

Judah said: Let Me Remain as Your Slave, but Let the Boy Return to My Father

44: 18-34

DIG: How do Judah's actions here compare with what he said and did when Joseph was sold into slavery (37:26-28)? How great a sacrifice is he willing to make? For whose sake, primarily? His own? Benjamin's? Israel's? Why do you think so? What does this tell you about how Judah has matured spiritually?

REFLECT: Where is ADONAI calling you, like Judah, to do something honorable or courageous? Where, like Yosef, have you given your brothers or sisters in Christ the chance to prove themselves or be reconciled? When has this chance to forgive been offered to you? What did you do with the chance? With whom do you still hold out hope for reconciliation? What hope does this story give you?

Parashah 11: Vayigash (He approached) 44:18-47:27

Just the mention of **their father** stirred **Joseph's** heart because **he** realized what would happen to **him** if **his** sons returned without **Benjamin**. **Yosef** could tell that **his** brothers would rather not go back at all than to see **their father** die from grief. So **Judah** spoke up again, this time asking to exchange **his** life for the life of **his** younger brother. **His** speech is the longest and perhaps the most moving in **Genesis**.

Then **Judah**, as spokesman for the brothers, went up to **Joseph** and speaking very respectfully, said: **Please, my lord, let your servant speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself (44:18)**. Then he reviewed selected portions of the conversations **he** had had earlier with **Yosef** and **his** father. Understandably, **Judah** only recalls those things that will be helpful in gaining **Benjamin's** release.

My lord asked his servants, "**Do you have a father or a brother?**" And we answered, "**We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him (44:19-20)**."

Then you said to your servants, "**Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.**" And we said to my lord, "**The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die. But you told your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again' (44:22-23)**."

When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said. Then our father said, "Go back and buy a little more food." But we said, "We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us." Your servant my father said to us, "You know that my wife bore me two sons. **Rachael was the only woman I really wanted for a wife, and so it was as though I only had two sons.** One of them went away from me, and I said, "He has surely been torn to pieces." And I have not seen him since. Actually, Isra'el had been deceived, and Joseph can see that now. He believes that Yosef had been **torn to pieces** and was dead. Previous statements about him had been somewhat vague. **If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery (44:24-29).** As a result, Judah was not only pleading for the life of Benjamin, but also for the life of his father.

So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, (the Hebrew literally reads *his soul is knit with the boy's soul*), sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. The relationship between Jonathan and David is also pictured this way in **First Samuel 18:1**. Your servant will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. Judah knew that he would be responsible for causing the death of his father. Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, "If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life" (44:30-32). At last, Judah came to the climax of his appeal.

Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers (42:33). It was Judah's suggestion that Yosef was sold into slavery, but now he was willing to become a slave as a substitute for Benjamin. He was indeed a changed man. The Ruach HaKodesh was at work, testing, training and transforming him.⁶⁸² Long ago he was jealous of Joseph's special relationship with his father, but now, he had no jealousy of Benjamin's special relationship with Isra'el.

Judah and all the brothers knew that Benjamin did not steal the silver bowl, but he could not argue against the evidence. Therefore, the only thing he could do was to bear his punishment for him. He would claim the sack in which the cup had been found as his own, and Benjamin would take Judah's. Therefore, he said to the prime minister of Egypt: **How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father (44:34).** Earlier, Judah had promised his father that he would be surety for Benjamin (43:9). Little did he know how literal his promise would become.

It was indeed an unselfish action on **Judah's** part to offer **himself** in **his brother's** place. As **Yeshua** stated: **Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13)**. And indeed, that is what **King Jesus** has done for you and me. Although **He** was sinless, **He** came to the earth to be our substitute, and **whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)**. Although we deserve death for our sins, **He** went to the cross instead. Is this not **a King** worthy of following? Have you made a decision to follow **the Kosher King** this day?⁶⁸³

Therefore, the children of **Isra'el**, especially **Judah**, had clearly changed and passed **Joseph's** last test. Rather than see **Benjamin** go into **slavery**, **they** all would have been willing to take **his** place. This transformation of **the brothers**, represented in **Judah**, was every bit as miraculous as the rise of **Yosef** to prime minister of Egypt and when we next see **Joseph**, we will see that **he** has changed as dramatically as **his brothers**.