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GENESIS 44:1 He commanded the steward of his house, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in his sack's mouth.

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Joseph commands his steward to put his cup secretly into Benjamin's sack, Gen 44:1, Gen 44:2. The sons of Jacob depart with the corn they had purchased, Gen 44:3. Joseph commands his steward to pursue them, and charge them with having stolen his cup, Gen 44:4-6. The brethren excuse themselves, protest their innocence, and offer to submit to be slaves should the cup be found with any of them, Gen 44:7-9. Search is made, and the cup is found in Benjamin's sack, Gen 44:10-12. They are brought back and submit themselves to Joseph, Gen 44:13-16. He determines that Benjamin alone, with whom the cup is found, shall remain in captivity, Gen 44:17. Judah, in a most affecting speech, pleads for Benjamin's enlargement, and offers himself to be a bondman in his stead, vv. 18-34.

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GENESIS 44:2 Put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, with his grain money." He did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

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#### Verse 2

Put my cup in the sack's mouth of the youngest - The stratagem of the cup seems to have been designed to bring Joseph's brethren into the highest state of perplexity and distress, that their deliverance by the discovery that Joseph was their brother might have its highest effect.

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GENESIS 44:3 As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys.

GENESIS 44:4 When they had gone out of the city, and were not yet far off, Joseph said to his steward, "Up, follow after the men. When you overtake them, ask them, 'Why have you rewarded evil for good?

GENESIS 44:5 Isn't this that from which my lord drinks, and by which he indeed divines? You have done evil in so doing.'"

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#### Verse 5

Whereby - he divineth? - Divination by cups has been from time immemorial prevalent among the Asiatics; and for want of knowing this, commentators have spent a profusion of learned labor upon these words, in order to reduce them to that kind of meaning which would at once be consistent with the scope and design of the history, and save Joseph from the impeachment of sorcery and divination. I take the word שחן nachash here in its general acceptation of to view attentively, to inquire. Now there has been in the east a tradition, the commencement of which is lost in immemorial time, that there was a Cup, which had passed successively into the hands of different potentates, which possessed the strange property of representing in it the whole world, and all the things which were then doing in it. The cup is called jami Jemsheed, the cup of Jemsheed, a very

ancient king of Persia, whom late historians and poets have confounded with Bacchus, Solomon, Alexander the Great, etc. This Cup, filled with the elixir of immortality, they say was discovered when digging to lay the foundations of Persepolis. The Persian poets are full of allusions to this cup, which, from its property of representing the whole world and its transactions, is styled by them jam jehan nima, "the cup showing the universe;" and to the intelligence received by means of it they attribute the great prosperity of their ancient monarchs, as by it they understood all events, past, present, and to come. Many of the Mohammedan princes and governors affect still to have information of futurity by means of a cup. When Mr. Norden was at Derri in the farthest part of Egypt, in a very dangerous situation, an ill-natured and powerful Arab, in a threatening way, told one of their people whom they sent to him that "he knew what sort of people they were, for he had consulted his cup, and found by it that they were those of whom one of their prophets had said, that Franks (Europeans) would come in disguise; and, passing everywhere, examine the state of the country; and afterwards bring over a great number of other Franks, conquer the country, and exterminate all." By this we see that the tradition of the divining cup still exists, and in the very same country too in which Joseph formerly ruled. Now though it is not at all likely that Joseph practiced any kind of divination, yet probably, according to the superstition of those times, (for I suppose the tradition to be even older than the time of Joseph), supernatural influence might be attributed to his cup; and as the whole transaction related here was merely intended to deceive his brethren for a short time, he might as well affect divination by his cup, as he affected to believe they had stolen it. The steward therefore uses the word שׁוֹנֵחַ nachash in its proper meaning: Is not this it out of which my lord drinketh, and in which he inspecteth accurately? Gen 44:5. And hence Joseph says, Gen 44:15 : Wot ye not - did ye not know, that such a person as I (having such a cup) would accurately and attentively look into it? As I consider this to be the true meaning, I shall not trouble the reader with other modes of interpretation.

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GENESIS 44:6 He overtook them, and he spoke these words to them.

GENESIS 44:7 They said to him, "Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants that they should do such a thing!

GENESIS 44:8 Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again to you out of the land of Canaan. How then should we steal silver or gold out of your lord's house?

GENESIS 44:9 With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."

GENESIS 44:10 He said, "Now also let it be according to your words: he with whom it is found will be my slave; and you will be blameless."

GENESIS 44:11 Then they hurried, and each man took his sack down to the ground, and each man opened his sack.

GENESIS 44:12 He searched, beginning with the eldest, and ending at the youngest. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

GENESIS 44:13 Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey, and returned to the city.

GENESIS 44:14 Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he was still there. They fell on the ground before him.

GENESIS 44:15 Joseph said to them, "What deed is this that you have done? Don't you know that such a man as I can indeed divine?"

GENESIS 44:16 Judah said, "What will we tell my lord? What will we speak? Or how will we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants. Behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we, and he also in whose hand the cup is found."

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Verse 16

What shall we say, etc. - No words can more strongly mark confusion and perturbation of mind. They, no doubt, all thought that Benjamin had actually stolen the cup; and the probability of this guilt might be heightened by the circumstance of his having that very cup to drink out of at dinner; for as he had the most honorable mess, so it is likely he had the most honorable cup to drink out of at the entertainment.

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GENESIS 44:17 He said, "Far be it from me that I should do so. The man in whose hand the cup is found, he will be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father."

GENESIS 44:18 Then Judah came near to him, and said, "Oh, my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and don't let your anger burn against your servant; for you are even as Pharaoh.

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Verse 18

Thou art even as Pharaoh - As wise, as powerful, and as much to be dreaded as he. In the Asiatic countries, the reigning monarch is always considered to be the pattern of all perfection; and the highest honor that can be conferred on any person, is to resemble him to the monarch; as the monarch himself is likened, in the same complimentary way, to an angel of God. See 2Sam 14:17, 2Sam 14:18. Judah is the chief speaker here, because it was in consequence of his becoming surety for Benjamin that Jacob permitted him to accompany them to Egypt. See Gen 43:9. "Every man who reads," says Dr. Dodd, "to the close of this chapter, must confess that Judah acts here the part both of the affectionate brother and of the dutiful son, who, rather than behold his father's misery in ease of Benjamin's being left behind, submits to become a bondman in his stead: and indeed there is such an air of candor and generosity running through the whole strain of this speech, the sentiments are so tender and affecting, the expressions so passionate, and flow so much from artless nature, that it is no wonder if they came home to Joseph's heart, and forced him to throw off the mask." "When one sees," says Dr. Jackson, "such passages related by men who affect no art, and who lived long after the parties who first uttered them, we cannot conceive how all particulars could be so naturally and fully recorded, unless they had been suggested by His Spirit who gives mouths and speech unto men; who, being alike present to all successions, is able to communicate the secret thoughts or forefathers to their children, and put the very words of the deceased, never registered before, into the mouths or pens of their successors born many ages after; and that as exactly and distinctly as if they had been caught, in characters of steel or brass, as they issued out of their mouths. For it is plain that every circumstance is here related with such natural specifications, as if Moses had heard them talk; and therefore could not have been thus represented to us, unless they had been written by His direction who knows all things, fore-past, present, or to come."

To two such able and accurate testimonies I may be permitted to add my own. No paraphrase can heighten the effect of Judah's address to Joseph. To add would be to diminish its excellence; to attempt to explain would be to obscure its beauties; to clothe the ideas in other language than that of Judah, and his translators in our Bible, would ruin its energy, and destroy its influence. It is perhaps one of the most tender, affecting pieces of natural oratory ever spoken or penned; and we need not wonder to find that when Joseph heard it he could not refrain himself, but wept aloud. His soul must have been insensible beyond what is common to human nature, had he not immediately yielded to a speech so delicately tender, and so powerfully impressive. We cannot but deplore the unnatural and unscientific division of the narrative in our common Bibles, which obliges us to have recourse to another chapter in order to witness the effects which this speech produced on the heart of Joseph.

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GENESIS 44:19 My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father, or a brother?'

GENESIS 44:20 We said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother; and his father loves him.'

GENESIS 44:21 You said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.'

GENESIS 44:22 We said to my lord, 'The boy can't leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die.'

GENESIS 44:23 You said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will see my face no more.'

GENESIS 44:24 When we came up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

GENESIS 44:25 Our father said, 'Go again, buy us a little food.'

GENESIS 44:26 We said, 'We can't go down. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down: for we may not see the man's face, unless our youngest brother is with us.'

GENESIS 44:27 Your servant, my father, said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons:

GENESIS 44:28 and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn in pieces"; and I haven't seen him since.

GENESIS 44:29 If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.'

GENESIS 44:30 Now therefore when I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us; since his life is bound up in the boy's life;

GENESIS 44:31 it will happen, when he sees that the boy is no more, that he will die. Your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant, our father, with sorrow to Sheol.

GENESIS 44:32 For your servant became collateral for the boy to my father, saying, 'If I don't bring him to you, then I will bear the blame to my father forever.'

GENESIS 44:33 Now therefore, please let your servant stay instead of the boy, my lord's slave; and let the boy go up with his brothers.

GENESIS 44:34 For how will I go up to my father, if the boy isn't with me?—lest I see the evil that will come on my father.”

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