

# Life of Joseph

Lessons in Humility, Leadership and Forgiveness

## The Return to Egypt

- The famine was so severe in Canaan that Joseph's family eventually came to need more food [Gen 43:1-2].
  - Note that Jacob is not critical of his sons as he had been before [Gen 42:1-2].
  - The description of the severity of the famine is the same word used of the famine in Abraham's day (כָּבֵד, cabed = heavy/oppressive) [Gen 12:10].
- Judah reminded Jacob that it would be a waste of time to go back to Egypt to buy more food without Benjamin [Gen 43:3-5].
  - Judah stepped in to talk to Jacob after Reuben's plea was rejected [Gen 42:38].
  - Judah does not try to bargain here, but simply states that they will not go without Benjamin [v. 4].
- Jacob (Israel) blamed his sons for putting him in this predicament [Gen 43:6].
- The brothers replied saying that they were interrogated by the Egyptian [Gen 43:7].
  - They responded as one to Jacob's complaint.
  - They were honest that they had no way to know he would ask them to bring their brother, but they lied about being interrogated [Gen 42:13].
- At this point Judah offered himself as surety for Benjamin's safety [Gen 43:8-10].
  - He started his plea by appealing to Jacob's parental instincts [v. 8].
  - He then offered his own life (or at least the punishment of lifelong shame) for failure [v. 9].
  - He concluded by emphasizing that time was of essence – they needed food soon [v. 10].
- Jacob finally conceded and put together a plan of appeasement [Gen 43:11-14].
  - They would take with them some goods typically exported from Canaan [Gen 37:25; Ezek 27:17].
  - They would take with them money for food as well as the money returned on their last trip [v. 12].
  - They would take Benjamin [v. 13].
  - Jacob finally acknowledged that he is powerless over the outcome [v. 14].
- The brothers did exactly as Jacob had asked and they were able to get a meeting with Joseph [Gen 43:15].
- When Joseph saw Benjamin he arranged for his brothers to dine with him [Gen 43:16-17].

- The brothers suspected that they were in deep trouble and pleaded their case to the steward [Gen 43:18-22].
  - They knew that such an invitation was unusual.
  - They feared a surprise attack [2 Sam 13:28].
- The steward immediately allayed their fears [Gen 43:23-24].
  - The steward told them that the books were balanced – the money was a gift from God [v. 23].
  - It is likely that Joseph had witnessed to his steward about the one true God.
  - The presentation of Simeon was proof that they were not in any peril.
  - The steward’s care for them and for their animals should have removed all doubt that they were safe [v. 24].
- The brothers calmed down and prepared their gift for Joseph’s arrival [Gen 43:25].
- When Joseph arrived they presented their gift and bowed before him [Gen 43:26-28].
  - Their language showed their humility as well (“your servant our father”).
  - Joseph asked them how they were doing and inquired about Jacob as well [v. 27].
  - With Benjamin present, Joseph’s second dream about the 11 stars was now fulfilled [Gen 37:9].
- This time when Joseph saw Benjamin, he was overcome with emotion [Gen 43:29-30].
  - He asked about who the young man was, but he needed no answer [v. 29].
  - His invocation of God’s grace upon Benjamin likely caught the notice of his other brothers.
  - Not wanting to be seen weeping over his brother, Joseph went to his chambers [v. 30].
- After composing himself, Joseph orders the meal to be served [Gen 43:31-34].
  - The low view the Egyptians had for the Hebrews made it detestable to eat with them, so there were three separate groups at the table: Joseph, the Egyptians, and his brothers [v. 32].
  - Joseph had the brothers seated at the table in the order of their birth [v. 33].
  - When the brothers noticed the seating arrangement, they were astounded [v. 33].
  - The word for astonishment here is תַּמַּח (tamah) which can include a sense of alarm [Isa 13:8].
  - The brothers may have thought that God was involved and were simply in awe.
  - Joseph fed his brothers from his own portions, an incredibly gracious act and a portend of things to come [v. 34].
  - Again, he bestowed particular favor upon his full brother Benjamin by giving him extra portions.
  - The brothers relaxed and feasted with Joseph.