

of your servants it is found with shall die; the rest of us, moreover, shall become slaves to my lord." ¹⁰He replied, "Although what you are proposing is right, only the one with whom it is found shall be my slave; but the rest of you shall go free."

¹¹So each one hastened to lower his bag to the ground, and each one opened his bag. ¹²He searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest; and the goblet turned up in Benjamin's bag. ¹³At this they rent their clothes. Each reloaded his pack animal, and they returned to the city.

¹⁴When Judah and his brothers reentered the house of Joseph, who was still there, they threw themselves on the ground before him. ¹⁵Joseph said to them, "What is this deed that you have done? Do you not know that a man like me practices divination?" ¹⁶Judah replied,

אֲנַחְנוּ נָהִיָּה לְאֲדֹנָי לְעֹבְדִים: ¹⁰וַיֹּאמֶר
גַּם-עִתָּה כְּדִבְרֵיכֶם כִּן-הוּא אֲשֶׁר יִמָּצֵא
אֹתוֹ יִהְיֶה-לִּי עֹבֵד וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ נְקִיִּים:
¹¹וַיִּמְהָרוּ וַיִּוְרְדוּ אִישׁ אֶת-אֲמֹתָתוֹ
אֲרָצָה וַיִּפְתְּחוּ אִישׁ אֲמֹתָתוֹ:
¹²וַיַּחְפֹּשׂ בַּגְּדוֹל הַחֹל וּבִקְטָן כָּלָה וַיִּמָּצֵא
הַגְּבִיעַ בְּאֲמֹתָחַת בְּנִימָן: ¹³וַיִּקְרְעוּ
שְׂמֹלְתָם וַיַּעֲמֹס אִישׁ עַל-חֻמְרוֹ וַיָּשֻׁבוּ
הָעִירָה:

¹⁴וַיָּבֵא יְהוּדָה וְאָחִיו בֵּיתָה יוֹסֵף וְהוּא
עוֹדְנֵנו שָׁם וַיִּפְּלוּ לְפָנָיו אֲרָצָה: ¹⁵וַיֹּאמֶר
לָהֶם יוֹסֵף מָה-הַמַּעֲשֶׂה הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר
עֲשִׂיתֶם הֲלוֹא יָדַעְתֶּם כִּי-נִחַשׁ יִנְחֹשׁ
אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כָּמֹנִי: ¹⁶וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה מָה-

9. shall die The proposed punishments reflect no known Egyptian law. It is possible that because the brothers are convinced of their innocence, they propose a penalty for themselves that is harsher than the law actually requires.

the rest of us The brothers accept the principle of collective responsibility.

10. what you are proposing The opening words of the steward's response—literally, "also now according to your words so it is"—could mean, "The penalties you invoke are indeed the law, but I shall be lenient," or, "I accept the logic of your argument to the effect that you are generally honest."

shall go free The word *n'kiyim* is a legal term for "cleared of offense or obligation."

11. hastened Their haste is a demonstration of innocence as well as an attempt to dispose of the entire business as quickly as possible.

12. He searched The steward adroitly manipulates the situation. One can imagine the ris-

ing self-confidence of the brothers after each successive search yielded nothing.

THE RETURN TO JOSEPH (vv. 13–17)

13. they rent their clothes The horror of their predicament leaves them speechless. They can only do what they caused their father to do years before (37:34).

14. Judah He takes the lead, because he took on the safety of Benjamin as his personal obligation.

who was still there Joseph has not yet left the house for his place of work because it is still very early in the morning (v. 3). His presence, therefore, does not raise any suspicion of trickery.

on the ground This addition to the usual phrase expresses their state of utter despair.

15. Joseph said Feigning anger, he addresses them collectively, implying that they are all involved in the theft. His "leniency," soon to

CHAPTER 44

12. Benjamin's mother, Rachel, had stolen Laban's idols and hidden them in her baggage. Will Benjamin be accused of acting similarly.

(Gen. R. 92:8)? Joseph's trap is now set. How will the brothers respond? Will they abandon Benjamin out of resentment of Jacob's favoring him? Or have they learned how to be brothers?

“What can we say to my lord? How can we plead, how can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered the crime of your servants. Here we are, then, slaves of my lord, the rest of us as much as he in whose possession the goblet was found.”¹⁷ But he replied, “Far be it from me to act thus! Only he in whose possession the goblet was found shall be my slave; the rest of you go back in peace to your father.”

נֹאמַר לְאֲדֹנָי מִה־נִּדְבַר וּמִה־נִּצְטַדֵּק
הָאֱלֹהִים מָצָא אֶת־עֵינֶן עֲבֹדֶיךָ הַגָּנוּ
עֲבָדִים לְאֲדֹנָי גַּם־אֲנַחְנוּ גַּם אֲשֶׁר־נִמְצָא
הַגְּבִיעַ בְּיָדוֹ: ¹⁷וַיֹּאמֶר הַלִּילָה לִּי
מִעֲשׂוֹת זֹאת הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר נִמְצָא הַגְּבִיעַ
בְּיָדוֹ הוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי עֶבֶד וְאַתֶּם עֲלוּ
לְשָׁלוֹם אֶל־אֲבִיכֶם: פ

be displayed (v. 17), thus appears to be all the more generous.

practices divination See Comment to verse 5. Because no mention is made of the goblet, it may be assumed that Joseph simply boasts of his ability to detect a thief by divination.

16. the crime of your servants Judah is perhaps falsely confessing collective guilt regarding the theft of the goblet to save Benjamin from being singled out for punishment. Alternatively, he is expressing the ancient belief that suffering is divine punishment for sin, even if the sin could not be identified, and his words are a res-

ignation to misfortune. It also could be a veiled reference to their sale of Joseph.

slaves Judah wisely makes no reference to his earlier rash statement regarding the death penalty (v. 9).

17. Far be it from me Joseph now confronts the brothers with a dilemma. They can save their own lives, but that would be an act of disloyalty to Benjamin and a disaster to their father. Or they can remain with Benjamin, but they would then be unable to bring food to their father and their families, who would die of starvation.

18Then Judah went up to him and said, "Please, my lord, let your servant appeal to my lord, and do not be impatient with your servant, you who are the equal of Pharaoh. 19My lord asked his servants, 'Have you a father or another brother?' 20We told my lord, 'We have an old father, and there is a child of his old age, the youngest; his full brother is dead, so that he alone is left of his mother, and his father dotes on him.' 21Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set eyes on him.' 22We said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he were to leave him, his father would die.' 23But you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, do not let me see your faces.' 24When we came back to your servant my father, we reported my lord's words to him.

25"Later our father said, 'Go back and pro-

18 וַיִּגֶשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר בְּנִי אֲדֹנָי
יְדַבְּרֵנָּא עִבְדְּךָ דְּבַר בְּאֲזְנֵי אֲדֹנָי וְאֶל-
יָחַר אַפֶּךָ בְּעִבְדְּךָ בְּנִי כְמוֹךָ כְּפִרְעָה:
19 אֲדֹנָי שָׁאַל אֶת-עֲבָדָיו לֵאמֹר הֲיֵשׁ-
לָכֶם אָב אוֹ-אָח: 20 וַנֹּאמֶר אֶל-אֲדֹנָי יֵשׁ-
לָנוּ אָב זָקֵן וַיֵּלֵד זְקֵנִים קָטָן וְאָחִיו מֵת
וַיִּתֵּר הוּא לְבָדּוֹ לְאִמּוֹ וְאָבִיו אֶהְבּוֹ:
21 וְהֵאמֵר אֶל-עֲבָדֶיךָ הוֹרְדֵהוּ אֵלַי
וְאֶשִׂימָה עֵינַי עָלָיו: 22 וַנֹּאמֶר אֶל-אֲדֹנָי
לֹא-יִוָּכַל הַנְּעַר לַעֲזֹב אֶת-אָבִיו וְעֹזֵב
אֶת-אָבִיו וּמָת: 23 וְהֵאמֵר אֶל-עֲבָדֶיךָ
אִם-לֹא יֵרֵד אָחִיכֶם הַקָּטָן אִתְּכֶם לֹא
תִסְפּוֹן לְרִאיוֹת פָּנָי: 24 וַיְהִי בְּנִי עָלֵינוּ אֶל-
עִבְדְּךָ אָבִי וַנִּגְדַּלּוּ אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֲדֹנָי:
25 וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִינוּ שָׁבוּ שְׁבָרוּ-לָנוּ מַעַט-

THE BROTHERS' LAST TRIAL (continued)

JUDAH'S SPEECH (44:18-34)

The encounter between Joseph and his brothers reaches its climactic moment.

18. appeal to Literally "speak in the ears of," which is idiomatic for "have a hearing."

the equal of Pharaoh The phrase is not mere flattery but a subtle reminder of Joseph's power to grant a pardon by virtue of his exalted position.

20. his full brother is dead In 42:13, they said, ambiguously referring to Joseph, "one is no more." Now Judah cites Jacob's words of 42:38.

21. I may set eyes on him Judah had inferred from Joseph's request to bring Benjamin an assurance that no harm would befall the lad. He now may be subtly calling into question Joseph's integrity and fair play.

CHAPTER 44

The reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers is one of the great scenes in all of literature. It is preceded by a deeply moving speech by Judah, who uses the word "father" 14 times in 17 verses. Joseph is moved to tears and to self-revelation by Judah's words. He realizes that his keeping Benjamin in prison would be doing to his brother and father what the brothers had done to him and their father years ago.

18. Judah went up to him He drew close emotionally as well as physically (Gen. R. 93:4). The author of *S'fat Emet* understands

these words to mean, "Judah approached himself." He discovered who he really was, not the compromiser who had said "Let us sell him . . . not do away with him ourselves" (Gen. 37:27), causing his father boundless grief, but the advocate for compassion and family harmony. Judah knows that his father still favors one brother, Benjamin, over the other brothers. Such knowledge, however, no longer drives him to jealousy. He understands that he cannot change his father; he can only change his reaction to his father's deeds. Judah, although not the eldest of the brothers, emerges as the family spokesman and leader.

cure some food for us.' ²⁶We answered, 'We cannot go down; only if our youngest brother is with us can we go down, for we may not show our faces to the man unless our youngest brother is with us.' ²⁷Your servant my father said to us, 'As you know, my wife bore me two sons. ²⁸But one is gone from me, and I said: Alas, he was torn by a beast! And I have not seen him since. ²⁹If you take this one from me, too, and he meets with disaster, you will send my white head down to Sheol in sorrow.'

³⁰"Now, if I come to your servant my father and the boy is not with us—since his own life is so bound up with his—³¹when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will send the white head of your servant our father down to Sheol in grief. ³²Now your servant has pledged himself for the boy to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I shall stand guilty before my father forever.' ³³Therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord instead of the boy, and let the boy go back with his brothers. ³⁴For how can I go back to my father unless the boy is with me? Let me not be witness to the woe that would overtake my father!"

45 Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out,

28. and I said That is, "I had to admit."

31. with us These words are an addition to the Hebrew text (*ein ha-na-ar*), required by the context. The addition is also found in many of the ancient versions.

your servants will send Judah is in essence saying to Joseph, "You will be responsible for his death."

אָבִל: ²⁶וַנֹּאמֶר לֹא נוּכַל לָרֶדֶת אִם־יֵשׁ
אֲחֵינוּ הַקָּטָן אִתָּנוּ וַיִּרְדְּנוּ כִּי־לֹא נוּכַל
לָרְאוֹת פְּנֵי הָאִישׁ וְאֲחֵינוּ הַקָּטָן אִינְנוּ
אִתָּנוּ: ²⁷וַיֹּאמֶר עֲבָדְךָ אָבִי אֵלֵינוּ אַתֶּם
יֹדְעֵתֶם כִּי שְׁנַיִם יָלְדָה־לִּי אִשְׁתִּי: ²⁸וַיֵּצֵא
הָאֶחָד מֵאֲתֵי וַאֲמַר אֶף טָרֵף טָרֵף וְלֹא
רְאִיתִיו עַד־הַנְּהָ: ²⁹וּלְקַחְתֶּם גַּם־אֶת־זֶה
מֵעַם פְּנֵי וְקָרְהוּ אָסוֹן וְהוֹרְדִתֶם אֶת־
שִׁיבְתִי בְרָעָה שְׂאֵלָה:

³⁰וְעַתָּה כְּבָאִי אֶל־עֲבָדְךָ אָבִי וְהִנֵּעַר
אִינְנוּ אִתָּנוּ וְנִפְשׁוּ קְשׁוּרָה בְּנַפְשׁוֹ:
³¹וְהָיָה כִּי־רְאוּ כִּי־אֵין הַנֵּעַר וּמָת
וְהוֹרִידוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ אֶת־שִׁיבַת עֲבָדְךָ אֲבִינוּ
בִּיגוֹן שְׂאֵלָה: ³²כִּי עֲבָדְךָ עָרַב אֶת־
הַנֵּעַר מֵעַם אָבִי לֵאמֹר אִם־לֹא אָבִיאֲנוּ
אֵיךָ וְחָטַאתִי לְאָבִי כָּל־הַיָּמִים:
³³וְעַתָּה יִשְׁבַּנָּא עֲבָדְךָ תַּחַת הַנֵּעַר עֶבֶד
לְאֲדֹנָי וְהִנֵּעַר יַעַל עִם־אָחִיו: ³⁴כִּי־אֵיךָ
אֶעֱלֶה אֶל־אָבִי וְהִנֵּעַר אִינְנוּ אִתִּי פֶן
אֶרְאֶה בְרָע אֲשֶׁר יִמְצֵא אֶת־אָבִי:

מה וְלֹא־יִכָּל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל
הַנֹּצְבִים עָלָיו וַיִּקְרָא הוֹצִיאוּ כָּל־אִישׁ

v. 29. חסר א'

32. has pledged himself Judah explains why he is acting as the spokesman, because Joseph knows that he is not the oldest brother (43:33).

33. remain as a slave The brother responsible for the sale of Joseph into slavery (37:26ff.) now unwittingly offers to become the slave of his own victim!

THE RECONCILIATION (vv. 1–28)

JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF (vv. 1–3)

1. before all his attendants Literally, "be-

fore all who were standing by him," i.e., his entourage.