

CHAPTER 43

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 43

This chapter informs us how that the famine continued in the land of Canaan, and the corn that Jacob's family had from Egypt being consumed, Jacob pressed his sons to go down for more, which they refused to do, unless Benjamin was sent with them, for whose safety Judah offered to become a surety, (^{<0430>}Genesis 43:1-10); Jacob with reluctance was prevailed upon to let him go, and dismissed them with a present to the governor of Egypt, and with double money to buy corn with, and with his blessing upon them, (^{<0431>}Genesis 43:11-14); upon which they set out for Egypt; and when they came into the presence of Joseph, he seeing Benjamin with them, ordered his steward to have them to his house, and get dinner ready, it being his pleasure that they should dine with him that day, (^{<0432>}Genesis 43:15-17); this threw them into a fright, supposing they were going to be called to an account for the money they found in their sacks; wherefore they related to the steward very particularly the whole of that affair, who bid them not be uneasy, for he had had their money; and as a proof that things would go well with them, brought Simeon out to them, and treated them very kindly and gently, (^{<0433>}Genesis 43:18-24); and having got their present ready against Joseph came home, they delivered it to him with great veneration and submission; who asked of the welfare of their father, and whether that was not their younger brother they spoke of, the sight of whom so affected him, that he was obliged in haste to retire to his chamber, and weep, (^{<0434>}Genesis 43:25-30); and having washed his face, and composed himself, he returned and ordered dinner to be brought, which was set on different tables, one for himself and the Egyptians, and the other for his brethren, whom he placed according to their age, to their great surprise; and sent them messes from his table to each, and to Benjamin five times more than the rest, and they were so liberally entertained, that they became cheerful and merry, (^{<0435>}Genesis 43:31-34).

Ver. 1. *And the famine [was] sore in the land.*] In the land of Canaan; it increased yet more and more: this is observed for the sake of what follows,

showing the reason and necessity of Jacob's sons taking a second journey into Egypt.

Ver. 2. *And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt*, etc.] Which, in so numerous a family as Jacob's was, having so many children, grandchildren, and servants, what nine men on so many asses could bring with them must be consumed in a short time, how long cannot be said; no doubt they lived sparingly on it in such a time of scarcity, to make it last as long as they could, and perhaps only he, his children and grandchildren, might eat of it; the servants, as Calvin observes, might live on meaner food, as acorns, herbs, and roots; and it must not be thought that all this corn was eaten up entirely, and none left, but the far greater part of it, and but very little remaining; or otherwise, how should Jacob, and his sons' wives and children be supported until the return of his sons from Egypt with fresh provisions? indeed it may be supposed, that the land of Canaan produced some corn, though but little; and it is certain there were other fruits which were serviceable for food, as appears from (⁰¹³¹Genesis 43:11):

their father said, go again, buy us a little food; just enough for him, and them, and theirs, for the present; hoping that the famine would be over quickly, and therefore orders them to go once more to Egypt, and buy some provisions: they made no motion themselves to go, as it is highly probable they determined they would not, since Jacob had resolved Benjamin should not go, but waited for their father's motion, and which he did not make until necessity obliged him.

Ver. 3. *And Judah spake unto him*, etc.] Reuben the eldest son had met with a repulse already, (⁰¹²⁶Genesis 42:36); Simeon the next was now in Egypt, (⁰¹²⁴Genesis 42:24), and Levi, perhaps on account of the affair of Shechem, (⁰¹²⁵Genesis 34:25-31), did not yet stand well in his father's favour and affection; wherefore Judah being next, with the consent of his brethren, undertakes to manage the affair with him, who had doubtless an interest in him, as well as authority among his brethren, and was a prudent man, and could speak well:

saying, the man did solemnly protest unto us; meaning Joseph, though he then knew not that it was he; whom he calls "the man", not by way of contempt, or as thinking and speaking meanly of him, but the reverse, the great man, the honourable man, the governor of Egypt; and so the

Septuagint version adds, “the man, the lord of the land”; he in the strongest terms, and in the most solemn manner, protested by the life of Pharaoh:

saying, ye shall not see my face; with acceptance, should not be admitted to come near him, or treat with him, and purchase any corn of him:

except your brother [be] with you; their youngest brother Benjamin.

Ver. 4. *If thou wilt send our brother with us*, etc.] Give orders for his going with us, and put him under our care:

we will go down and buy thee food; signifying, on the above condition, that they were ready and willing to take a journey into Egypt, and buy provisions for him and his family, otherwise not.

Ver. 5. *But if thou wilt not send [him], we will not go down*, etc.] This they said not as undutiful, and from a spirit of rebellion and disobedience to their father, or of stubbornness and obstinacy, but because they durst not go down, nor could they with any safety; they might expect to be taken up as spies, and put to death as they were threatened; and besides, it would be in vain, and to no purpose, since there was no likelihood of succeeding, or of getting any provision:

for the man said unto us, ye shall not see my face, except your brother [be] with you; which they repeat both for the confirmation of it, and as an apology for themselves, to clear them from any charge of unfaithfulness.

Ver. 6. *And Israel said*, etc.] In answer to the speech of Judah:

wherefore dealt ye [so] ill with me; had done that which brought so much evil upon him, gave him so much grief and trouble, and threw him into such perplexity and distress, that he knew not what to do, or course to take:

[as] to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother? which he thought was done imprudently and unadvisedly, and that there was no need of it; which, had it not been done, would have prevented this anxiety of mind he was now in, and the mischief he feared would follow.

Ver. 7. *And they said*, etc.] Not Judah only, in the name of the rest, but each of them in turn, being all charged with doing an ill thing:

the man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred; or “in asking asked”^{f1756}; very particularly and closely, putting many questions to us,

who we were? to whom we belonged? of what family we were? and inquired into the particulars and circumstances of our relations:

saying, [is] your father yet alive? have ye [another] brother? they told him they were all one man's sons, as they were obliged, when they were charged with being spies, in order to clear themselves, (⁽⁴²⁰⁾Genesis 42:10,11); upon which he inquired whether their father was living, and whether they were all the sons their father had:

and we told him according to the tenor of these words; they answered to these questions put to them, and which were so closely put, that they could do no other than say what they did:

could we certainly know that he would say, bring your brother down? could they have foreseen this, they would have been more upon their guard; though in all probability had they been ever so cautious this would have been the case; it would have been required of them to bring their brother with them, so desirous was Joseph of seeing him.

Ver. 8. *And Judah said unto Israel his father, send the lad with me, and we will arise and go,* etc.] Directly to Egypt for corn; Judah calls Benjamin a lad, because the youngest brother, and tenderly brought up by his father, who had an affectionate fondness for him as if he had been a child; otherwise he must be thirty two years of age, for he was seven years younger than Joseph, who was now thirty nine years of age; yea, Benjamin must have children of his own, who went with him and his father into Egypt, (⁽⁴⁴²⁾Genesis 46:21); for the computation of Benjamin's age, (see ⁽⁴³²⁾Genesis 30:22 31:41 35:18 37:2 41:40,53,54 45:6);

that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, [and] also our little ones; he argues, that if they with Benjamin went down to Egypt for corn, there was a possibility, yea, a probability that they would all live, even Benjamin also; but if not, they must all in course die, and Benjamin likewise; and therefore it was most prudent and advisable, for the sake of all their lives, of them and theirs, and for the sake of Benjamin among the rest, for whom Jacob was so particularly concerned, to let him go with them to Egypt for corn, since he must die if they did not go, and he could but die if he did go; and there was great likelihood, if not a certainty, he would not; at least Judah was confident he would not, as appears by what follows.

Ver. 9. *I will be surety for him,* etc.] Engage for his safe return:

of my hand shall thou require him; I will be answerable for him:

if I bring him not to thee, and set him before thee: do not return him from Egypt, and bring him to Canaan, into his father's house and presence safe, and sound:

then let me bear the blame for ever; of persuading his father to let him go with him; all this he said, to show what care he would take of him, and what confidence he had that no evil would befall him, that he would be returned with them in safety; which he might ground upon the assurance that Joseph had given, that they should not die if they brought their brother with them, (⁽¹⁸²⁰⁾Genesis 42:20); and perhaps Judah, as Schmidt thinks, might be under a special instinct of divine Providence, which directed him to say these things: and it may be added, that Jacob also might be under a divine impulse, which influenced him to regard what Judah said, or otherwise his suretyship was but a poor security, and of little avail.

Ver. 10. *For except we had lingered*, etc.] Delayed going down to Egypt, through the demur Jacob made of tending Benjamin with them:

surely now we had returned this second time; they would have made their journey to Egypt, and returned again with their corn, and their brother Benjamin too, as Judah supposed, before this time; so that by these delays they were losing time, and involving themselves and families in distress for want of corn.

Ver. 11. *And their father said unto them*, etc.] Being in some measure convinced by their reasonings, and in part at least reconciled to let Benjamin go with them, there being nothing to be done, he perceived, unless he consented to it:

if [it must be] so now, do this; if nothing else will do but Benjamin must go, which after all he was reluctant to, then he advises them to do as follows:

take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels; such as were the peculiar produce of the land of Canaan, and the best of it; for which it was most famous, and praised, as the word used signifies; these Jacob advises to take and put into their sacks they carried to bring back their corn in:

and carry down the man a present; the great man and governor of Egypt, whose name was not known, little thinking it was his son Joseph; this he

proposed to be done, in order to procure his friendship, that he might carry it kindly and respectfully to them, release Simeon, and send back Benjamin with them. The present consisted of the following things,

a little balm: or rosin, of which there was great quantity in and about Gilead; (see Gill on “~~482~~Jeremiah 8:22”):

and a little honey; the land of Canaan in general is called a land flowing with milk and honey; and some parts of it were famous for it, as the, parts about Ziph, called from thence the honey of Ziphim ^{f1757}: this is the first time mention is made of “honey” in Scripture. Some say ^{f1758} Bacchus was the inventor of it. Justin ^{f1759} makes a very ancient king of a people in the country, now called Spain, to whom he gives the name of Gorgoris, to be the first that found out the way of gathering honey; but by this it appears to be of a more early date. Dr. Shaw ^{f1760} thinks, that not honey, properly so called, is meant, but a kind of “rob” made of the juice of grapes, called by the Arabs “dibsa”, a word near in sound with, and from the same root as this. And who further observes, that Hebron alone (the place were Jacob now was) sends every year to Egypt three hundred camel loads, i.e. near two thousand quintals of this rob: and Leo Africanus says ^{f1761}, there is but little honey to be found in Egypt, wherefore it made this part of the present the more acceptable:

spices; of various sorts, a collection of them; though it is thought, by Bochart and others, that the “storax” is particularly meant; the best of that sort being, as Pliny ^{f1762} says in Judea. The Targum and Jarchi take it to be “wax”, as do also other Jewish writers:

and myrrh; the liquor called “stacte”, that drops from the myrrh tree. Some will have this “lot”, as the word is, the same with “ladanum”; one should rather think that it should be the lotus or lote tree, the fruit of which, Pliny ^{f1763} says, is the size of a bean, and of a saffron colour, and Herodotus ^{f1764} says, it is sweet like a date; but that it was frequent in Egypt, and needed not be carried there. The Targum renders it “chestnuts”, and so Ben Melech, as it does what follows,

nuts, and almonds, the oil of nuts, and the oil of almonds: the former design not common, but the pistachio nuts, as Jarchi observes from R. Machir; and these, as Pliny ^{f1765} says, were well known in Syria, and were good for food and drink, and against the bites of serpents; and, as Bochart

^{f1766} observes, are frequently mentioned by naturalists along with almonds, and as like unto them.

Ver. 12. *And take double money in your hand*, etc.] Than what they carried before, either to buy as much more as they then did; or rather because of the greater scarcity of corn, as Jarchi observes, which made it doubly dearer; for this seems to be different from the money they are also bid to take in return for that found in their sacks, which was a third parcel, as follows:

and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry [it] again in your hand; that it might be ready to pay upon demand, should they be charged with nonpayment for the corn they had before:

peradventure it [was] an oversight; a mistake of the governors, or of those that were under him, concerned in the sale of the corn, and receiving money for it, or of Jacob's sons; he could not tell how it was, but some way or other he supposed a mistake was made.

Ver. 13. *Take also your brother*, etc.] Their brother Benjamin, committing him into their hands and to their care, hereby declaring his consent and willingness that he should go with them:

and arise, go again to the man; the governor of Egypt, to buy corn of him.

Ver. 14. *And God Almighty give you mercy before the man*, etc.] Who has the hearts of all men in his hands, kings, princes, governors, even those who are the most cruel and hardhearted, rough and severe in their tempers and dispositions, and such an one they had represented this man to be; one that had spoke roughly to them, and used them roughly: Jacob therefore sent him a present to soften his mind, and now he puts up a prayer to God, and dismisses his sons with his good wishes for them, that God would incline the heart of the governor to show kindness to them, and let them have corn, nor use any of them ill: particularly,

that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin; release Simeon, and send him and Benjamin aiming with them when they returned:

if I be bereaved [of my children], I am bereaved; this he said, not as utterly despairing of their return, but as expressive of his patient submission to the divine will, be it as it may be.

Ver. 15. *And the men took the present*, etc.] Their father directed them to:

and they took double money in their hand; besides what they found in their sacks mouths, which they also carried with them:

and Benjamin; they took him likewise with their father's leave:

and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph; presented themselves to him, and their petitions for more corn, as well as to answer to any questions that should be asked them.

Ver. 16. *And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them*, etc.] Whom he knew, though he had not seen him twenty two years, and though he must be very much altered, being but about ten years of age when Joseph was said into Egypt, yet being with the rest of his brethren, whom he knew very well, concluded it must be him:

he said to the ruler of his house; his steward, as he is after called, not his son Manasseh, as the Targum of Jonathan:

bring [these] men home; to his own house, for Joseph was now at or near the place where were the granaries of corn, and where that was said and distributed:

and slay, and make ready; or "slay a slaughter"^{f1767}, that is, of beasts for food; a sheep, or a lamb, or a calf, very probably, and order it to be dressed, boiled or roasted, or both, that it might be fit for food: wherefore Aben Ezra must be mistaken when (^{<046>}Genesis 46:34); he says, that the Egyptians in those times did not eat flesh, nor might any kill a sheep; for it cannot be thought that Joseph could order a dinner for his brethren, to whom as yet he did not choose to make himself known, in direct violation of the customs and laws of Egypt, and who, it is plain by what follows, dined as an Egyptian, and with the Egyptians, and not as an Hebrew, and with his brethren as Hebrews; besides, for what purpose did Pharaoh get and possess such herds and flocks of cattle, if not for food as well as other uses? (see ^{<047>}Genesis 47:6,16,17); though in later times they abstained from eating various animals, as Porphyry^{f1768} from Chaeremon relates, and particularly from sheep and goats, according to Juvenal^{f1769}:

for [these] men shall dine with me at noon; which was the usual time of dining with the eastern people, as it is now with us, though with the Romans at evening.

Ver. 17. *And the man did as Joseph bade: and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.*] Showed them the way to it, and introduced them into it, and led them into some apartment in it, and ordered every thing to be got ready for dinner as his master had bid him, being a diligent and faithful servant: at old Cair is shown to travellers ^{f1770} the house of Joseph in the tower, and a very surprising well, said to be made by him, and here, they say; the granaries were, in which the corn was laid up.

Ver. 18. *And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house,* etc.] It not being usual, as Jarchi observes, for those that came to buy corn to lodge there, but at an inn in the city:

and they said, because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; to examine and inquire of them how they came to go away without paying for their corn, take up their money again after they had laid it down, and take it away with them, and so were guilty of tricking and defrauding, if not of theft:

that he may seek occasion against us: or “roll on us” ^{f1771}; cast all the shame on them, and leave the reproach and scandal of it on them:

and fall upon us; with hard words, and severe menaces, if not with blows:

and take us for bondmen, and our asses; imprison them, which was the punishment for fraud and theft, and take their asses as a forfeiture.

Ver. 19. *And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house,* etc.] The same person before called the ruler of his house, under whose direction they were; just before they came to the house, as it seems by what follows, they made up to him as having something to say to him:

and they communed with him at the door of the house; before they went into it, being uneasy and eager to know what should be the meaning of their being brought thither, which was unusual.

Ver. 20. *And said, O sir,* etc.] Or, “on me, my lord” ^{f1772}, one said in the name of the rest, perhaps Judah, on me let the blame lie, if guilty of rudeness in making our address to thee; or as the Vulgate Latin version, “we pray, sir, that thou wouldest hear us”; and so Jarchi and Aben Ezra say the phrase is expressive of beseeching, entreating, and supplicating:

we came indeed down at the first time to buy food; not to spy the land but to buy corn, and not to get it by fraud or tricking but by paying for it the price that was required.

Ver. 21. *And it came to pass when we came to the inn*, etc.] Upon the road, on the first day's journey, to refresh themselves and their cattle:

that we opened our sacks; to give provender to our cattle; by which it appears that they all did this, though it is only said of one of them at the inn, and of all of them when they came home, (^(14:27)Genesis 42:27,35);

and, behold, [every] man's money [was] in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; nothing wanting of it; it being usual in those times to pay money by weight, and not by the tale of pieces:

and we have brought it again in our hand; in order to pay it for the corn we have had, having no design to defraud.

Ver. 22. *And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food*, etc.] Double money for a double quantity, or because the price of corn was now doubled; and their bringing this besides the other showed their honest and upright intentions:

we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks; we are quite ignorant of it, and can by no means account for it, and therefore hope no blame will be laid on us.

Ver. 23. *And he said, peace [be] unto you, fear not*, etc.] Do not be uneasy and disturbed, you have nothing to fear, you are in no danger:

your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks; the hidden treasure, as the word signifies, found in their sacks; was there by the providence of God, so disposing the heart of Joseph to order it to be put there, as the steward interpreted it; who by being Joseph's family had got some knowledge of the true God, and of his all wise and disposing Providence:

I had your money; he received it of them, which he acknowledges, and that was sufficient to acquit them from guile and theft, though he does not say that he put the money into their sacks, or by whose order it was done:

and he brought Simeon out unto them; either out of prison, or out of some other room to them, which was, no doubt, done by the direction of Joseph.

Ver. 24. *And the man brought the men into Joseph's house*, etc.] After the above discourse had passed between them, and he had made their minds easy, both with respect to the money, and by bringing Simeon unbound to them:

and gave [them] water, and they washed their feet; which was usually done in the eastern countries after travelling, and when about to take a meal, and was both for refreshment and cleanliness:

and he gave their asses provender; thus were they hospitably entertained, they and all that belonged to them.

Ver. 25. *And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon*, etc.] They took it out of their vessels or bags in which they brought it, having unladen their asses, and disposed of it in a proper manner to present it to him when he came home at noon to dine:

for they heard that they should eat bread there; dine there, bread being put for all provision: this was told them, very probably, by the steward, or by some of the servants in the house, or they overheard what Joseph said to the steward, (⁰⁴⁹⁶Genesis 43:16).

Ver. 26. *And when Joseph came home*, etc.] In order to dine, it being noontime:

they brought him the present which [was] in their hand into the house; everyone took a part of it in his hand, and brought it to Joseph in the parlour where he was, and delivered it to him as a present from their father, or from themselves, or it may be as from both:

and bowed themselves to him to the earth; in the most prostrate and humble manner, now again fulfilling his dream, and more completely than before, for now all his eleven brethren were together, signified by the eleven stars in the dream, that made obeisance to him, (see ⁰⁵³⁰Genesis 37:9 42:6).

Ver. 27. *And he asked them of [their] welfare*, etc.] Or “peace”^{f1773}, their prosperity, especially of the health of their bodies, whether they were well and in good health after so long a journey:

and said, [is] your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? when they were with him before, and told him they were all the sons of one man, who dwelt in Canaan:

[is] he yet alive? which he was very desirous of knowing; for, being advanced in years, he might fear he was removed by death in the time between their going and returning.

Ver. 28. *And they answered, thy servant our father [is] in good health, he [is] yet alive,* etc.] Which is an answer to both his questions; and by calling their father Joseph's servant, he did obeisance to him in them, as well as by sending a present to him, which they delivered as coming from him his servant; and it is not improbable that Jacob sent his salutation to him as his servant, and so that part of the dream of Joseph's was also fulfilled, which represented the sun doing obeisance to him, (⁴⁰⁵³⁰Genesis 37:9,10):

and they bowed their heads, and made obeisance; a second time, as they did, no doubt, at every time they gave answer to Joseph's questions; and this is again observed, to show the full completion of the above dream.

Ver. 29. *And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin,* etc.] He had seen him before when his brethren first presented themselves to him, but then took no particular and special notice of him, only gave him a side look as it were, but now he looked wistly at him:

his mother's son; the son of Rachel his mother, and who was his only brother by his mother's side, the rest, though his brethren, yet only by his father's side, not his mother's sons:

and said, [is] this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? he knew he was the same, but was willing to have it from their mouths, to lead on to what he had further to say:

and he said; after they had answered his question, and told him it was he:

God be gracious unto thee, my son; speaking as a superior, a governor, in which capacity he was a father to his inferiors; and as a man, a relation, a brother, though not as yet discovered; he spoke in the most tender and affectionate manner, and, as a religious good man, he wishes the best thing he could for his brother, the grace and goodness of God; and which may be understood in the largest and most expressive sense, as including all good things, temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

Ver. 30. *And Joseph made haste,* etc.] To get out of the room where he was with his brethren as fast as he could:

for his bowels did yearn upon his brother; his passions grew strong, his affections were raised, his heart was full of tenderness, and there was such a flow of love and joy at the sight of his brother, and the little conversation he had with him, that he was ready to burst out, and must have discovered himself if he had not immediately turned and got out of the room:

and he sought [where] to weep; a proper place to vent his passion in tears of joy, and relieve himself

and he entered into [his] chamber, and wept there; where he could be the most retired, and not likely to be overheard.

Ver. 31. *And he washed his face*, etc.] From the tears on it, that it might not be discerned that he had been weeping:

and went out; of his chamber into the room again, where his brethren were:

and refrained himself; from weeping, or showing any excess of passion, love, joy, etc.

and said, set on bread; gave orders to his servants to bring in dinner, and set it upon the table; bread, as before, being put for all kind of food.

Ver. 32. *And they set on for him by himself*, etc.] A table was placed and provisions set upon it in one part of the room for Joseph by himself; which was done either because he was an Hebrew, and the Egyptians might not eat with him, nor he with them; or rather for the sake of grandeur, he being the next man in the kingdom to Pharaoh:

and for them by themselves; another table was placed and spread for Joseph's brethren by themselves, the reason of which is after given:

and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves; a third table was laid for such Egyptian noblemen and others, who were at this time Joseph's guests, or used to dine with him:

because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that [is] an abomination unto the Egyptians; the reason of which, as given by the Targums of Onkelos and, Jonathan, is, because the creatures the Egyptians worshipped the Hebrews eat; but it is a question whether such creatures as oxen, sheep, goats, etc. which were eaten by the Hebrews, were so early worshipped by the Egyptians; though they were in later times, and particularly the Apis or ox, which is supposed by many to be worshipped

on the account of Joseph, and so after his time; rather the abhorrence the Egyptians had the Hebrews in was on account of their being shepherds, on a political account, they having before this time suffered much by the insurrections and rebellions of such sort of persons among themselves, who set up a kingdom and kings of their own, called the “Hyysi”, or pastor kings: or else this difference made between the Egyptians and Hebrews at eating, was not on account of what they did eat, as of the certain rites and customs the Egyptians had peculiar to themselves in dressing their food, and eating it; and therefore would not eat with any of another nation; so that this was not any particular distaste they had to the Hebrews, but was their usage towards men of all nations; for so Herodotus says ^{f1774}, that

“no Egyptian, man or woman, might kiss the month of a Greek, or use a knife, or spit, or pot;”

that is, a knife a Greek had cut anything with, or a spit he had roasted meat on, or a pot he had boiled it in; and adds,

“nor might taste of the flesh of an ox, cut with the knife of a Greek.”

And indeed they would not eat nor converse with any of another religion ^{f1775}, be they who they would.

Ver. 33. *And they sat before him*, etc.] At a table, so placed that they were in his sight, and he had a full view of them:

the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth; everyone according to his age, Reuben, the firstborn, first, and so on to Benjamin the youngest: thus they placed themselves as they used to be in their father’s family, or they were so placed by Joseph; and if this was the case, it may be a reason, and a principal one, of what follows:

and the men marvelled one at another; not the Egyptians, the guests of Joseph, seeing eleven brethren placed in this manner, and these being Hebrews, taken so much notice of; but Joseph’s brethren, who either wondered at the manner of their being seated so regular, according to their age; or at the honour done them to dine with the governor, and at the grandeur of the entertainment, and at the separate manner in which the governor, and the nobles of Egypt, sat at meals; or at what follows.

Ver. 34. *And he took [and sent] messes unto there from before him, etc.]*

The several dishes were brought before him, who cut them up, and sent to everyone their part and portion, as was usual in those times and countries, and afterwards elsewhere ^{f1776}, for the master of the family or feast to divide the food into parts, and to give to every guest his part; and these were called, from their being sent, “missus”, and from whence seems to be our English word “messes”, here used:

but Benjamin’s mess was five times so much as any of theirs; which was done out of his great affection to him, being his own brother both by father and mother’s side; and, as some think, to try his brethren, how they stood affected to Benjamin, and observe if this did not raise their envy to him, as his father’s particular respect to him had raised it in them against himself; and that, if it should, he might provide for his safety, lest they should use him in like manner as they had used him. This undoubtedly was designed as a peculiar favour, and a mark of special honour and respect, it being usual for princes to send messes from their tables to such as they favoured; and particularly it was usual with the Egyptians for their kings to have double messes more than the rest, in honour of them, as Herodotus ^{f1777} relates: Benjamin’s mess consisted either of five parts, or it was five times bigger than what was sent to the rest; not but that they had all what was sufficient; there was no want to any, but great plenty of everything for them all; nor was this designed Benjamin, that he should eat the larger quantity, only to show him distinguishing respect:

and they drank, and were merry with him; after dinner they drank wine liberally and plentifully, but not to excess and intemperance, yet so as to be cheerful and in good spirits; their fears being all dissipated by this generous entertainment they met with.