



FEED MY SHEEP

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Judgment and Mercy Meet

The Story of Joseph, Part 18

Previously in our story of Joseph the Overcomer, we found that the first batch of food, which the brothers had obtained from Egypt, began to dwindle after a time. Jacob was now confronted with the decision of allowing his now-favorite son, Benjamin, to accompany the other sons back to Egypt to purchase more food.

Recall that the “harsh” CEO of Egypt had kept Simeon hostage until his demand for the brothers to bring their youngest brother, Benjamin, to him was met. Of course, this king of Egypt (as he was so-called by the brothers in the account in the book of Jasher), was unbeknownst to any of them, Jacob’s true and first favorite son, Joseph, whom, it was thought, had been dead many years now.

Reuben—though his heart was probably in the right place—had made a silly and preposterous offer to father, Jacob, in the event Benjamin was not returned safely to him. Then Judah offered to bear responsibility for Benjamin’s safety (Genesis 43:8, 9) and Jacob reluctantly agreed to let them depart. Jacob also arranged to have them carry valuable gifts of essential oils, honey, and nuts (almonds) to this powerful vizier of Egypt, as well as sending double payment (since to a man, the brothers had all found their money secretly returned in their sacks of grain. We departed from the Genesis account at the point where the brothers once again stood before Joseph, still not recognizing him.

Then we turned to the parallel and more expansive account in the book of Jasher. (For newcomers to our teachings, see FMS #23 & 24, October & November, 2000 for a discussion of the reliability of the book of Jasher. N.B., I did not say that it was on a par with the inspired record of the Bible. Back issues are available on our website.) In the Jasher account, as the brothers are trying to persuade Jacob to send Benjamin with them, they told him of “the wisdom and understanding and the knowledge which God has given in his heart, nor heard his sweet voice when he spake unto

us.” (Jasher 52:14) And we left off by wondering why they would characterize the vizier’s voice as “sweet!” Did the brothers know instinctively that they could trust this Zaphnath-paaneah as a man of his word?

Jasher 52:15 We know not, father, who made him acquainted with our names and all that befell us, yet he asked also after thee, saying, Is your father still living, and is it well with him?

16 Thou hast not seen the affairs of the government of Egypt regulated by him, without inquiring of Pharaoh his lord; thou hast not seen the awe and fear which he impressed upon all the Egyptians.

17 And also when we went from him, we threatened to do unto Egypt like unto the rest of the cities of the Amorites, and we were exceedingly wroth against all his words which he spoke concerning us as spies, and now when we shall again come before him his terror will fall upon us all, and not one of us will be able to speak to him either a little or a great thing.

Wow! Are they telling their father the truth? Did these Israel brothers really threaten the king of Egypt as they were leaving? Or are they just embellishing the story to build themselves up in their father’s eyes? Considering what they actually did to the cities of the Amorites—it is recounted earlier in the book of Jasher—they very well may have been so bold as to threaten the lord of Egypt.

18 Now therefore father, send we pray thee the lad with us, and we will go down and buy thee food for our support, and not die through hunger. And Jacob said, Why have you dealt so ill with me to tell the king you had a brother? what is this thing that you have done unto me?

19 And Judah said unto Jacob his father, Give the lad into my care and we will rise up and go down to

Egypt and buy corn, and then return, and it shall be when we return if the lad be not with us, then let me bear thy blame forever.

We will forego for now commenting upon Judah's willingness to stand as guarantor of Benjamin's safety. We will comment, however, at the appropriate place further in the story. Judah continues pleading with his father:

20 Hast thou seen all our infants weeping over thee through hunger and there is no power in thy hand to satisfy them? now let thy pity be roused for them and send our brother with us and we will go.

21 For how will the Lord's kindness to our ancestors be manifested to thee when thou sayest that the king of Egypt will take away thy son? as the Lord liveth I will not leave him until I bring him and place him before thee; but pray for us unto the Lord, that he may deal kindly with us, to cause us to be received favorably and kindly before the king of Egypt and his men, for had we not delayed surely now we had returned a second time with thy son.

22 And Jacob said unto his sons, I trust in the Lord God that he may deliver you and give you favor in the sight of the king of Egypt, and in the sight of all his men.

23 Now therefore rise up and go to the man, and take for him in your hands a present from what can be obtained in the land and bring it before him, and may the Almighty God give you mercy before him that he may send Benjamin and Simeon your brethren with you.

24 And all the men rose up, and they took their brother Benjamin, and they took in their hands a large present of the best of the land, and they also took a double portion of silver.

25 And Jacob strictly commanded his sons concerning Benjamin, Saying, Take heed of him in the way in which you are going, and do not separate yourselves from him in the road, neither in Egypt.

26 And Jacob rose up from his sons and spread forth his hands and he prayed unto the Lord on account of his sons, saying, O Lord God of heaven and earth, remember thy covenant with our father Abraham, remember it with my father Isaac and deal kindly with my sons and deliver them not into the hands of the king of Egypt; do it I pray thee O God for the sake of thy mercies and redeem all my children and rescue them from Egyptian power, and send them their two brothers.

27 And all the wives of the sons of Jacob and their children lifted up their eyes to heaven and they all wept before the Lord, and cried unto him to deliver their fathers from the hand of the king of Egypt.

28 And Jacob wrote a record to the king of Egypt and gave it into the hand of Judah and into the hands of his sons for the king of Egypt, saying, ...

We will stop our reading at this point for this issue, because the book of Jasher then goes on to record a rather lengthy letter from Jacob to Zaphnath-paaneah. Reading it would send us into "overtime," so I want to focus in the space remaining on some lessons we can draw out from this portion of the story of Joseph.

These are fundamental precepts of God's moral government. The first is summed up in the well-known Scripture that pride goeth before a fall. Ah, but some of you know that what I just said is not exactly what the Scripture says. It is close and I don't think it is in error to say it that way, but the actual wording found in Proverbs 16:18 goes like this:

Proverbs 16:18 Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Paul himself paraphrases it when he is instructing Timothy on the qualifications necessary before one is set apart as a bishop of the church. Paul says the man must be ...

1 Timothy 3:6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

At the outset of our study of the life of Joseph as an overcomer type, we speculated—because none of us can be sure—but it seemed to me that Joseph, as a teenager at home, had a problem with pride and arrogance.

He appeared to proud of his place as his father's favorite. He appeared to be boastful about his future position as one who would rule over his brothers. When his brothers stripped him of his royal robe and threw him into the pit, it appears—at least from the Jasher account—that he was whiney and full of self-pity.

If indeed Joseph was beset with those vices as a lad of 17, then the Bible record is certainly unequivocal about Joseph's character after his arrival in the house of Potiphar in Egypt. His character ever after is nothing less than pure gold, or at least sterling silver since he was still mortal.

We saw him resist the temptations of Zelicah, Potiphar's "desperate housewife." We witnessed his lack of self-pity those 12 years in prison, the dungeon,

the “dung” “eon” of his life. Simultaneously, we universally admire his learning of patience and of well-doing while in jail; his service to others, done—shall we remind ourselves—with an attitude of cheerfulness and joy. He learned joy while being in suffering.

Are you suffering? Did you know that you can experience joy in the midst of your suffering? Now, we are not referring to some kind of phony, pasted-on smile, as though everything is alright when, in reality, the bottom seems to be falling out of your life. That is not joy. Joy is the calm and continuous knowledge during times of trial that your Father in heaven has planned this exercise for you, and that it is for your ultimate good! With that faith in Father, you can possess the peace that surpasses all understanding, as the Scripture says. (Philippians 4:7)

Joseph also learned humility during his dung eon. And when he as the beggar is raised from the dunghill and caused to be seated with Pharaoh, Joseph exemplifies numerous traits of high moral character: wisdom, discernment, integrity, honesty, justice and the major trait coming soon: mercy. (The previous statement is based upon this verse:)

1 Samuel 2:8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, and he hath set the world upon them

Well, pride may have been a vice of young Joey, but there is no question that it had been an eminent character trait in his brothers! Yet, we have now seen on several occasions how the brothers have bowed down in obeisance to Joseph.

Where now is that haughty spirit and contemptuous tone as they had once mockingly asked their little brother “Will you indeed reign over us?” Here now, they bow in utmost humility to this man whom they had once taunted when they said as they cast him into the pit: Let’s see now what will become of your precious dreams?

Granted, they are bowing to Joseph while not yet knowing it is he, but their pride has indeed brought them to this fall, to these trials and tribulations in the courts of Egypt. And the thought struck me as I composed this and I remembered the content of an old issue of *Feed My Sheep* wherein we pose the question: should we fight Babylon? (FMS #75. *Should We Fight Babylon?*, *Patriots & Politics, Part 2*; March, 2005) The thought struck me: How many a patriot’s pride has brought a man to fall as he suffers trials and

tribulations in the courts of Egypt, as in the courtrooms of Egypt, or Mystery Babylon, if you will?

A second precept prominent in this portion of the story is that the Plan of God remains intact no matter what men may do to try to impede or thwart its purpose. We must keep in mind the difference between the Plan of God and the Will of God as I taught in the *Sovereignty of God* lecture series, and my book, *Sacred Secrets of the Sovereignty of God*.

The brothers did everything in their power to try to *prevent* Joseph’s dreams from becoming reality, and yet, everything they did which *they* thought would thwart and prevent Joseph from ruling over them was perfectly planned by God to be the very means which would bring it about. How excellent is the Plan of God! How beyond the ability of men are the ways of God!

A third precept we can extract from our study is that though judgment may seem delayed, it is never denied. In other words, no one will escape the judgment of Christ the King. Joseph, being king of Egypt, is a type of Christ as king of the world. Even as Peter said in his epistle that judgment must begin at the house of God, so the brothers Israel appeared before Christ in the form of Joseph for judgment.

Though their deeds of envy, jealousy, malice, hatred and intent to murder had occurred over twenty years earlier, God’s Plan had brought them at the precise moment to the throne of judgment to answer for their sins. In the process, Judge Joseph first examined them. That is to say, he devised for them these tests we have seen in the past few issues of FMS, tests which would demonstrate that they either *still* had malice in their hearts towards Joseph, or that they had an *incredible* burden of remorse and guilt. It was a burden which only forgiveness could lift from their souls.

We will be speaking much more about forgiveness in the next lecture or two, but even now we can all be examining ourselves in terms of what our burdens of guilt are, if any, and to seek forgiveness. In seeking forgiveness, there are certain ways to proceed with wisdom, so that further hurt is not done in the process. A fourth precept of God’s moral government is summed up in the Scripture...

Galatians 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

When Jacob had sent young Joey out to see how

his brothers were doing, the brothers looked upon him as a snitch, a tattletale to daddy, in effect, a spy. Now, they find themselves unjustly accused as spies in the land of Egypt. While they enjoyed dinner around the campfire, Joseph was shivering and hungry in the pit into which they had cast him. Now they bow before him and beg him to provide food for all their households. They had cast him down low, into a pit; and now he is raised above them, high upon a throne with a golden crown upon his head, rendering unappealable judgment upon them. There seems to be a certain parallel between the sin and the judgment, would you not agree? Indeed, what a man sows, so shall he reap.

Finally, there is a precept evident even now in just this much of the story we have read to date. It is that even through His righteous judgment for sin, there is a stream of God's mercy which is wide enough to encompass all the faults of all mankind. This is the glorious good news of God's universal reconciliation. And I hasten to add in the same breath that this does not mean that any one will "get away with" sin. Sin will be punished; there is no question about that. But the judgment is for purposes of *correction* not for ultimate and *eternal destruction*. We are all sinners. Therefore, Joseph's brothers stand for all of us at one time or another. One writer commented on it this way, and I am paraphrasing somewhat.

"Joseph put on a stern demeanor. He must bring his brethren to a sense of their sin by lifting the rod of justice against them. And yet he feels more distress than the objects of his chastisement. He is like a wise and just father who feels compelled to punish his son, though all the time it grieves his own heart to do so.

"A merciful intention must often wear this hard aspect. Joseph afflicted his brethren for their own good. He disguises his private feelings, and acts for a while with stern justice. But when the harsh remedy has had its desired effect, then he relents, and the prevailing kindness of his character is free to flow.

"And similarly, God loves us, yet with a love which does not shrink from severity. But the purpose which underlies all His dealings is kind. He wounds in order that he might heal. He will not keep his anger forever."

It again reminds me of that line from an old hymn by William Cowper which speaking of our Father God goes like this: "Behind a frowning Providence, He hides a smiling face."

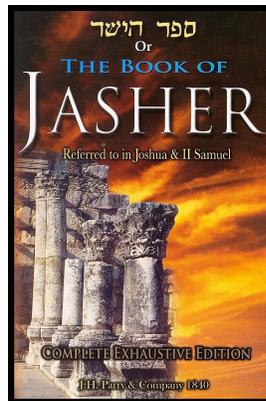
Well, as you know, the best part of the story of Joseph is still to come, so stay tuned.

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