



FEED MY SHEEP

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Joseph and Jacob's Tearful Reunion

The Story of Joseph, Part 28

What a story this is! We have already seen the powerful emotional climax as Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers. Now we come to the scene where Joseph is reunited with his father, Jacob. Grab another box of tissues!

Genesis 46:4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up *again*; and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

“Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.” That’s an interesting figure of speech, isn’t it? It is a gentle way of signifying that Jacob would die there in Egypt, and so when God said immediately before that “and I will also surely bring thee up *again*,” the “thee” refers to Jacob’s offspring, not to Jacob himself. But as soon as I say that, I must admit that possibly, it could also refer to Jacob’s corpse being brought up out of Egypt and back to Canaan for burial with his fathers. And there is one more important nuance in that figure of speech.

As we all know from the early part of the story of Joseph, Jacob had early on chosen Joseph as his favorite son, Joseph being the firstborn of his beloved wife Rachel. While yet a lad, Joseph had been groomed by his father to lead the family. Jacob had arrayed him in the multi-colored tunic, making it clear to Reuben and the other brothers that they were being bypassed in favor of Joseph. Then Joseph disappears and is presumed dead for 22 years. In biblical number symbolism the number 22 means means “light,” as in, the light of the world.

Here now Jacob has just learned that Joseph is still alive and is prime minister of Egypt. In seeking God’s answer to his dilemma, Jacob is also told that “Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.” You see, in those

days it was the custom that the firstborn had the duty or the privilege to close the eyes of the father. Therefore, God was confirming to Jacob that the right of firstborn was indeed to be conveyed to Joseph, as opposed to Reuben.

A lesson we can draw from this incident is this: No Christian should *necessarily* follow the example of another. Because what may be God’s plan for one person, may not be God’s plan for you. As we see in this incident, Abraham had been scolded for going down to Egypt. Isaac had been expressly *prohibited* from going down to Egypt. But Jacob was expressly directed to go down to Egypt.

Our heavenly Father has programmed a course for our life. My duty is to seek God’s plan for my life. Your duty is to seek God’s plan for your life. We seek God’s plan for us through prayer and reading His word. We hear through the illumination of the Holy Spirit which is then manifested through various means. Are you having difficulty hearing the voice of God? For some specifics on that, we carried for many years the exceptionally helpful book by Jack Deere called *Surprised by the Voice of God*. It is still available online and other sources.

Genesis 46:5 And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

6 And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:

7 His sons, and his sons’ sons with him, his daughters, and his sons’ daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.

8 And these *are* the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn. ...

10 And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman. ...

12 And the sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zerah: but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul.

We are going to skip the rest of the verses listing all the family members and pick it up again in verse...

Genesis 46:26 All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls *were* three-score and six;

27 And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, *were* two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, *were* three-score and ten.

These 70 souls are literally all the family of Israel. However, the number 70 has from the most ancient days represented all the nations of the world. Those who would restrict the 70 to simply representing all *Israel* and only Israel are neglecting two important facts about the chosen people.

Number one: The word of God says that through Abraham all the families of the earth would be blest. That clearly refers to more than just Abraham's descendants. Number two: The nation of Israel was ultimately to become a nation of priests for the rest of the nations of the world. As the tribe of Levi was to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, so Israel was to become for the rest of the world.

Despite the general blindness of Israel to her own identity over the past two millennia, Israel, as the Christian West, has done just that: carried the gospel to all the other peoples of the world—not very effectively, and very imperfectly, granted. That is because it has been the age of Pentecost, an age of in-part anointing, when leaven (false doctrine) permeates the loaf. But in the age of Tabernacles, which I believe we are just in the process of now entering, in the millennial age, Israel will serve as the priestly nation in perfection to all the nations of the world—to all 70 nations, as it were.

Someone might be thinking, “Well, according the United Nations, there are now 185 or 203, or whatever the number of nations now exist in the world. How does that line up with 70?” Well, that is missing the point. The 70 is a symbolic number. Besides, it seems

that the number of nations in the world changes every couple of months anyhow. So by the time the age of Tabernacles is fully arrived, there may actually be 70, who knows? And so the number 70 is generally and correctly understood to symbolize all the nations of the world. I make a point of this because it is a number whose symbolism all Bible students should remember.

Genesis 46:28 And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.

29 And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

30 And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou *art* yet alive.

Which is another way of saying: “There can now never be any greater happiness in my life. I am content and I am ready to die.” I emphasized the fact that Joseph *presented* himself before Jacob because we need to turn to Jasher here to supply the details. The condensed statement of Genesis cannot carry the amazing and wondrous and oh-so-touching scene that unfolded as the reunion of father and son commenced.

In fact, one 19th century commentary says that when Joseph presented himself, it means literally that he *appeared* to him, which is generally used only of the appearance of God; but it is used here to indicate the glory in which Joseph came to meet his father. You will get the picture as I read now from ...

Jasher 55:6 And it came to pass when they came near Egypt, Jacob sent Judah before him to Joseph that he might show him a situation in Egypt, and Judah did according to the word of his father, and he hastened and ran and came to Joseph, and they assigned for them a place in the land of Goshen for all his household, and Judah returned and came along the road to his father.

7 And Joseph harnessed the chariot, and he assembled all his mighty men and his servants and all the officers of Egypt in order to go and meet his father Jacob, and Joseph's mandate was proclaimed in Egypt, saying, All that do not go to meet Jacob shall die.

8 And on the next day Joseph went forth with all Egypt a great and mighty host, all dressed in garments of fine linen and purple and with instruments of silver and gold and with their instruments of war with them.

9 And they all went to meet Jacob with all sorts of musical instruments, with drums and timbrels, strew-

ing myrrh and aloes all along the road, and they all went after this fashion, and the earth shook at their shouting.

10 And all the women of Egypt went upon the roofs of Egypt and upon the walls to meet Jacob, and upon the head of Joseph was Pharaoh's regal crown, for Pharaoh had sent it unto him to put on at the time of his going to meet his father.

11 And when Joseph came within fifty cubits of his father, he alighted from the chariot and he walked toward his father, and when all the officers of Egypt and her nobles saw that Joseph had gone on foot toward his father, they also alighted and walked on foot toward Jacob.

12 And when Jacob approached the camp of Joseph, Jacob observed the camp that was coming toward him with Joseph, and it gratified him and Jacob was astonished at it.

13 And Jacob said unto Judah, Who is that man whom I see in the camp of Egypt dressed in kingly robes with a very red garment upon him and a royal crown upon his head, who has alighted from his chariot and is coming toward us? and Judah answered his father, saying, He is thy son Joseph the king; and Jacob rejoiced in seeing the glory of his son.

14 And Joseph came nigh unto his father and he bowed to his father, and all the men of the camp bowed to the ground with him before Jacob.

15 And behold Jacob ran and hastened to his son Joseph and fell upon his neck and kissed him, and they wept, and Joseph also embraced his father and kissed him, and they wept and all the people of Egypt wept with them.

16 And Jacob said unto Joseph, Now I will die cheerfully after I have seen thy face, that thou art still living and with glory.

17 And the sons of Jacob and their wives and their children and their servants, and all the household of Jacob wept exceedingly with Joseph, and they kissed him and wept greatly with him.

Does this scene not move you to tears as well, or at least bring a lump in your throat? This had to have been the greatest family reunion in all history!

18 And Joseph and all his people returned afterward home to Egypt, and Jacob and his sons and all the children of his household came with Joseph to Egypt, and Joseph placed them in the best part of Egypt, in the land of Goshen.

We will continue the narrative here in Jasher concerning how they came to be in Goshen and after that

we will return to the biblical account.

Jasher 55:19 And Joseph said unto his father and unto his brethren, I will go up and tell Pharaoh, saying, My brethren and my father's household and all belonging to them have come unto me, and behold they are in the land of Goshen.

20 And Joseph did so and took from his brethren Reuben, Issachar, Zebulun and his brother Benjamin and he placed them before Pharaoh.

21 And Joseph spoke unto Pharaoh, saying, My brethren and my father's household and all belonging to them, together with their flocks and cattle have come unto me from the land of Canaan, to sojourn in Egypt; for the famine was sore upon them.

22 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Place thy father and brethren in the best part of the land, withhold not from them all that is good, and cause them to eat of the fat of the land.

23 And Joseph answered, saying, Behold I have stationed them in the land of Goshen, for they are shepherds, therefore let them remain in Goshen to feed their flocks apart from the Egyptians.

24 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Do with thy brethren all that they shall say unto thee; and the sons of Jacob bowed down to Pharaoh, and they went forth from him in peace, and Joseph afterward brought his father before Pharaoh.

25 And Jacob came and bowed down to Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and he then went out; and Jacob and all his sons, and all his household dwelt in the land of Goshen.

26 In the second year, that is in the hundred and thirtieth year of the life of Jacob, Joseph maintained his father and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread according to their little ones, all the days of the famine; they lacked nothing.

27 And Joseph gave unto them the best part of the whole land; the best of Egypt had they all the days of Joseph; and Joseph also gave unto them and unto the whole of his father's household, clothes and garments year by year; and the sons of Jacob remained securely in Egypt all the days of their brother.

Let us now expound upon this from ...

Genesis 46:31 And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which *were* in the land of Canaan, are come unto me;

32 And the men *are* shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have

brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.

Alright, Joseph has just informed his brothers what *he* will say to Pharaoh, and now he instructs them what *they* are to say to Pharaoh.

33 And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation?

According to the ancient Greek historian, Herodotus, this was not simply idle chit-chat and small talk on the part of the Pharaoh. The government’s desire to know what you do for a living was actually required by Egyptian law at that time.

Hmmm. Does that remind anybody of an agency of our government today? I am reminded of the newspaper editorial cartoon I saw many years ago. It showed a citizen filling out his IRS 1040 tax return form. And you all know how the IRS is always being criticized for the difficulty and complexity of their forms, right? So anyhow this cartoon showed the new, revised and simplified 1040 form. I mean they really did simplify it this time. This form did not even ask you what you did for a living. The first question on the form was: “How much did you make?” And the next sentence on the form simply said: “Send it in.”

According to Herodotus, a law promulgated by Amasis, a monarch of the 26th dynasty, decreed that every Egyptian was obligated to give an annual account to the king of how he made his living, with the penalty that if he failed to show that he practiced an honorable occupation, he should be put to death. [Herod., 2:177]. So Joseph is preparing his brothers to answer this very important question with very particular words. Joseph says...

34 That ye shall say, Thy servants’ trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers:

Besides the “government mandate,” why is Joseph coaching them so carefully on this? Stay tuned.
(To be continued.)

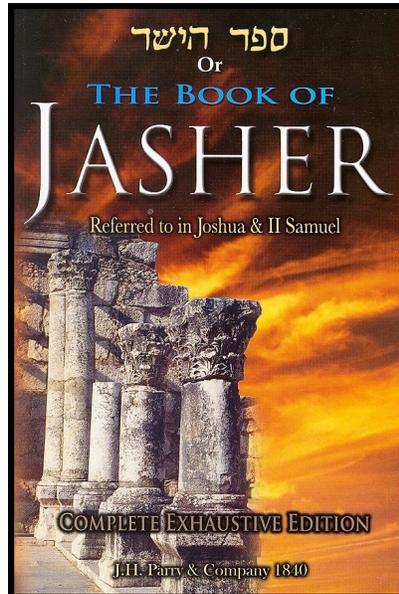
The Book of Jasher

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And now here is the reason Joseph tells them to speak in such a manner...

34....that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

In other words, shepherds were at or near the bottom

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