

FEED MY SHEEP

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The State Funeral for King Jacob-Israel

The Story of Joseph, Part 54

In the previous FMS, we examined in the book of Genesis the circumstances and immediate aftermath of the death of Jacob-Israel. We are now in the middle of examining the same events as found described in the book of Jasher. Once again, for new readers, I gave an extensive disclaimer many issues back regarding the book of Jasher. We will not repeat it here. From my website, you can download the two pertinent issues of FMS (#23 & 24: October and November, 2000.)

Jasher 56:30 And all the people of Egypt and the elders and all the inhabitants of the land of Goshen wept and mourned over Jacob, and all his sons and the children of his household lamented and mourned over their father Jacob many days.

31 And after the days of his weeping had passed away, at the end of seventy days, Joseph said unto Pharaoh, I will go up and bury my father in the land of Canaan as he made me swear, and then I will return.

32 And Pharaoh sent Joseph, saying, Go up and bury thy father as he said, and as he made thee swear; and Joseph rose up with all his brethren to go to the land of Canaan to bury their father Jacob as he had commanded them.

33 And Pharaoh commanded that it should be proclaimed throughout Egypt, saying, Whoever goeth not up with Joseph and his brethren to the land of Canaan to bury Jacob, shall die.

I must say that I can hardly take that literally. Surely it does not mean that the entire population of the country suddenly had to journey to Canaanland with Joseph! And as we read on, we find that the “whoever” is limited to certain officials.

34 And all Egypt heard of Pharaoh’s proclamation, and they all rose up together, and all the servants of Pharaoh, and the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt went up with Joseph, and all the officers and nobles of Pharaoh went up as the servants of Joseph, and they went to bury Jacob in the land of Canaan.

35 And the sons of Jacob carried the bier upon which he lay; according to all that their father commanded them, so did his sons unto him.

A bier is the stand or platform upon which the deceased is laid and/or carried. It can include the coffin or casket also, if one is used. So I picture Jacob is in this open casket or sarcophagus which is resting upon the platform, the bier upon which he had been “lying in state” for the past 70 days. Now listen to the description of this bier. There is no question now that he was considered royalty.

36 And the bier was of pure gold, and it was inlaid round about with onyx stones and bdellium; and the covering of the bier was gold woven work, joined with threads, and over them were hooks of onyx stones and bdellium.

37 And Joseph placed upon the head of his father Jacob a large golden crown, and he put a golden scepter in his hand, and they surrounded the bier as was the custom of kings during their lives.

Is there any doubt that Jacob was considered a king? To add even more weight to this statement, let us take a brief side trip. Some time ago, I gave a two-part lecture entitled *Joseph and the Tennessee Valley Authority* (see p. 4). In it I showed how Joseph had initi-

ated and overseen the construction of huge land reclamation projects by the use of canals and dams. It was in the El Fayum area of Egypt. When that lecture was received by my CD ministry, someone took the trouble—and I appreciate it very much—to go to a copy shop and make me a full color copy of a map from the January 1995 issue of *National Geographic* which confirms that work, although it does not mention Joseph. On this map of ancient Egypt, it shows the El Fayum area very prominently and the statement pointing to that area says...

“Middle Kingdom and later pharaohs reclaim land by regulating the flow of Nile waters to Lake Moeris.”

On the side of the map, the *National Geographic* writers placed a small chronology chart which puts the Middle Kingdom as lasting from 2040 B.C. until the New Kingdom began in 1550 B.C. I would submit to you that this would harmonize quite well with Joseph being a great ruler in Egypt about right in the middle of that period. According to the chronology charts in Dr. Stephen Jones’ book, *Secrets of Time*, Joseph interpreted Pharaoh’s dream in 1666 B. C. and he died in 1586.

I could go on with more details on that, but I just wanted to show how the *National Geographic* article reinforces our statements about Joseph and his supervision of the ancient equivalent of the TVA. But returning to my suggestion that Jacob was a king and his burial shows it, this same *National Geographic* map has a note down here at the bottom which is titled *Wrapped for Eternity*. It says “The ancient Egyptians are known for mummifying their kings—a process that took 70 days.”

So there lies King Jacob-Israel with a golden crown on his head and a golden scepter in his hand.

38 And all the troops of Egypt went before him in this array: at first all the mighty men of Pharaoh, and the mighty men of Joseph, and after them the rest of the inhabitants of Egypt, and they were all girded with swords and equipped with coats of mail, and the trappings of war were upon them.

39 And all the weepers and mourners went at a distance opposite to the bier, going and weeping and lamenting, and the rest of the people went after the bier.

40 And Joseph and his household went together near the bier barefooted and weeping, and the rest of

Joseph’s servants went around him; each man had his ornaments upon him, and they were all armed with their weapons of war.

41 And fifty of Jacob’s servants went in front of the bier, and they strewed along the road myrrh and aloes, and all manner of perfume, and all the sons of Jacob that carried the bier walked upon the perfumery, and the servants of Jacob went before them strewing the perfume along the road.

Incidentally, the aloes there is probably not the aloe vera plant that most of us are familiar with, but it turns out that aloes is another name for the beautiful aroma of the essential oil of sandalwood, which is almost as costly as frankincense. All three of these oils also have properties which can affect us emotionally and spiritually.

42 And Joseph went up with a heavy camp, and they did after this manner every day until they reached the land of Canaan, and they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which was on the other side of Jordan, and they mourned an exceeding great and heavy mourning in that place.

The location of the threshing floor of Atad is a bit confusing in that verse because it says it was on the *other* side of Jordan and most of us would think that meant the east side. Actually, it means just the opposite. Atad was located between Jordan and Jericho on the west bank. I do not know if that was just the conventional way that the ancient writers had for designating which side of Jordan was which, and if so, if that was because when the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, that that is the direction they entered from.

But saying “the other side of Jordan” could indicate that this gigantic funeral procession left Egypt and then for whatever reason journeyed *south* of the Dead Sea and up the east side and finally crossing Jordan across from Jericho. And if that is the case, then again, it is a type and shadow of exactly what Jacob’s descendants would do a couple hundred years later.

Anyhow, this enormous gathering of Jacob’s extended family and the highest officials of Egypt, plus large numbers of military personnel, plus huge numbers of servants are all gathered on the plain near Jericho. This gathering did not go unnoticed by the inhabitants.

43 And all the kings of Canaan heard of this thing and they all went forth, each man from his house, thirty-one kings of Canaan, and they all came with their men to mourn and weep over Jacob.

44 And all these kings beheld Jacob's bier, and behold Joseph's crown was upon it, and they also put their crowns upon the bier, and encircled it with crowns.

45 And all these kings made in that place a great and heavy mourning with the sons of Jacob and Egypt over Jacob, for all the kings of Canaan knew the valor of Jacob and his sons.

Can you picture that? Thirty-one kings from all over Canaan and each places his crown on top of the bier. They were indeed "paying their last respects" to this once very powerful man. And now we come to the part of the story where it really gets interesting. Because guess who gets wind of the funeral?

46 And the report reached Esau, saying, Jacob died in Egypt, and his sons and all Egypt are conveying him to the land of Canaan to bury him.

47 And Esau heard this thing, and he was dwelling in mount Seir, and he rose up with his sons and all his people and all his household, a people exceedingly great, and they came to mourn and weep over Jacob.

48 And it came to pass, when Esau came he mourned for his brother Jacob, and all Egypt and all Canaan again rose up and mourned a great mourning with Esau over Jacob in that place.

Even though, Jacob had told his sons to bury him at the cave of Machpelah down south in Hebron, the language there indicates that Esau and his people went all the way from mount Seir to the plain of Jericho to mourn Jacob. According to the Bible account, the second last time Jacob and Esau had seen each other was when Jacob was returning from having served Laban. And Esau met him with 400 men and Jacob feared him. So Jacob sent him all kinds of gifts and it seemed like that pacified Esau.

The *last* time, according to Genesis, that the two are mentioned having seen each other is when their father Isaac died. The Bible says the two brothers buried him. There is no indication in the Scripture at that point concerning what kind of terms they were on with each other, but we can assume it was not *overtly* antagonistic. Thus, it appears that here at the death of Jacob that Esau was actually mourning the death of his twin brother. At the same time, one has to wonder

what kind of health old Esau himself was in by this time, because he, too, would have been 147 years of age. Obviously, he made the journey to Hebron, so he must have been in fairly good health. Let's see what happens next.

49 And Joseph and his brethren brought their father Jacob from that place [i.e., from the threshing-floor of Atad], and they went to Hebron to bury Jacob in the cave by his fathers.

50 And they came unto Kireath-arba, to the cave, and as they came Esau stood with his sons against Joseph and his brethren as a hindrance in the cave, saying, Jacob shall not be buried therein, for it belongeth to us and to our father.

Uh-oh! Looks like there's trouble in Dodge City. Esau's sons creating a stand-off with Jacob's sons. First cousins against first cousins.

51 And Joseph and his brethren heard the words of Esau's sons, and they were exceedingly wroth, and Joseph approached unto Esau, saying, What is this thing which they have spoken? surely my father Jacob bought it from thee for great riches after the death of Isaac, now five and twenty years ago, and also all the land of Canaan he bought from thee and from thy sons, and thy seed after thee.

Twenty five years ago? Jacob spent the last 17 years of his life in Egypt with Joseph. Knowing the incredibly close bond that Jacob must have developed with Joseph in those final years, it is not surprising in the least that Jacob had briefed Joseph fully on anything and everything that had ever transpired between himself and his brother Esau. He had informed Joseph that eight years before he came down to Egypt that he and Esau had made this deal which Joseph is now telling Esau that he knows all about it. Joseph concludes:

52 And Jacob bought it for his sons and his seed after him for an inheritance for ever, and why speakest thou these things this day?

Joseph finishes his statement to his uncle Esau with that point blank question, in effect, saying: "Uncle Esau, you know this to be true as well as I do. Just what are you trying to pull here?"

53 And Esau answered, saying, Thou speakest falsely and utterest lies, for I sold not anything belonging to me in all this land, as thou sayest, neither did

my brother Jacob buy aught belonging to me in this land.

Esau's first tactic? The bald-faced lie attempt.

54 And Esau spoke these things in order to deceive Joseph with his words, for Esau knew that Joseph was not present in those days when Esau sold all belonging to him in the land of Canaan to Jacob.

55 And Joseph said unto Esau, Surely my father inserted these things with thee in the record of purchase, and testified the record with witnesses, and behold it is with us in Egypt.

56 And Esau answered, saying unto him, Bring the record, all that thou wilt find in the record, so will we do.

Esau is bluffing, of course, challenging Joseph to produce the record, all the while hoping against hope that he will fold and simply let Esau and his sons have the land and the sacred burial cave of the family. But Joseph is no deceiver like Esau. No games—as far as he is concerned. He has been safeguarding the title deed and the receipt of sale documents for years and thus...

57 And Joseph called unto Naphtali his brother, and he said, Hasten quickly, stay not, and run I pray thee to Egypt and bring all the records; the record of the purchase, the sealed record and the open record, and also all the first records in which all the transactions of the birth-right are written, fetch thou.

58 And thou shalt bring them unto us hither, that we may know from them all the words of Esau and his sons which they spoke this day.

Ah! The birthright! So when Joseph had said that Jacob had purchased “all the land of Canaan” from Esau, he meant literally the whole land of Canaan. And of course, the men on both sides of the dispute recognized that the land of Canaan was fully inhabited with Canaanites, but Joseph and Esau are disputing about it as though it were a totally uninhabited land.

All of which gives us a picture of how *certain* both of these men were that the God of their fathers could and would give them that land, Canaanites notwithstanding. Whoever had the birthright would eventually inherit the land of Canaan.

I suspect that Joseph had also been fully briefed by his father about the lying, hating and treacherous

type of man that Esau was. He was not a man of virtue and good character, and he had definitely passed those traits on to his sons and grandsons.

Having been warned by his father that Esau just might pull this kind of stunt, Joseph therefore was not surprised at this turn of events and so he had kept the records safe for just this day. So Naphtali, “the Flash,” is commissioned to go retrieve the records.

59 And Naphtali hearkened to the voice of Joseph and he hastened and ran to go down to Egypt, and Naphtali was lighter on foot than any of the stags that were upon the wilderness, for he would go upon ears of corn without crushing them.

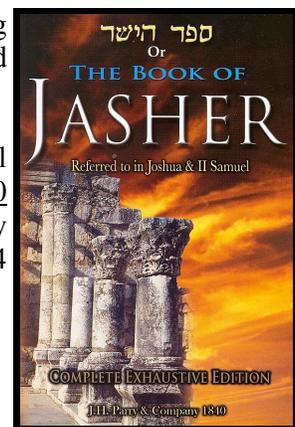
Hey! Don't ask me! I would like to have seen Naphtali run on the top of the fields of grain without crushing them, wouldn't you? It is without doubt a very creative figure of speech, not to be taken literally. Obviously, Esau knows for certain what the records contain, so he is now left with only one alternative: violence. We will continue with the story next month.

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