

FEED MY SHEEP

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Real Men Weep

The Story of Joseph, Part 20

Last month's installment of *The Story of Joseph* concluded with our reading of Jacob's letter to the king of Egypt as found in the book of Jasher. Of course, neither Jacob nor his sons are aware at this point that the king of Egypt is their very own son and brother respectively. Jacob's letter to the king is strikingly bold—so much so that I likened its tone to what one might expect to see from a modern Mafia boss to the U. S. president—but not intending to liken Jacob to a Mafia don in any other sense than that. Jacob now concludes his letter to the king of Egypt by saying:

Jasher 52:40 Now therefore behold Benjamin my son cometh unto thee with my sons, take heed of him and put thy eyes upon him, and then will God place his eyes over thee and throughout thy kingdom.

41 Now I have told thee all that is in my heart, and behold my sons are coming to thee with their brother, examine the face of the whole earth for their sake and send them back in peace with their brethren.

42 And Jacob gave the record to his sons into the care of Judah to give it unto the king of Egypt.

Let us now pick up the story in Genesis again.

Genesis 43:15 And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

16 And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring *these* men home, and slay, and make ready; for *these* men shall dine with me at noon.

17 And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.

Can you picture that scene there in ancient Egypt? Out of the tens of thousands of people who must have been coming to Egypt to buy food, how many of them

are singled out and told that they are invited to dine with the king of Egypt at high noon? We can imagine what the brothers, with their guilt-plagued consciences, must be thinking. They're thinking that this is just a pretext to get them inside the house, and then the king's men will surround them and they will all be taken as slaves, and their animals confiscated.

18 And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses.

So as the brothers are being escorted to the door of the palatial home of King Zaphnath-paaneah, they try to explain their innocence to the steward.

19 And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house,

20 And said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food:

21 And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand.

22 And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks.

Do you suppose that these original Israelites might have had "sheepish" looks on their faces as they finished their explanations? They realized that it was about as silly a story as anyone could have concocted, yet they had no other explanation. The steward replies:

23 And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them.

I had your money. Whoa! Can you imagine the relief that statement must have brought them?! Oh, but I think there is more there. Notice that this operations manager for Joseph said to the brothers: “your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure...”

I surmise that Joseph anticipated this attempt on the part of his brothers to proclaim their innocence to anyone who had the ruler’s ear, and so Joseph had in advance instructed the steward how to respond to them. To inform them that El Shaddai, their God, and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had given them this wealth, this financial blessing.

Therein we might also find a nugget to ponder. To keep with the analogy here, this was an unexpected blessing, so how do we look upon unexpected blessings? Whether you won the Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes, or if your uncle or somebody else just sent you a hundred bucks or two out of the blue. Sure, you thank your uncle for the gift, or you are grateful to Publishers Clearing House, but it is very important that we always remember that the original Source for everything is your Father in heaven.

It was He who impressed upon your uncle to write you a check. It was He who caused your entry to come up the winner in the contest. By this instruction to the steward, Joseph the overcomer was indirectly teaching his brothers the virtue of gratitude, and he was simultaneously teaching them the sovereignty of God. So now, after a year’s separation, the brothers are reunited with Simeon.

24 And the man brought the men into Joseph’s house, and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender.

25 And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: [That phrase is poorly translated; a better rendering: And they made ready the present in expectation of Joseph’s arrival at noon:] **for they heard that they should eat bread there.**

Now, as it is with most farm families today, so it was in ancient Egypt, that the noon meal was the big meal of the day.

26 And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the

earth.

Ah, there they go again, fulfilling Joseph’s prophetic dreams of decades ago, and still they are totally ignorant of it. And there, too, I believe, is a Bible pattern. Namely, that individuals, groups, and even nations generally fulfill prophecy and never recognize it until after the fact, *if* they recognize it at all. For example, we remember that on the day of Pentecost, it was Peter who was given to understand that the happenings of that day were in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Peter said in ...

Acts 2:16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

Genesis 43:27 And he asked them of *their* welfare, and said, *Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?*

28 And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

We have seen this before: where they speak to King Joseph of their father, and they refer to him as “thy servant our father,” and at the same time they are bowing down to Joseph. By so doing, they are acting in proxy for Jacob, thus fulfilling the dream further in that Jacob also bowed down to Joseph. Let’s press the pause button in Genesis at this juncture and pick up the thread in Jasher.

Jasher Chapter 53:1 And the sons of Jacob rose up and took Benjamin and the whole of the presents, and they went and came to Egypt and they stood before Joseph.

2 And Joseph beheld his brother Benjamin with them and he saluted them, and these men came to Joseph’s house.

3 And Joseph commanded the superintendent of his house to give to his brethren to eat, and he did so unto them.

4 And at noon time Joseph sent for the men to come before him with Benjamin, and the men told the superintendent of Joseph’s house concerning the silver that was returned in their sacks, and he said unto them, It will be well with you, fear not, and he brought their brother Simeon unto them.

5 And Simeon said unto his brethren, The lord of the Egyptians has acted very kindly unto me, he did not keep me bound, as you saw with your eyes, for when you went out from the city he let me free and dealt kindly with me in his house.

Let's reflect on that for a moment: Was there any bitterness in Joseph towards this man Simeon, his own brother, who had treated him so badly those many years ago? Was there any bitterness or desire for revenge in the heart of Joseph? I dare say, there was not one speck in his heart! Not one iota of bitterness or revenge!

How many of us have had, or perhaps *still* have some family member with whom we have a very strained relationship? If the relationship is strained, we need to examine our own heart and let the Holy Spirit reveal to us if we have any bitterness or resentment hiding deep within our soul.

And listen, my dear friends, I am not pointing fingers here at anyone, because as all of you know who have heard my own life story and my personal testimony on forgiveness, that I came to realize after nearly 30 years that I hated my father. You talk about resentment and bitterness—If they had offered bitterness as a major in college, I would have graduated with honors, *summa cum laude* and all that. I was an expert in bitterness. (*Could You Forgive God? My Personal Testimony on Forgiveness* spans 2 CDs and is available free for the asking; but please include \$4 for shipping.)

And I want to add this: God doesn't just drop the bitterness test from our lifetime class work, does He? From time to time, He surprises us with pop quizzes, just to see if we can still suffer injustice and suffer perceived wrongs and yet remain free from bitterness. Am I correct, or am I the only one experiencing those pop quizzes?

6 And Judah took Benjamin by the hand, and they came before Joseph, and they bowed down to him to the ground.

7 And the men gave the present unto Joseph and they all sat before him, and Joseph said unto them, Is it well with you, is it well with your children, is it well with your aged father? and they said, It is well, and Judah took the record which Jacob had sent and gave it into the hand of Joseph.

8 And Joseph read the letter and knew his father's writing, and he wished to weep and he went into an inner room and he wept a great weeping; and he went out.

9 And he lifted up his eyes and beheld his brother Benjamin, and he said, Is this your brother of whom

you spoke unto me? And Benjamin approached Joseph, and Joseph placed his hand upon his head and he said unto him, May God be gracious unto thee my son.

10 And when Joseph saw his brother, the son of his mother, he again wished to weep, and he entered the chamber, and he wept there, and he washed his face, and went out and refrained from weeping, and he said, Prepare food.

Once again, back to Genesis.

Genesis 43:29 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

The question arises in our mind, why does Joseph call him "my son?" Is he trying to give an obvious hint to all the brothers? No, the context of the story is quite clear that Joseph is not yet finished testing his brothers. It was customary and proper, however, in those eastern cultures, as it is in many societies today, for a person of greater age or rank or dignity to address someone inferior as "my son." So it did not at all imply any special paternal affection, although, of course, Joseph's affection was already too much for him to contain.

30 And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought *where* to weep; and he entered into *his* chamber, and wept there.

Speaking of customs and societal norms, the occurrence of men weeping is a norm in the Bible (and in the book of Jasher). Jacob wept daily for Joseph. Joseph wept. David wept. Jesus wept. These are the greatest men in the Bible! So all you American macho men of the John Wayne myth, how many examples of great men in the Bible weeping do you need in order to persuade you that weeping is not the sign of a sissy? It is not an indicator of effeminacy. It is not a mark of weakness.

If some of you men *still* think men should never weep, how about men from the National Football League? I heard a sports radio talk show once in which former NFL coach Jim Moira was telling about how privileged he was to have been at an awards banquet in Kansas City where he was presenting the "Coach of the Year" award to his son, Jim, Jr., who was coach of the Atlanta Falcons. And when the interviewer mentioned how Jim, Sr. wept with pride there at the podium, Jim remarked that such a thing was nothing new in Kansas City—with their coach at the time, Dick Vermeil, who is noted for having wept

openly on a number of occasions. So if Jesus weeping is not enough for you, how about the tough guys in the NFL?

I do not know how men weeping came to be considered unmanly in American society, but it is a mindset which I am grateful to see changing. Real men do not beat women. Real men lead by example. And real men realize there is a time to weep, whether out of happiness, or out of grief, or from a host of other powerful emotions. Weeping is part of the Master's perfect design of our physical-emotional being. Thus, at certain times in our life, when circumstances of overpowering emotions envelop us, our tear ducts open like a fire hose faucet, and the tears run like a river.

Did you know that especially in times of sadness and grief, that this is one of the methods by which the body rids itself of toxins? And at the same time, weeping allows our emotional equilibrium to be reset, to be brought back into balance. What a Creator!

And so as I get choked up while reading this story—as I *always* do in this portion of the story of Joseph—I want any of you men out there who are trying to hold back the tears, to let them loose for once. Don't bottle up those emotions! Let them be released! You'll be glad you did!

Genesis 43:31 And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.

32 And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

33 And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.

We will come back to comment on that in the next issue and after the corresponding passage in Jasher.

The Book of Jasher

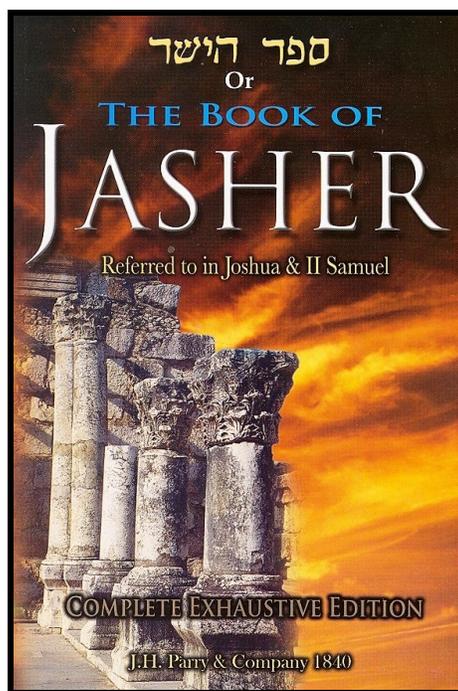
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We will come back to comment on that after the corresponding passage in Jasher.

34 And he took *and sent* messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

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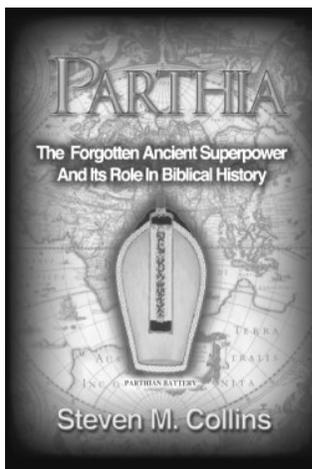
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tians worshiped the cow, the ox and certain other animals, and thus they would not eat them.

Incidentally, the heathen people of India still consider the cow as sacred, and so do you now see that the term “holy cow!” must have originated as a reference to these heathen religions?

Personally, I don’t think there is anything wrong with using such an exclamation. It does not mean that I worship cows. As a matter of fact, I like cows. I eat cows! ...just like our Hebrew forefathers have done for millennia.

In kind of a reverse way, I suppose one could trace the origin of the expression “holy mackerel!” to the fact that the Roman Catholic church had for centuries forbid the eating of meat on Friday and so it became traditional to eat fish on Friday.

So if we picture the scene in Joseph’s dining room, we have three tables: One for the Egyptian officials or staff members who might have been invited to join them. One table was for the Hebrew brothers. And a separate table for Joseph, with all the food spread out upon it. And this table was undoubtedly up on a raised platform, in front of Joseph’s throne.

Another custom in the ancient eastern world was that the guests’ portions were served to them from the host’s table. And thus Joseph sent a “mess” to Benjamin which was five times the portion sent to the other brothers.

Just a quick comment here on that word “mess.” As is our custom, after our meeting here in Atlanta, we usually go to a place for a meal and that place is called a *cafeteria*, right? Back when I was in the Catholic seminary, the dining hall was called the “*refectory*.” –And I have never heard that word since. Later, when I was in the Air Force, and in all the military services, the big place where they eat is called what? The mess hall.

One more thing about verse 34. As I was preparing this lecture, as often happens, I am compelled to look up certain words, and yet most other words I feel no particular leading to look them up in the Greek or Hebrew lexicons. But in verse 34 where it says “And they drank, and were merry with him,” I looked up the word “merry” there, and I was frankly surprised.

It is the Hebrew word H7937 שָׁכַר [’] shakar {shaw-kar’} which means 1) to be or become drunk or drunken, be intoxicated 1a) And in the (Qal) form of the verb, which is what it is here in this verse, it means to become drunken.

And so I have to assume that the King James translators were trying to be delicate here, or else trying not to have the Word of God say that Joseph and the boys were getting tanked. In fact, this word is translated properly as drunken, drunk, or filled with drink 17 times and only this one time is it translated “were merry.”

Moreover, all of a dozen other modern translations that I consulted do the same thing, avoiding anything that they decided might impugn the character of Joseph. But if we grant that the word should have been translated “were drunken” does it necessarily say that Joseph was getting loaded with them?

I don’t think so. It could merely be saying that the brothers were drinking and getting intoxicated “with Joseph,” meaning, in his presence. We will leave that hanging for the moment.

