



December 9, 2022

A Hero of the Bible, Joseph, part 3...

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Last week we continued our discussion about one of the heroes mentioned in the pages of the Bible, "Joseph". I would like to spend a couple more letters examining his recorded life for you and me.

So, continuing with the life of one of the truly great heroes of the Bible, we find Joseph had been appointed to prepare for the future famine, directly under Pharaoh. He is now 30 years old and Pharaoh gives Joseph a wife - Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On.

This story is fascinating to me, as it gives great insight in to how we should live, and in relationships with others. Heroes of good character relay things for us to ponder.

Asenath was not the ideal companion regarding religion, but it appears Joseph made the marriage work. She bore him two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. The seven years of famine begin and the people of Egypt and other nations sought and bought grain that had been stored under the direction of Joseph. Genesis 42 records the famine affecting Canaan and how Jacob sends ten of his sons to Egypt to buy grain, insisting that Benjamin be left back.

Famine and drought have always had a way of bringing people back to what is really important. Similar to natural disasters, for a time, at least it gets people's attention.

When Joseph's brothers arrive he recognizes them but they obviously do not recognize him. Joseph recalled the dream he had in the past, decides to put on an act, and then accuses them of being spies, talking harshly to them. Hummm, okay, let's continue.

As we see how events unfold, it is clear that he is not trying to get vengeance or make harsh accusations. That is not the kind of person he was. He has the ten brothers put into prison for three days. He then lets them out and demands that one of the brothers be left behind. He has them bring the youngest, Benjamin, back with them to have Simeon, who was selected to be left behind by Joseph, thereby freed.

I have to wonder if Simeon had sided with Judah to have Joseph sold to the Ishmaelites? We do not know for sure. Joseph overhears the brothers expressing regret for mistreating Joseph and thinking they are being punished for their action. So, it is obvious they remembered what had happened prior. Joseph has to leave them for a moment when he tears up. It's quite an emotional story.

Again, we don't see Joseph acting in a vengeful way at all, but we see him working out events to cause his brothers some consternation, some fear, and even uneasiness. He wants them to stop and think about what they did many years ago.

God does this with us too at times does He not, hoping we will repent and change our way of thinking or how we've been living?

Joseph then directs his servants to fill their empty sacks with grain and place the payment money in the top of each sack. The brothers are troubled about what this means and they return and relay to Jacob all that has happened. Jacob was greatly distraught that Simeon was left behind and that this "harsh lord of the country" demanded that Benjamin be brought down to Egypt.

Do you think anything else crossed their minds from events of their past? I would think so.

Genesis 43 then records the famine continuing and Jacob and the family needing more grain. They need to return to Egypt to buy more from this “man” they are now afraid of. Jacob is worried about Benjamin going down with them, but agrees to him going. Judah is told to keep a close watch on Benjamin and take responsibility for his welfare.

They take double the money with them as well as several gifts - "*balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.*" (v.11) The brothers, including Benjamin, arrive in Egypt. Joseph recognizes Benjamin and he instructs his servants to prepare a noon meal and invite all of the brothers to dine with him. They arrive and tell the steward about the money left in their sacks. And, he tells them “he has done that”.

The steward brings out Simeon to join them. He tells them, "*Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks.*" (v.23) This must have really puzzled them. How would this servant know about their and their father's God? Sometimes we might not listen when God is working through others to get our attention.

Finally Joseph arrives and the brothers all bow down to him, presenting the presents they had brought. Joseph asks about the wellbeing of Jacob. When he sees Benjamin he has to excuse himself because of his emotional state again, and the joy of seeing his youngest brother!

Perhaps some of us can relate to a story like this? I know I can.

Joseph returns to the dining area and interestingly has the brothers seated according to their birth order. This really astonished his brothers! Then Joseph has five servings given to Benjamin.

We see in Joseph with these interactions a sense of humor, but also a little retaliation, not in a mean way, but in a way that will set the stage for reconciliation.

Now we get to the crux of the matter “reconciliation”.

Joseph had no intention of punishing his brothers, but he did have a certain relish in seeing them squirm. We’ll finish with this story next time, because it’s something that in our Christian life affects us all...

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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