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The Cup was Found in Benjamin's Sack, at this They Tore Their Clothes

44: 1-17

The cup was found in Benjamin's sack, at this they tore their clothes **DIG: Why does Joseph place the silver bowl in Benjamin's sack? Why the exciting delay in sending the steward after them? How do the brothers respond when the planted bowl is found in Benjamin's sack? How do these feelings compare with their feelings at the end of Chapter 43? With what Yosef felt at the end of Chapter 37? What changes have taken place in their lives?**

REFLECT: Where in your family or at work have you seen someone whose "walk matched his or her talk?" Do you see this in your own life? Where is it tougher, at home, at work, or socially, for you to achieve this?

Clearly elated after **their** dinner with **the prime minister of Egypt, the brothers** pack up and head home. **They** have food to stave off the famine in Canaan, and **they** are returning with **Simeon** and **their** youngest brother **Benjamin**.⁶⁷³ How pleased **their father** will be! But this was all part of **Joseph's** plan. Even though **they** had shown real sorrow for **their** sin against **him**, had confessed it as sin, and shown no resentment against **Benjamin, Joseph** was still not sure what **their** attitude might be if **they** had to choose between **their** own personal welfare and that of **Benjamin** and **their father**.⁶⁷⁴ In view of that, **he** needed to satisfy **his** mind in this regard before **he** made **himself** known to **them**. The test **he** used would give **him** absolute proof that **his brothers** would not repeat the same sin that **he** had experienced at **their** hands so many years before.⁶⁷⁵

Now as part of the test, **Joseph gave these instructions to the steward** of his house: **Fill the men's sacks** with as much food as **they** can carry. **The sacks on their donkeys** could only carry so much, and **they** needed to feed hundreds of people. Then **he** added: **put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack. Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack, along with the silver for his grain. (44:1-2a).** In essence, **he** framed **Benjamin**. The

gabia, here rendered **cup**, was more properly a **bowl**, and was distinguished from the *kosoth*, or smaller cups, into which the liquid was poured from the *gabia*. The distinction is made in **Jeremiah 30:5**, where the two words are used. **Then I set bowls (*gabia*) full of wine and some cups (*kosoth*) before the men of the Recabite family and said to them, "Drink some wine."⁶⁷⁶**

It would have been easy for one of **the brothers** to slip the **silver bowl** into **his sack**. **They** had just finished dining with **Yosef**; perhaps **the bowl** was temptingly placed on the eating table. At least it had to be displayed in a place where the guests had access to it or could observe it so that **they** could later be charged with stealing it. It was unlikely that **they** could have had the chance to burglarize **Joseph's** house while **they** were **his** guests. But **they** could have easily hid it under one of **their** coats, then slipped it unnoticed into one of **their sacks**.⁶⁷⁷ *The test was to see if the brothers would abandon Benjamin as they once had abandoned Joseph. And the steward did as Joseph said.* This **bowl** was a symbol of **his** authority, and to steal it would be a serious crime. **As morning dawned, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys (44:2-3)**. All seemed to be going well.

They had not gone far from the city limits when Yosef said to **his** trusted friend: **Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them say, "Why have you repaid good for evil?"** Then after inspecting the **sack of the youngest**, say, **"Isn't this the silver bowl my master drinks from and also uses for divination" (44:4-5a)?** The Hebrew literally reads: *Nacheish Yeanacheish*, which translates from *divining he divines*. This comes from the same root as the word for *serpent* because the occult is connected with Satan. This was part of the ploy because **Joseph** wanted to make the crime seem worse, but in actuality, **he** did not use any kind of **divination**.

Of course there were **silver bowls used for divination**. This is how they were used. Clean water would be poured into such a **bowl**, then particles of gold, **silver** or precious stones would be dropped into the clean water. Then oil would be added to the clean water. Then depending on how light would shine between the oil and the particles, a prediction would be made. It was viewed as a sacred vessel. Then, at the appropriate moment **the steward** pretended to scowl: **This is a wicked thing you have done (44:5b)!**

When the steward and his many soldiers caught up with them, he repeated these words to them. But they said to **him**, **"Why does my lord say such**

things?" Far be it from your servants to do anything like that! We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the silver we found inside the mouths of our sacks. So why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house? Their reasoning was this: How could **we** be guilty of stealing a **bowl**, when **we** were honest and returned **the silver** we found in **our sacks** after the first trip? And **they** were so sure that none of **them** had stolen the **silver bowl** that **they** made an offer to **the steward**. **They** said: **If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die; and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves (44:6-9)**. Their offer was sincere, but did not accomplish **Joseph's** intent. The counter proposal of **the servant** modifies the penalty even though **he** seemingly agrees with **them**.

The servant said: **Very well then, let it be as you say. Whoever is found to have it will not be executed, but will become my slave; the rest of you will be free from blame**. Now their choice would be between self-preservation and **Benjamin's** welfare. Will family unity and loyalty prevail? Had **the brothers** changed since the time **they** had sold **Joseph**? **All the conditions were set for another betrayal. Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it (44:10-11)**.

Then the steward proceeded to search the sacks of the brothers. The verb **search** is the same one used in **31:35** to describe Laban's search of Jacob's tents for **his** household gods. There is tension that is built up in both accounts. Laban starts in Jacob's tent, moves to Leah's tent, then to the tents of Bilhah and Zilpah, and lastly searches Rachel's tent. The tension builds because the narrator and the reader already know the household gods are in Rachel's tent. Here, **Joseph's steward**, to cause tension to build, began **with the oldest ending with the youngest** because **he** already knew **Benjamin** had **the silver bowl (44:12a)**.



As **sack** after **sack** was opened without finding **the bowl** **they** must have felt more and more vindicated - even angry. **They** must have thought, "How *dare* **he** accuse

us!" But then, at the very last, **the silver bowl was found in Benjamin's sack.** The sudden threat to **Benjamin** was like a sword thrust through **their** hearts, and was an indication that **they** were indeed changed **men. At this, they tore their clothes** in mourning, a response that **they** had earlier caused **their father** to make over the loss of **Yosef**. Now **they** loved **their father** too much to face **him** with the news that **Benjamin**, like **Joseph**, was gone.⁶⁷⁸ So in shock and disbelief, **they all loaded their donkeys again and returned to the city (44:12b-13).**

Joseph, who was expecting **them** to come back, **was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in. He** no doubt was overjoyed when **he** saw all of **them** returning instead of **Benjamin** alone. However, **he** still needed to hear from **their** own lips **their** thoughts and feelings as **they threw themselves to the ground before him** once again **(44:14).**⁶⁷⁹ At this point, **Judah** was the leader of **the brothers. He** had initiated the sale of **Yosef**, but now **he** would sacrifice **himself** for the sake of **Benjamin.**

Joseph said to them: **What is this you have done? Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination (44:15)?** By this point **the brothers** were certainly convinced of that! **His** knowledge of **them** had been uncanny and astonishing. But this was part of the test. Of course, **Joseph** did not practice **divination**; **he** just wanted **his brothers** to understand that **the silver bowl** was used as a sacred vessel.

70. Joseph and Jesus will not reveal themselves until the children of Isra'el confess their sin. Judah replied: **What can we say to my lord? How can we prove our innocence? God had uncovered your servant's guilt (44:16a). It was after this that Joseph revealed himself (45:3), and so it will be with Jesus. Through the mouth of the prophet He says: Then I will go back to My place until they admit their guilt and they will seek My face; in their misery they will earnestly seek Me (Hosea 5:15). So as a condition for the Second Coming, the children of Isra'el will cry out: All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). At that time ADONAI will reveal Himself to the believing remnant of Jews at the end of the Great Tribulation** (see my commentary on **Revelation Ev - The Basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**). There are eighty ways that the life of **Joseph** would prepare the Jews for the coming of **Jesus Christ** (see the commentary on **Genesis lw - The Written Account of the Generations of Jacobs**).

Judah's statement, **God had uncovered your servant's guilt**, was one of the things that **Yosef** was looking for. **He** obviously knew **Benjamin** didn't steal **the silver bowl**, but **Judah** saw the whole thing as **God's** retribution for the way **he** and **his brothers** had dealt with **Joseph**. **Judah** saw this as **Ha'Shem's** way of dealing with **their** past sin against **their brother**. **They** withheld mercy from **him** (42:21), and now **the LORD** would withhold mercy from **them**. **They** deserved what was happening to **them** even if **they** were not guilty of that particular crime.⁶⁸⁰ **We are now my lord's slaves - we ourselves and the one who was found to have the silver bowl (44:16b)**. If **Benjamin** was guilty, so were **they** all.

Judah is discerning enough to know that one's sins will normally find one out, and those sins will serve to punish the sinner. **God** often works that way (see my commentary on **Esther, to see link click Bf - So They Impaled Haman on the Pole He Had Set Up for Mordecai**). Even at the cross there is a sense of retributive irony. There the Adversary and his followers attempted to destroy the promised **One** by hanging **Him** on a cross. But it was the very death of **the Messiah** that brought about the eternal defeat of Satan and his demons. And, of course, **they did what God's power and will had decided beforehand should happen (Acts 4:28)**. The tempter and all his fallen angels meant the cross for evil, but **God** used it for good.⁶⁸¹

But Yosef rejected **Judah's** offer when **he** said: **Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the silver cup will become my slave**. And seeing if **they** would really abandon **their brother**, **Joseph** said: **The rest of you, go back to your father in peace (44:17)**. This was the final test of **the brothers**, and particularly **Judah**. Would **they** stand by **Benjamin** or let **him** become a **slave**? Had **Judah** really changed, or would history repeat itself?

Haftarah miKetz: M'lakhim Alef (First Kings) 3:15-4:1
(see my commentary on Deuteronomy, to see link click **Af - Parashah**)

The Torah portion is preceded by **Joseph's dreams** that his brothers would bow down to **him**. The Haftarah is preceded by a **dream** in which **Solomon** asks **ADONAI** for wisdom to rule. The test came immediately. At a feast, two **women** approach **the young king**, both claiming to be the mother of a newborn **baby**. Each insists that the other's **baby** died during the night. **Solomon** rules that **the baby**



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should be divided and half given to each woman. The true **mother was filled with compassion for her son and said to the king, "Please, my lord, give her the baby! Don't kill him" (First Kings 26-26a)**. Her display of **compassion** contrasted sharply with cold response of the other, who was satisfied to see **the baby** cut in two. **Solomon** ruled that **the baby** should be given to **the woman** who showed **compassion**. **The people** were in awe of **their king**, because **they saw the wisdom of God** at work in **him (First Kings 3:28)**.

**B'rit Chadashah suggested reading for Parashah miKetz:
Matthew 27:45-50; Acts 7:9-16 (specifically verses 11 and 12)**

What could be worse than separation from **God the Father**? At Gethsemane, **Yeshua** prayed that **His cup of suffering** be removed, but surrendered **His will to the Father (Matthew 26:39)**. It was customary before Passover for the imperial magistrate of Rome to acquit or pardon a prisoner charged with a capital offense. **Pilate's wife dreamed** that **Yeshua** was not deserving of crucifixion (**Matthew 27:19**), and **she** warned **her** husband. But **the crowd** demanded the release of **Barabbas**, literally, *bar-Abbas*, or *son of the father*, a popular zealot (**John 18:40; Luke 23:14-19; Acts 3:14**). When **Yeshua** was crucified, **God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us (Second Corinthians 5:21a)**, **He** was cut off from **God the Father** and **darkness** covered **the entire world** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lv - Jesus' Second Three Hours on the Cross: The Wrath of God**).