



# FEED MY SHEEP

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Issue #148

May 2011

## Joseph in the Years of Plenty and the Years of Famine

*The Story of Joseph, Part 13*

Before we get back to Genesis, I want to continue the narrative in Jasher from the point where we left off. Recall that Joseph had gone out to take a tour of Egypt (Genesis 41:46). Then, according to the book of Jasher narrative (new readers are advised to see our disclaimer in last month's issue), we read:

Jasher 49:32 And Joseph returned and came on that day before Pharaoh, and the king gave unto Joseph a possession in the land of Egypt, a possession of fields and vineyards, and the king gave unto Joseph three thousand talents of silver and one thousand talents of gold, and onyx stones and bdellium and many gifts. 33 And on the next day the king commanded all the people of Egypt to bring unto Joseph offerings and gifts, and that he that violated the command of the king should die; and they made a high place in the street of the city, and they spread out garments there, and whoever brought anything to Joseph put it into the high place.

34 And all the people of Egypt cast something into the high place, one man a golden ear-ring, and the other rings and ear-rings, and different vessels of gold and silver work, and onyx stones and bdellium did he cast upon the high place; every one gave something of what he possessed. 35 And Joseph took all these and placed them in his treasuries, and all the officers and nobles belonging to the king exalted Joseph, and they gave him many gifts, seeing that the king had chosen him to be his second. 36 And the king sent to Potiphera, the son of Ahiram priest of On, and he took his young daughter Osnath and gave her unto Joseph for a wife. 37 And the damsel was very comely, a virgin, one whom man had not known, and Joseph took her for a wife; and the king said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and beside thee none shall dare to lift up his hand or his foot to regulate my people throughout the land of Egypt. 38 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before

Pharaoh, and Joseph went out from before the king, and he became the king's second in Egypt. 39 And the king gave Joseph a hundred servants to attend him in his house, and Joseph also sent and purchased many servants and they remained in the house of Joseph. 40 Joseph then built for himself a very magnificent house like unto the houses of kings, before the court of the king's palace, and he made in the house a large temple, very elegant in appearance and convenient for his residence; three years was Joseph in erecting his house.

Uh-oh! Joseph built a temple. I wonder if he was now succumbing to heathen idol worship?

41 And Joseph made unto himself a very elegant throne of abundance of gold and silver, and he covered it with onyx stones and bdellium, and he made upon it the likeness of the whole land of Egypt, and the likeness of the river of Egypt that watereth the whole land of Egypt; and Joseph sat securely upon his throne in his house and the Lord increased Joseph's wisdom. 42 And all the inhabitants of Egypt and Pharaoh's servants and his princes loved Joseph exceedingly, for this thing was from the Lord to Joseph.

The fact that all Egypt loved Joseph was caused by God and that the Lord increased Joseph's wisdom, are good indicators that Joseph did not build any temple for idolatrous purposes.

43 And Joseph had an army that made war, going out in hosts and troops to the number of forty thousand six hundred men, capable of bearing arms to assist the king and Joseph against the enemy, besides the king's officers and his servants and inhabitants of Egypt without number. 44 And Joseph gave unto his mighty men, and to all his host, shields and javelins,

and caps and coats of mail and stones for slinging.

The next chapter of Jasher, begins by telling how Pharaoh sent Joseph to lead a mighty army to help out the small nation of Ishmaelites who were evidently being trounced by an army from Tarshish. Needless to say, Joseph's armies were victorious; in fact, it states they did not lose a man. Now I want to commence in Jasher 50, verse 7:

7 And at the revolution of the year, in the second year of Joseph's reigning over Egypt, the Lord gave great plenty throughout the land for seven years as Joseph had spoken, for the Lord blessed all the produce of the earth in those days for seven years, and they ate and were greatly satisfied. 8 And Joseph at that time had officers under him, and they collected all the food of the good years, and heaped corn year by year, and they placed it in the treasuries of Joseph. 9 And at any time when they gathered the food Joseph commanded that they should bring the corn in the ears, and also bring with it some of the soil of the field, that it should not spoil.

Did you notice the special method by which Joseph orders the grain to be kept?

10 And Joseph did according to this year by year, and he heaped up corn like the sand of the sea for abundance, for his stores were immense and could not be numbered for abundance. 11 And also all the inhabitants of Egypt gathered all sorts of food in their stores in great abundance during the seven good years, but they did not do unto it as Joseph did. 12 And all the food which Joseph and the Egyptians had gathered during the seven years of plenty, was secured for the land in stores for the seven years of famine, for the support of the whole land. 13 And the inhabitants of Egypt filled each man his store and his concealed place with corn, to be for support during the famine. 14 And Joseph placed all the food that he had gathered in all the cities of Egypt, and he closed all the stores and placed sentinels over them. 15 And Joseph's wife Osnath the daughter of Potiphera bare him two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and Joseph was thirty-four years old when he begat them. 16 And the lads grew up and they went in his ways and in his instructions, they did not deviate from the way which their father taught them, either to the right or left. 17 And the Lord was with the lads, and they grew up and had understanding and skill in all wisdom and in all the affairs of government, and all the king's officers and his great men of the inhabitants of Egypt exalted the lads, and they were brought up amongst the king's children. 18 And the seven years of plenty that were throughout the land were at an end, and the seven years of famine came after them as Joseph had spo-

ken, and the famine was throughout the land.

We will stop there and compare all that detail with how Moses summarizes it very tersely.

**Genesis 41:47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.**

**48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.**

**49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.**

**50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him.**

**51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, *said he*, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.**

As you might surmise, the meaning of the name is "causing to forget."

**52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.**

Ephraim actually has two meanings: "I shall be doubly fruitful," and oddly enough, it also means "double ash heap." These two boys become very prominent in history, so it might not be a bad idea to lock the meanings of their names into our gray matter. Manasseh: "causing to forget" and Ephraim: doubly fruitful or double ash heap.

**53 And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended.**

That's the point where we left off in Jasher, but let's continue right on in Genesis here.

**Genesis 41:54 And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.**

Although it may be repetitious for some of you, it is worthwhile to note that the word "all" there must always be understood in context. When Caesar Augustus decreed that "all the world" should be taxed, do you think the ten tribes of Israel who now comprised the Parthian Empire complied with the edict? Of course not. The word "all" in that context obviously was limited to only those under the jurisdiction of Caesar Augustus. Likewise, here when it says the fam-

ine was in all lands, or over all the face of the earth, it did not mean that North America or even that Scandinavia and the later-to-be-called British Isles were experiencing a famine. The “all” here is logically understood to mean at the least, all the neighboring countries, and at the most, all the region, which would allow for it to go a few borders beyond strictly the nations contiguous to Egypt. In any event, people from Australia were not coming to Egypt to buy grain. You see the point, I’m sure.

**Genesis 51:55 And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.**

**56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.**

**57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.**

**Genesis 42:1 Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?**

Alright, that’s a pretty straightforward account: the years of plenty end; the years of famine begin. The people cried to Pharaoh for bread. He tells them “Go see Joseph.” Not only the Egyptian people, but since the famine extended far and wide, people from many countries came seeking sustenance from Joseph—including Jacob and his sons back in Canaanland.

What a Plan God is working out! But if I may, let me share more of the inside story as given in the book of Jasher. Because if we had read *only* the Genesis account, when we read verse 55 above, we might have wondered why the Egyptians were clamoring to Joseph for bread, when in verse 48 it had told us that vast stores of grain were strategically located around all the major urban areas. So why did they need to come to Joseph? What happened to their own grain? Let’s find out...

Jasher 50:19 And all the people of Egypt saw that the famine had commenced in the land of Egypt, and all the people of Egypt opened their stores of corn for the famine prevailed over them. 20 And they found all the food that was in their stores, full of vermin and not fit to eat, and the famine prevailed throughout the land, and all the inhabitants of Egypt came and cried before Pharaoh, for the famine was heavy upon them.

Aha! Remember earlier how Joseph had stored the national grain reserves in a special manner, still on

the stalk and still anchored with some soil? The people, on the other hand, obviously threshed the wheat. It is my speculation—and only that—it is my speculation that they did not have Tupperware in those days ☺, and so the storage containers—if any—were susceptible to infiltration by the destroying vermin.

21 And they said unto Pharaoh, Give food unto thy servants, and wherefore shall we die through hunger before thy eyes, even we and our little ones? 22 And Pharaoh answered them, saying, And wherefore do you cry unto me? did not Joseph command that the corn should be laid up during the seven years of plenty for the years of famine? and wherefore did you not hearken to his voice? 23 And the people of Egypt answered the king, saying, As thy soul liveth, our lord, thy servants have done all that Joseph ordered, for thy servants also gathered in all the produce of their fields during the seven years of plenty and laid it in the stores unto this day. 24 And when the famine prevailed over thy servants we opened our stores, and behold all our produce was filled with vermin and was not fit for food. 25 And when the king heard all that had befallen the inhabitants of Egypt, the king was greatly afraid on account of the famine, and he was much terrified; and the king answered the people of Egypt, saying, Since all this has happened unto you, go unto Joseph, do whatever he shall say unto you, transgress not his commands.

Political Science 101: If there is one thing that potentates fear, it is rebellion by the people, and one of the most powerful impetuses for rebellion is starvation. When the people are dying anyhow, they have nothing to lose by attempting to overthrow the king, right? So Pharaoh passes the buck...as God would have it, of course.

Jasher 50:26 And all the people of Egypt went forth and came unto Joseph, and said unto him, Give unto us food, and wherefore shall we die before thee through hunger? for we gathered in our produce during the seven years as thou didst command, and we put it in store, and thus has it befallen us. 27 And when Joseph heard all the words of the people of Egypt and what had befallen them, Joseph opened all his stores of the produce and he sold it unto the people of Egypt.

Notice that: he sold it. He did not give it away. Remember that, we will rejoin that idea later in the story, but not in this issue.

28 And the famine prevailed throughout the land, and the famine was in all countries, but in the land of Egypt there was produce for sale. 29 And all the in-

habitants of Egypt came unto Joseph to buy corn, for the famine prevailed over them, and all their corn was spoiled, and Joseph daily sold it to all the people of Egypt. 30 And all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan and the Philistines, and those beyond the Jordan, and the children of the east and all the cities of the lands far and nigh heard that there was corn in Egypt, and they all came to Egypt to buy corn, for the famine prevailed over them. 31 And Joseph opened the stores of corn and placed officers over them, and they daily stood and sold to all that came. 32 And Joseph knew that his brethren also would come to Egypt to buy corn, for the famine prevailed throughout the earth.

Now, observe the wisdom of Joseph as he sets his plan in motion.

32 And Joseph commanded all his people that they should cause it to be proclaimed throughout the land of Egypt, saying,...

Okay, remember the signet ring? Here is something that was written down, “photocopied” and then sealed by Joseph with the signet ring before passing them out to the officers to be read to the people of Egypt. I guess the government also served as the news media in those days... Here is what the proclamation was...

33 It is the pleasure of the king, of his second and of their great men, that any person who wishes to buy corn in Egypt shall not send his servants to Egypt to purchase, but his sons, and also any Egyptian or Canaanite, who shall come from any of the stores from buying corn in Egypt, and shall go and sell it throughout the land, he shall die, for no one shall buy but for the support of his household. 34 And any man leading two or three beasts shall die, for a man shall only lead his own beast. 35 And Joseph placed sentinels at the gates of Egypt, and commanded them, saying, Any person who may come to buy corn, suffer him not to enter until his name, and the name of his father, and the name of his father’s father be written down, and whatever is written by day, send their names unto me in the evening that I may know their names. 36 And Joseph placed officers throughout the land of Egypt, and he commanded them to do all these things. 37 And Joseph did all these things, and made these statutes, in order that he might know when his brethren should come to Egypt to buy corn; and Joseph’s people caused it daily to be proclaimed in Egypt according to these words and statutes which Joseph had commanded. *(We are out of space for this month. To be continued.)*

### **The Book of Jasher**

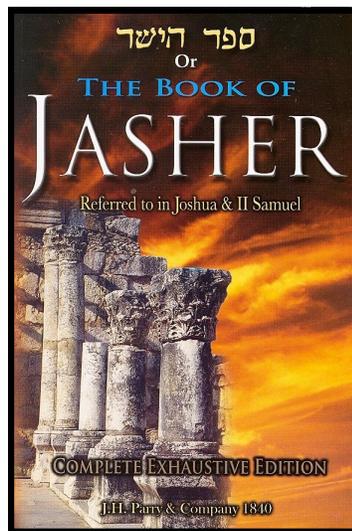
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38 And all the inhabitants of the east and west country, and of all the earth, heard of the statutes and regulations which Joseph had enacted in Egypt, and the inhabitants of the extreme parts of the earth came and they bought corn in Egypt day after day, and then went away.

39 And all the officers of Egypt did as Joseph had commanded, and

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all that came to Egypt to buy corn, the gate keepers would write their names, and their fathers' names, and daily bring them in the evening before Joseph.

## CHAPTER 51

1 And Jacob afterward heard that there was corn in Egypt, and he called unto his sons to go to Egypt to buy corn, for upon them also did the famine prevail, and he called unto his sons, saying,

[And the story just kinda peters out at this point, so we will just conclude the Joseph series with that, if that's okay with you...]

What? You want to go on? Well, yeah, there is more to the story, but are you sure you want to hear it? Okay, we will continue for just a few more minutes today, since generally we do limit ourselves by the length of the tape recording.]

Let's go back to Genesis now and pick up the condensed version of the story.

**Genesis 42:** 2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.

3 And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.

4 But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.

