GENESIS

Chapter 43

*The Second Journey to Egypt*

**Now the famine was still severe in the land. 2 So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go back and buy us a little more food.” 3 But Judah said to him, “The man warned us solemnly, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’ 4 If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you. 5 But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’ ” 6 Israel asked, “Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?” 7 They replied, “The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. ‘Is your father still living?’ he asked us. ‘Do you have another brother?’ We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, ‘Bring your brother down here’?” 8 Then Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die. 9 I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life. 10 As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice.” 11 Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift—a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds. 12 Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. 13 Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. 14 And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.” 15 So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. 16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare dinner; they are to eat with me at noon.” 17 The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph’s house. 18 Now the men were frightened when they were taken to his house. They thought, “We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys.” 19 So they went up to Joseph’s steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. 20 “Please, sir,” they said, “we came down here the first time to buy food. 21 But at the place where we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver—the exact weight—in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back with us. 22 We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don’t know who put our silver in our sacks.” 23 “It’s all right,” he said. “Don’t be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.” Then he brought Simeon out to them. 24 The steward took the men into Joseph’s house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys. 25 They prepared their gifts for Joseph’s arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there. 26 When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground. 27 He asked them how they were, and then he said, “How is your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?” 28 They replied, “Your servant our father is still alive and well.” And they bowed low to pay him honor. 29 As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother’s son, he asked, “Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?” And he said, “God be gracious to you, my son.” 30 Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there. 31 After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, “Serve the food.”32 They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians. 33 The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment. 34 When portions were served to them from Joseph’s table, Benjamin’s portion was five times as much as anyone else’s. So they feasted and drank freely with him.**

**43:3** *Judah said.* From this point on, Judah became the spokesman for his brothers (see vv. 8–10; 44:14–34; 46:28). His tribe would become preeminent among the 12 (see 49:8–10), and he would be an ancestor of Jesus (see Mt 1:2, 17; Lk 3:23, 33). (CSB)

The next oldest son after Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. Reuben failed to convince his father to send Benjamin with them (42:37–38); Simeon was imprisoned (42:24); Jacob distrusted Levi (34:30). Judah is next. Despite glaring sins, Judah had had a change of heart (37:26–27; 38:26). (TLSB)

**43:8** *the boy*. Benjamin, the youngest of the brothers, was an adult, over 20 years old (cf 42:4; 46:21). (TLSB)

**43:9** Judah offered himself as security for Benjamin’s safety—an even more generous gesture than that of Reuben (see 42:37 and note). (CSB)

Judah offered to bear whatever penalty Jacob would impose for failure. (TLSB)

**43:10** *returned twice*. They could have made two trips to Egypt, perhaps over two years’ time. (TLSB)

**43:11** *take them … as a gift.* A customary practice when approaching one’s superior, whether political (see 1Sa 16:20), military (see 1Sa 17:18) or religious (see 2Ki 5:15). (CSB)

**43:11** *choice fruits*. Harvested before the famine, or indicating the famine had causes other than drought. Jacob sought to appease Joseph as he had Esau (32:20). (TLSB)

 *balm … myrrh.* See 37:25 and note. (CSB)

Medicinal salve (cf Jer 8:22). (TLSB)

 *honey*. Either from bees or a syrup from grapes or dates. *gum*. Aromatic gum of tragacanth. (TLSB)

 *myrrh*. Medicinal, anesthetic aromatic (cf Ps 45:8; Mk 15:23). (TLSB)

 *pistachio nuts.* Mentioned only here in the Bible; the fruit of a small, broad-crowned tree that is native to Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine but not to Egypt. (CSB)

Plentiful in Canaan. All items were valuable. Luther: “In this way the father honors his son and pays him homage according to the dream” (AE 7:323; cf Gn 37:10). (TLSB)

**43:12** *double the money*. For both prior and current purchases. (TLSB)

**43:14** *God Almighty.* See note on 17:1. (CSB)

 *if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.* Cf. Esther’s similar phrase of resignation in Est 4:16. (CSB)

If he must be robbed of his children, in patience he will commit the matter to God. (TLSB)

**43:15** *stood before Joseph*. To purchase grain. (TLSB)

**43:16** *steward*. Servant with complete authority. (TLSB)

 *slaughter an animal*. Eating meat implies a special occasion. See p 236; cf Lk 15:23. (TLSB)

**43:21** The brothers’ statement to Joseph’s steward compressed the details (see 42:27, 35). (CSB)

**43:23** *Your God … has given you treasure.* The steward spoke better than he knew. (CSB)

Joseph must have told him of the God of Israel. Luther: “It is evident that he was imbued with the doctrine of godliness by his master” (AE 7:333). *received your money*. Joseph probably paid for the grain. (TLSB)

**43:24** See note on 18:2. (CSB)

**43:25** *eat bread*. Eat a meal (cf 31:54; Mt 6:11). (TLSB)

**43:26** *bowed down.* Additional fulfillment of Joseph’s dreams (37:7, 9; see also 42:6; 43:28). (CSB)

**43:29** *lifted up his eyes*. Focused intently. (TLSB)

 *Benjamin, his own mother’s son.* Joseph’s special relationship to Benjamin is clear. *God be gracious to you.* Later blessings and benedictions would echo these words (see Nu 6:25; Ps 67:1). (CSB)

Rachel’s (30:22). Benjamin is the focus of Joseph’s further actions. (TLSB)

**43:30** *Joseph … wept.* Both emotional and sensitive, he wept often (see 42:24; 45:2, 14–15; 46:29). (CSB)

**43:32** *Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews.* The taboo was probably based on ritual or religious reasons (see Ex 8:26), unlike the Egyptian refusal to associate with shepherds (see 46:34), which was probably based on social custom. (CSB)

Ancient historians record similar instances of Egyptian aversion to eating with foreigners. (TLSB)

**43:33** *amazement*. Not knowing how Joseph or his servants could have known their birth order. (TLSB)

**43:34** *from Joseph’s table*. Suggests three tables: Joseph’s, from which the food is served; one for the Egyptians; a third for Joseph’s brothers. (TLSB)

 *Benjamin’s portion was five times as much.* Again reflecting his special status with Joseph (see note on v. 29; see also 45:22). (CSB)

To see if his generosity would make the brothers jealous, as Jacob’s had long ago (cf 37:3–4). (TLSB)

 *drank and were merry*. Not as if they had become fully drunk, but because they had had somewhat more to drink due to the happy occasion. Cf Ps 104:15. (TLSB)

 **Ch 43** Joseph—motivated by love for Benjamin and his other brothers—tests his brothers to learn whether they will be jealous or abandon their youngest brother, as they had Joseph. Joseph’s conduct is like God’s. He displays both generosity and severity, seeking repentance. The brothers’ fear comes from the alienating power of sin. When we do not rightly fear God, we fear other things more (Mt 10:28). Joseph’s banquet displays kindness and generosity, independent of his brothers’ recognition of his love. So also God blesses His people, even when they doubt His goodness. Jesus, like His earthly ancestor, Judah, offered Himself to His Father for us. • Holy God, give us grace to endure Your tests and to recognize Your kindness, in Jesus’ name. Amen. (TLSB)