

# Genesis 44 - Testing by Joseph; Benjamin Framed; The Brothers are Questioned; Judah Intercedes

## II. Epilogue: Patriarchal history (Gen 11:10—50:26)

### (4) Life of Joseph (Gen 37:1—50:26)

#### (C) Jacob and Joseph's brothers go to Egypt (Gen 42:1—47:26)

##### (b) Brothers' second trip to Egypt (Gen 43:1—45:28)

###### (ii) Joseph tests his brothers (44:1-34)

###### (a) Planting of the cup (44:1-5)

###### (b) Discovery of the cup (44:6-13)

###### (c) Meeting with Joseph (44:14-17)

###### (d) Judah intercedes for Benjamin (44:18-34)

## Genesis 44

### (b) Brothers' second trip to Egypt (Gen 43:1—45:28)

#### (ii) Joseph tests his brothers (44:1-34)

##### (a) Planting of the cup (44:1-5)

1 Then he commanded his house steward, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the opening of his sack."

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

1 Later, Joseph commanded his palace manager, "Fill the men's sacks to full capacity with food and replace each man's money at the top of the sack."

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.

- Three instructions from Joseph for the brother's trip back to Canaan:

(1) Fill sacks with food

- This would've been much more food than the money they had to pay for it

(2) Return each brother's money in the mouth of their sack

- This was the second time Joseph gave them their money back

2 And put my cup, the silver cup, in the opening of the sack of the youngest, and his money for the grain." And he did as Joseph had told *him*.

2 Put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his money for the grain." And he did as Joseph had told *him*.

2 Then place my cup—the silver one—in the top of the sack belonging to the youngest one, along with the money he brought to buy grain." So the manager did precisely what Joseph told him to do.

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.

(3) Place Joseph's silver cup

- Later, this will be passed off as a divining cup to make the crime seem worse; however, this was part of the ploy. It was not really a divining cup since Joseph did not practice divination or sorcery

- 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 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.

3 As soon as it was light, the men were sent away, they with their donkeys.

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3 Early the next morning, the men were sent on their way, along with their donkeys.

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

4 They had *just* left the city, *and* were not far away, when Joseph said to his house steward, "Up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good?

4 They had *just* gone out of the city, *and* were not far off, when Joseph said to his house steward, "Up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good?

4 They had not traveled far from the city when Joseph ordered his palace manager, "Get up, follow those men, and when you've caught up with them, ask them, 'Why did you repay evil for good?

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?

5 Is this not *that* from which my lord drinks, and which he indeed uses for divination? You have done wrong in doing this!"

5 Is not this the one from which my lord drinks and which he indeed uses for divination? You have done wrong in doing this."

5 Don't you have the cup that my master uses to drink from and also uses to practice divination? You're wrong to have done this."

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

- Earlier this "cup" was referred to simply as "the silver cup," which is what it was

— It was passed off as a divining cup so Joseph could test his brothers

(b) Discovery of the cup (44:6-13)

6 So he overtook them and spoke these words to them.

6 So he overtook them and spoke these words to them.

6 So he went after them and made that accusation.

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

7 And they said to him, "Why does my lord say such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing!

7 They said to him, "Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing.

7 "Your Excellency," they replied, "Why do you speak like this? Far be it from your servants to act like this.

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

8 Behold, the money which we found in the opening of our sacks we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?

8 Behold, the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?

8 Look, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money that we found at the top of our sacks. How, then, could we have stolen silver or gold from your master's palace?

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?

- Their rationale was: if they were proven honest by returning the money, how can they be dishonest by stealing a cup?

9 With whomever of your servants it is found, he shall die, and we also shall be my lord's slaves."

9 With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."

9 Go ahead and execute whichever one of your servants is discovered to have it, and we'll remain as your master's slaves."

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

- This shows their confidence in their own innocence

10 So he said, "Now let it indeed be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, but *the rest of you* shall be *considered innocent*."

10 So he said, "Now let it also be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and *the rest of you* shall be *innocent*."

10 "Agreed," he responded. "Just as you've said, the one who is found to have it in his possession will become my slave, and the rest of you will be innocent."

**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.

- This would be the test for the brothers: their choice will be between self-preservation and Benjamin's welfare

11 Then they hurried, each man lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack.

11 Then they hurried, each man lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack.

11 So they quickly dismounted, unloaded their sacks onto the ground, and each one of them opened his own sack.

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

12 And he searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

12 He searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

12 The palace manager searched for the cup, beginning with the oldest brother's sack and ending with the youngest brother's sack, and there it was!—in Benjamin's sack.

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 Kings 3:16-28)

— All the conditions were present for another betrayal when Benjamin was accused

13 Then they tore their clothes *in grief*, and when each man had loaded his donkey, they returned to the city.

13 Then they tore their clothes, and when each man loaded his donkey, they returned to the city.

13 At this, they all tore their clothes, reloaded their donkeys, and returned to the city.

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

### (c) Meeting with Joseph (44:14-17)

14 When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell down to the ground before him.

14 When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell to the ground before him.

14 Joseph was waiting for them back at his palace when his brothers returned. They fell to the ground in front of him,

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

- Judah alone is named because he interceded on Benjamin's behalf; it also indicates he was rising in prominence in the family

— It was Judah who initiated the sale of Joseph

15 Joseph said to them, "What is this thing that you have done? Do you not know that a man who is like me can indeed practice divination?"

15 Joseph said to them, "What is this deed that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed practice divination?"

15 and Joseph asked them, "Why did you do this? Don't you know that I'm an expert at divination?"

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?

- Yet this time their response shows how well the chastening had worked
- They tore their clothes in grief, a response which they had earlier caused their father to make over Joseph's loss (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

16 So Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What words can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the **guilt of your servants**; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found."

16 So Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found."

16 "What can we say, Your Excellency?" Judah replied. "How can we explain this or justify ourselves? God has discovered the sin of your servants, and now we've become slaves to you, Your Excellency, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been discovered."

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.

- Judah recognized they had no defense; he knew they were innocent, but he was resigned to the punishment because they had no real defense in light of the evidence
- "...guilt of your servants" - he was not talking about stealing the silver cup, but the selling of Joseph, of which Judah was the instigator (37:26-27)

17 But he said, "Far be it from me to do this. The man in whose possession the cup has been found, he shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father."

17 But he said, "Far be it from me to do this. The man in whose possession the cup has been found, he shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father."

17 "Far be it from me to do this," Joseph responded. "The man in whose possession the cup was discovered will be my slave, but the rest of you may leave in peace to be with your father."

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 rejected Judah's answer; he would only keep Benjamin as a slave since he was the offender; the rest would be free to go

- This was the final test for the brothers, Judah in particular. He instigated the selling of Joseph; would he now rally the brothers to abandon Benjamin and go back alone?

(d) Judah intercedes for Benjamin (44:18-34)

**18** Then Judah approached him and said, "Oh my lord, may your servant please speak a word in my lord's ears, and do not be angry with your servant; for you are equal to Pharaoh.

**18** Then Judah approached him, and said, "Oh my lord, may your servant please speak a word in my lord's ears, and do not be angry with your servant; for you are equal to Pharaoh.

**18** But Judah approached him and begged him, "Your Excellency, please allow your servant to speak to you privately. Please don't be angry with your servant, since you are equal to Pharaoh.

**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.

- Judah separated himself from the other brothers and addressed Joseph

— He recognized Joseph's authority

19 My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?'

19 My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?'

19 Your Excellency asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or brother?'

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 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

20 And we said to my lord, 'We have an old father and a little boy *born in our father's old age*. Now **hisbrother** is dead, so he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.'

20 We said to my lord, 'We have an old father and a little child of *his* old age. Now his brother is dead, so he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.'

20 and we answered Your Excellency, 'We have an aged father and a younger child who was born when he was old. His brother is now dead, so he's the only surviving son of his mother. His father loves him.'

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.

- "...his brother" - Joseph

21 Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me so that I may set my eyes on him.'

21 Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me that I may set my eyes on him.'

21 "But then you ordered your servants, 'Bring him here to me so I can see him for myself.'

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

22 But we said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.'

22 But we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.'

22 So we told Your Excellency, 'The young man cannot leave his father, because if he were to do so, his father would die.'

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

23 You said to your servants, however, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.'

23 You said to your servants, however, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.'

23 But then you told your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes back with you, you won't see my face again.'

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

**24** So it came about when we went up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

24 Thus it came about when we went up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

24 Later on, after we had gone back to your servant, my father, we told him what Your Excellency had said.

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

25 And our father said, 'Go back, buy us a little food.'

25 Our father said, 'Go back, buy us a little food.'

25 "'Go back,' our father ordered, 'and buy us a little food.'

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

26 But we said, 'We cannot go down. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.'

26 But we said, 'We cannot go down. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.'

26 "But we told him, 'We can't go back there. If our youngest brother accompanies us, we'll go back, but we cannot see the man's face again unless our youngest brother accompanies us.'

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.

27 Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons;

27 Your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons;

27 "Then your servant, our father, told us, 'You know my wife bore me two sons.

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

28 and the one left me, and I said, "Surely he is torn to pieces," and I have not seen him since.

28 and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn in pieces," and I have not seen him since.

28 One of them left me, so I concluded "I'm certain that he has been torn to pieces," and I haven't seen him since then.

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

29 If you also take this one from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.'

29 If you take this one also from me, and harm befalls him, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.'

29 If you take this one from me, too, and then something harmful happens to him, then it will be death for me and my sad, gray hair!'

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.

30 So now, when I come to your servant, my father, and the boy is not with us—since our father's life is so attached to the boy's life—

30 Now, therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life,

30 "So when I go back to your servant, my father, and the young man isn't with us, since he's constantly living life focused on his son,

**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;

- The Hebrew literally reads, "his soul is knit with the lad's soul"

— This phrase is also used of David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:1)

31 when he sees that the boy is not *with us*, he will die. So your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant, our father, down to Sheol in sorrow.

31 when he sees that the lad is not *with us*, he will die. Thus your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant our father down to Sheol in sorrow.

31 when he notices that the young man hasn't come back with us, he'll die, and your servants really will have brought death to your servant, our father, along with his sad, gray hair!

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.

- In other words, the brothers would be responsible for Jacob's death

32 For your servant accepted responsibility for the boy from my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him *back* to you, then my father can let me take the blame forever.'

32 For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him *back* to you, then let me bear the blame before my father forever.'

32 Also, your servant pledged his own life as a guarantee of the young man's safety. I told my father, 'If I don't bring him back to you, you can blame me forever.'

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.

33 So now, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord instead of the boy, and let the boy go up with his brothers.

33 Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.

33 Therefore, please allow your servant to remain as a slave to Your Excellency, instead of the young man, and let the young man go back home with his brothers.

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.

- It was Judah who suggested that Joseph be sold as a slave, and now he was willing to become a slave as a substitute for Benjamin, showing how much he had changed since selling Joseph

— He was not jealous over Benjamin's special relationship with Jacob

34 For how shall I go up to my father if the boy is not with me? *I fear* that I may see the evil that would overtake my father."

34 For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me—for fear that I see the evil that would overtake my father?"

34 After all, how can I go back to my father if the young man doesn't accompany me? I'm afraid of what might happen to my father."

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.

### **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).

### **Observations**

- The brothers have clearly repented of the sin of selling Joseph
- They show a clear concern and respect for the emotional and physical health of their father, Jacob (which they were not concerned about when they sold Jacob)
- They showed a special concern for their youngest brother Benjamin