



# FEED MY SHEEP

PUBLISHED BY DR. JAMES W. BRUGGEMAN  
STONE KINGDOM MINISTRIES  
P. O. Box 5695  
ASHEVILLE, NC 28813 U.S.A.  
See my blog at [www.stonekingdom.org](http://www.stonekingdom.org)

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## Jacob and the Stairway to Heaven *The Story of Joseph, Part 32*

In connection with Judah being singled out as a mighty warrior in the blessing by Jacob-Israel over his sons, we find this interesting insertion in 2 Samuel. If you remember the story of David and Jonathan, you will recall the close bond of friendship between them. Then remember how tragic it was when both Jonathan and his father, King Saul, were killed in the battle with the Philistines? As we read here now in 2 Samuel, we find David mourning for the loss of both Jonathan and Saul. Even though King Saul had tried to kill him on many occasions, David mourns for him.

**2 Samuel 1:17 And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:**

**18 (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.)**

And so there we have one of the two places in the Bible where the book of Jasher is referenced as a source, the other place being in Joshua 10:13. King Saul has just been slain by the Philistines, or he was suffering from a wound which would eventually kill him, and so he committed suicide; or perhaps it was an "assisted suicide" with the help of an Edomite.

King Saul's ancestry was from the tribe of Benjamin. David was from the tribe of Judah. David has just seen his best friend and his king slain by the Philistines. David is certainly aware of the deathbed prophecies and blessings by Jacob, in which David's tribe, Judah, was to be the warrior tribe and to lead the battles for their brother tribes. Therefore, having just seen one of his brother tribes defeated in battle, David takes this opportunity to reiterate and to remind his *own* tribesmen that they should all become proficient in the weapons of warfare. We will now return to Genesis 47. But as we leave the book of Jasher, we note that Jasher glosses

over the deathbed blessings for the twelve sons, and it *entirely* omits the account of the adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh by Jacob.

**Genesis 47:28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years.**

Forty-nine is a number that is associated with the jubilee. Jacob therefore lived for a period of three jubilees ( $3 \times 49 = 147$ ). We noted that fact in our study-lecture some years ago called *The Laws of Jubilee*, so we just mention it in passing here.

It is also interesting to note that the number 17 bracketed or served as bookends for the life of Jacob, insofar as Joseph is concerned. He had Joseph in his presence for the first 17 years of his life, then a 22-year absence of Joseph, followed by the reunion and another 17 years with Joseph. He took care of Joseph for the first 17 years and Joseph took care of his father for the last 17 years. That makes Joseph 56 years old when Jacob died. The number 17 in Bible numerics is the number associated with victory. You can be sure that to Jacob, the last 17 years must have been like a very sweet victory period.

**Genesis 47:29 And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt:**

**30 But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their buryingplace. And he said, I will do as thou hast said.**

**31 And he said, Swear unto me. And he**

**sware unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.**

Even though Joseph is vice-pharaoh of Egypt, I do not think that Jacob is bowing to Joseph here. Remember, this scene is occurring inside Jacob's bed-chamber, and it is Joseph who would be bowing in honor and deference to his aged father. Rather, I believe that Jacob is bowing in an act of worship to Yahweh, and I believe that is what is spoken of in Hebrews 11:21.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews has a nickname. It is called the Faith Hall of Fame. That is where many of the great heroes of the Old Testament are listed, along with one of their notable deeds. Of all the deeds of Jacob's long life, let us pay special attention then, to what the writer of Hebrews singles out under inspiration as *the* event of great importance in the life of Jacob.

**Hebrews 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.**

So the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews combines two events: Jacob worshiping and the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob was dying. Among the twelve sons, Joseph is now the acknowledged leader of the family. Thus Jacob makes his request known to Joseph that he not be buried in Egypt.

When Joseph swears accordingly, Jacob, who had been seated upon his bed, then turns to face the head of his bed, and bows in thanksgiving and worship of God. Hebrews 11:21 says that Jacob worshiped "leaning upon the top of his staff." That phrasing comes from the Septuagint, and it need not necessarily be seen as a contradiction to Genesis. Both could be true. The Greek word for staff could also mean rod, or royal scepter. Remember how I noted previously that there is some evidence to suggest that Jacob was none other than the mythological King Saturn of Crete?

It is possible that Jacob could have used his staff or royal scepter to steady himself as he stood up to face the head of the bed as though towards the Supreme Head of the Universe, and having steadied himself, he then bowed to the extent he was able, given his feeble condition. The more important fact I want us to notice is that the one-liner given to Jacob in the Faith Hall of Fame points to the exceedingly *critical* significance of the blessing of the sons of Joseph... toward which incident we are progressing.

**Genesis 48:1 And it came to pass after these things, that *one* told Joseph, Behold, thy father is**

**sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.**

Why do you suppose that Manasseh is listed first at this point in the story? It is because he is the older of the two.

**2 And *one* told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.**

We notice here how the author changes from using the name Jacob to the name Israel. This might have been to signify the holiness and solemnity of the ritual which was now about to occur.

**3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,**

Just a note here about the term "God Almighty." In Hebrew the phrase is *El Shaddai*, which I have stated before is representative of the feminine aspect of God. We will do a more extensive study on the nature of the Godhead at some other time.

**4 And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee *for* an everlasting possession.**

Since we are now at the point in the story of Joseph where Jacob passes on the birthright and other blessings to his sons, let's go back and examine more closely the times when Jacob himself received those blessings. And Luz is central to the story.

On this first occasion, Jacob is fleeing in fear of the anger and hatred of his brother Esau. Remember, this is immediately after Jacob himself had just secured the birthright blessing from their father Isaac, albeit, by a little deception that Jacob's mother Rebekah had cooked up—along with the venison.

Anyhow, Jacob is now running for his life and he is on his way up to his Uncle Laban's home, hundreds of miles northeast of Canaanland, to see if he can stay there until Esau's murderous anger subsides. One night on the journey, he is sleeping under the stars near a place called Luz (rhymes with "muse") and there he has an astonishing dream.

**Genesis 28:12 And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.**

**13 And, behold, the LORD** [literally, YHWH, and I will use YHWH herein the remainder of this issue] **stood above it, and said, I am YHWH God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac**

As I read on, I will enumerate the various components of this unconditional covenant that God is here making with Jacob. God says:

**(1) the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;**

**14 And (2) thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and (3) thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south:**

I will interject here that it is my opinion that west is mentioned first because that is the direction where the vast *majority* of Israelites eventually headed. I am referring to a thousand years and more after the lives of Jacob and the boys. As for the other points of the compass, very much smaller bodies of Israelites migrated in those directions.

**14 ...and (4) in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.**

Where have we heard that before? Genesis 12:3. It is a word for word reiteration of the promise to Abraham.

**15 And, behold, (5) I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and (6) will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.**

So those are six major components of the unconditional promises which God made to Jacob.

**16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely YHWH is in this place; and I knew it not.**

**17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.**

**18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.**

**19 And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.**

**20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,**

**21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall YHWH be my God:**

**22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.**

Let us analyze this passage. The name Luz means an almond tree. Many people's eyes are almond-shaped and thus the almond symbolizes the *opening* of the eyes or...**awakening**. In fact, the Hebrew for almond tree is derived from the word **לֶשֶׁת** shaqad {shaw-kad'} which means "to awake." So Luz has this connotation of awakening. The apostle Paul likens **death** to sleep. Therefore, when we awaken from death, we call it resurrection. Therefore, Luz is associated with resurrection also.

So Jacob has this dream of a ladder—instead of a ladder, I like to call it "the stairway to heaven," at a place called Luz, and in verse 16, it says he... "awaked"... and declared that YHWH is in this place, and I didn't even know it.

But when **did** he know it? When did he *realize* it? It was when God spoke to him through a dream. While asleep, Jacob was given this new consciousness, this higher consciousness, where he was able to perceive invisible realities—realities of other worlds, worlds in the realm of spirit which are in close communication with this world by means of those celestial beings ascending and descending.

As a side note, some readers will also be aware that this incident might signify our DNA "ladders" wherein we have mRNA (messenger RNA) and "messengers" are angels, but that is a separate study.

Jacob also perceived a being standing at the top of the stairway who identified Himself as Yahweh, the God of Jacob's father and grandfather. Jacob was dumb-struck as Yahweh made these astounding promises to him, and then, Jacob awakened!—with full memory of the dream, a dream so powerful, it had to be just what the Being in it had declared: this was a visitation from the Creator of the Universe!

Verse 17 said Jacob was *afraid*, and said, *How dreadful is this place!* There are other ways to translate the Hebrew accurately. I personally do not think Jacob was experiencing fear and dread. I would express it like this: "In solemn amazement, Jacob exclaimed: How awesome is this place!" I also like what F. B. Meyer wrote:

"There is an open way between heaven and earth for each of us. The movement of the tide and the cir-

culuation of the blood are not more regular than the inter-communication between heaven and earth. Jacob may have thought that God was local; now he found Him to be omnipresent. Every lonely spot was His house, filled with angels.”

You see, *when Jacob found God in his own heart, he found Him everywhere.* Therefore, wherever you are, there He is. Jacob announced: this *is* none other but the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven. Remember Jacob was all alone on this journey, fleeing Esau. ...Not yet married, nobody else with him when he has this encounter with the Living God.

So when the Scripture states that Jacob said such and such, either he was talking to himself out loud, or he was simply thinking those thoughts. We have no evidence of whether or not he made any gestures with those statements, but I believe that when he said “this is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of heaven,” that he was not pointing to the real estate of Luz, or even to the stone. In the way that we would gesture today—I believe he started with his arms outstretched and as he spoke the words “this is none but the house of God,” he was bringing his hands, his palms to his chest area, to mean: this body is, this person is, I am the house of God.

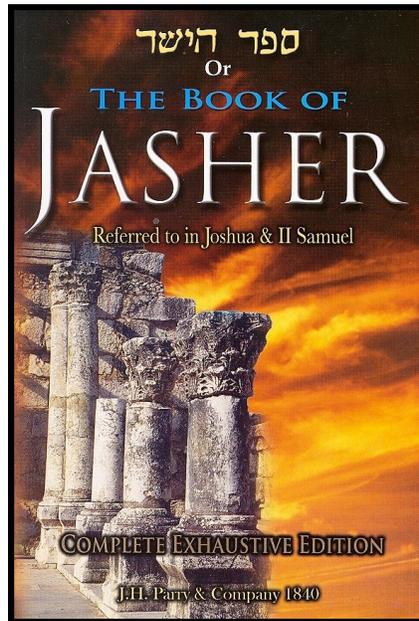
Is that unscriptural? Not at all! It is 100 percent biblical. Your body is the temple of the Living God, the house of God! So Jacob was declaring a Bible truth which we see now extends prior to the Tabernacle in the wilderness, a truth that extends from Genesis to Revelation.

And then Jacob either laid his palm over his heart or perhaps over the top of his head, over his pineal gland, as he concluded: “and this is the gate of heaven!” This is the doorway to the heavenly realm, to the spiritual dimensions, if you will. So brothers and sisters, are you looking for God? Look within. (To be continued.)

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