

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
[Adapted from Bethel Bible-  
Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St.  
Oakleigh, Vic, 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 34**

**THE BOOK OF GENESIS**

**Chapter 43-44**

**INTRODUCTION**

These two chapters have to be taken together for the obvious reason that the events are closely connected. The families of the patriarch, Jacob, had consumed all of their provisions. The famine continued to be severe. They had no grain left and it was a life-and-death situation. They had to go back to Egypt to get more food. But Jacob's refusal to let Benjamin go with his brothers made it impossible. How the brothers overcome this seemingly insurmountable hurdle is instructive. Joseph, having seen his brother Benjamin, continued with the testing and evaluation of his brothers' honesty and love for one another. In his godly wisdom, he continued in his work of leading his brothers to acknowledge their iniquity and to change for the better. Judah stood, head and shoulders, above his brothers in his display of self-sacrificing love and concern for his father, brothers and their families. He was realistic and sensible.

There are many precious lessons from these two chapters.

**OUTLINE**

**(THE SECOND JOURNEY TO EGYPT)**

**A. Judah Succeeded in Getting Jacob's Permission to Take Benjamin to Egypt (43:1-14).**

1. The famine continued and Jacob told his sons to go to Egypt to buy more food (vv.1-2).
2. Judah reminded Jacob that Benjamin must go with them but Jacob refused (vv.3-7).
3. Judah pledged to take full responsibility for Benjamin's safety and reasoned that unless they go and get the food, they would all perish (vv.8-10).
4. Jacob acceded and asked that God grant them mercy before the man (vv.11-14).

**B. Joseph Met His Brothers Again and Threw A Feast at His House (43:15-34).**

1. Joseph's brothers set off with Benjamin for Egypt with double the amount of money (v.15).
2. Joseph saw Benjamin and instructed his servants to prepare a feast at his house (vv.16-17).
3. Joseph's brothers were apprehensive when they were brought to his house (v.18).
4. Joseph's brothers explained their intention of returning the money,

for their earlier purchases, that they had found in their sacks (vv.19-22).

5. Joseph's servant allayed their fears and said that their God had favoured them (vv.23-25).
6. Joseph feasted with his brothers (vv.26-34).
  - a. Joseph entered the banquet room and his brothers bowed to him (v.26).
  - b. Joseph inquired about his father and his brothers bowed again to him (v.27).
  - c. Joseph saw Benjamin. He could not control his emotions so he withdrew to his room to cry (vv.28-32).
  - d. The brothers marvelled that their seating arrangements were according to their ages (v.33).
  - e. Joseph gave Benjamin special treatment. (v.34).

### **C. Joseph Tested His Brothers' Concern For Benjamin (44:1-13).**

1. Joseph instructed his steward to fill their sacks with food and to return their money (44:1).
2. Joseph instructed his steward to put his cup in Benjamin's sack (v.2).
3. After they had gone some distance, Joseph commanded his steward to overtake them and charge them for stealing Joseph's silver cup (vv.3-5).

4. Joseph's steward overtook them and a search was made. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack (vv.6-12).

5. Joseph's brothers returned to the city together (v.13).

### **D. Judah Interceded on Behalf of His Father and His Brother Benjamin (44:14-34).**

1. Judah confessed that they had nothing to say and that God had found out their sin. However, he did not state the sin committed. He submitted that they were all Joseph's servants (vv.14-16).
2. Joseph expressed intention to detain only Benjamin as his servant (v.17).
3. Judah pleaded with Joseph to free Benjamin (vv.18-34).
  - a. Judah related how they persuaded their father to let Benjamin accompany them to Egypt (vv.18-29).
  - b. Judah explained that their failure to bring Benjamin home would be a fatal blow to their father (vv.30-31).

Judah stated that he stood surety for Benjamin and was answerable to his father (vv.32-34).

## COMMENTARY

### God's People Must Show a Sense of Responsibility

The famine remained severe. Food had run out again in Jacob's household. They must go back to Joseph to get more food or die of starvation. But there was a big problem. They would have to present Benjamin before Joseph. That was Joseph's uncompromising requirement. At first, Jacob was uncooperative but Judah reasoned with him. He pointed out that they had no choice if they did not want to die of starvation. He assured Jacob that he would take special care of Benjamin, when he said, "Send the lad with me." (43:8). He was prepared to take the blame if Benjamin failed to return. He reasoned that if they had not delayed they would have already gone and returned with more food. This indicates that there had been previous discussions about going back to Egypt but they had not materialised because of Jacob's insistence that his favourite son, Benjamin, remained with him. After listening to Judah, Jacob finally relented and submitted the whole matter to God. He prayed that God would show mercy to them when they stand before "the man" (43:14). He put his trust and faith in God who had promised him a great nation from out of his seed.

### God's People Must Show Themselves to be Honest

Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt. They brought with them gifts and double the amount of money. One portion of the money was to be returned to Joseph for their earlier purchases. Joseph saw his

brother Benjamin. He told his chief butler to lead them to his house and to prepare a meal that he would partake with them. The brothers were afraid and lost no time in trying to make restitution for the money that they had found in their sacks on their first trip. God's people must show themselves to be honest if they want to obtain mercy and favour from the Lord.

The chief butler's response: "Peace (*shalom*) be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money," might have initially allayed their fears and put them at ease. However, the mention of God might also have stirred up their conscience about their past evil deeds. Von Rad's comment aptly puts it:<sup>1</sup>

"The master of ceremonies' gracious answer is the jewel in this masterful scene. It is reassuring and intended to distract the upset men from the object of their fear; but its dark ambiguity touches the innermost mystery of the whole Joseph story: God's concealed guidance. God is at work in the events and therefore nothing is said now about the money but rather about a "treasure" which God has placed for them in their sacks. This answer may at first have reassured the brothers somewhat, but they could only understand it later."

Joseph's brothers were humble before him. When Joseph joined them, they bowed to him and presented their gifts. Joseph's opening words were to inquire about their welfare and that of their father's. His words would have comforted them, and they replied that

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<sup>1</sup> Ross, p.661.

Jacob was alive and well. Then they bowed again and paid obeisance. Joseph then turned his attention to Benjamin. Maintaining his act as an Egyptian, he had kind words for him. He blessed him: "God be gracious to you, my son." At this time, Joseph was so overwhelmed with emotion that he hastily withdrew to his room to cry.

When the banquet was ready, Joseph seated them according to their seniority in age. He deliberately showed special favour towards Benjamin who received five times more of whatever was given to his brothers. Through this, Joseph sought to test if they harboured feelings of envy against Benjamin, who was their father's favourite (just as he was favoured when he was with them). The brothers' reaction would betray their true feelings. However, they conducted themselves well.

### **God's People Must Be Loyal towards One Another**

Joseph wanted to conduct one final test on his brothers. The time had come for them to return home with the provisions for their families. Joseph instructed his steward to return their money to their sacks, and to put his personal silver cup in Benjamin's sack. Early the next morning, the eleven brothers left for home.

But as soon as they stepped out of the city boundary, Joseph ordered his steward to catch up with them and to accuse them thus: "Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing" (44:4, 5). This was a very serious charge. Joseph had treated them well but they were ungrateful and

had stolen his personal cup. Their responses were immediate and firm: "God forbid" (44:7). They explained that they were honest and had sought to return the money for their earlier purchases. They were so confident that none of them was guilty of the theft that they proposed that the culprit, if found amongst them, should pay the death penalty and they also would become Joseph's slaves (44:9). The search began from the eldest to the youngest, and of course, the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. They all returned to the city and to Joseph's house. Once again when they appeared before Joseph, they bowed before him. Judah spoke on behalf of his brothers. He said that God had found out their sin (he did not state the sin) and that they were his slaves. However, Joseph replied that only the guilty one would be his slave and that the rest should return to their father in peace.

Judah pleaded passionately with Joseph. He reasoned that they had a hard time persuading Jacob to let Benjamin accompany them. If Benjamin were detained and could not go back with them, their father would be so grieved that he would die. Judah explained that he stood surety for Benjamin and pleaded to be taken as a slave in place of Benjamin so that he can return with the others to their father.

The fact that they returned to Joseph instead of abandoning Benjamin showed a genuine change in their character. Judah was deeply concerned that his father would grieve to death. He was even prepared to sacrifice his life for his half-brother Benjamin.

**SUMMARY**

The events that happened in these two chapters are very moving. We saw how Joseph tested his brothers to see if they had changed for the better. Of course, Joseph meant well. If they had not passed his tests, he would have used other measures to change them. But Joseph found that his brothers showed maturity and moral strength. They had reasoned rationally and firmly with their father to let Benjamin accompany them to Egypt. Judah had made a pledge to his father to take special care of Benjamin. They were humble and submissive before Joseph. They showed loyalty and solidarity when Benjamin was alleged to have stolen the cup. Judah spoke up and pleaded passionately and powerfully for the sake of his father and Benjamin. God's people must demonstrate these character traits. AMEN

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 34**

**THE BOOK OF GENESIS**

**Chapter 43 & 44**

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION**

**QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

Monday: Genesis 43:1-14; Ephesians 5:22-6:10.

Tuesday: Genesis 43:15-25; Deuteronomy 4:29-31; Hebrews 13:5.

Wednesday: Genesis 43:26-34; Psalm 18:20-30.

Thursday: Genesis 44:1-13; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

Friday: Genesis 44:14-34; 1 John 2:1-5; Hebrews 7:25.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What was the problem in Jacob's household?

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2. What made Jacob finally decide to let Benjamin accompany his brothers to Egypt?

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5. Why did Joseph show Benjamin special favour in front of his brothers?

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3. What attitude and action, on the part of the brothers, were in accordance to God's will?

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6. How did the brothers behave at the banquet?

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4. What is the significance of the steward's remarks to Joseph's brothers?

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7. Why did Joseph frame Benjamin for the theft of his cup?

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8. What do the words of chapter 44:9 tell us?

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11. Could Judah go in peace to his father as proposed by Joseph (44:17)?

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9. What do you think Joseph was trying to accomplish when he told his brothers that he practised divination?

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12. How passionately and powerfully did Judah plead his case?

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10. What did Judah mean when he said, "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants" (44:16)?

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