

# GENESIS

## Chapter 43

### *Joseph's Brothers Return to Egypt*

Now the famine was severe in the land. 2 And when they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go again, buy us a little food." 3 But Judah said to him, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.' 4 If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. 5 But if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.'" 6 Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?" 7 They replied, "The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?' What we told him was in answer to these questions. Could we in any way know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'" 8 And Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. 9 I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. 10 If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice." 11 Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry a present down to the man, a little balm and a little honey, gum, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds. 12 Take double the money with you. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks. Perhaps it was an oversight. 13 Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man. 14 May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." 15 So the men took this present, and they took double the money with them, and Benjamin. They arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph. 16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Bring the men into the house, and slaughter an animal and make ready, for the men are to dine with me at noon." 17 The man did as Joseph told him and brought the men to Joseph's house. 18 And the men were afraid because they were brought to Joseph's house, and they said, "It is because of the money, which was replaced in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may assault us and fall upon us to make us servants and seize our donkeys." 19 So they went up to the steward of Joseph's house and spoke with him at the door of the house, 20 and said, "Oh, my lord, we came down the first time to buy food. 21 And when we came to the lodging place we opened our sacks, and there was each man's money in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight. So we have brought it again with us, 22 and we have brought other money down with us to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks." 23 He replied, "Peace to you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them. 24 And when the man had brought the men into Joseph's house and given them water, and they had washed their feet, and when he had given their donkeys fodder, 25 they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they should eat bread there. 26 When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present that they had with them and bowed down to him to the ground. 27 And he inquired about their welfare and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?" 28 They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive." And they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves. 29 And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!" 30 Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought

a place to weep. And he entered his chamber and wept there. 31 Then he washed his face and came out. And controlling himself he said, “Serve the food.” 32 They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. 33 And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in amazement. 34 Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry 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. (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.* 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)

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

*honey.* Either from bees or a syrup from grapes or dates. (TLSB)

*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** *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 put 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). (TLSB)

*received your money*. Joseph probably paid for the grain. (TLSB)

**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. (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)