

Genesis 44

THE FINAL TEST

Opening Thoughts

- * Chapter 44 completes the brothers testing
- * What is the purpose of this final test?
 - ◆ To “definitively” expose the condition of the brothers hearts, namely —
 - ◆ Will they sacrifice the one or be sacrificial, and ...
 - ◆ Will they fully confess and repent of their sin

Opening Thoughts

- * As we will see — God, via Joseph, will set up the perfect test ...
- * He will thoroughly “corner” the brothers to fully reveal their hearts
- * But that is not all ...

Opening Thoughts

- * From a “bigger picture” perspective, what has God been orchestrating?
 - ◆ Fulfillment of Gen 15:12ff [\[READ\]](#)
- * In addition to “getting them to Egypt” there must be family solidarity from the outset, otherwise ...

Opening Thoughts

- * They might “drift” into the Egyptian culture as they have done in Canaan
- * [Side Note](#): While we are urged to persevere — it is interesting to see how God perseveres in His purposes

Structure

- * The Plot — vv. 1-5
- * The Proceedings — vv. 6-13
- * The Prosecution — vv. 14-17
- * The Plea — vv. 18-34

The Plot

- * As is typical in Genesis, the readers, are “clued-in” from the outset
- * In vv. 1-2, Joseph “sets a trap”
- * **What does he do?**
 - ◆ OK — too easy a question ...

The Plot

- ◆ He again returns their money, and ...
- ◆ He places his “cup” in Benjamin’s sack
- * Note the steward’s complicity in the plot — this will be important later
- * At first light, the brothers are “sent off”

The Plot

- * One thing troubles me at the outset — anything come to mind for you?
- ◆ Why don't the brothers check their sacks as they set out!!
- ◆ Of course it is "divinely intended" — But what other options come to mind?

The Plot

- ◆ Maybe they were just hungover, or ...
- ◆ More likely they had been lulled into false confidence from the prior day's treatment
- * I suspect Joseph knew this — thus this final test!

The Plot

- * No sooner than they've left the city limits, Joseph "springs the trap"
- * He arms his steward with 2 questions
 - ◆ Why do you return evil for good?
 - ◆ Why have you stolen "my cup?"

The Plot

- * Does Joseph's use of divination seem strange?
 - ◆ I'd say yes — so why does he say this?
 - ◆ I think to maintain his cover
- * Water divination was a known Egyptian practice

The Plot

- * It involved dropping contaminants into pure clear water and “reading the results”
- * What is interesting about the charge?
 - ◆ NO MENTION OF THE MONEY!!

The Proceedings

- * Move along in 5-quick stages
 - ◆ The Pursuit - v. 6
 - ◆ The Protest - vv. 7-8
 - ◆ The Proclamation - v. 9
 - ◆ The Penalty - v. 10

The Proceedings

- ◆ The Perpetrator - vv. 11-13
- * As instructed, the steward sets out and confronts the brothers
- * How do the brothers go about protesting the charge in vv. 7-8?

The Proceedings

- ◆ First incredulity in v. 7 — “Far be it from us to do such a thing!” ...
- ◆ Which I believe is probably genuine
- ◆ Second in v. 8 they offer a logical defense
- * What do they do next?

The Proceedings

- * They make a rash vow! — Can you think of another OT example?
 - ♦ Jephthah — Judges 11:29ff [\[READ\]](#)
- * Now, from here it starts to get really interesting ...

The Proceedings

- * Verse 10 seem to be contradictory — what is happening?
 - ♦ A little unfair question — tricky Hebrew
 - ♦ An understandable paraphrase would be ...
 - ♦ Yes, as you say, there will be consequences

The Proceedings

- ◆ BUT ... Here is what they will be
- * So, why does the steward modify the punishment?
- ◆ Because he knows the cup is in Benjie's bag
- ◆ And — implied — he must know that it is not Joseph's intent to kill his brother!

The Proceedings

- ◆ Rather — to bait the brothers to reveal their hearts!!
- * What does v. 11 suggest about the brothers mindset?
- ◆ They are convinced they are innocent and eager to prove it — “they hurried to lower their sacks”

The Proceedings

- * Try to put yourself in to the situation
— what would you be feeling in v. 12?
- ◆ Tension, tension, tension ...
- ◆ Until they got to Benjamin — then elation ...
- ◆ The evil brothers were “clean” — NO WAY Benjamin did it!!

The Proceedings

- * The steward proceeded in birth order
— again an interesting “coincidence”
- * In so doing the tension — and their confidence builds
- * And then “the reveal” ...

The Proceedings

- * Which must have felt like a dagger in their hearts
- * Now what is interesting about their collective response(s) in v. 13?
 - ◆ Primarily genuine grief — “they tore their clothes”

The Proceedings

- * But what else about their response?
 - ◆ Total resignation: No push back at all — even from Benjamin!
 - ◆ And — family “solidarity” ...
- * And one more thing — What?

The Proceedings

- ◆ They neither blame, nor question Benjamin
- * All of which suggests what?
- ◆ The beginnings of the fruit of real heart change and repentance from the “bros”

The Prosecution

- * Now the brothers “appear in court”
- * In today’s terminology — How would we express their action upon appearing before the judge?
- ◆ He throws himself “on the mercy of the court” — offering no defense for their actions

The Prosecution

- * Joseph begins with two questions
 - ◆ What have you DONE!
 - ◆ Don't you know I can practice divination?
- * The first question is straight forward
- * What is the point of the second one?

The Prosecution

- * I don't think Joseph is saying he actually practices divination — Why?
 - ◆ Because he seems to have a pretty good "pipeline" to God already!
- * Rather — again concealing himself he is saying ...

The Prosecution

- * Do you actually think you could get away with this with a man who can “divine” things like myself!
- * In other words, it is an emphatic question
- * What does Judah’s response in v. 16 tell us about his heart condition?

The Prosecution

- ◆ He has FINALLY been brought to and IS at the “end of himself”
- ◆ Note the three questions of complete resignation ...
- ◆ In the vernacular of today he says — “I got nothin’!”

The Prosecution

- * Judah is demonstrating genuine penitence vs. remorse, marked by ...
- * True sorrow and contrition over his sin
- * What iniquity does he refer to in v. 16?

The Prosecution

- ◆ I believe he is referring to their prior sin against Joseph
- * What are my textual clues?
- ◆ First — Note again that God (“The God” in the Hebrew) has found them out ... God certainly was not needed to expose their present guilt!

The Prosecution

- ◆ Second, note the plural — “[Your servants](#)”
... including all of the prior perpetrators
- ◆ Though likely at this point excluding Benjamin — **How can I assert this?**
- ◆ Because of the final clause in v. 16 — note what it says ...

The Prosecution

- * “[We and the one](#)” — A very specific grammatical construction in the Hebrew
- ◆ Judah distinguishes the “10” from Benjamin
- ◆ The “10” will become slaves for their prior iniquity against Joseph, while ...
- ◆ Benjamin will be accountable for the “present” iniquity — [the cup](#)

The Prosecution

- * Reminding us of an important implication
- 📖 There is none righteous — not even one ...
Ps 14:1-3 [READ] and Rom 3:10-12 [READ]
- * NOW — what is Joseph doing in v. 17?
 - ◆ Firstly honoring the penalty set forth in v. 10 —
But I think something more ... What?

The Prosecution

- * He is tightening the noose — How?
 - ◆ By giving them a chance to throw Benjamin under the bus ...
 - ◆ The conditions for betrayal are right before them!
- * Joseph knows where Judah stands — but not yet definitively where the others stand

The Prosecution

- * Divinely orchestrated for sure — and brilliantly executed by Joseph!
- * Verse 17 is the hinge of the chapter
- * Now we proceed to Judah's "impassioned plea" in vv. 18-34

The Plea

- * Verses 18-34 are the "heart" of the chapter
- * They capture a dramatic and extended plea voiced by Judah — an appeal for mercy made to the "supreme ruler" of the land
- * What "precipitates" the appeal?

The Plea

- * His father's love for Benjamin and the impact of his incarceration ...
 - ◆ In effect — Don't "hasten" my father's death
- * **What do we see in the appeal?**
 - ◆ Judah's love for his father and genuine care for the needs of someone other than himself!

The Plea

- * **What is absent in the appeal?**
 - ◆ Any claims of innocence or attempt to escape punishment
- * The plea is a masterful and heartfelt oratory, proceeding in five-stages ...
 - ◆ Permission to speak: [An appeal for favor](#) - v. 18

The Plea

- ◆ Prolegomena: [A case review](#) - vv. 19-24
- ◆ Painful parting: [Heartbreak](#) - vv. 25-29
- ◆ Present dilemma: [Sorrow unto death](#) - vv. 30-32
- ◆ Proposed solution: "[Let it be me](#)" - vv. 33-34

The Plea

- * [Permission to speak](#) - v. 18
- ◆ Judah implores "the judge" to grant him a favorable audience, and ...
- ◆ Acknowledges Joseph's total authority
- ◆ Proceeding — Judah proceeds to review the "facts of the case"

The Plea

- * The “Case Review” — vv. 19-24
- * Judah recounts the substance and sequence of the “events to date”
 - ◆ First the inquiry into the family make-up — vv. 19-20
 - An aging father and “youngest” brother ...

The Plea

- The only surviving son of his “mother” ...
- Since his “blood brother” is dead
- ◆ Next he recounts Joseph’s demands in v. 21
- ◆ Followed by its difficulties in v. 22, and
- ◆ Joseph’s non-negotiable resolve and their capitulation in vv. 23-24

The Plea

* Painful Parting — vv. 25-29

- ◆ Next Judah moves on to the scene of their painful parting ...
- ◆ Jacob commands the brothers to return
- ◆ To which Judah responds by reminding his father of the “terrifying terms of restocking”

The Plea

- ◆ And then in vv. 28-29 Jacob’s potential heartbreak at losing Benjamin
- * Now all of this has been an artful prelude to Judah’s actual appeal!!
- * Notice how he now characterizes the present dilemma in vv. 30-32 ...

The Plea

* What is he doing in these verses?

- ◆ Redirecting the issue from Benjamin's guilt for the "infraction," to ...
- ◆ The threat to his father's life — which is absolutely brilliant
- ◆ ... AND sincere!

The Plea

* What does Judah demonstrate in this transition?

- ◆ His genuine repentance and resultant heart change

* What else in vv. 30-32 supports Judah's heart change?

The Plea

- ◆ He has pledged his life — and eternal damnation — as “surety” for Benjamin’s return
- * Which leads us to the final two verses ...

The Plea

- * Body of the plea complete, Judah concludes with his appeal in vv. 33-34
- * **What theological principle does it foreshadow?**
- ◆ Vicarious penal substitution — the offering of one for the offense of another!

The Plea

- ◆ In Gen 22:13 — an animal for a person
- ◆ Here a person for a person — picturing Christ ...
- * **How does Christ's substitution differ?**
- ◆ His was the "perfect" for the "imperfect!"

The Plea

- * No doubt at this point Judah is fully repentant ... And likely the brothers
- * Which now paves the way for chapter 45 — **And what?**
- ◆ RECONCILIATION of the brothers!

Closing Thoughts

- * Another marvelously constructed and rich chapter with “Divine” twists
- * We have been climbing the mountain over chapters 37-44 ...
- * And now in Gen 45:1-7 we reach the summit and climactic conclusion
