

# Life of Joseph

Lessons in Humility, Leadership and Forgiveness

## The Final Test

- After feasting with his brothers, Joseph sent them away [Gen 44:1-3].
  - Joseph made sure they had provisions for the journey and returned their money as he had done before [Gen 42:25].
  - Joseph also planted a silver cup in Benjamin's sack, setting up a critical test of his brothers' attitude toward his younger brother [v. 2].
  - The word for cup here is גַּבִּיָּע (gabiya) which is a bowl shaped cup like the ones on the lampstand in the tabernacle [Ex 25:31-34].
  - The normal word for a drinking cup is כּוֹס (kos) as we saw in the cupbearer's dream [Gen 40:11] and Joseph's interpretation [Gen 40:12-13].
  - Joseph sent them away first thing in the morning which was typical for such a journey [v. 3].
  - That, in conjunction with the gracious treatment they had received from Joseph the night before, gave the brothers the confidence to leave their bags unchecked before departing.
- Joseph sent his steward to catch up to the brothers and accuse them of stealing his cup [Gen 44:4-6].
  - Although the cup is not mentioned explicitly by the steward, the brothers surmised that they were being accused of stealing [v. 8].
  - The claim that Joseph used the cup for divination was part of the elaborate ruse [v. 5; Deut 18:10].
- The brothers indignantly asserted their innocence [Gen 44:7-9].
  - They had demonstrated their honesty by returning the money previously [Gen 43:21], so it made no sense that they would steal now [v. 8].
  - They were so confident of their innocence that they made a bold proposal of punishment if they were found to be guilty [v. 9].
- Joseph's steward revised the punishment and the bags were searched [Gen 44:10-13].
  - Joseph wanted Benjamin brought back to him and the steward's terms made that happen [v. 10].
  - When Benjamin was found to have the cup [v. 12] the brothers were upset and showed their dismay by tearing their clothes [v. 13].
  - The tearing of clothes (along with the wearing of sackcloth and ashes) was a common outward display of inward distress [Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 3:31; 1 Kgs 21:27; 2 Kgs 19:1; Esth 4:1].
  - The brothers returned with the steward to the city to face the consequences of their "theft" [v. 13].

- The brothers presented themselves before Joseph [Gen 44:14-15].
  - The brothers “fell to the ground” [v. 14] before Joseph which is a Hebrew word (נָפַל, naphal) describing desperation, not humility.
  - Joseph accused them before even giving them a chance to speak, citing his supposed ability to use divination to uncover their guilt [v. 15].
- Judah speaks for the brothers and admits their guilt [Gen 44:16-17].
  - Judah knew they had no case and offered up all of the brothers as slaves to Joseph [v. 16].
  - The language “we and the one” indicates the voluntary sharing of the guilt by the ten brothers even though Benjamin was the one caught with the silver cup.
  - Joseph rejected Judah’s offer and declared that only the guilty party would be held as a slave and the rest could go home [v. 17].
  - This was the “moment of truth” for the brothers as they could abandon Benjamin just as they had done Joseph so many years ago.
- Judah approached Joseph and summarized the dire situation to him [Gen 44:18-34].
  - This summary is the longest speech in the entire book of Genesis.
  - Judah expressed his humility and subordination before the one “equal to Pharaoh” [v. 18] by asking for permission to speak and using the word “servant” a total of twelve times.
  - In Judah’s account of the first trip to Egypt he omitted Joseph accusing them of being spies.
  - Judah highlighted the special bond between Jacob and Benjamin in his plea for mercy indicating a significant shift in the older brothers’ attitudes toward Rachel’s sons.
  - Judah made it clear multiple times that his father’s life was at stake [vv. 22, 29-31].
  - Judah offered himself as a slave to Joseph instead of Benjamin because he could not bear to see the distress (רָעָה, ra – evil in v. 34, but can mean distress) that would overtake Jacob.