

## Adam Clarke:

## Introduction

The famine continuing, Jacob desires his sons to go again to Egypt and buy some food, Genesis 43:1, Genesis 43:2. Judah shows the necessity of Benjamin's accompanying them, without whom it would be useless to return to Egypt, Genesis 43:3-5. Jacob expostulates with him, Genesis 43:6. Judah replies, and offers to become surety for Benjamin, Genesis 43:7-10. Jacob at last consenting and desires them to take a present with them for the governor of Egypt; and double money, that which they had brought back in their sacks's mouth, and the price of the load they were now to bring; and, having prayed for them, sends them away, Genesis 43:11-15. They arrive in Egypt, and are brought to Joseph's house to dine with him, at which they are greatly alarmed, Genesis 43:16-18. They speak to the steward of Joseph's house concerning the money returned in their sacks, Genesis 43:19-22. He gives them encouragement, Genesis 43:23, Genesis 43:24. Having made ready the present, they bring it to Joseph when he came home to dine, Genesis 43:25, Genesis 43:26. He speaks kindly to them, and inquires concerning their health, and that of their father, Genesis 43:27, Genesis 43:28. Joseph is greatly affected at seeing his brother Benjamin, Genesis 43:29-31. They dine with him, and are distinguished according to their seniority; but Benjamin receives marks of peculiar favor, Genesis 43:32-34.

## Verse 8

Send the lad with me - As the original is not  $\text{לָדִי}$  (yeled), from which we have derived our word lad, but  $\text{נָעָם}$  (naar), it would have been better had our translators rendered it by some other term, such as the youth, or the young man, and thus the distinction in the Hebrew would have been better kept up. Benjamin was at this time at least twenty-four years of age, some think thirty, and had a family of his own. See Genesis 46:21.

That we may live, and not die - An argument drawn from self-preservation, what some have termed the first law of nature. By your keeping Benjamin we are prevented from going to Egypt; if we go not to Egypt we shall get no corn; if we get no corn we shall all perish by famine; and Benjamin himself, who otherwise might live, must, with thee and the whole family, infallibly die.

## Verse 9

Let me bear the blame for ever -  $\text{אֲנִי אֶחָדָם}$  (anachad) - re (vechatathi lecha col haiyamim), then shall I sin against thee all my days, and consequently be liable to punishment for violating my faith.

## Verse 11

Carry down the man a present - From the very earliest times presents were used as means of introduction to great men. This is particularly noticed by Solomon: A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men, Proverbs 18:16. But what was the present brought to Joseph on this occasion? After all the labor of commentators, we are obliged to be contented with probabilities and conjecture. According to our translation, the gifts were balm, honey, spices, myrrh, nuts, and almonds.

Balm -  $\text{סִרִּי}$  (tsori) is supposed to signify resin in general, or some kind of gum issuing from trees.

Honey -  $\text{דִּבְשִׁים}$  (debash) has been supposed to be the same as the rob of grapes, called in Egypt dibs. Others think that honey, in the common sense of the term, is to be understood here: we know that honey was plentiful in Palestine.

Spices -  $\text{סָמִימִם}$  (nechoth) is supposed to mean gum storax, which might be very valuable on account of its qualities as a perfume.

Myrrh -  $\text{מוֹרְרִי}$  (lot), supposed by some to mean stacte; by others to signify an ointment made of myrrh.

Nuts -  $\text{אֲמִנִּים}$  (botnim), by some rendered pistachio nuts, those produced in Syria being the finest in the world; by others, dates; others, walnuts; others, pine apples; others, the nuts of the terebinth tree.

Almonds -  $\text{שִׁקְדִּים}$  (shekedim), correctly enough translated, and perhaps the only article in the collection of which we know any thing with certainty. It is generally allowed that the land of Canaan produces the best almonds in the east; and on this account they might be deemed a very acceptable present to the governor of Egypt. Those who wish to see this subject exhausted must have recourse to the Physica Sacra of Scheuehzer.

## Verse 12

Double money - What was returned in their sacks, and what was farther necessary to buy another load.

#### Verse 14

This verse may be literally translated thus: - "And God, the all-sufficient, shall give you tender mercies before the man, and send to you your other brother, and Benjamin; and I, as I shall be childless, so I shall be childless." That is, I will submit to this privation, till God shall restore my children. It appears that this verse is spoken prophetically; and that God at this time gave Jacob a supernatural evidence that his children should be restored.

#### Verse 16

Slay, and make ready - *x'x'x— x'x'x—* (teboach tebach), slay a slaying, or make a great slaughter - let preparations be made for a great feast or entertainment. See a similar form of speech, Proverbs 9:2 (note); 1 Samuel 25:11 (note); and Genesis 31:54 (note).

#### Verse 18

And the men were afraid - A guilty conscience needs no accuser. Every thing alarms them; they now feel that God is exacting retribution, and they know not what the degrees shall be, nor where it shall stop.

Fall upon us - *x''x<sup>a</sup>x'xœxœ xçxœx™x x•* (hithgolel alainu), roll himself upon us. A metaphor taken from wrestlers; when a man has overthrown his antagonist, he rolls himself upon him, in order to keep him down.

And our asses - Which they probably had in great number with them; and which, if captured, would have been a great loss to the family of Jacob, as such cattle must have constituted a principal part of its riches.

#### Verse 20

O sir, we came indeed - to buy food - There is a frankness now in the conduct of Joseph's brethren that did not exist before; they simply and honestly relate the whole circumstance of the money being found in their sacks on their return from their last journey. Afflictions from the hand of God, and under his direction, have a wonderful tendency to humble the soul. Did men know how gracious his designs are in sending such, no murmur would ever be heard against the dispensations of Divine Providence.

#### Verse 23

And he said - The address of the steward in this verse plainly proves that the knowledge of the true God was in Egypt. It is probable that the steward himself was a Hebrew, and that Joseph had given him intimation of the whole affair; and though he was not at liberty to reveal it, yet he gives them assurances that the whole business would issue happily.

I had your money - *x›x›xœx›x• x'x• x•xœx™* (caspechem ba elai), your money comes to me. As I am the steward, the cash for the corn belongs to me. Ye have no reason to be apprehensive of any evil; the whole transaction is between myself and you; receive therefore the money as a present from the God of your father, no matter whose hands he makes use of to convey it. The conduct of the steward, as well as his words, had a great tendency to relieve their burdened minds.

#### Verse 24

Brought the men into Joseph's house, etc. - This is exactly the way in which a Hindoo receives a guest. As soon as he enters, one of the civilities is the presenting of water to wash his feet. So indispensable is this, that water to wash the feet makes a part of the offering to an image.

#### Verse 27

And he asked them of their welfare - This verse may be thus translated: "And he asked them concerning their prosperity; and he said, is your father prosperous, the old man who ye told me was alive? And they said, Thy servant our father prospers; he is yet alive."

#### Verse 29

He lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin - They were probably introduced to him successively; and as Benjamin was the youngest, he would of course be introduced last.

God be gracious unto thee, my son! - A usual salutation in the east from the aged and superiors to the younger and inferiors, which, though very emphatic and expressive in ancient times, in the present day means no more than "I am your humble servant," or "I am exceedingly glad to see you;" words which among us mean-just nothing. Even in David's time they seem to have been, not only devoid of meaning, but to be used as a cloak for the basest and most treacherous designs: They bless with their mouths, but they curse inwardly.

Hence Joab salutes Amasa, kisses him with apparent affection, and stabs him in the same moment! The case of Judas, betraying the Son of man with a kiss, will not be forgotten.

#### Verse 32

They set on for him by himself, etc. - From the text it appears evident that there were three tables, one for Joseph, one for the Egyptians, and one for the eleven brethren.

The Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews - There might have been some political reason for this, with which we are unacquainted; but independently of this, two may be assigned. 1. The Hebrews were shepherds; and Egypt had been almost ruined by hordes of lawless wandering bandits, under the name of Hyksos, or King-shepherds, who had but a short time before this been expelled from the land by Amasis, after they had held it in subjection for 259 years, according to Manetho, committing the most wanton cruelties. 2. The Hebrews sacrificed those animals which the Egyptians held sacred, and fed on their flesh. The Egyptians were in general very superstitious, and would have no social intercourse with people of any other nation; hence we are informed that they would not even use the knife of a Greek, because they might have reason to suspect it had cut the flesh of some of those animals which they held sacred. Among the Hindoos different castes will not eat food cooked in the same vessel. If a person of another caste touch a cooking vessel, it is thrown away. Some are of opinion that the Egyptian idolatry, especially their worship of Apis under the figure of an ox, was posterior to the time of Joseph; ancient monuments are rather against this opinion, but it is impossible to decide either way. The clause in the Alexandrian Septuagint stands thus, ἵνα ἕκαστος ἐκ τῶν ποιμένων ἑαυτοῦ φάγῃ, ὡς ἐστὶν ἡ συνήθεια αὐτῶν. [ ἵνα ἕκαστος ἐκ τῶν ποιμένων ἑαυτοῦ φάγῃ, ὡς ἐστὶν ἡ συνήθεια αὐτῶν, ] For [every shepherd] is an abomination to the Egyptians; but this clause is probably borrowed from Genesis 46:34, where it stands in the Hebrew as well as in the Greek. See Clarke on Genesis 46:34 (note).

#### Verse 33

The first-born according to his birthright - This must greatly astonish these brethren, to find themselves treated with so much ceremony, and at the same time with so much discernment of their respective ages.

#### Verse 34

Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs - Sir John Chardin observes that in Persia, Arabia, and the Indies, there are several houses where they place several plates in large salvers, and set one of these before each person, or before two or three, according to the magnificence of each house. This is the method among the Hindoos; the dishes are not placed on the table, but messes are sent to each individual by the master of the feast or by his substitute. The great men of the state are always served by themselves, in the feasts that are made for them; and with greater profusion, their part of each kind of provision being always Double, Treble, or a Larger proportion of each kind of meat. The circumstance of Benjamin's having a mess Five times as large as any of his brethren, shows the peculiar honor which Joseph designed to confer upon him. See several useful observations on this subject in Harmer's Observ., vol. ii., p. 101, etc., Edit. 1808. 1. The scarcity in Canaan was not absolute; though they had no corn, they had honey, nuts, almonds, etc. In the midst of judgment, God remembers mercy. If there was scarcity in Canaan, there was plenty in Egypt; and though his providence had denied one country corn, and accumulated it in the other, his bounty had placed in the former money enough to procure it from the latter. How true is the saying, it is never ill with any but it might be worse! Let us be deeply thankful to God that we have any thing, seeing we deserve no good at his hands. 2. If we examine our circumstances closely, and call to remembrance the dealings of God's providence towards us, we shall find that we can sing much both of mercy and of judgment. For one day of absolute unavoidable want, we shall find we had three hundred and sixty-four, if not of fullness, yet of a competency. Famines, though rarely happening, are everywhere recorded; innumerable years of abundance are scarcely ever registered! Such is the perverseness and ingratitude of man!