

# Then Judah said to Isra'el, Send Benjamin with Me and I will Guarantee His Safety

**43: 1-14**

**DIG:** Why is Judah successful in convincing his father to let him take Benjamin with him, whereas Reuben's similar offer of security was rejected (42:37-38)? Why? Compare Judah's words in 42:8-9 with 37:26-27. Do you think he has changed much?

**REFLECT:** What or who in your life do you have trouble trusting to the Lord?

Now the famine was still severe in the land of Canaan and Isra'el's family of about one hundred and fifty still needed more grain at Hebron (43:1). There was no getting around it. If they did not get more grain, the whole family could die. So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little more food" (43:2). Evidently the Egyptians were carefully rationing the sale of grain and a little more was all they could hope for. But anything was better than nothing.

But Judah confronted his father with the fact that without Benjamin their trip would be in vain: The man warned us solemnly, "You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you" (43:3). Judah had taken over the leadership role of the sons by this time. Reuben, the eldest son, had already been refused, and Levi, who followed Reuben and Simeon, had forfeited his father's confidence through the treachery and slaughter of the men of Shechem.<sup>656</sup>

Judah will not usurp the authority of his father, but he tells him plainly: If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you. But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, "You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you" (43:4-5). The Egyptian ruler would not even talk to them without Benjamin.

But before that glorious meeting, Isra'el was in agony and scolds Judah saying: Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother (43:6)? Thinking primarily of himself, this was Isra'el's way of trying to escape a decision he didn't want to make. It seems that Benjamin was not afraid to go to Egypt; it was Isra'el's concern alone. It is interesting that, at this point in the narrative, the name Isra'el begins to be used instead of Jacob. This name has not been used since 37:13.<sup>657</sup> Isra'el means *he who prevails victoriously with God*, and the name Isra'el is emphasized here to point out that *God was working behind the scenes to accomplish His purposes (12:3)*.

Israel's sons attempt to defend themselves by saying: The man questioned us closely about our family and ourselves. The questions the brothers say Joseph asked them are not found in 42:8-17 because they only gave a paraphrase. Then they said, he asked us: Is your father living. Do you have another brother? We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say: Bring your brother down here (43:7)? When Yosef asked them these questions, they had no suspicions whatsoever that the Egyptian prime minister would ask them to bring Benjamin to him. They were totally caught off-guard.

Judah, more than Isra'el, knew that if they stayed in Canaan they had no chance at all. So Judah said to Isra'el his father, "Send the boy, Benjamin, along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children, three generations altogether, may live and not die of hunger" (43:8). The implication was that Benjamin would die as well. It is interesting that Judah should refer to Benjamin as a boy. Benjamin was probably about fifteen years younger than Yosef, and was quite an infant when he was sold.

Just as Rebekah told Isra'el that she would bear the responsibility of Isaac's curse (27:13), now Judah said that he would be held personally responsible if Benjamin did not return.<sup>658</sup> He said: I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life (43:9). The Hebrew actually reads *I will have sinned against you forever* and would mean that Judah would be cut off from all inheritance. Back in Chapter 37:26-27, Judah had talked the brothers into selling Yosef; now, because he realizes that his father's affection has transferred from Joseph to Benjamin, he took personal responsibility for his return.

Friend, you and I have that same guarantee today. Having believed, you were marked in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His promised Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance that is to come (Second Corinthians 1:21-22 and Ephesians 1:13b-14). The Lord Jesus came from the tribe of Judah. Messiah took our place and took our penalty. He became our guarantee and gave His life for ours. Judah reminded his father, "As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice" (43:10).

Then their father Isra'el did just what he had done many years earlier when he tried to appease his brother Esau before meeting him (32:13-21), he prepared some of the best products of the land to take down to the Egyptian ruler as a gift. He said: Take a little balm, and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds (43:11). They scraped together a little something as a gift to this powerful man. The gift

includes three products that formed part of the merchandise carried by the caravan of Ishmaelites (37:25) that took Joseph to Egypt. It was ironic that now *he* would receive those very same products.<sup>659</sup>

Besides these items, *he* reminded them to take double the amount of silver with them, for they needed to return the silver that was put back into the mouths of their sacks (43:12). All they could hope for was that the Egyptians would realize that the silver had been placed in their sacks by mistake. It is also interesting to note that there were ten brothers (counting Simeon) with two bags of silver for each, so there were twenty bags of silver returning to Egypt. Therefore, it seems possible that the brothers themselves realized the ironical connection between the facts that they had sold their brother for twenty pieces of silver into Egypt (37:28), and that now they were having to pay into the treasuries of Egypt not merely twenty pieces of silver but twenty bags of silver.<sup>660</sup>

Take your brother also and go back to the man at once (43:13). Thus Isra'el let his sons go with his blessing: And may El Shaddai (17:1, 28:3, 35:11), *who is so powerful that He can set aside the laws of nature, grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother Simeon and Benjamin come back with you.* But Isra'el has no guarantee that El Shaddai will do anything, so fearing the worst, *he* said: As for me, if I am bereaved of Benjamin and left alone, then I am bereaved (43:14). Queen Esther said the same thing when *she* concluded: If I perish, then I perish (Esther 4:16). However, Isra'el does believe that El Shaddai will be the One to make the final decision about the destiny of Benjamin. Neither Judah nor the powerful ruler of Egypt had that authority.<sup>661</sup>

When Isra'el finally decided to send Benjamin back to Egypt so the family could retrieve Simeon and buy more grain, *he* reacted in two different ways. First, *he* prayed that El Shaddai would grant his sons mercy. But on the other hand *he* feared for the worst when *he* basically said, "If I lose my sons, then I lose my sons." In other words, his "What ever will be, will be" attitude is very worldly, but *we* ought to have compassion on Isra'el here. *Are not our thoughts and attitudes very similar when we undergo various trials and tribulations?* On the one hand, *we* want to trust the Lord but our flesh is weak. *We* vacillate between hope and despair and so does Isra'el. Of course, the ultimate answer is to go to El Shaddai and seek His mercy, which means *not getting what we do deserve.* Only then will *we* be reconciled to our greatest trials.<sup>662</sup>