

GENESIS

Lesson 60

Genesis 43:1-34 The Second Journey to Egypt

¹ 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 a meal; 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 "We beg your pardon, our lord," 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 down, prostrating themselves before him.

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.

Genesis 43: 1-34 [NIV]

In this lesson, we continue with the story of Jacob's family trading for grain from Egypt and not realizing that the Governor they're trading with is their brother, (and Jacob's favorite son) Joseph. When we ended our study in the previous lesson, Joseph had had Simeon bound and was holding him as a prisoner in Egypt until the remaining brothers returned with Benjamin. However, Israel was not about to send his son Benjamin to Egypt, fearing that he might also be killed or imprisoned.

Genesis Chapter 43 continues the narrative. After Israel and his family have exhausted their initial grain supply from Egypt, he once again sends his sons there to buy grain, but he insists they are not allowed to take Benjamin with them. His sons protest and refuse to go back without Benjamin.

Israel is furious with his sons for having told the Governor (Joseph) about Benjamin in the first place. Judah steps forward and tells Israel that he will personally guarantee Benjamin's safety, and Israel relents and allows him to go. It is interesting that no mention is made of Simeon who is still being held in prison, nor the fact that they have delayed going back to the extent that they have consumed all of the food that they brought out of Egypt. Certainly, tensions were high in the family, further frustrated by their father's insistence that Benjamin would not be taken to Egypt—even though Egypt was holding one of his sons prisoner as ransom. Judah, however, gives us a little indication of this tension with his comment to Israel: "As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice." (Genesis 43:10)

Again, Israel finally agrees and allows Benjamin to go as well. He instructs them to take gifts along with the silver that was in their sacks back to Egypt, hoping that the silver incident was simply a mistake. We also receive additional insight into the brothers at this point as, "they hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph." (Genesis 43:15)

Joseph, realizing that his brothers had finally returned, and that they had Benjamin with them, instructs his house steward to prepare a meal at his house; he wanted all of them to eat with him. However, his brothers thought that this was just a trap, fearing that Joseph wanted to attack them in the house in order to, "seize us as slaves and take our donkeys." Hoping to prevent this as they arrive at Joseph's house, they confess to the Steward about the silver in their sacks and that they are returning it.

In the house, they are treated well, and as they prepare to have lunch with the Governor, they present the gifts that Israel sent from Canaan. This would be quite the lunch, since the narrative describes how the tables in the hall are set up with Joseph, the Governor, seated at his own table, his brothers seated at a separate table, and the Egyptians who normally ate with Joseph at a separate table.

Joseph can see before him his brothers, seated separately to one side, and the Egyptians seated separately at the other. Note that scripture tells us that the Egyptians were not seated with Joseph's brothers for one significant reason: "because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians."

As gifts are presented, Joseph asks them about their father and if indeed this was Benjamin with them. They tell Joseph that their father is alive and well, and yes this is Benjamin. Once again, we see that in spite of all that his brothers had put him through, Joseph still loves his family. We know this, as Genesis 43:30 recounts that Joseph was "deeply moved at the sight of his brother, [and] Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there."

Once Joseph had finished weeping, he washed his face and returned to the hall, and the meal began. It was quite the afternoon, gifts were presented to Joseph, and then they had a meal with him. To make things even more interesting, Benjamin was given a portion five times that of everyone else, and the atmosphere became much more relaxed, as "they feasted and drank freely with him." (Genesis 43:34)

It must have been a fun afternoon and perhaps a fun evening as well. As we will find out in the next lesson, they remained in Joseph's house until morning when, once again, Joseph gives his steward unusual instructions.

In Christ,

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