

• *Joseph's silver cup discovered in Benjamin's sack*

Joseph's trick is to test the reality of his brothers' repentance

• *Wonderful for Joseph to see that a change had taken place*

• *The brothers make clear their very deep and real repentance*

• *A special test – history repeated*

Judah's speech

• *Reveals his great love for Jacob*

• *Includes an offer to be a substitute for Benjamin*

Joseph releases his brothers, at the same time giving instructions that their money should be returned to them^{□1}. Joseph's silver cup is to be put in Benjamin's sack^{□2}. They leave in the morning^{□3} and soon Joseph's men catch up with them and demand to know why their have stolen Joseph's property^{□4}. The brothers protest their innocence^{□5}. 'With whomever of your servants it be found, let him die...' ^{□6}. The cup is soon found in Benjamin's sack^{□7}.

What is the point of Joseph's trick? He is not simply playing with them or being vindictive. **Joseph is testing the reality of his brothers' repentance.** It is his way of testing them to see what the relationships are between them and how they feel toward Jacob? Will they still betray one of the brothers for their own advantage? Will they still be totally unconcerned about the feelings of Jacob? The events that Joseph had brought about tested whether the brothers would still do the kind of thing they had done to him over twenty years before. Twenty years previously they had planned the death of Joseph. Now the death of Benjamin had been made easy for them by Joseph! How would they respond? Would they simply abandon Benjamin to his fate? Would they disregard Jacob's feelings and take revenge on his new favourite, Rachel's son Benjamin? Joseph wanted to know.

Joseph must have very eager to see what would happen. Would the brothers allow Benjamin to be brought back to Joseph for execution? It was wonderful for Joseph to see that a change had taken place in his brothers. They would not do again what they had done to Joseph many years previously. Years before they had taken trouble to get rid of Jacob's favourite Joseph; now they are taking trouble to do what they can to rescue Jacob's favourite, Benjamin.

The brothers make clear their very deep and real repentance. After Joseph's protest^{□1} Judah acts as a spokesman. 'God has exposed the guilt of your servants'^{□2}; he thinks Benjamin did indeed take the cup. He will not abandon Benjamin to his fate. He says they will all submit to being slaves in Egypt. He feels that what they did to Joseph has now come upon them. They are going to be slaves in Egypt just as they sold Joseph to slavery in Egypt years before. The brothers are admitting their guilt because they think they are being justly punished for what they did to Joseph. His fate is coming upon them.

Then Joseph puts a special test before them. He offers them freedom on the understanding that Benjamin will remain as a slave^{□1}. It is an exact replica of what they did to Joseph himself many years before when they sent Joseph off to be a slave but maintain freedom for themselves. How will they react now?

At this point Judah gives a very moving speech^{□1}. **His speech reveals his great love for Jacob.** Years before they had cared nothing for Jacob when they got rid of Joseph, but now things have changed. Judah explains. Jacob loves Benjamin very greatly^{□2} and released him only very reluctantly^{□3}. Jacob's life is bound up with Benjamin's life^{□4}. If Judah goes back without Benjamin the grief for Jacob will be overwhelming^{□5}. Judah is pleading for Benjamin out of his great love for his father Jacob.

His speech includes an offer to be a substitute for Benjamin. He has promised to be a surety for Benjamin and to bring him back safely^{□1}. Now comes the most moving part of the speech. 'Let your servant... remain instead of the lad as a slave...' ^{□2}. Out of great love for his father he wishes to substitute himself and release Benjamin. It is, of course, the precise thing that Jesus did on the cross. On the cross it was if as Jesus was saying to the Father 'Let Your servant remain instead...' 'Let Me be in the place of sinners.' 'Let Me bear your anger against sin instead of them.' Jesus offered Himself as our substitute. Judah is being Christ-like. 'Let me be Benjamin's substitute.' It demonstrates

□1 44:1
 □2 44:2
 □3 44:3
 □4 44:3-5
 □5 44:6-8
 □6 44:9
 □7 44:10-12

□1 44:14-15
 □2 44:16

□1 44:17

□1 44:18-34
 □2 44:18-20
 □3 44:21-29
 □4 44:30
 □5 44:30-31

□1 44:32
 □2 44:33

once and for ever that the brothers have changed and are deeply repentant over what they have done. Even when an opportunity is given them to have their own freedom but get rid of Benjamin, they will not take it. They would rather bear Benjamin's punishment in order that he will be restored to his father. Jesus was like that. He would rather bear our punishment so that we might be restored to the Father.

• Reveals that Judah himself is a new man

His speech reveals that Judah himself is a new man. Now we can understand why the story of Genesis 38 was put where it was between Genesis 37 and Genesis 39. It was the deep disgrace of the events recorded in Genesis 38 that was to humble Judah and lead into his being a man of humility and very great compassion. A sinner disgraced became a sinner restored with a very tender heart.

True repentance for all to see

• Joseph is convinced

Joseph has now at last proved to his own satisfaction that these brothers have truly repented of the sin they had committed many years ago. If they were given a chance they now would not do what they had done years ago. When an opportunity to repeat the sin comes along they fight against it and stand by their brother Benjamin.

Joseph has had to do what he has done. What would be the good of bringing his family to Egypt if the old animosities and jealousies and hatred were still there? What would be the good of his having his brothers near him if they would kill him at the first opportunity?

• His brothers can also see that they have changed

But there is more. Not only has Joseph proved to his own satisfaction that the brothers have changed, **he has also allowed them to see that they have changed.** They have been put in the same situation that they were in years before and without knowing that they were dealing with Joseph they turned down all invitations to behave as they had done twenty years ago. They will have the joy of knowing that they have changed. They will have the joy of seeing that when they are placed in tempting situations they reject violently the temptations to repeat their old sin.

• There is also enough evidence for Jacob to know that his sons have truly repented

There is more still. **Joseph has provided enough evidence for Jacob to know that his sons have truly repented.** It is likely that Jacob will soon hear the entire story of what they did to Joseph. The terrible truth about the attempted murder and the abandonment in the pit and the sale to the passing Ishmaelites – it is all going to come out. Maybe Jacob will want to know every detail. What will he think of his sons? But Jacob has already provided evidence ahead of the event that the brothers have turned aside from such wickedness. The news of their sin and the news of their repentance will reach Jacob at the same time.

A reunited family

Joseph has been a skilful pastor and shepherd of his own family. He has brought them to repentance and he has made it possible for them and everyone involved to see that a very great change has taken place in their lives. They are ready to be a united family again – in Egypt.



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