



Genesis – 43:1 - 44:34  
(44:14 - 44:34)

Self-Preservation or Selflessness - The Final Test  
(Lesson #55)

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Joseph's Timeline

Event	Joseph's Age	Genesis
Joseph's father moves family from Haran	6	31:17-21
Joseph is sold into slavery	17 / <a href="#">Jac 108</a>	37:12-36
Joseph interprets the dreams of cupbearer and baker while in prison	28	41:1
Joseph's grandfather Isaac dies	29 / <a href="#">Jac 120</a>	35:28-29
Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams and is released from prison	30	41:46
Seven years of plenty, Manasseh and Ephraim born during this time	30-37	41:47-52
Seven years of famine	37-44	41:47-52
Joseph and Jacob reunite (2 years into famine), and family moves family to Egypt	39 / <a href="#">Jac 130</a>	45:6, 47:9, 28
Jacob dies	56 / <a href="#">Jac 147</a>	47:28
Joseph dies	110	50:22-26

Twenty-Seven Point Outline for chapters 43-44:

23. They arrive back at the Lord of the land's home and fall to the ground before him (44:14)
24. Joseph feigns amazement at their crime (44:15)
25. Judah accepts responsibility and declares that they are all the Lord of the land's servants (44:16)
26. The Lord of the land declares no, only the guilty party will be punished, the rest are free to go (44:17)
27. Judah explains how devastating this will be for his father and offers himself in place of Benjamin (18-34)

**44:14-15** *When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there. They fell before him to the ground. 15 Joseph said to them, "What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that a man like me can indeed practice divination?"*

**Vs 14 -** You can imagine as the eleven brother's arrived at Joseph house, they were likely scared and confused.

Notice how Moses describes it: ***When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house...***

Where is Reuben, where is Simeon, and where is Levi? They are there, but Moses records when Judah and his brothers arrived at Joseph's house, it is Judah who engages with the Lord of the land.

When they arrive Joseph is still there, he has not left for the granary yet.

Once again, they bow themselves to the ground, once again fulfilling a pair of prophecies that were given 22 years ago to Joseph via two dreams.

**APPLICATION:** I know I have said this multiple times, but it bears repeating. If God says it, that settles it!

Jesus said this in John chapter 5:

*“Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.” (Joh 5:28-29 ESV)*

But there is something else we need to see here and that is their humility before this powerful Egyptian.

They do not come in **demanding an investigation** of the Lord of the land’s servants, they do not come in **demanding justice**, in fact quite the opposite, they are very humble.

They come before the Lord of the land and in great humility they bow. WHY?

Let’s be honest, they were innocent of stealing the silver chalice, the silver cup, but they were guilty of a host of other sins, and they come in great humility before the Lord of the land.

**A REMINDER about Humility:**

*“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,” (1Pe 5b:5-6 ESV)*

*“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.” (Jas 4:10 ESV)*

*“if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2Ch 7:14 ESV)*

*“The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.” (Pr 22:4 ESV)*

**Vs 15** - Joseph engages the brothers and asks them two pointed and direct questions:

**FIRST, What deed is this that you have done?**

We get the **depth of the question**. After I showed you **so much hospitality**, after I treated you like honored guests in my home, after I was **so kind**, after you **enjoyed dinner with me in my home**, **after you spent the night in my home**, after I have been so gracious and kind to you, what is this that you would **steal from my home**?

**SECOND, Do you not know that a man like me can indeed practice divination?!”**

**Again**, I do not believe that Joseph practices divination, any more than Benjamin stole the cup, but I believe Joseph is role playing and he is setting up the **final and toughest examination**.

*16-17 - And Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord’s servants, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found." 17 But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my servant. But as for you, go up in peace to your father."*

**Vs 16a** - Once again, the thing that captures our attention is that the **person engaging for the group** is the fourth born son, Judah.

Judah asks **three rhetorical questions**, then he makes **a shocking declaration**, and ends with **a surprising conclusion**.

**FIRST rhetorical question: *What shall we say to my lord?***

What shall we say: the Hebrew word is אָמַר (**aw-mar**'), what shall we **say**, what shall we **answer**, what shall we **speak**? We have **nothing to say**. There is **nothing we can say**.

What is **interesting** is that he does not deny they committed the crime of stealing the cup. Although they did not steal it. He does not try to defend them.

**SECOND rhetorical question: *What shall we speak?***

It seems like a restatement of the first rhetorical question. Although Judah uses a different Hebrew word here.

He asks what shall we דָּבַר (**daw-bar**'), what shall we speak, what shall we pronounce, what shall we promise, so slightly different word, but it seems the same overall point.

**THIRD rhetorical question: *How can we clear ourselves?***

This question makes sense, in a rhetorical fashion he is asking: What evidence can we bring forth?

The cup was found in the youngest brother's bag. What evidence could we bring forth to clear our charge?

By the way, the Hebrew word here translated "**clear ourselves**" is צָדַק (**tsadaq**), it is normally translated **justify** or **righteous**.

You see what he is asking: **How can we be justified?**

This word is only used twice in Genesis, here and in Gen 38:24-26.

Here Judah asked how can we be declared right in this matter, how can we be justified? It is a rhetorical question and I suspect in Judah's mind they cannot. You will see his declaration in a second.

**APPLICATION:** But this **whole event**, this **whole question**, focuses our attention on the age-old question.

It was the question that Eliphaz asked when speaking with Job (Job 4:17), it was the question Job asked in (Job 9:2-3) and here it is the question that Judah is asking.

But this forces the bigger question. **How can sinful man be righteous before a HOLY GOD?** That is the question each of us must contend with. How will you and I, sinners, be right before a perfect and holy God?

Is it by a perfect obedience to God's laws? **Two problems:**

- 1) You and I have already sinned, many times
- 2) Remember: "*For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*" (Ro 3:20 ESV)

The law can declare we are guilty, but it cannot correct or fix our guilt!

But then Paul says something amazing in (Rom 3:20-22).

You and I are guilty and on our own, we will never be right before God. You and I have sinned. But now, God makes a new way. The way of faith, where we put our trust in Jesus, and we freely receive His righteousness.

Remember Paul's bold declaration in Rom 1:16-17?

**Back to our story...**

So we have the **three rhetorical questions** now we come to a **shocking declaration:**

As Judah stands before the Lord of the land he makes a **shocking declaration!**

**Vs 16b - God has found out the guilt of your servants;** Now, I do not believe that Judah is saying they are somehow guilty of stealing the silver cup. Nor do I believe that Judah thinks that Benjamin stole the cup.

**Then what is Judah talking** about that Elohim has found out the “guilt” of your servants?

The **Hebrew word** translated guilt is **אָוֹן** (**‘avon**) (**aw-vone**’), it is normally translated **iniquity** and can also be translated **perversity, depravity, or guilt.**

I think the guilt of your servants, the **iniquity of your servants** that Judah is referring to is the **guilt over what they did to Joseph 22 years ago**, it is the guilt of **Judah in particular**, it is that guilt that, it seems, **Elohim has found out.**

Here is what Judah seems to be saying, if we land in an Egyptian prison for the rest of our lives it is because Elohim has found out our sins and we are only getting what we deserve. Not the cup, but the brother they mercilessly sold into slavery!

Now I want to quickly remind you about what they said during the first meeting, right before they agreed with the Lord of the land’s demand for one to stay (Gen 42:21).

There in the pit, Joseph begged for mercy. None was extended!

If you remember, in that first interaction, **Reuben went on to say** (Gen 42:22)!

**Now a Physicist could** tell you how long it took for their words to travel through the air and reach their eardrums. Distance from the pit, speed of sound in air, in fact, if I knew the distance, I could tell you.

**But it has taken these 22 years for Joseph’s cries to reach their hearts!**

**Judah**, I believe is continuing to wrestle with a **guilty conscience**. And here, Judah says, and besides all that **God has found out the guilt of your servants**. This is similar to what Reuben said on the first visit, it is the day of reckoning.

**APPLICATION:** When we went through Genesis 42, you will remember I told you the brothers had a **guilty conscience**. Further, I told you nothing can erase a guilty conscience but the blood of Jesus Christ. People try all sorts of things, drugs, alcohol, etc.

**Hear me**, nothing is going to **clear our consciences of past sins** with the exception of the **blood of Jesus Christ**.

If God is calling to your spirit, about your sins, you need to deal with that. Nothing except repentance and faith is going to clear your conscience.

**Vs 16c -** Then Judah tells the Lord of the land something shocking! We, **all of us**, are my **Lord’s servants**. All of us, not only the one in whose hand the cup was found, but all of us!

Judah is saying this, we are **not leaving Benjamin behind**.

**Vs 17 -** The **Lord of the land** responds, I would never punish all of you for the crime of one man. Far be that from me to punish the innocent with the guilty!

Instead, only the man in whose hand the cup was found will be punished, only that man will become my slave. As far as the other ten of you, go up, return to your father in peace.

**Here the test is executed, the examination begins! What will the brothers do?**

There are two choices: **self-preservation or selflessness?**

Will they put the younger (favored) brother first or will they, for the sake of self-preservation throw him to the wolves (the Lord of the land)? Like they did many years ago with Joseph!

Will they turn their backs and leave Benjamin, the way they left Joseph or will they take a different path?

**APPLICATION:** You and I are faced with this same choice all the time. **Selfishness or selflessness?** Here is what Paul said (Php 2:5-8).

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*18-20 - Then Judah went up to him and said, "Oh, my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not your anger burn against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh himself. 19 My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father, or a brother?' 20 And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.'*

Before we read what Judah says, Dr. Donald Barnhouse said of this speech: *"This is the most moving address in all the word of God."*

**Vs 18 -** Then Judah closes space between himself and the Lord of the land. Judah draws near to the Lord of the land and he begins with **two very broad and over-arching requests:**

- 1) Please let me, your servant speak to you. I know I do not have standing. I know that you do not owe me anything, but please hear what I have to say.
- 2) Let not your anger burn against me, for you are like Pharaoh himself. You are powerful, this nation listens to your voice.

At this point we wonder, what will Judah say?

**Vs 19-20 -** Judah then begins recounting, reviewing all that went down through this entire event.

You remember, you are the one, when we came the first time to buy grain, who executed the discussions. You are the one who asked your servants: *'Have you a father, or a brother?'*

And we said to you, there at the granary, we have a father an older man and we also have a younger brother.

The younger brother was the child of our father's old age. He is the baby of the family having been the last child born to our dad and having been born to our father when he was older.

Judah, provided a very wise, respectful, and humble appeal. He appeals to the Lord of the land's heart.

**FOR A MOMENT:** Think of what it was like to live in Jacob's home. He was so focused on loving Joseph and Benjamin. For the other ten, it was likely almost like Jacob could care less.

Judah is 40 something here, and in spite of how he feels his dad felt about him, he did not respond here with anger or bitterness. Instead, he loves his father and he has compassion for his father.

**God is working in Judah's life and how he sees his father is proof of that work.**

**APPLICATION:** Some of us have **been hurt**, I mean **really hurt**, maybe by **someone we loved**. Someone who should have never hurt us the way they did. It is our **natural response** to shut them out, to push them away, to close the door. Maybe even to be angry at them and want nothing to do with them.

Can you not hear God saying, through his servant Judah, let me **heal that wound**, let me **heal your heart**, let me **change your heart**.

You and I can respond in love even though what was done to us was so unlovely and unloving.

*21-23 - Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.' 22 We said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' 23 Then you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again.'*

**Vs 21** - Then you **commanded us** to bring the boy, the **boy our father loves**, the boy who has already lost his blood brother, bring him down to Egypt.

**Vs 22 - We responded;** this is impossible, the boy cannot leave his father's side (please keep in mind, the boy is around 30 at this time). To take our youngest brother from our dad would kill our dad.

**The grief and sorrow would overwhelm our father.** He simply cannot handle the possible loss of this youngest son. We told you as much when we were with you.

**Vs 23** - Then you commanded, to us, your servants: You will not see me again, unless your brother comes down with you. You told us plainly, do not come back to Egypt unless you come with your younger brother.

*24 "When we went back to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. 25 And when our father said, 'Go again, buy us a little food,' 26 we said, 'We cannot go down. If our youngest brother goes with us, then we will go down. For we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.'*

**Vs 24** - We went back to Canaan, we told our father all the words that you had told us. We shared with him that you told us plainly we would not see your face again, unless our youngest brother was with us.

**Vs 25-26** - After some passage of time, after the grain supply begin to dwindle, our father said to us: **'Go again, buy us a little food,'** He told us up, go back to Egypt and buy more grain.

Now the brothers would all ultimately agree and sign-on with everything Judah said, but it was Judah, at least initially, who responded to dad's command to go to Egypt and buy grain. Remember what we read in Genesis 43:3-5.

*27 Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. 28 One left me, and I said, "Surely he has been torn to pieces," and I have never seen him since. 29 If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in evil to Sheol.'*

**Vs 27-28** - Here we are told what Jacob said to his sons. Now this is a much larger response with additional details that were not contained in Genesis 43.

Here Judah tells the Lord of the land then our dad said to us, and you will notice it is a **two-fold response**:

**FIRST**, you brothers know that my wife Leah bore me two sons. One of those sons, the eldest left me. What he really means here is that he was killed by a wild animal when I dispatched him to Shechem to check on you guys to see how caring for the flock was going.

After seeing the multi-colored coat that the brothers sent ahead as they returned, I (Jacob) concluded that the firstborn of Rachel had been "torn to pieces." You will notice how Judah quotes Jacob here, and does not himself state that an animal killed Joseph.

But then Judah adds this: And I have never seen him since then. It is interesting to see how Judah navigates this story. Of course, all that Judah just said here is the truth. **Carefully curated**, but all true.

**SECOND**, if you **take this boy (Joseph's)** younger brother from me, and harm were to befall him, something bad was to happen to him, the way it happened to Joseph, then it would bring down my gray hairs in evil to Sheol.

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*30 "Now therefore, as soon as I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy's life, 31 as soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. 32 For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.'*

**Vs 30-31 - Now Judah** brings this whole discussion to his **two main points**.

Having set the background, he is now ready to bring this who discussion to its **two main points** which includes **his request**.

**POINT #1:** If we were to leave and head back home, the moment, the very moment our father sees that the boy is not with us, he will die. **For his life is bound up with the boy's life.**

Dr. Arnold Fructenbaum writes: *"The Hebrew here literally reads "his soul is knit with the lad's soul."*

This same phrase is used of King David and Saul's son Jonathan (I Sam 18:1).

If we go home and Benjamin is not with us it will **kill our father**. He is so connected to this younger boy, it will kill him. You do not get how he loves this boy! **He will simply die!**

**Vs 32 - Point #2:** Your servant, me, **I made a pledge to my father**, I became **surety** for the safe return of our younger brother. I made a pledge that I would **bring him back**. **I promised that I would bear the sin if I did not.**

**DO NOT MISS:** An unchanged heart would have concluded, and who cares! Dad has never loved me the way he loved these two sons of Rachel. Who cares!

**That is not Judah's heart. He loves his father and does not want to see him hurt.** This was much different than how Judah watched his dad breakdown over the loss of Joseph and said NOTHING!

Now Judah comes to the request. He has said a lot to get here, but **now he has come to the ask**.

*33 Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers. 34 For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father."*

**Vs 33 - Here is the ask:** Please let me, your servant remain, instead of the boy. Let me become a slave to my Lord, and let the boy (young man) (30ish) go back with his brothers.

**Let me stay as the substitute for my brother.** Let me **take his place**, let me **bear the cost of his iniquity**, let me **stand in his place**.

As far as appearance, the guilty party, the person who had the cup was Benjamin, Judah was totally innocent of the cup issue.

**I want us to observe two points here:**

**FIRST**, as we process this, this is the same man who we read this about with all his brothers in Genesis 37:3-4, this is the same man we read about in Gen 37:26-27, this is the same man we read about in Gen 38:15-16.

Prior to last week the only characteristics we would be able to ascribe to Judah would be things like **anger**, **jealousy**, **bitterness** and an overall all draw of his flesh toward **carnal pleasures**. He seemed to have little interest in **following the ways of Yahweh**. If we are honest, we wondered why God would choose this rascal to bring the Messiah through.

But it is that same Judah, although a totally different person now who in Canaan told his dad he would be surety for Benjamin. Who here is pleading to take the place of Benjamin, to bear the penalty of Benjamin and thus allow Benjamin to go free!

**SECOND:** If you remember, weeks back, a few times, I told you that this man would ultimately redeem himself. You see all the **dirty business in Dothan** has worked **repentance in the heart of Judah**. It has brought Judah to the **end of himself**, which I would argue is right where **God wants him**.

**Here is a beautiful foreshadowing of Jesus**, Judah is saying. I will lay down my life for the life of Benjamin. Lock me up, set him free!

**Jesus** is the one who **came alongside guilty ones** and said even though I am innocent, I will take their place, I will bear their punishment.

God has been working mightily in Joseph's life, but he has also been working in Judah's life as well as the other brother's lives.

**APPLICATION:** Now there are many points of application here. But let's focus our attention on Jesus.

Judah steps up and says I will **take the boy's place**. I will **bear his penalty**. **This is the gospel**, this is the **message of the gospel hidden away** in the Old Testament, this points us forward to what Jesus did for you and I (I Pet 2:24), or as Isaiah prophesied of the coming Messiah (Isa 53:4-6).

Judah's selflessness here, serves as a picture of the **selflessness of God** who came and **bore our wrath**, although He himself was **guilty of no sin!**

**Vs 34** - Judah concludes, how can I go back to my father if Benjamin is not with me? If I go back home without the boy, I fear that evil would find my father.

Think with me for a moment. Judah had no concern for his dad when he sold Joseph into slavery. **Here Judah has a real, legitimate concern for his dad.**

What at one time had generated a great deal of jealousy in Judah's heart, the fact that dad loved Joseph more, no longer generates that in Judah's heart even when he sees that his dad loves Benjamin more.

Rather, it seems that Judah is now driven by love, now driven by compassion, now driven by concern for his brother Benjamin and his dad (Jacob) Israel. **Isn't that the lesson for you and I?**

**What in the world will happen now?** What will Joseph do? **Tune in next week** as we pick back up this **amazing story of Joseph**, that has now turned into an **amazing story of Judah**, that points to the **amazing story of Jesus!**