



FEED MY SHEEP

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Civil Wars and the Blessing to Benjamin

The Story of Joseph, Part 48

We left off last time in an analysis of Genesis 49, verse 26, a prophecy concerning the descendants of Joseph. For context's sake, I will repeat briefly from last month.

Genesis 49:26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills:

Allow me to paraphrase that for us: Jacob is calling to the attention of his 12 sons and two grandsons, the fact that he is enlarging upon the blessings which had heretofore come down from Abraham and Isaac. He says "my blessings upon you include and are greater than those of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and I have enlarged upon them because....and now the rest of verse 26...

[Because] **26... they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.**

Of course, Joseph had been separated from his brethren for 17 years. Please notice that Jacob had described these blessings upon Joseph as prevailing "unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." Which to me implies that they will extend in both space and time...To the other side of the earth in North America, and to far into the future—as in—37 hundred years into the future!

And this is strange verbiage here also, where he says these blessings will not only be on the *head* of Joseph, but on the *crown* of the head of Joseph... What

does that mean? Well, of course, Joseph personally was wearing a crown as vizier of Egypt, but I think Jacob was looking well beyond that because he had already adopted Joseph's sons as his own first-born, bypassing Joseph himself. Not to slight Joseph in any way; in fact, just the opposite.

Joseph was already near the pinnacle of earthly riches and power. Joseph, the man, was set for life. So when Jacob says the blessings will come upon the head of Joseph and the crown of the head of Joseph, I believe he was being given a glimpse of the yet far off history of earth.

At a time in the future where he saw God come down and take on a body of flesh, flesh that would come through Jacob's own offspring—through his son, Judah, but many centuries later. And perhaps he saw how Jesus would suffer and be put to death, but then gloriously rise again and ascend into the heavenly realm. Perhaps Jacob was also permitted to see—but not to speak to his sons about—that time two thousand or so years later, when the sons of Joseph had reached the culmination of these prophecies in receiving these blessings of material abundance and power, how that this same Jesus, a descendant of Jacob, through Judah and David, would then return and receive the scepter from Judah, and would rule the world in true righteousness.

In verse 24, Jacob had foretold how Joseph would prevail over his enemies because he would be made strong by the mighty God of Jacob, and he concluded...

Genesis 49:24 But his bow abode in strength,

and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

Joseph himself had been a shepherd feeding his brothers, the flock of Israel, during the famine. Jacob had no doubt already bequeathed the pillar stone to the care of Ephraim, the stone which would end up in Great Britain many centuries later. But these prophecies have another layer of meaning, the shepherd and the stone referring to Jesus Christ, the coming king. But what good is a king without a kingdom? Did not Jesus say: my kingdom is not of this world? The kingdom which Jesus would rule over is the Stone Kingdom which would engulf and swallow up all previous and existing kingdoms of the world. Let us return now to a verse we discussed some time back.

Genesis 49:10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

We could not get into this aspect previously because our focus was on the prophecy about Judah. We had to wait until we covered these prophecies concerning Joseph. You see, what it is really saying is that the scepter *will depart* from Judah, but that will not happen until Jesus comes the second time as Joseph, in other words, to do the Joseph work, which is what? To restore all things, to subdue the world under a righteous government.

As there has been a breach or separation since Jacob, when he separated the priesthood to Levi, the scepter to Judah and the birthright to Joseph, so it will be that at the second coming of Christ, all three will be re-united in the Joseph work, the Stone Kingdom. Jesus the Christ will be the High Priest and King, and with Him will be the overcomers, the Joseph Company, the Sonship Company. They will be priests and kings under Jesus and, as it says in Revelation 5:10: "and we shall reign on the earth." And thus the scepter will depart from Judah. It will go to Joseph in the form of Jesus and His firstborn sonship company. They are of Joseph because God said in ...

Jeremiah 31:9 They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

This is not a physical thing. This is not declaring that you must be physically descended from Ephraim in order to be an overcomer, to be part of the Sonship Company, the Joseph Company. We have spoken many times about the qualifications for being an overcomer. We mentioned it in part not long ago, remember? I asked: What kind of fruit are you bringing forth? So let us not get disappointed and concerned because we may not be descended from Ephraim. These are types and shadows. Speaking of which, let us look at Hebrews 12. The Epistle to the Hebrews explains the fulfillment of many of the Old Testament types and shadows.

We see beneath the surface of one verse in chapter 12, a revelation of timing. Remember what I just quoted to you from Jeremiah. God declares that Ephraim is my firstborn. The author is telling the Hebrew believers that they as Christians have come to the heavenly Jerusalem and ...

Hebrews 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

For the word "church," let's read "assembly." So we are coming into an assembly of the sons of God. The firstborn would be the overcomers, the first ones born from the dead. Spiritually, they are converted-Ephraimites because God said, "and Ephraim is my firstborn." I looked up "general assembly," and it actually means a feast gathering!

We have come to a feast gathering and an assembly of the first born from the dead. So what feast do you think that might be? Yes, the feast of Tabernacles! And that fits the rest of the verse: Your names are written in heaven, and you have come before God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just [-ified] men made perfect. When do believers, justified men have their spirits made perfect?

Will it not be when God joins their spirits back to their resurrected immortal bodies at the feast of Tabernacles some year? Yes, and that is what I believe will happen some year on the feast of Tabernacles. They will be glorified so that they may rule and reign as part of the company of the sons of God, the first born, the Ephraim Company, the Joseph Company, helping Jesus to administer righteousness in the Stone Kingdom on this planet. God speed the day!

In this lengthy study of the life of Joseph the Overcomer, we have spent considerable time analyzing the deathbed blessings and prophecies given by Jacob-Israel to his 12 sons. We have now concluded with the prophecy over Joseph himself. There is only one son remaining whose blessing we have not examined and that is the youngest one, Benjamin.

Verse 27 gives us Jacob's prophetic blessing upon Benjamin. But remember, even though Sunday School picture books may portray him as "little Benjy," Benjamin is a full-grown man, probably in his forties by the time of Jacob's death.

Genesis 49:27 Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

Well, this verse, like the prophecies upon some of the other tribes, does not tell us all that much. But perhaps there are enough clues which, with the hindsight of history, will point us to see where in the world Benjamin is today. The clues in that verse indicate that the descendants of Benjamin will have the fierceness of a wolf. There is a story in the book of Judges, chapters 19 through 21, which is instructive in this connection. We do not have time to read the whole story to you, and so I will summarize it.

Obviously, this occurred during the period of the judges, and so we know that each tribe had been allotted its territory in the Promised Land. It seems there was a Levite man who was traveling in the land of Benjamin with his concubine. As he was offered a place for the night in some Benjamite's home in Gibeah, a gang of perverted men came by and demanded the owner send the Levite outside for them to have their way with him (i.e., the way of Sodom). To shorten the story, they didn't get the Levite, but they abused his concubine all night to the point that the Levite man found her dead on the doorstep the next morning.

The Levite then did a gruesome thing. He divided her body into twelve parts and sent a part to each of the tribes of Israel. When the other tribes heard about the incident, they were very angry and demanded that the Benjamites take action against the perpetrators. When the Benjamites refused to bring the rapists to justice, it led to a civil war.

Here we are in the spring of the year 2014. We are

told that most of our troops are now almost all out of Iraq. About ten years ago, I believe the level of American troops over there was somewhere about 150,000. Regardless, it is just for comparison purposes.

Anyhow, the 11 tribes quickly put together an army of 400,000(!) men to teach the Benjamites a lesson. The tribe of Benjamin gathered all their able-bodied men, but of course they couldn't come close to matching that kind of manpower. They had 26,000 men that drew the sword, plus there were 700 "snipers," I call them. I call them snipers because the Bible says in ...

Judges 20:16 Among all this people *there were* seven hundred chosen men left-handed; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss.

We will come back to the left-handed aspect later, but for now, this civil war pits 400,000 men against 26,000. On day one, the Benjamites apparently suffered only a few casualties as they killed 22,000 of their brothers from the combined 11 tribes.

Can you imagine Fox News or CNN reporting this evening that 22,000 Americans were killed in Iraq today? Can you fathom that? But that was only the first day of the civil war in ancient Israel! By the way, why do we call any war "civil?" Is there anything ever civil about a war? In our 19th century War between the States—modern Israelites against modern Israelites—the bloodiest single battle ever fought on American soil was September 17, 1862. It was known as the Battle of Antietam by the North, but called the Battle of Sharpsburg by the South. I have visited the site and read the accounts of that fearsome battle.

On that most horrible day in 1862, 11,000 Union soldiers perished while the Confederacy lost 10,000. That is slightly less than the number of warriors who perished in one day at the hands of the ferocious Benjamites. On the second day, again the Benjamites had few casualties as they slew 18,000 from the 11-tribed army. Two days and 40,000 deaths, not counting the wounded! The 11 tribes cried to the Lord and said, Hey, what's going on? We're supposed to be the good guys here! And the Lord said, Go ahead and go out and attack them again this third time and this time you will prevail. So they did, and they ended up killing *all but 600 men*. Which means that over 26,000 Benjamites were slaughtered on the third day! They were

ambushed. When it was all over, the 11 tribes were so remorseful that they had taken such vengeance.

They realized too late that here was one of the tribes of Israel and they have only 600 men left in the whole tribe. One tribe in Israel was almost exterminated, and it was not done by the Canaanites or Philistines or Moabites, but by their own brethren. How incredibly sad! We will come back to this fact later also—the fact that the tribe of Benjamin was left very few in numbers—but the main point here is to note the *martial* skill of the tribe of Benjamin. They were some *very* fierce and skillful warriors. Let us now turn to an incident in Judges 3.

The theme of the book of Judges is the cycle of history: how when Israel was obedient, they prospered. When they were disobedient, God brought in alien nations to subjugate them. When Israel repented and cried out for deliverance, God sent a deliverer who led them in conquering the aliens. One of those deliverers was a man from the tribe of Benjamin named Ehud. The Israelites had been under the boot of the Moabites for some 18 years when Ehud is sent to deliver them from bondage.

Judges 3:15 But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man left-handed: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

I remember that I discussed this whole story in one of my lectures many years ago but I cannot remember the title. You can read the rest of the story on our own. It's not all that long, but the point here again is to notice the military prowess of Benjamin's descendants—they ranked right up there with the descendants of Judah in martial skills. Equally curious to note is the fact that this Benjamite, Ehud, is specifically said to be left-handed. What is it about the Benjamites and the left-handedness?

After the period of the Judges came the beginning of the monarchy. From our extensive studies of the lives of Kings Saul and David, we know that the Saul, the first king of Israel, came from what tribe? Benjamin. Saul, also, was a warrior of no small accomplishment. However, when Saul turned away from Yahweh and grew tyrannical, even some of his own tribe turned away from him. That's what we read about here in

1 Chronicles 12:1 Now these *are* they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish: and they *were* among the mighty men, helpers of the war.

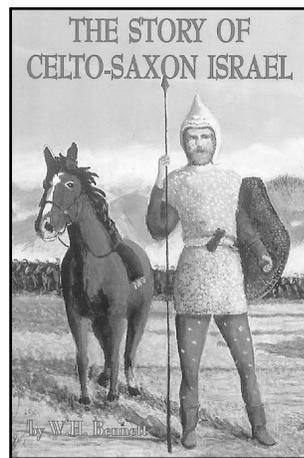
2 They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in *hurling* stones and *shooting* arrows out of a bow, *even* of Saul's brethren of Benjamin.

There we have it again, mentioning the left-handedness (or in this case, actually the ambidextrous ability of the Benjamites). When Jacob named his last son, Benjamin, it was wholly deliberate because the name means "son of my right hand." So during for all those years Jacob thought that Joseph was dead, he obviously was very fond of Benjamin.

And if we picture Jacob and Benjamin standing side-by-side, we see Jacob extending his right hand to grasp the hand of Benjamin, and he would logically grab which hand of Benjamin? The left. But there is another way to look at this and we will pick up here next time.

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