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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Greater Refuge Memorial Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

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**“JOSEPH’S PLAN AND JUDAH’S PLEA”**

**Genesis 44:1-34**

***Genesis 44:1 "And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks [with] food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth."***

***Genesis 44:2 "And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken."***

As Joseph’s brothers left Egypt, Joseph arranged for one final test. He had his steward put his cup, the silver one, at the top of the youngest one’s bag. Joseph was so happy to see his brother, and he had a plan and a little trick to the brothers, so that he would have an excuse to keep Benjamin with him. Joseph wanted to bless his family with all these provisions, but he, also, wanted to keep Benjamin. He did not know of the oaths these brothers had made to their father about bringing the boy back.

***Genesis 44:3 "As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses."***

***Genesis 44:4 "[And] when they were gone out of the city, [and] not [yet] far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?"***

***Genesis 44:5 "[Is] not this [it] in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing."***

This steward of Joseph's helped Joseph set this trap for his brothers. The steward knew about the plot. It was he who gave chase and caught Joseph's brothers. He accused them of stealing. A silver cup, or chalice, was used by the Egyptians for divining, calling on an evil spirit for advice. Whether Joseph actually did practice this type of false religion is not answered here. This statement is just given to make Joseph's brothers think that Joseph was an Egyptian who able to divine. A follower of the true God, and especially one of Joseph’s stature, would not use divine a cup. God had gifted him with discernment, wisdom, and knowledge. Joseph's steward had accused them of stealing it from his master. He was, probably, the one who encouraged them not to worry. Now, he was accusing them of taking the good things the governor had done and, in return, doing only evil to him. The literal accusation was, why did you steal my silver goblet? In this move, he was framing Benjamin for theft to see whether his brothers would defend him. The steward, following Joseph’s orders, overtook his brothers and charged them with stealing the cup of his master.

***Genesis 44:6 "And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words."***

***Genesis 44:7 "And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing:"***

***Genesis 44:8 "Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?"***

***Genesis 44:9 "With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen."***

The steward caught them and accused them. They were so sure that they had not stolen, that they spoke a terrible punishment, if the goods were found in their possession. The brothers denied it, but of course, when the bags were searched, the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack. The penalty for such an act would have been Benjamin becoming Joseph’s slave. The brothers said, if we had wanted to steal, we wouldn't have brought the money back that we found in our sacks last time. You should never make rash promises you can't keep. The brothers spoke death to Benjamin, and hard labor to themselves.

***Genesis 44:10 "And he said, Now also [let] it [be] according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless."***

***Genesis 44:11 "Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack."***

***Genesis 44:12 "And he searched, [and] began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack."***

***Genesis 44:13 "Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city."***

They were so confident that they didn't have it they quickly opened the sacks for inspection. When it was found that Benjamin had the cup, the brothers tore their clothes in mourning. They came back with Benjamin. They had made hard promises to Jacob that they would bring the boy home again. They were as good as dead themselves.

***Genesis 44:14 "And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he [was] yet there: and they fell before him on the ground."***

***Genesis 44:15 "And Joseph said unto them, What deed [is] this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?"***

***Genesis 44:16 "And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we [are] my lord's servants, both we, and [he] also with whom the cup is found."***

The immediate response of Benjamin’s brothers indicates that they were no longer the heartless, cruel, deceitful men they had once been. When Benjamin was exposed as the thief, they tore their clothes, showing intense grief. Now, they were lying face down before Joseph in absolute submission. Last time they only bowed. Not only did they grieve, but they also refused to abandon Benjamin to his plight. Joseph used their fear of divination to make them believe he was an Egyptian. The steward would have been content to return with Benjamin, but the brothers each loaded his donkey and returned to the city, signaling to their youngest sibling that they were in the mess together. Even when Joseph repeated his intentions to imprison only Benjamin, they offered themselves as willing slaves in solidarity. Judah, for the first time, had admitted to Joseph that he and his brothers had truly sinned. They had not stolen the cup and money from Joseph, but they had stolen his freedom and his homeland. They accepted this as punishment from God for selling Joseph.

***Genesis 44:17 "And he said, God forbid that I should do so: [but] the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father."***

***Genesis 44:18 "Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou [art] even as Pharaoh."***

***Genesis 44:19 "My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother?"***

***Genesis 44:20 "And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him."***

***Genesis 44:21 "And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him."***

***Genesis 44:22 "And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for [if] he should leave his father, [his father] would die."***

***Genesis 44:23 "And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more."***

***Genesis 44:24 "And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord."***

***Genesis 44:25 "And our father said, Go again, [and] buy us a little food."***

***Genesis 44:26 "And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother [be] with us."***

***Genesis 44:27 "And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two [sons]:"***

***Genesis 44:28 "And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since:"***

***Genesis 44:29 "And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."***

***Genesis 44:30 "Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad [be] not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;"***

***Genesis 44:31 "It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad [is] not [with us], that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave."***

Joseph kept up his poker face for a while, insisting that Benjamin must stay as his slave. Joseph just wanted to keep Benjamin. He told them they could go on home. This pleading of Judah was for Benjamin and for their father. Judah told Joseph that he had the power to pardon Benjamin if he would. This plea of Judah's had certainly told the story truthfully. He had eloquently stated his case to this ruler: calling himself Joseph's servant every few words. Truly this had to touch Joseph's heart. Joseph would not want to harm his father, Jacob, in any way. Judah continued his plea in the new few verses.

***Genesis 44:32 "For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever."***

***Genesis 44:33 "Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren."***

***Genesis 44:34 "For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad [be] not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father."***

The last part of the plea was the most touching. Judah was asking to be the substitute for the boy. Judah told Joseph that it would be easier to be a servant the rest of his life than to live with the knowledge that he had brought grief on his father to kill him. This plea had to touch Joseph's heart, Joseph would forgive them all, just as Christ forgave all of us. Judah once again moved to the forefront. He had already stepped up to lead his brothers by promising their father to bring Benjamin back alive. At this point he led them by giving an impassioned plea for Joseph to show mercy, both for Benjamin’s sake and for the sake of his father Jacob. The pinnacle of Judah’s appeal the proof that he had truly experienced a change of heart was the staggering offer he made to remain here as [his] lord’s slave, in place of the boy. Once Judah had been so bereft of virtue that he thought nothing of sacrificing his brother’s life for his own convenience; now he was willing to lay down his own life so another brother could be free. The character transformation was complete, and God was ready to carry out the next step in his plan.

**QUESTIONS**

1. What two things did Joseph tell his steward to put in his brothers sack?

2. What was the steward to do with Joseph's cup?  
3. What was the cup made of?  
4. Joseph wanted to help his family, but what else does he want?

5. When did the brothers leave?  
6. How far had they gone when Joseph sent his steward after them?

7. What was the steward to say to them?  
8. What two things was the steward to tell?  
9. Who set this trap?  
10. Why was this story about the cup given?  
11. What was the literal accusation?  
12. What did the brothers say was to be done to the one who the cup was found with?  
13. What thing had these brothers spoken on themselves?  
14. How did the steward reduce the punishment?  
15. What did the brothers do when they found the cup with Benjamin?

16. Where did Judah and his brothers go?  
17. What did they do to win favor with Joseph?  
18. Why were the brethren willing to accept punishment?  
19. Who pled for Benjamin?  
20. Who else was the pleading for?  
21. What did Judah call himself throughout the pleading?  
22. Who was to bear the blame forever?  
23. What did Judah offer to be for the boy?  
24. Rather than face his father, what was Judah willing to do?