

APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURE REFLECTION:

for Mikkeitz

by Mark Huey posted 19 December, 2009 www.outreachisrael.net

Acts 7:9-16 (esp. vs. 10b-12)

Psalm 105:19-21

“Divine Interpretive Wisdom”

The life and times of Joseph and his brothers continue to be highlighted in our Torah examination this week in *Mikkeitz* (Genesis 41:1-44:17). What we are considering once again plays a role within Stephen’s defense before the Sanhedrin, as he was being challenged for his faith in Yeshua. Stephen refers to the severe famine that required Jacob to send his sons to Egypt to buy grain. In his emotional plea, Stephen briefly mentions Jacob’s sons’ first trip to Egypt that is found in our *parashah* (Genesis 42:1-28), after speaking to his listeners about the wisdom Joseph received from the Lord to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams:

“The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. *Yet* God was with him, and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household. **Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction *with it*, and our fathers could find no food. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers *there* the first time.** On the second *visit* Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family was disclosed to Pharaoh. Then Joseph sent *word* and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons *in all*. And Jacob went down to Egypt and *there* he and our fathers died. *From there* they were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem” (Acts 7:9-16).

Joseph gaining favor from Pharaoh, as a result of receiving Divine wisdom and the ability to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams, is something that modern-day Believers should seriously contemplate. How many of us may be put in future situations where we have to employ the unique spiritual gifts that God has given us? We might not be put before world leaders, but we will surely need to demonstrate godly insight to people seeking answers to life’s questions. The critical thing to remember is that Joseph clearly recognized and gave due honor to the Lord from whom his interpretation skills originated—just as we should thank God when we get to use our abilities:

“Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.’ Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, ‘It is not in me; **God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer**’” (Genesis 41:14-16).

Pharaoh recognized Joseph’s Divine gifting, and rewarded him by appointing him second in command over all in Egypt:

“Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants. Then Pharaoh said to his servants, ‘Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?’ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘**Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are**’” (Genesis 41:37-39).

One wonders that after more than a dozen years in Egypt, having gone from Potiphar’s house to the prison, if Joseph still looked passionately to the dreams he had received as a youth. Once again, I am reminded of words from Psalm 105:19, as the time of his elevation required great patience:

“‘Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him.’ The king sent and released him, the ruler of peoples, and set him free. He made him lord of his house and ruler over all his possessions, to imprison his princes at will, that he might teach his elders wisdom” (Psalm 105:19-22).

Joseph became the viceroy of Egypt, and after more than seven years of plenty, when the famine had become severe in Canaan, Jacob sends ten of his sons to Egypt to purchase some grain. It was by this time that Joseph was able to finally visualize the completion of his dream, as his brothers would literally bow down to him. Joseph wisely uses this situation to teach his brothers a great lesson:

“Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. **And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with *their* faces to the ground.** When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, ‘Where have you come from?’ And they said, ‘From the land of Canaan, to buy food.’ But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him. Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about them, and said to them, ‘You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land.’ Then they said to him, ‘No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies.’ Yet he said to them, ‘No, but you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land!’” (Genesis 42:6-12).

A great drama unfolds in Genesis chs. 42-47 as God uses Joseph's position as viceroy, the famine, and the unrelenting love of Jacob for his son Benjamin, to instruct the frightened sons of Jacob. In many regards, Stephen's recollection of this point in Biblical history could recall how there are important connections seen in the Scriptures between Israel and Egypt. Matthew's Gospel makes a specific reference to Hosea 11:1, connecting the Messiah coming out of Egypt with how Ancient Israel was delivered from Egypt in the Exodus:

“So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. He remained there until the death of Herod. ***This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON’*** [Hosea 11:1]. Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: ‘A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN; AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE’ [Jeremiah 31:15]. But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, ‘Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead.’ So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel” (Matthew 2:14-21).

Here, we can note how God continued to use dreams—this time to speak to another Joseph, the stepfather of Yeshua. The parallels are exciting to contemplate, as the Almighty has weaved together His salvation history story for humanity.

Today, we have the privilege of considering the testimony of the Holy Scriptures when we need encouragement for our lives. We can read about figures like Joseph, Stephen, and Joseph and Mary—and understand how they were filled with great righteousness and piety. They can each be examples of mortals who received great gifting from the Holy One, and accomplished something quite important in His ongoing plan of redemption! May we each benefit from these great forerunners of the faith with whatever Divine gifts we have been given!

Until the restoration of all things...

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