

## Gen 43 – Brothers return to Egypt

**THEME:** *Jacob sends his sons to Egypt; the brothers are entertained in Joseph's home.*

Due to the seriousness of the famine, the sons of Jacob are forced to return with Benjamin to Egypt where they again have an audience with Joseph and present Benjamin. Joseph does not make himself known unto them at this time.

This is doubtless the most dramatic chapter in the Book of Genesis. I know of nothing that is quite as moving as the appearance of Benjamin before Joseph. The thing that brings them down to the land again is the seriousness of the famine. If the famine had lifted, I think Simeon would have spent the rest of his life in jail down in the land of Egypt, at least until Joseph released him.

### Joseph's Brothers Return to Egypt

**Gen 43:1-2** *Now the famine was severe in the land. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food."*

Jacob realized they would starve to death if they didn't go down to Egypt again. - McGee

**Gen 43:3-5** *But Judah spoke to him, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.' If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. 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.'"*

"The man" is their brother Joseph, but they do not know it. He had presented to them a cut-and-dried proposition, and they knew he meant it. Judah tells his father very definitely, "If we go down there, we must have Benjamin with us. You wouldn't send him before, but there is no use going if he is not with us this time because the man won't see us." – McGee

Notice: God is willing to let Jacob and the family go hungry in order for them to make the right decision. He never oversteps freewill, but He can use circumstances and trials to bring us to our senses.

**Gen 43:6-7** *And Israel said, "Why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still another brother?" But they said, "The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?' And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'"*

Poor old Jacob is really frustrated. He says, "Why in the world did you tell the man in the first place that you even had another brother?" He doesn't realize that Joseph knew it anyway. But Jacob wishes his sons had kept their mouths shut. – McGee

**Gen 43:8-9** *Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. I myself will be surety for him; 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."*

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

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

***Gen 43:10-11 For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time." And their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man—a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.***

Judah says, "If you had let Benjamin go, we would have been there and back home by this time."

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

***Gen 43:12-15 Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man. And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!" So the men took that present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand, and arose and went down to Egypt; and they stood before Joseph.***

So old Jacob relinquishes Benjamin and lets him go along with his older brothers. Now the dramatic moment comes when they stand again before Joseph. You can well imagine Joseph's emotion as his eye singled out Benjamin! - McGee

***Gen 43:16-18 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take these men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for these men will dine with me at noon." Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph's house. Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, "It is because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and seize us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys."***

The reason for Joseph's inviting them to his home is obvious. He wants to talk with them in the privacy of his own home. These men are really panicky now. They can't imagine him inviting them to his home for any good purpose. He had dealt with them so harshly before, and now he is inviting them to lunch!

Again, here is something that under ordinary circumstances would be something to brag about. Wouldn't you brag if the President of the United States had invited you to the Blue Room, or, better yet, the dining room for dinner? You would think it was a wonderful privilege. Yet, for these men, such a privilege brings no joy whatsoever. You see, they have a guilt complex. They feel guilty about everything that happens because they are the ones who sold their brother. Guilt changes joy into misery. In their

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fears, they wonder and begin to speculate. Could this man be plotting to take them as slaves because of the money in the sacks? Well, they had not hesitated to make a slave of Joseph when they sold him to the Ishmeelites for slavery in Egypt. – McGee

**Gen 43:19-23** *When they drew near to the steward of Joseph's house, they talked with him at the door of the house, and said, "O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food; but it happened, when we came to the encampment, that we opened our sacks, and there, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; so we have brought it back in our hand. And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks." But he said, "Peace be with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them.*

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

Apparently, this man, through the testimony of Joseph, had come to a knowledge of the living and true God. I think that Joseph had at least partially let him in on what was taking place. When he said, "I had your money," I imagine that frightened the brothers all the more. - McGee

**Gen 43:24-26** *So the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed. Then they made the present ready for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there. And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth.*

Here we see the custom of footwashing again. We saw it in the life of Abraham and then again down in the city of Sodom. It was the custom of that day.

Remember that old Jacob had told his sons to take a present to "the man." Notice that they "bowed themselves to him to the earth." Again the boyhood dreams of Joseph are being fulfilled.

**Gen 43:27-28** *Then he asked them about their well-being, and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?" And they answered, "Your servant our father is in good health; he is still alive." And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves.*

This is a dramatic moment! Joseph is probably seated, not necessarily on a throne, but on an elevation of prominence, as his brothers bow before him. When they stand to their feet, Joseph looks them right in the eye, and they look at him. Joseph asks, "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he still alive?" You see, Joseph is acutely interested because he is *his* father, also.

Here they go down on their faces again. I would love to have a picture of this, wouldn't you? Benjamin is with them, and he goes down on his face, too. - McGee

**Gen 43:29-30** *Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son." Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought somewhere to weep. And he went into his chamber and wept there.*

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Joseph looks at his brother Benjamin, “his mother's son.” The others are his half–brothers, but this boy is his full–brother, his mother's son. He asks, “Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me?” I suppose the brothers nodded. Joseph said to Benjamin, “God be gracious unto thee, my son.” What a dramatic moment! And Joseph can't contain his emotion—

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

***Gen 43:31-32 Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, "Serve the bread." So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.***

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

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

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

After Joseph had gone to his private quarters to weep, he regained control of his emotions, washed his face, and returned to his brothers. He said, “Let's eat.”

There are several things about this meal that the brothers would have noticed had they not been so frightened. The first thing is that Joseph did not eat with the Egyptians. The Egyptians ate alone. Joseph was separate from them. The brothers may have thought this was simply because he was the brass, the head man in this particular place.

Now here is something else—McGee

***Gen 43:33-34 And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another. Then he took servings to***

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*them from before him, but Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him.*

Joseph arranged the place cards, and he put Reuben in his proper place, he put Benjamin in his proper place, and all the brothers were in their right order, according to their ages. They looked at each other in amazement and wondered how he knew all that.

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

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