

# The Story of Joseph

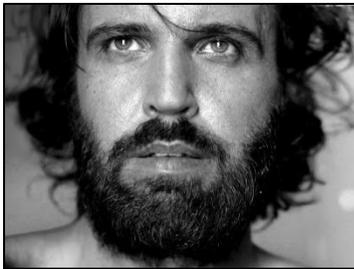
## Scarred Reunion

Part 53 – July 14, 2013

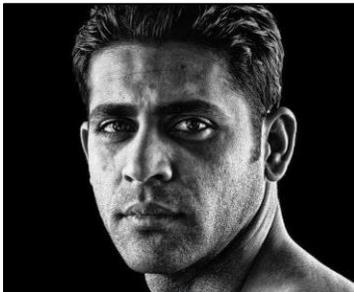


At 130, Jacob returned to his old hometown, Beersheba, where he went so wrong so long ago His spirit has revived! (45:27) **Jacob's wounds of regret are becoming scars of rebirth**, as he seeks God's will before moving into Egypt.

[And God said go; so ...] Now Jacob sent Judah [son #4] ahead of him to Joseph ... - Genesis 46:28a NIV



Judah, who's BLOODLINE will produce both Mary *and* Joseph, Jesus' father, has become the leader, trailblazer, and guide of Israel. And, #4 is just the one: the last time Judah approached Joseph, (Gen 44:18) he offered himself in exchange for his brothers, and received Joseph's unveiled identity and undying respect. God is healing another old wound.



It was *Judah's* idea to *sell* Joseph; and afterwards he abandoned his family for 20 years. **Judah's wounds of rebellion are becoming scars of repentance**. So are Joseph's. He accused his brothers of spying out the land, and wanted to kill 'em. Now, he's handing out the best of the land, so the *famine* won't kill 'em! **Joseph's wounds of resentment are becoming scars of reunion**. We love the stories that scars tell, because **a scar story is only gained through pain**.



And all those wounds, and all these scars, are all intersecting in one spot. Judah went ...

... to get directions to Goshen. – Genesis 46:28b NIV

They were directed here, to Egypt's northeast Delta. Beersheba to Goshen is about the same distance as Burlington to Gresham, Oregon. Jacob had another sore spot: when 17-year-old Joseph shared his God-given dream about his father bowing to him, Jacob publically rebuked his unruly son.

Then he was gone ... and, *never sent word*. Jacob will be meeting the 40-year-old ruler of Egypt, savior of a starving world, who only revealed himself through happenstance. The son he most cherished, was running the nation next door, and didn't even bother to let his grieving father know he was alive.



... his father rebuked him and said, “What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?” His brothers were jealous of him, but **his father kept the matter in mind**. – Genesis 37:10-11 NIV

Joseph recorded this *after* the reunion. And, he could only know this if *Jacob* told him. This was in *Jacob’s* thoughts as he approached their reunion.

And, Joseph’s swirling thoughts were just as troubled as his fathers.

When they arrived in the region of Goshen, Joseph had his chariot made ready [**chariots are pulled by horses; ox carts by oxen**] and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time. – Genesis 46:28c-29b NIV

Half of Genesis, 25 of 50 chapters, (Gen 25:22-50:26) is devoted to Jacob and Joseph. And when we finally get to the most dramatic, climactic, heartrending moment, there’re *no words*. Only tears. Know why? It’s none of our business. They aren’t characters. It ain’t a fable. Most documentaries that capture an emotional event have that moment when someone says, “**Shut the camera off.**”

Naysayers say, “**Joseph’s dream didn’t come true ‘cause Jacob didn’t bow**”. **1)** His sons had bowed on his behalf.<sup>1</sup> (43:28) **2)** The Hebrews considered it indecent for a father to bow to his son. **3)** *Didn’t he?* When has inappropriateness ever stopped Jacob?! It doesn’t say *he didn’t bow*. It just says that *Joseph* “**threw his arms around his father**”. Why didn’t *they* throw *their arms* around *each other*?



If this rapturous old man kept that dream in mind for *23 years*, and later told Joseph, “**I never forgot! I never forgot!**” is there *any way* in this *whole wide world* he *didn’t bend* those trembling, arthritic knees? The rabbis teach, from the oral tradition, that Jacob bowed; an indecency he shouldn’t have done, but couldn’t help doing. And, do you think there’s *any way* in this *whole wide world* the sight didn’t absolutely annihilate whatever scintilla of self-centered pride that might’ve remained in his mortified son?!



The closer Joseph got, the faster he drove his horses. Almost there. Breakneck speed. How to justify condemning a softhearted father to 23 years of hell? “**He’ll slap my face. That’s okay. That’s good. I’ll fall at his feet, and take his blows, and beg forgiveness, asking for yet another favor from the father who gave me all he had.**” His shimmering, golden chariot decelerates as he draws near to cartloads of famine-stricken, travel-weary, Hebrew hillbillies. Pans clanging. Livestock bleating and braying. Babies crying.

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<sup>1</sup> We covered this in the sermon, “**Blast from the Past**” (3/24/13)

He scans the frightened faces, not wanting to see the one he most came to find. The one who is nowhere to be seen. Scanning. Seeking. Searching. And then, to his horror, he comprehends. The crumpled bodies. The four bobbing white heads at the forefront of the family, faces in the soil, are Bilhah, Zilpah, Leah, and ... his dad.



Reflexively he leaps. Chariot rolling. He sprints. Each stride a step closer, a year younger. 39, 38, 37. There's cheering now. He can't hear it. His heart is bursting in his 7-year-old chest. His father is on the ground! He would kill the man responsible, if it weren't himself. He drops. Embraces a bony back. And inhales a long forgotten, so familiar, campfire deodorant. And sobs.



How long it's been. How much he's missed. Why? What if? How come? A pathetic, pitiful moment. Broken father. Devastated son. Years of tears streaming down rosy cheeks onto a leathery old neck. The stiff neck of a man whose deep wounds are *finally* given permission to heal. **Jacob hadn't allowed his grief to bring healing to his loss.**



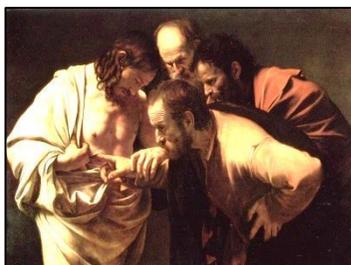
... he refused to be comforted. **"No,"** he said, **"in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son."** So his father wept for him. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt ... – Genesis 37:34-36 NIV

And, God went about fulfilling all His promises to Jacob. **Do you face your wounds to fix 'em, or fixate on 'em?** Jacob allowed the wound of Joseph to remain open for 23 years! So, maybe *that's* why God said, at Beersheba ...

**"And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes."** [when you die] – Genesis 46:4b NIV



It's an ancient custom for the closest relative to close the eyes of the dead, and offer a parting kiss on behalf of the family. Who's God's closest relative? Those made in His image. Mankind. And, **on our behalf, Judas offered the parting kiss, and the religious leaders blindfolded His eyes.** (Mark 14:45, 65)



When the disciples touched the holes in Jesus' hands and feet (Lk24:39) and side, (Jn 20:20) were they touching wounds or scars?

Scars. The difference? **Scars no longer hurt when touched, no matter how severe: "A ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."** (Lk 24:39)

You can only ignore your wounds for so long. **Scars serve to remind us of the battles God has brought us through.**

The Incredulity of Saint Thomas

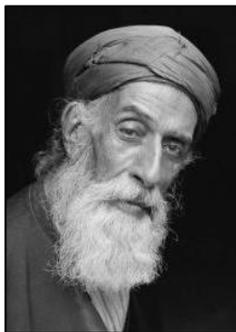
So, question is, **are you defined by your wounds or your scars?** When Jacob finally finds his voice, he changes his classification.

Israel [as opposed to Jacob/heel-grabber and holder-on'er; because he was born holding onto the heel of his twin] said to Joseph, **"Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive."** – Genesis 46:30 NIV

Joseph's 'resurrection' enables Israel to die in peace. Jacob, the twin, doubted God's promises; but now he can see 'em in the flesh.

Now **Thomas**, called **the Twin**<sup>2</sup>... was not with them ... And after **eight days** [Lit. 'on the eighth day'] ... [Jesus came and] said to Thomas, **"Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."** – John 20:24-27 NKJ

Contrast Jacob's reunion and the Twin's 8th day revelation to ...



... a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel ... It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents [Mary and **Joseph**, whose father was **Jacob** (Mat 1:16)] brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ["On the **eighth day** the boy is to be circumcised." (Or: "circum-scarred") (Lev 12:3)] Simeon [didn't bow, but] took him in his arms and praised God, saying: **"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation ..."** – Luke 2:25-30 NIV



**God longs to show you His redemption as a gift, not a condition.**

Otherwise, we'll wallow in our woundedness even as He goes about fulfilling every promise He's ever made to us.

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are **"Yes"** in Christ. – 2 Corinthians 1:20a NIV



**Believing that God has promised what He has, and that He'll do what He's promised, is what turns wounds into scars.** Not to say it's easy, because, usually **the pain screams louder than the promise!** When the disciples saw the nails going into Jesus, they just knew those wounds were destroying their lives. But, **His wounds unto death became scars unto life! Forever.** Jesus didn't trade in those scars-of-the-very-means of salvation when He got to heaven. **His scars are part of His glorified body.**

The eternally, beautifully, heroically scarred body of Jesus empowers us to look with hope, not only to the day *our* suffering will be gone, but to the day our suffering will be *glorious*. When we'll see that every wound was allowed for our eternal best; and every scar we bear will forever declare God's purpose and glory, and will only, ultimately, enhance our endless delight.

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<sup>2</sup> The Aramaic name, 'Thomas', means "a twin"; the Greek name, 'Didymus' means "two fold".