into the sack of Benjamin was obviously to bring that young man into a situation of difficulty or danger, in order thereby to discover how far the brotherly feelings of the rest would be roused to

¹ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

² McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:176). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³³ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

sympathize with his distress and stimulate their exertions in procuring his deliverance. But for what purpose was the money restored? It was done, in the first instance, from kindly feelings to his father; but another and further design seems to have been the prevention of any injurious impressions as to the character of Benjamin. The discovery of the cup in *his* possession, if there had been nothing else to judge by, might have fastened a painful suspicion of guilt on the youngest brother; but the sight of the money in each man's sack would lead all to the same conclusion, that Benjamin was just as innocent as themselves, although the additional circumstance of the cup being found in his sack would bring him into greater trouble and danger.⁴

Genesis 44:2

And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

[put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest] This was Joseph's new strategy to humble his brothers before revealing himself. It was his fourth step in testing them to see if they had changed, or would treat Benjamin as they had treated him.

Put my cup in the sack's mouth of the youngest—The stratagem of the cup seems to have been designed to bring Joseph's brethren into the highest state of perplexity and distress, that their deliverance by the discovery that Joseph was their brother might have its highest effect.⁵

put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth—It was a large goblet, as the original denotes, highly valued by its owner, on account of its costly material or its elegant finish and which had probably graced his table at the sumptuous entertainment of the previous day.

Joseph's silver cup was a symbol of his authority. It was thought to have supernatural powers, and to steal it was a serious crime. Such goblets were used for predicting the future. A person poured water into the cup and interpreted the reflections, ripples, and bubbles. Joseph wouldn't have needed his cup, since God told him everything he needed to know about the future.⁶

Genesis 44:3

As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses.

Joseph's master stroke: He tested their concern for Benjamin in order to get them to recognize their evil. (If they had no compassion for this second son of Rachel, then they would have no part in the fulfillment of the promises. God could start over again and

⁴ JFB Commentary

⁵ Adam Clarke's Commentary

⁶ Life Application Notes

make Joseph into a great nation if the others proved unworthy.) The test involved the men's silver in their sacks (as had been done on the first return trip) and placing Joseph's own silver cup in Benjamin's sack and then pursuing them to arrest Benjamin.⁷

As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away—They commenced their homeward journey at early dawn (see on Genesis 18:2); and it may be readily supposed in high spirits, after so happy an issue from all their troubles and anxieties.⁸

Genesis 44:4

And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?

When they were gone out of the city . . . Joseph said unto his steward—They were brought to a sudden halt by the stunning intelligence that an article of rare value was missing from the governor's house. It was a silver cup; so strong suspicions were entertained against them that a special messenger was despatched to search them.

Genesis 44:5

Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing.

[**divineth**] This was to impress them that Joseph was an Egyptian. Divining cups were used among the Egyptians as well as other nations. They bore certain magical inscriptions. They were filled with pure water and in some cases melted wax was poured into the water and the will of the gods was interpreted by the shapes of the wax. Or, gold and silver and precious stones with magical characters engraved on them were thrown into the water. Then words of incantation were muttered, and some of the signs engraved on the stones, being reflected by the sun in the water, were interpreted as meaningful.⁹

Whereby—he divineth?—Divination by cups has been from time immemorial prevalent among the Asiatics; and for want of knowing this, commentators have spent a profusion of learned labor upon these words, in order to reduce them to that kind of meaning which would at once be consistent with the scope and design of the history, and save Joseph from the impeachment of sorcery and divination. I take the word נחש nachash here in its general acceptance of to view attentively, to inquire. Now there has been in the east a tradition, the commencement of which is lost in immemorial time, that there was a CUP, which had passed successively into the hands of different potentates, which possessed the strange property of representing in it the whole world, and all the things which were then doing in it. The cup is called jami Jemsheed, the

⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

⁸ JFB Commentary

⁹ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

cup of Jemsheed, a very ancient king of Persia, whom late historians and poets have confounded with Bacchus, Solomon, Alexander the Great, etc. This CUP, filled with the elixir of immortality, they say was discovered when digging to lay the foundations of Persepolis. The Persian poets are full of allusions to this cup, which, from its property of representing the whole world and its transactions, is styled by them *jam jehan nima*, “the cup showing the universe;” and to the intelligence received by means of it they attribute the great prosperity of their ancient monarchs, as by it they understood all events, past, present, and to come. Many of the Mohammedan princes and governors affect still to have information of futurity by means of a cup. When Mr. Norden was at Derri in the farthest part of Egypt, in a very dangerous situation, an ill-natured and powerful Arab, in a threatening way, told one of their people whom they sent to him that “he knew what sort of people they were, for he had consulted his cup, and found by it that they were those of whom one of their prophets had said, that Franks (Europeans) would come in disguise; and, passing everywhere, examine the state of the country; and afterwards bring over a great number of other Franks, conquer the country, and exterminate all.” By this we see that the tradition of the divining cup still exists, and in the very same country too in which Joseph formerly ruled. Now though it is not at all likely that Joseph practiced any kind of divination, yet probably, according to the superstition of those times, (for I suppose the tradition to be even older than the time of Joseph), supernatural influence might be attributed to his cup; and as the whole transaction related here was merely intended to deceive his brethren for a short time, he might as well affect divination by his cup, as he affected to believe they had stolen it. The steward therefore uses the word *נחש nachash* in its proper meaning: Is not this it out of which my lord drinketh, and in which he inspecteth accurately? Genesis 44:5. And hence Joseph says, Genesis 44:15: Wot ye not—did ye not know, that such a person as I (having such a cup) would accurately and attentively look into it? As I consider this to be the true meaning, I shall not trouble the reader with other modes of interpretation.¹⁰

[divineth] *nachash*, (H5172) *naw-khash'*; a primitive root; properly to *hiss*, i.e. *whisper* a (magic) spell; generally to *prognosticate* :- × certainly, divine, enchanter, (use) × enchantment, learn by experience, × indeed, diligently observe.

divination cup. The cup that Joseph plants in Benjamin’s sack is identified as being used for divination. Just as tea leaves are read today, the ancients read omens by means of liquid in cups. One mechanism involved the pouring of oil onto water to see what shapes it would take (called lecanomancy). More popular methods of divination used everyday occurrences, configurations of the entrails of sacrificed animals or the movements of the heavenly bodies. Lecanomancy was used in the time of Joseph, as is attested by several Old Babylonian omen texts concerned with the various possible configurations of the oil and their interpretations. Another technique, hydromancy, made its observations from the reflections in the water itself. Not enough is known about Egyptian divination techniques to offer more specific information, but in these early periods typically only people of status had access to divination procedures.¹¹

¹⁰ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

¹¹ Bible Background Commentary

Is not this it in which my lord drinketh—not only kept for the governor's personal use, but whereby he divines. Divination by cups, to ascertain the course of futurity, was one of the prevalent superstitions of ancient Egypt, as it is of Eastern countries still. It is not likely that Joseph, a pious believer in the true God, would have addicted himself to this superstitious practice. But he might have availed himself of that popular notion to carry out the successful execution of his stratagem for the last decisive trial of his brethren.¹²

It is the very one from which my master drinks seems abrupt. An ancient Jewish translation (the Septuagint) gives evidence that a second question, “Why have you stolen my silver goblet?” once followed the one at the end of v.4. In contrast to other passages in the Torah (Lev 19:26; Num 23:23; Deut 18:10-11), divination (fortunetelling) is not here condemned (cf. 30:27). The practice suggests Joseph’s ominous dreams, the immediate cause of his brothers’ selling into slavery, and the silver of the goblet recalls the “twenty pieces of silver” they received for selling him (37:18-28).¹³

Joseph sends them away, and the brothers start out, thinking everything is all right. They have no idea of the cup in the sack of Benjamin. But the steward of Joseph’s house comes after them with specific instructions. When the brothers get out a little way, they are overtaken. Here comes a whole troop after them, and they are accused of taking the cup belonging to Joseph.¹⁴

Torah Class: Despite the questions that the circumstances surrounding the banquet served to the 11 brothers must have inspired in them.....being invited to dine in the home of the 2nd most powerful man in all Egypt...the incredible coincidence of their being seated in exact order of their birth...the strange offering of the royal portion (5 times as much) of food given to Benjamin.....they got the grain they had come seeking, packed up their donkeys and left at first light of the next morning. They likely figured their ordeal was finally over.

Hardly. Just as before, Joseph had each brother’s money placed back into his sack of grain; but a new twist was added. Joseph’s silver cup was placed into the mouth of Benjamin’s sack.

No sooner had the brothers begun their journey home than Joseph’s house steward, sent by Joseph, catches up to these Israelites and once again accuses them of stealing from his master. The brothers are dumbfounded. The house steward tells the eleven exactly what Joseph had instructed him to say; that is, why have you repaid me evil for good, and why have you taken my goblet, or cup, from which I make my divinations?

First, let’s address the cup. Actually, it was a bowl.....a silver bowl. The master of the house in Egypt in those days, if judged a sage, a seer, had a special bowl from which he and he alone drank. But, it was also used for the purpose of divining messages from the

¹² JFB Commentary

¹³ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

¹⁴ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:177). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

gods. One can only imagine how Joseph came by this “diviner’s bowl”likely it was a gift from the Pharaoh, because Joseph was undoubtedly, after accurately interpreting Pharaoh’s dreams, determined the highest and best sage, diviner, in all the land. Typically, the bowl was filled with water, and then gold or silver objects, amulets, sometimes with magic inscriptions written on them, were put into the water, and from the reflections the seer would attempt to see the future. It is unimaginable that Joseph actually used the bowl for anything except to drink from.but to keep up the appearance of being thoroughly Egyptian, he used the common knowledge of the bowl as an implement of divination to continue to test his brothers.

By the way: notice that we never hear a word about the brothers’ questioning of whether or not Joseph was an Egyptian.which he was not. So, why NOT? Why don’t we hear the brothers wondering why Joseph doesn’t even LOOK like other Egyptians? Egyptians, after all, are NOT Semites. They are from Ham. And, their physical features are quite different from Semites, the most obvious being their dark, rather than olive colored, skin. Once again, we have another hidden illusion to the Hyksos rulership over Egypt at this time. The whole of the Middle East would have been quite aware of this political situation in Egypt, whereby Bedouins conquered and ruled Egypt. So, it was of no surprise at all to these Israelites from Canaan.these Semites.that the vizier of Egypt looked, physically, much like themselves, even though he dressed in more typical Egyptian garb and adopted Egyptian customs and traditions. For the brothers well knew that Semites were, at this time, ruling over Egypt. . . .it was common knowledge.¹⁵

Ramban (Nachmanides): “In which my lord drinketh” This is intended as a pretext in order to magnify the accusation against them, for he who steals the royal cup from which the king drinks demonstrates disdain for royalty, and bribe and ransom will be of no avail.¹⁶

Genesis 44:6

And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words.

Genesis 44:7

And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing:

he overtook them, and he spake . . . these words—The steward’s words must have come upon them like a thunderbolt, and one of their most predominant feelings must have been the humiliating and galling sense of being made so often objects of suspicion. Protesting their innocence, they invited a search. The challenge was accepted [Genesis 44:10-11]. Beginning with the eldest, every sack was examined, and the cup being found in Benjamin’s [Genesis 44:12], they all returned in an indescribable agony of mind to the

¹⁵ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

¹⁶ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

house of the governor [Genesis 44:13], throwing themselves at his feet [Genesis 44:14], with the remarkable confession, "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants" [Genesis 44:16].¹⁷

Note that the steward says that Joseph uses this cup for "divining." Remember that Joseph was a prophet, and he was able to foretell the future. We know that is so because he interpreted the dreams of the baker, the butler, and of Pharaoh. He may have used this cup, or maybe that was part of the ruse that he used. We must understand that his gift of prophecy was a gift that God had given him, and this was before there was any written revelation. We are not to get a cup and look at tea leaves, nor are we to watch the horoscope—that is all absolute nonsense. It reveals the sad spiritual condition of people today when they turn to that sort of thing. Joseph had a gift. It was not in the cup. His gift was from God.¹⁸

Genesis 44:8

Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?

Genesis 44:9

With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen.

[let him die] Such rashness was in accordance with the Code of Hammurabi, which was known in both Canaan and Egypt. It ordered the death penalty for trivial offenses in some cases; robbing a palace was a serious crime.

[we also will be my lord's bondmen] This shows the absolute confidence the brothers had in one another.

The accusation strikingly recalls Laban's charge that Jacob had stolen his household icons (31:25-27). The latter's defense, "anyone with whom you find your gods shall not remain alive!" (31:32) is probably connected to Rachel's premature death giving birth to Benjamin (35:16-20). Here, too, the curse involves death for the malefactor, but it also entails slavery for the rest of the brothers (44:9). Not coincidentally, death and slavery were the two punishments that the brothers plotted to inflict on Joseph in 37:18-28.¹⁹

Torah Class: In response to the accusations of stealing the divining cup of the vizier, the brothers boldly announce that they are so sure that the cup is not among them, that should the house steward inspect their grain sacks and find it, that not only will they offer

¹⁷ JFB Commentary

¹⁸ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:177). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁹ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

themselves to be slaves to the master, but that the one with the cup should die! It's interesting to me that seemingly every time it becomes necessary for one or all of these Israelite brothers to prove their intent or honesty on a matter, or need to resolve a difficult situation, death is the answer. They killed the males of Shechem for raping their sister. They decided to kill Joseph, but ONLY sold him off into slavery figuring he wouldn't survive very long in those conditions, anyway. Judah ordered that his daughter-in-law Tamar be burned alive for her supposed fornication and dishonoring of Judah's family by her out-of-wedlock pregnancy, Reuben offers his own children's lives to Jacob as retribution should anything happen to Benjamin.....on and on. What this shows me is that up to this point in their lives, ten of the 12 tribes of Israel had very little respect for life, and had utterly no understanding of God's moral principles!²⁰

Genesis 44:10

And he said, Now also *let it be* according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless.

Their proposition was accepted and search was made (Genesis 44:10-13).

Genesis 44:11

Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack.

Genesis 44:12

And he searched, *and* began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

When the steward caught up with them and accused them of theft, he deliberately created tension among them by opening the sack of the oldest first and ending with the youngest. He knew, of course, that the silver cup was in Benjamin's sack. The sudden threat to Benjamin was like a sword thrust through their hearts (cf. Solomon's plan, 1 Kgs 3:16-28). All the conditions were present for another betrayal when Benjamin was accused.²¹

Torah Class: The house steward refuses that offer, but does order that only the guilty party would bear punishment.....and that punishment was enslavement, not death. And, of course, to add drama to the situation, the house steward, already knowing exactly where the cup was because he had put it there, begins his dramatic inspection of the grain sacks with the oldest brother's first, and works his way down to the youngest. And, finally, as he opens the mouth of Benjamin's sack, the glittering of the polished silver

²⁰ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

²¹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

bowl sends the brothers into a frenzy of disbelief and confusion, and they tear at their clothes in anguish, for they know what this means; Benjamin, their father's favorite, may be lost. And, it will probably kill Jacob.²²

Ephrem the Syrian: "They were confounded" The brothers did not know what to say; they found it impossible not to put the blame on Benjamin because the cup had come out from his sack, but the money that had twice come out from their own sacks did not permit them to put the blame on him. Then the brothers, confounded by the things that had befallen them, rent their garments and went back weeping to that house from which they had just departed rejoicing. (*Commentary on Genesis 38:8*)²³

Genesis 44:13

Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city.

[rent their clothes] Rending clothes was a Hebrew custom and a sign of genuine honesty, sincerity, and deep mourning. Joseph now knew his brothers had the right spirit of love and concern for both their younger brother and their father.

[returned to the city] They could have made a break for freedom, but they knew they were innocent. They were glad to return and face charges, proving their innocence.

Tearing clothes was an expression of deep sorrow, a customary manner of showing grief. The brothers were terrified that Benjamin might be harmed.

They "rent" or tore their clothes as a gesture of extreme distress. They all turned around to go back. They are not going home without Benjamin, you may be sure of that. Here they fall on the ground before Joseph again. This time it is in dismay and in agony—²⁴

Genesis 44:14

And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he *was* yet there: and they fell before him on the ground.

Genesis 44:15

And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?

²² Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

²³ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

²⁴ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:177). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yet this time their response shows how well the chastening had done its work. They tore their clothes in grief, a response which they had earlier caused their father to make over Joseph's loss (Gen 37:34). The brothers returned and bowed again before Joseph. Joseph did not actually use divination in discovering their treachery (44:5, 15). He simply referred to it to enhance his brothers' awe of him.²⁵

[divine] What Joseph meant by leading his brothers to believe this isn't stated. Perhaps he was merely playing his part to bring them to complete submission and confession of their guilt, hatred, and envy; to make them merciful and kind to one another; and to find out their true and deepest love for Jacob. He wanted to know what they were willing to do to help a younger brother and protect their father from suffering. Such treatment fully satisfied him that they had completely changed.²⁶

Did Joseph really practice divination? Probably not—he would have no desire or need to because of his relationship with God. This statement was probably part of the test to emphasize how important the cup was.²⁷

Judah comes to the front, and the nobility of this man really stands out now. Remember it is from the tribe of Judah that the Savior is to come. This man makes one of the finest speeches ever recorded. He makes a full confession that it is because of their sin that this has come upon them.²⁸

Genesis 44:16

And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we *are* my lord's servants, both we, and *he* also with whom the cup is found.

[What shall we say unto my lord?] Judah offered no excuse for the cup being in Benjamin's sack. What could he say under the circumstances? He offered for all of them to become slaves. Joseph wanted Benjamin only. The demand brought Judah to the height of his manhood, to make the plea of Genesis 44:18-34 and offer himself instead of Benjamin. The simplicity of the narrative, the pathetic appeal, the filial affection, and the generous devotion to his father and brothers make this plea of Judah one of the greatest examples in history. Every word finds its way to the heart. For Joseph it meant there had been enough suffering for his brothers, and he could refrain himself no longer (Genesis 45:1).²⁹

What shall we say, etc.—No words can more strongly mark confusion and perturbation of mind. They, no doubt, all thought that Benjamin had actually stolen the cup; and the

²⁵ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

²⁶ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

²⁷ Life Application Notes

²⁸ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:177). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁹ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

probability of this guilt might be heightened by the circumstance of his having that very cup to drink out of at dinner; for as he had the most honorable mess, so it is likely he had the most honorable cup to drink out of at the entertainment.³⁰

Judah 's contrition was complete. He offered no excuse; what had happened was the will of **God**. He presented himself and all his brothers as slaves to Joseph.

Genesis 44:17

And he said, God forbid that I should do so: *but* the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

Joseph demanded that the youngest son, the presumably guilty one, become his slave. Joseph's parting words, **go up in peace to your father**, were a test. Would the brothers leave Benjamin as a slave in Egypt as they had left Joseph? For the brothers, Joseph's words must have been especially bitter. There would be no peace in their father's household if Benjamin became an Egyptian slave.³¹

Judah again assumes the leading position (see 43:11n.). Having devised the plan to sell Joseph into slavery (37:26-27), he now offers to accept slavery upon himself and his brothers rather than abandon Benjamin, as he (and they, with the exception of the ineffectual Reuben) had once callously and criminally abandoned Joseph.

Joseph forces his older brothers to face and, moreover, to accept the special place that Benjamin (Joseph's *alto ego*) has in his father's heart.³²

Joseph wants to test them now in regard to their love for their brother. He says that Benjamin is the guilty one; so it is Benjamin who must stay. They had sold *him* into slavery; now he says, "Just leave Benjamin here, and he can be my slave. He is the guilty one. The rest of you can go home." Now listen to Judah—³³

Genesis 44:18

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou *art* even as Pharaoh.

Thou art even as Pharaoh—As wise, as powerful, and as much to be dreaded as he. In the Asiatic countries, the reigning monarch is always considered to be the pattern of all perfection; and the highest honor that can be conferred on any person, is to resemble him

³⁰ Adam Clarke's Commentary

³¹ The Nelson Study Bible

³² The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

³³ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:177). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

to the monarch; as the monarch himself is likened, in the same complimentary way, to an angel of God. See 2 Samuel 14:17, 18. Judah is the chief speaker here, because it was in consequence of his becoming surety for Benjamin that Jacob permitted him to accompany them to Egypt. See Genesis 43:9.

“EVERY man who reads,” says Dr. Dodd, “to the close of this chapter, must confess that Judah acts here the part both of the affectionate brother and of the dutiful son, who, rather than behold his father’s misery in ease of Benjamin’s being left behind, submits to become a bondman in his stead: and indeed there is such an air of candor and generosity running through the whole strain of this speech, the sentiments are so tender and affecting, the expressions so passionate, and flow so much from artless nature, that it is no wonder if they came home to Joseph’s heart, and forced him to throw off the mask.” “When one sees,” says Dr. Jackson, “such passages related by men who affect no art, and who lived long after the parties who first uttered them, we cannot conceive how all particulars could be so naturally and fully recorded, unless they had been suggested by His Spirit who gives mouths and speech unto men; who, being alike present to all successions, is able to communicate the secret thoughts or forefathers to their children, and put the very words of the deceased, never registered before, into the mouths or pens of their successors born many ages after; and that as exactly and distinctly as if they had been caught, in characters of steel or brass, as they issued out of their mouths. For it is plain that every circumstance is here related with such natural specifications, as if Moses had heard them talk; and therefore could not have been thus represented to us, unless they had been written by His direction who knows all things, fore-past, present, or to come.”

To two such able and accurate testimonies I may be permitted to add my own. No paraphrase can heighten the effect of Judah’s address to Joseph. To add would be to diminish its excellence; to attempt to explain would be to obscure its beauties; to clothe the ideas in other language than that of Judah, and his translators in our Bible, would ruin its energy, and destroy its influence. It is perhaps one of the most tender, affecting pieces of natural oratory ever spoken or penned; and we need not wonder to find that when Joseph heard it he could not refrain himself, but wept aloud. His soul must have been insensible beyond what is common to human nature, had he not immediately yielded to a speech so delicately tender, and so powerfully impressive. We cannot but deplore the unnatural and unscientific division of the narrative in our common Bibles, which obliges us to have recourse to another chapter in order to witness the effects which this speech produced on the heart of Joseph.³⁴

The turning point: With all apparently lost and Benjamin about to enter into slavery (and Jacob about to die as a result), Judah again assumes the lead role, with results that amaze all concerned. “*Va-Yiggash*,” translated here as went up, appears also in the introduction to Abraham’s bold intercession for Sodom in 18:23 (where it is rendered “came forward”). Both Judah’s speech and Abraham’s exhibit a delicate balance of deference and assertion, and both succeed in moving the addressee from judgment to mercy. Abraham’s argument, however, rests on the possibility that there is an innocent minority in the evil city (18:23-32), whereas Judah makes no argument for Benjamin’s innocence (even if he believed in it, he could hardly make the case without incriminating

³⁴ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

Joseph or his staff). Instead, he appeals to the vizier's compassion for the foreigners' father and courageously offers himself in Benjamin's stead.³⁵

Ramban (Nachmanides): "For thou art even as pharaoh" it is with great fear that I speak before you, as if I was speaking before Pharaoh.³⁶

Chumash: The Last Word: It appears at first glance that Judah approaching Joseph reflected the power of Joseph – the ruler of Egypt to whom Judah had to appeal. Joseph was at the time appointed by Pharaoh as the ruler of the land. Pharaoh was an absolute monarch, and Joseph was "like Pharaoh," as Judah himself said.

Nevertheless we see that Judah, not knowing that this was in fact his brother Joseph, was not intimidated by authority and acted with the greatest measure of confidence. Without even asking permission from Joseph, he approached him in an aggressive manner and spoke to him in harsh language. This was despite the fact that it was a life endangering move, knowing how Joseph could respond to his chutzpaht!

Thus it appears that Judah approaching Joseph expresses, in fact, the power of Judah. It could be argued that the powerful manner in which Judah approached him, actually broke through a spiritual barrier, making it possible for Jacob and his children later to settle in a manner that "they acquired property there. They were fertile, and their population increased very rapidly" (47:27).

The reason for this could be argued as follows. The strength of a Jew in this world during exile can be in one of two manners:

- a.) One's strength is proportionate to what is possible according to the laws of nature and conduct of the world – according to the limitations of exile, government law etc. This was represented by Joseph.
- b.) One is in a state which completely transcends the limitations of the world, the nations of the world, and even the exile itself. In fact, the person conducts himself with such a strong resolve that he is even able to change the national laws and practices. This was the level of Judah.

Thus, the strength of Judah made it possible for a Jew to be not only a controlling force over the nations of the world (like, Joseph), but in addition, to be able to influence the world in a manner which completely transcends any limitation.³⁷

Genesis 44:19

My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother?

Judah interceded for the boy; his lengthy plea to be imprisoned in place of Benjamin is among the finest and most moving of all petitions. It demonstrated his concern for his father who would surely die if Benjamin did not return with them.

Judah's intercession was remarkable, one of the sublime utterances of literature: He offered no excuse, made no denial, but simply pled with the mighty Egyptian official for the life and freedom of Benjamin. Sir Walter Scott called this plea "the most complete

³⁵ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

³⁶ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

³⁷ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

pattern of genuine natural eloquence extant in any language.” The spirit of self-sacrifice, once so foreign to Judah, shone forth with rare beauty. By his references to his father’s suffering, Judah revealed himself as one now keenly aware of sacred values and relationships.

Genesis 44:20

And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

Genesis 44:21

And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

Genesis 44:22

And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for *if* he should leave his father, *his father* would die.

Genesis 44:23

And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

Genesis 44:24

And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

Genesis 44:25

And our father said, Go again, *and* buy us a little food.

Genesis 44:26

And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man’s face, except our youngest brother *be* with us.

Genesis 44:27

And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two *sons*:

Genesis 44:28

And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since:

[**Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since**] Joseph learned what happened after they sold him and how they deceived their father (Genesis 37:31-32).

Genesis 44:29

And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

[grave] sh^cowl, (H7585) *sheh-ole'*; from Hebrew 7592 (sha'al); *hades* or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean *retreat*), including its accessories and inmates :- grave, hell, pit.

Judah here in this statement is recounting what has happened and the feelings of their father. Actually, the father had been deceived, and Joseph can see that now. He now knows exactly what the brothers told their father had happened to him so long ago. I believe that this is the first time any one of them has said that much. They had said previously that he “was not,” meaning that he was dead.

We can see something else. Jacob is growing in grace, but he hasn't arrived. Instead of trusting the Lord, he is leaning on this boy Benjamin. If anything had happened to Benjamin, it would have killed him—he would have gone down into his grave, sorrowing.

There are Christians today who reveal a very wonderful faith in God at the time when death comes to a loved one. Others actually collapse when this happens. I don't care how much you love a member of your family, friend, if you both are children of God, you know you are going to see each other again someday. The one walking by faith is not going to collapse at a time like that. Therefore, we can recognize that Jacob has not yet arrived. Although he is growing in grace, he still does not have a complete trust in God.³⁸

Genesis 44:30

Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad *be* not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;

[**seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life**] Joseph could understand this for he had been the one loved by Jacob, before being sold into slavery (Genesis 37:3). Favoritism always causes troubles in the home (Genesis 25:28; James 2:9).

³⁸McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:178). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Genesis 44:31

It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not *with us*, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

Judah is unwittingly accusing Pharaoh's vizier of killing his own father, catching Joseph in his own stratagem.³⁹

Genesis 44:32

For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

[For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever] Judah passionately described Jacob's suffering at the loss of Joseph (Genesis 44:27-33). Benjamin's loss would surely cause his death. To prevent this Judah offered himself in place of Benjamin. He was the one who had proposed selling Joseph to save his life (Genesis 37:26-27); now he begged to save Benjamin at the cost of his own freedom. He had already become surety for him (Genesis 43:8-9; Genesis 44:32). At this moving speech Joseph could contain himself no longer. He commanded everyone else to leave so he could reveal himself to his brothers (Genesis 45:1).⁴⁰

Genesis 44:33

Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

44:32-33 Judah had promised Jacob that he would guarantee young Benjamin's safety (Genesis 43:9). Now Judah had a chance to keep that promise. Becoming a slave was a terrible fate, but Judah was determined to keep his word to his father. He showed great courage in carrying out his promise. Accepting a responsibility means carrying it out with determination and courage, regardless of the personal sacrifice.⁴¹

44:33 Joseph wanted to see if his brothers' attitudes had changed for the better, so he tested the way they treated each other. Judah, the brother who had stepped forward with the plan to sell Joseph (Genesis 37:27), now stepped forward to take Benjamin's punishment so that Benjamin could return to their father. This courageous act convinced Joseph that his brothers had dramatically changed for the better.⁴²

³⁹ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

⁴⁰ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

⁴¹ Life Application Notes

⁴² Life Application Notes

Judah's eloquent plea is climaxed by his offer to take Benjamin's punishment on himself—a beautiful illustration of what Judah's illustrious descendant, Jesus, actually did at Calvary.⁴³

See 43:9 n., where the same verb (“*arav*,” “pledged himself”) appears.

Judah offers to take the place of Benjamin, who takes the place of Joseph (vv.27-28). The brother responsible for selling Joseph into slavery (37:26-27) now freely offers himself as a slave to Joseph in order to save Jacob's life. Things have come full circle, and the longstanding a nearly fatal rift in the family is about to be healed.⁴⁴

Genesis 44:34

For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad *be* not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

Judah said, What shall we say?—This address needs no comment—consisting at first of short, broken sentences, as if, under the overwhelming force of the speaker's emotions, his utterance were choked, it becomes more free and copious by the effort of speaking, as he proceeds. Every word finds its way to the heart; and it may well be imagined that Benjamin, who stood there speechless like a victim about to be laid on the altar, when he heard the magnanimous offer of Judah to submit to slavery for his ransom, would be bound by a lifelong gratitude to his generous brother, a tie that seems to have become hereditary in his tribe. Joseph's behavior must not be viewed from any single point, or in separate parts, but as a whole—a well-thought, deep-laid, closely connected plan; and though some features of it do certainly exhibit an appearance of harshness, yet the pervading principle of his conduct was real, genuine, brotherly kindness. Read in this light, the narrative of the proceedings describes the continuous, though secret, pursuit of one end; and Joseph exhibits, in his management of the scheme, a very high order of intellect, a warm and susceptible heart, united to a judgment that exerted a complete control over his feelings—a happy invention in devising means towards the attainment of his ends and an inflexible adherence to the course, however painful, which prudence required.⁴⁵

44:16-34 When Judah was younger, he showed no regard for his brother Joseph or his father, Jacob. First he convinced his brothers to sell Joseph as a slave (Genesis 37:27); then he joined his brothers in lying to his father about Joseph's fate (Genesis 37:32). But what a change had taken place in Judah! The man who sold one favored little brother into slavery now offered to become a slave himself to save another favored little brother. He was so concerned for his father and younger brother that he was willing to die for them. When you are ready to give up hope on yourself or others, remember that God can work a complete change in even the most selfish personality.⁴⁶

⁴³ The Ryrie Study Bible

⁴⁴ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

⁴⁵ JFB Commentary

⁴⁶ Life Application Notes

44:18-34 Judah finally could take no more and stepped forward to plead their case. This was risky because Joseph could have had him killed. But Judah courageously defended himself and his brothers and pled for mercy. And he offered to put himself in Benjamin's place. There are times when we should be silent, but there are also times when we should speak up, even if there could be serious repercussions. When faced with a situation that needs a strong voice and courageous action, remember Judah, and speak up.⁴⁷

Judah explained to Joseph the deep despair his father would experience if he lost Benjamin. Then he offered himself as a slave in Benjamin's place. Instead of showing indifference to his family as he had in the past (see ch. 38), Judah offered his own life to save Benjamin's.⁴⁸

Again, Judah is the spokesman for the group, and any one of them would have offered himself. Joseph tests his brothers, and they all pass the test. Rather than to see Benjamin go into slavery, they are willing to take his place.

My friend, later on in history there came One in the line of Judah, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who bore the penalty for the guilty. "... God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Christ took the place of the guilty.⁴⁹

Torah Class: Verse 14, however, marks a turning point in the character of at least some of the tribes of Israel. Notice that all the brothers returned, with Benjamin, to Joseph's house. Once the bowl had been found, all the brothers, except Benjamin, were free to go their way and return to their families in Canaan. But, they didn't do that. Rather than solve their problem the way they had so long ago with Joseph by abandoning him, they decided to stay with Benjamin and bear together whatever fate awaited them. And, it was Judah who now acted as spokesman for the brothers. The Judah who confessed that it was he that had done wrong, and not his pregnant daughter-in-law Tamar; the Judah who offered up HIMSELF as surety for Benjamin's life to his father Jacob, Israel. Judah now confesses all to the vizier, Joseph, and tells him that while they are innocent in that they did not steal his cup or his money, that indeed, they are guilty before God. Guilty for their many wrong doings. Guilty for selling their little brother into slavery, guilty for deception and for grieving their father nearly to the point of death. And, so, Judah, the most humbled by life, apparently, of the 11 brothers, does in small measure what his greatest descendant, Yeshua, Jesus of Nazareth, will do in infinite measure in the future: he offers himself up to pay for the sins of his brothers.

I want to take a moment to show you some characteristics of Joseph and how he reacts and even his relation to Pharaoh that may help us to understand Jesus and His role, for it has long been understood that Joseph was a type of Messiah.

In verses 9 and 10, when Joseph's house servant accuses the brothers of taking Joseph's silver divining bowl, the brothers said that whoever is found with the bowl shall

⁴⁷ Life Application Notes

⁴⁸ The Nelson Study Bible

⁴⁹ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:178). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

die and all the other brothers will become Joseph's slaves. The response to this offer is this: No, only the one who did the deed is responsible, the rest may go in peace.

Here we have perhaps the greatest principle of salvation in Christ: you are responsible **ONLY** for **YOUR** sins, not for the sins of any one else. Further, no one else can pay the price for your sins; **YOUR** sins are on your head. Was your father an abuser? You are not responsible for his sins. Was your mother mean and self-absorbed? You are not responsible for her sins. Is your brother a criminal? Those are his sins, not yours. Are you rebellious? No one else but you is responsible for your sin. This, however, is a goodnews, bad-news deal; because although you aren't responsible for the sins of others, neither are others responsible for your sins. **YOU** must bear your own guilt. And, since the wages of sin before God is death....**YOUR** death.....your **ETERNAL** death.....what is to be done to escape this fate from which there seems to be no hope?

A little later, in verse 16, we get this profound speech from Judah, and another great principle of salvation is brought to light. Judah admits to Joseph that it is useless to plead innocence before him; because even though they did not commit the crime of which they had been accused (stealing the silver bowl), in fact they were guilty of other crimes; crimes they thought were well hidden and unknowable; crimes long past and nearly forgotten; crimes of the heart and soul. They were infested with sin and as a result lived sinful lives. And, despite their outward appearance of honesty and integrity, and their earnest pleading of innocence, all that they were, all they had done, has been exposed by God.

This is exactly the position we have before Jesus. Joseph says to Judah "how is it that you think you can hide **ANYTHING** from me, don't you know I practice divination?" What is divination? It is the supposed power of the gods used to help the human diviner discern hidden things. Divination is man's attempt to be like gods. Most of the time it was a hoax men perpetrated on other men. At other times men turned their lives over to Satan who gave them certain insights in exchange for their souls. At times, God gave the power to divinely discern to His prophets.

Jesus says there is **NOTHING** about us that is hidden from Him. All the evil and deceit that is in us is exposed to Him. And, how does Yeshua know this? Divination. Yeshua, being divine, knows everything there is to know about us. Things we don't even really know about ourselves. Where does Yeshua get this power of divination? Simple. He **IS** divine.

Then in verse 18 we are presented a principle that can fly right by us unless we open our eyes to it: Judah, in paying homage to Joseph, says this: "...you who are **EQUAL** of Pharaoh...". Oh, how **KEY** this is. Look at Joseph's position in Egypt. He was appointed to power **BY** Pharaoh. Joseph was given authority to wield all of Pharaoh's power, by Pharaoh. Joseph is so connected to Pharaoh that He is essentially the equal of Pharaoh. But, is Joseph the Pharaoh? No. The Pharaoh still exists and is the highest of the high. Joseph was the Vizier, but Pharaoh was Pharaoh.

This was put here that, in addition to knowing this important piece of history, we might understand the relationship between Yeshua and Yehoveh. Between Jesus the Son and God the Father. There is at once an equality....a oneness.....a unity....echad..... between Jesus and the Father, and yet a subservience of the Son to the Father. Joseph wielded the full power and authority of Pharaoh, but he was **NOT** Pharaoh. Yeshua wields the full power and authority of the Father, yet Yeshua is **NOT** the Father. Joseph was the ruler of

Egypt, so was Pharaoh the ruler of Egypt, yet Joseph was NOT Pharaoh. Yeshua is God, but He is not God the Father. He is God the Son. And, the Son is ultimately subservient to the Father, just as Joseph was subservient to the Pharaoh. Do you see this? The relationship between Joseph and the Pharaoh is the earthly demonstration of the heavenly, spiritual relationship between the Word who became flesh, Jesus, and the Father of all things, Yehoveh. Of course, the picture presented in Joseph and Pharaoh is not flawless nor perfect, because the physical can never fully represent nor explain the spiritual. But, it IS a correct picture, as far as it goes.

So, here in Genesis 44, as in all the first of the 5 books of the Torah, we see this glaring Messianic foreshadowing that quickly brings to mind what Jesus said as it was written in Matthew 5:17,18; “Do not think I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come NOT to abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah. . . . not until everything that must happen, has happened”.

When Jesus says ‘I have come not to abolish but to complete’, it can in its MOST literal sense be said, “I have come NOT to abolish, but to fill full (of meaning)’.

The Jews right up until today study only the Old Testament, the Tanach, portion of God’s Word, which Jesus Himself studied. And, all the greatest Jewish religious leaders and scholars and Rabbis, both ancient and modern, who must have read these passages in Genesis about Joseph in Egypt, and Judah offering up his life for his brothers, thousands of times, missed the ultimate fulfillment of it. In fact, all of the Torah and the Prophets were certainly understood to be true; but the ancient Hebrews thought that it was more about Israel’s history and God’s laws and commands, than about God pouring out his heart, about His explaining the need for and the characteristics of a coming Messiah, and about a personal relationship with God. And, it was Yeshua who would fill the Torah and the Prophets full of meaning; not just by explaining it, but by living it, and fulfilling it. It was Jesus that the Torah and the Prophets pointed to beginning with the Book of Beginnings, Genesis. Jesus didn’t come to abolish the Torah and the Prophets, as so many now think. He didn’t come to replace the Old with the New. He came to bring the Older Testament to its fullest God-intended meaning and purpose, through the Newer. And, of course, Jesus IS the New Covenant.

The Lord’s Prayer, as instructed by Jesus in Matthew 6, (which, by the way, is but part of the long discourse that we, today, call the Sermon on the Mount), is given to us as the best and greatest model of how to pray to the Father of the Universe. But, remember: it’s not that we pray TO Jesus, rather we pray to the Father in the name of Jesus. We pray to the Father by means of Jesus. We only have the standing the pray to the Father because we are in union with Yeshua. Jesus didn’t pray to Himself, but to the Father. Even the prayer begins “Our Father. . . .”. But, if there be a second best example of what our attitude of prayer ought to be, it must be Judah’s plea, here in Genesis 44, as he lays prostrate before Joseph. He confesses all; he acknowledges his lack of understanding, his helplessness before the greatness of his master, his guilt. . . . perhaps not of what he was accused, but his absolute guilt beyond measure, nonetheless. He acknowledges that in vein did he try to hide his sin and his evil deeds, but the master was able to divine it all, so it was a futile attempt. He intercedes for others, his brothers, Benjamin, his father Jacob, whom he now loves and values above himself. He pleads with complete honesty of soul; he offers himself up, a substitute, for what was due the others.

And, now, the question is, how will the Master, Joseph, receive these pleadings? Will he rightfully mete out justice for the great guilt of those who are bent over in hopeless anguish before him? Hold your breath, because what will see at the beginning of the next chapter gives us the answer. And, it is put there to show us the way that Yahweh, Creator, God of Israel, will respond to yours, mine, and our pleadings to Him, from our position of absolute, undeniable guilt.⁵⁰

Jacob and Joseph Compared

Both begin with the father being deceived and the brothers being treacherous (Gen 27; 37); both include a 20-year period of separation, with the younger brother in a foreign land. Jacob (31:38); Joseph—13 years in Potiphar's house and prison from age 17 to age 30 (37:2; 41:46) after 7 years of abundance his brothers came to Egypt, (41:53-54; 42:1-2); both conclude with a reunion and reconciliation of the brothers (33:1-15; 45:1-15).

Book of Jasher: Chapter 53:

23 At that time Joseph commanded his officer to fill their sacks with food, and to put each man's money into his sack, and to put the cup in the sack of Benjamin, and to give them provision for the road, and they did so unto them. 24 And on the next day the men rose up early in the morning, and they loaded their asses with their corn, and they went forth with Benjamin, and they went to the land of Canaan with their brother Benjamin. 25 They had not gone far from Egypt when Joseph commanded him that was set over his house, saying, Rise, pursue these men before they get too far from Egypt, and say unto them, Why have you stolen my master's cup? 26 And Joseph's officer rose up and he reached them, and he spoke unto them all the words of Joseph; and when they heard this thing they became exceedingly wroth, and they said, He with whom thy master's cup shall be found shall die, and we will also become slaves. 27 And they hastened and each man brought down his sack from his ass, and they looked in their bags and the cup was found in Benjamin's bag, and they all tore their garments and they returned to the city, and they smote Benjamin in the road, continually smiting him until he came into the city, and they stood before Joseph. 28 And Judah's anger was kindled, and he said, This man has only brought me back to destroy Egypt this day. 29 And the men came to Joseph's house, and they found Joseph sitting upon his throne, and all the mighty men standing at his right and left. 30 And Joseph said unto them, What is this act that you have done, that you took away my silver cup and went away? but I know that you took my cup in order to know thereby in what part of the land your brother was. 31 And Judah said, What shall we say to our lord, what shall we speak and how shall we justify ourselves, God has this day found the iniquity of all thy servants, therefore has he done this thing to us this day. 32 And Joseph rose up and caught hold of Benjamin and took him from his brethren with violence, and he came to the house and locked the door at them, and Joseph commanded him that was set over his house that he should say unto them, Thus saith the king, Go in peace to your father, behold I have taken the man in whose hand my cup was found.

⁵⁰ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

CHAPTER 54

1 And when Judah saw the dealings of Joseph with them, Judah approached him and broke open the door, and came with his brethren before Joseph. 2 And Judah said unto Joseph, Let it not seem grievous in the sight of my lord, may thy servant I pray thee speak a word before thee? and Joseph said unto him, Speak. 3 And Judah spoke before Joseph, and his brethren were there standing before them; and Judah said unto Joseph, Surely when we first came to our lord to buy food, thou didst consider us as spies of the land, and we brought Benjamin before thee, and thou still makest sport of us this day. 4 Now therefore let the king hear my words, and send I pray thee our brother that he may go along with us to our father, lest thy soul perish this day with all the souls of the inhabitants of Egypt. 5 Dost thou not know what two of my brethren, Simeon and Levi, did unto the city of Shechem, and unto seven cities of the Amorites, on account of our sister Dinah, and also what they would do for the sake of their brother Benjamin? 6 And I with my strength, who am greater and mightier than both of them, come this day upon thee and thy land if thou art unwilling to send our brother. 7 Hast thou not heard what our God who made choice of us did unto Pharaoh on account of Sarah our mother, whom he took away from our father, that he smote him and his household with heavy plagues, that even unto this day the Egyptians relate this wonder to each other? so will our God do unto thee on account of Benjamin whom thou hast this day taken from his father, and on account of the evils which thou this day heapest over us in thy land; for our God will remember his covenant with our father Abraham and bring evil upon thee, because thou hast grieved the soul of our father this day. 8 Now therefore hear my words that I have this day spoken unto thee, and send our brother that he may go away lest thou and the people of thy land die by the sword, for you cannot all prevail over me. 9 And Joseph answered Judah, saying, Why hast thou opened wide thy mouth and why dost thou boast over us, saying, Strength is with thee? as Pharaoh liveth, if I command all my valiant men to fight with you, surely thou and these thy brethren would sink in the mire. 10 And Judah said unto Joseph, Surely it becometh thee and thy people to fear me; as the Lord liveth if I once draw my sword I shall not sheathe it again until I shall this day have slain all Egypt, and I will commence with thee and finish with Pharaoh thy master. 11 And Joseph answered and said unto him, Surely strength belongeth not alone to thee; I am stronger and mightier than thou, surely if thou drawest thy sword I will put it to thy neck and the necks of all thy brethren. 12 And Judah said unto him, Surely if I this day open my mouth against thee I would swallow thee up that thou be destroyed from off the earth and perish this day from thy kingdom. And Joseph said, Surely if thou openest thy mouth I have power and might to close thy mouth with a stone until thou shalt not be able to utter a word; see how many stones are before us, truly I can take a stone, and force it into thy mouth and break thy jaws. 13 And Judah said, God is witness between us, that we have not hitherto desired to battle with thee, only give us our brother and we will go from thee; and Joseph answered and said, As Pharaoh liveth, if all the kings of Canaan came together with you, you should not take him from my hand. 14 Now therefore go your way to your father, and your brother shall be unto me for a slave, for he has robbed the king's house. And Judah said, What is it to thee or to the character of the king, surely the king sendeth forth from his house, throughout the land, silver and gold either in gifts or expenses, and thou still talkest about thy cup which thou didst place in our brother's

bag and sayest that he has stolen it from thee? 15 God forbid that our brother Benjamin or any of the seed of Abraham should do this thing to steal from thee, or from any one else, whether king, prince, or any man. 16 Now therefore cease this accusation lest the whole earth hear thy words, saying, For a little silver the king of Egypt wrangled with the men, and he accused them and took their brother for a slave. 17 And Joseph answered and said, Take unto you this cup and go from me and leave your brother for a slave, for it is the judgment of a thief to be a slave. 18 And Judah said, Why art thou not ashamed of thy words, to leave our brother and to take thy cup? Surely if thou givest us thy cup, or a thousand times as much, we will not leave our brother for the silver which is found in the hand of any man, that we will not die over him. 19 And Joseph answered, And why did you forsake your brother and sell him for twenty pieces of silver unto this day, and why then will you not do the same to this your brother? 20 And Judah said, the Lord is witness between me and thee that we desire not thy battles; now therefore give us our brother and we will go from thee without quarreling. 21 And Joseph answered and said, If all the kings of the land should assemble they will not be able to take your brother from my hand; and Judah said, What shall we say unto our father, when he seeth that our brother cometh not with us, and will grieve over him? 22 And Joseph answered and said, This is the thing which you shall tell unto your father, saying, The rope has gone after the bucket. 23 And Judah said, Surely thou art a king, and why speakest thou these things, giving a false judgment? woe unto the king who is like unto thee. 24 And Joseph answered and said, There is no false judgment in the word that I spoke on account of your brother Joseph, for all of you sold him to the Midianites for twenty pieces of silver, and you all denied it to your father and said unto him, An evil beast has devoured him, Joseph has been torn to pieces. 25 And Judah said, Behold the fire of Shem burneth in my heart, now I will burn all your land with fire; and Joseph answered and said, Surely thy sister-in-law Tamar, who killed your sons, extinguished the fire of Shechem. 26 And Judah said, If I pluck out a single hair from my flesh, I will fill all Egypt with its blood. 27 And Joseph answered and said, Such is your custom to do as you did to your brother whom you sold, and you dipped his coat in blood and brought it to your father in order that he might say an evil beast devoured him and here is his blood. 28 And when Judah heard this thing he was exceedingly wroth and his anger burned within him, and there was before him in that place a stone, the weight of which was about four hundred shekels, and Judah's anger was kindled and he took the stone in one hand and cast it to the heavens and caught it with his left hand. 29 And he placed it afterward under his legs, and he sat upon it with all his strength and the stone was turned into dust from the force of Judah. 30 And Joseph saw the act of Judah and he was very much afraid, but he commanded Manassah his son and he also did with another stone like unto the act of Judah, and Judah said unto his brethren, Let not any of you say, this man is an Egyptian, but by his doing this thing he is of our father's family. 31 And Joseph said, Not to you only is strength given, for we are also powerful men, and why will you boast over us all? and Judah said unto Joseph, Send I pray thee our brother and ruin not thy country this day. 32 And Joseph answered and said unto them, Go and tell your father, an evil beast hath devoured him as you said concerning your brother Joseph. 33 And Judah spoke to his brother Naphtali, and he said unto him, Make haste, go now and number all the streets of Egypt and come and tell me; and Simeon said unto him, Let not this thing be a trouble to

thee; now I will go to the mount and take up one large stone from the mount and level it at every one in Egypt, and kill all that are in it. 34 And Joseph heard all these words that his brethren spoke before him, and they did not know that Joseph understood them, for they imagined that he knew not to speak Hebrew. 35 And Joseph was greatly afraid at the words of his brethren lest they should destroy Egypt, and he commanded his son Manasseh, saying, Go now make haste and gather unto me all the inhabitants of Egypt, and all the valiant men together, and let them come to me now upon horseback and on foot and with all sorts of musical instruments, and Manasseh went and did so. 36 And Naphtali went as Judah had commanded him, for Naphtali was lightfooted as one of the swift stags, and he would go upon the ears of corn and they would not break under him. 37 And he went and numbered all the streets of Egypt, and found them to be twelve, and he came hastily and told Judah, and Judah said unto his brethren, Hasten you and put on every man his sword upon his loins and we will come over Egypt, and smite them all, and let not a remnant remain. 38 And Judah said, Behold, I will destroy three of the streets with my strength, and you shall each destroy one street; and when Judah was speaking this thing, behold the inhabitants of Egypt and all the mighty men came toward them with all sorts of musical instruments and with loud shouting. 39 And their number was five hundred cavalry and ten thousand infantry, and four hundred men who could fight without sword or spear, only with their hands and strength. 40 And all the mighty men came with great storming and shouting, and they all surrounded the sons of Jacob and terrified them, and the ground quaked at the sound of their shouting. 41 And when the sons of Jacob saw these troops they were greatly afraid of their lives, and Joseph did so in order to terrify the sons of Jacob to become tranquilized. 42 And Judah, seeing some of his brethren terrified, said unto them, Why are you afraid whilst the grace of God is with us? and when Judah saw all the people of Egypt surrounding them at the command of Joseph to terrify them, only Joseph commanded them, saying, Do not touch any of them. 43 Then Judah hastened and drew his sword, and uttered a loud and bitter scream, and he smote with his sword, and he sprang upon the ground and he still continued to shout against all the people. 44 And when he did this thing the Lord caused the terror of Judah and his brethren to fall upon the valiant men and all the people that surrounded them. 45 And they all fled at the sound of the shouting, and they were terrified and fell one upon the other, and many of them died as they fell, and they all fled from before Judah and his brethren and from before Joseph. 46 And whilst they were fleeing, Judah and his brethren pursued them unto the house of Pharaoh, and they all escaped, and Judah again sat before Joseph and roared at him like a lion, and gave a great and tremendous shriek at him. 47 And the shriek was heard at a distance, and all the inhabitants of Succoth heard it, and all Egypt quaked at the sound of the shriek, and also the walls of Egypt and of the land of Goshen fell in from the shaking of the earth, and Pharaoh also fell from his throne upon the ground, and also all the pregnant women of Egypt and Goshen miscarried when they heard the noise of the shaking, for they were terribly afraid. 48 And Pharaoh sent word, saying, What is this thing that has this day happened in the land of Egypt? and they came and told him all the things from beginning to end, and Pharaoh was alarmed and he wondered and was greatly afraid. 49 And his fright increased when he heard all these things, and he sent unto Joseph, saying, Thou hast brought unto me the Hebrews to destroy all Egypt; what wilt thou do with that thievish slave? send him away and let him go with his brethren, and let us not perish through their evil, even we, you and all Egypt.

50 And if thou desirest not to do this thing, cast off from thee all my valuable things, and go with them to their land, if thou delightest in it, for they will this day destroy my whole country and slay all my people; even all the women of Egypt have miscarried through their screams; see what they have done merely by their shouting and speaking, moreover if they fight with the sword, they will destroy the land; now therefore choose that which thou desirest, whether me or the Hebrews, whether Egypt or the land of the Hebrews.

51 And they came and told Joseph all the words of Pharaoh that he had said concerning him, and Joseph was greatly afraid at the words of Pharaoh and Judah and his brethren were still standing before Joseph indignant and enraged, and all the sons of Jacob roared at Joseph, like the roaring of the sea and its waves. 52 And Joseph was greatly afraid of his brethren and on account of Pharaoh, and Joseph sought a pretext to make himself known unto his brethren, lest they should destroy all Egypt. 53 And Joseph commanded his son Manasseh, and Manasseh went and approached Judah, and placed his hand upon his shoulder, and the anger of Judah was stilled. 54 And Judah said unto his brethren, Let no one of you say that this is the act of an Egyptian youth for this is the work of my father's house. 55 And Joseph seeing and knowing that Judah's anger was stilled, he approached to speak unto Judah in the language of mildness. 56 And Joseph said unto Judah, Surely you speak truth and have this day verified your assertions concerning your strength, and may your God who delighteth in you, increase your welfare; but tell me truly why from amongst all thy brethren dost thou wrangle with me on account of the lad, as none of them have spoken one word to me concerning him. 57 And Judah answered Joseph, saying, Surely thou must know that I was security for the lad to his father, saying, If I brought him not unto him I should bear his blame forever. 58 Therefore have I approached thee from amongst all my brethren, for I saw that thou wast unwilling to suffer him to go from thee; now therefore may I find grace in thy sight that thou shalt send him to go with us, and behold I will remain as a substitute for him, to serve thee in whatever thou desirest, for wheresoever thou shalt send me I will go to serve thee with great energy. 59 Send me now to a mighty king who has rebelled against thee, and thou shalt know what I will do unto him and unto his land; although he may have cavalry and infantry or an exceeding mighty people, I will slay them all and bring the king's head before thee. 60 Dost thou not know or hast thou not heard that our father Abraham with his servant Eliezer smote all the kings of Elam with their hosts in one night, they left not one remaining? and ever since that day our father's strength was given unto us for an inheritance, for us and our seed forever. 61 And Joseph answered and said, You speak truth, and falsehood is not in your mouth, for it was also told unto us that the Hebrews have power and that the Lord their God delighteth much in them, and who then can stand before them?⁵¹

Eidermein Old Testament History: However, the banquet itself passed pleasantly, and early next morning the eleven, gladsome and thankful, were on their way back to Canaan. But the steward of Joseph's house had received special instructions. As before, each "bundle of money" had been restored in every man's sack. But, besides, he had also placed in that of Benjamin, Joseph's own cup, or rather his large silver bowl. The brothers had not traveled far when the steward hastily overtook them. Fixing upon the eleven the

⁵¹ The Book of Jasher, Faithfully Translated 1840, Hebrew to English, J.H.Perry & Co, Salt Lake City UT

stain of base ingratitude, he charged them with stealing the "bowl" out of which "his lord drank, and whereby, indeed, he divined." Of course this statement of the steward by no means proves that Joseph actually did divine by means of this "cup." On the contrary, such could not have been the case, since it was of course impossible to divine, out of a cup that had been stolen from him, that it was stolen (ver. 15)! But, no doubt, there was in Joseph's house, as in that of all the great sages of Egypt, the silver bowl, commonly employed for divination, in which unknown events were supposed to appear in reflection from the water, sometimes after gems or gold (with or without magical inscriptions and incantations) had been cast into the cup, to increase the sheen of the broken rays of light. Similar practices still prevail in Egypt.

The charge of treachery and of theft so took the brothers by surprise, that, in their conscious innocence, they offered to surrender the life of the guilty and the liberty of all the others, if the cup were found with any of them. But the steward had been otherwise instructed. He was to isolate Benjamin from the rest. With feigned generosity he now refused their proposal, and declared his purpose only to retain the guilty as bondsman. The search was made, and the cup found in the sack of Benjamin. Now the first great trial of their feelings ensued. They were all free to go home to their own wives and children; Benjamin alone was to be a bondsman. The cup had been found in his sack! Granting that, despite appearances, they knew him to be innocent, why should they stand by him? At home he had been set before them as the favorite; nay, for fear of endangering him, their father had well nigh allowed them all, their wives and their children, to perish from hunger. In Egypt, also, he, the youngest, the son of another mother, had been markedly preferred before them. They had formerly got rid of one favorite, why hesitate now, when Providence itself seemed to rid them of another? What need, nay, what business had they to identify themselves with him? Was it not enough that he had been put before them everywhere; must they now destroy their whole family, and suffer their little ones to perish for the sake of one who, to say the best, seemed fated to involve them in misery and ruin? So they might have reasoned. But so they did not reason, nor, indeed, did they reason at all; for in all matters of duty reasoning is ever dangerous, and only absolute, immediate obedience to what is right, is safe. "They rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city."

The first trial was past; the second and final one was to commence. In the presence of Joseph, "they fell before him on the ground" in mute grief. Judah is now the spokesman, and right well does his advocacy prefigure the pleading of his great Descendant. Not a word does he utter in extenuation or in plea. This one thought only is uppermost in his heart: "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." Not guilty indeed on this charge, but guilty before God, who hath avenged their iniquity! How, then, can they leave Benjamin in his undeserved bondage, when not he, but they have really been the cause of this sorrow? But Joseph, as formerly his steward, rejects the proposal as unjust, and offers their liberty to all except Benjamin. This gives to Judah an opening for pleading, in language so tender, graphic, and earnest, that few have been able to resist its pathos. He recounts the simple story, how the great Egyptian lord had at the first inquired whether they had father or brother, and how they had told him of their father at home, and of the child of his old age who was with him, the last remaining pledge of his wedded love, to

whom the heart of the old man clave. Then the vizier had asked the youth to be brought, and they had pleaded that his going would cost the life of his father. But the famine had compelled them to ask of their father even this sacrifice. And the old man had reminded them of what they knew only too well: how his wife, the only one whom even now he really considered such, had borne him two sons; one of those had gone out from him, just as it was now proposed Benjamin should go, and he had not seen him since, and he had said: "Surely he is torn in pieces." And now, if they took this one also from him, and mischief befell him, his gray hairs would go down with sorrow to the grave. What the old man apprehended had come to pass, no matter how. But could he, Judah, witness the grief and the death of his old father? Was he not specially to blame, since upon his guarantee he had consented to part with him? Nay, he had been his surety; and he now asked neither pardon nor favor, only this he entreated, to be allowed to remain as bondsman instead of the lad, and to let him go back with his brethren. He besought slavery as a boon, for how could he "see the evil" that should "come on his father?"

Truly has Luther said: "What would I not give to be able to pray before the Lord as Judah here interceded for Benjamin, for it is a perfect model of prayer, nay, of the strong feeling which must underlie all prayer." And, blessed be God, One has so interceded for us, Who has given Himself as our surety, and become a bondsman for us. (Psalm 40:6, 7; Philippians 2:6-8) His advocacy has been heard; His substitution accepted; and His intercession for us is ever continued, and ever prevails. The Lord Jesus Christ is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," and "hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."⁵²

⁵² Bible History, Old Testament, Eidermein