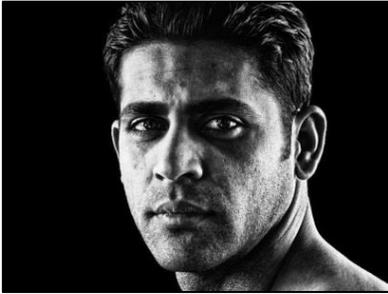


The Story of Joseph

The Blessing of Goshen

Part 54 – July 21, 2013



Joseph, without eyeliner and wig

Joseph has a lot on his plate, what with feeding Egypt and their hostile neighboring nations (to prevent an enemy raid), and now, an emotionally draining reunion with his father and family. Yet, there's a quiet calm in *all* he does, a becoming beauty when he blesses others, and **it all comes from a secure comprehension that God is superintending ... everything**. Remember, **he can't turn the page to see what God is doing**. Just like us, **he has to choose to trust God, and to choose to bless others**.

According to the historical chronology, King Senusret suddenly died as the famine began, leaving, little Sen, Joseph's pupil, (Psalm 105:20-22) all alone, on his father's throne, when the crisis came.¹ Two years later, little Sen leans heavily on his beloved mentor, even as he becomes more and more comfortable being treated as a god.



Young Senusret III, c. 1878 BC

[Joseph told his brothers] “[God] made me **father to Pharaoh**, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. ... You shall live in the region of **Goshen** and be near me—[It's close to home (His Place to Gresham), great for grazing, and they'll be left alone; the zealously clean Egyptians despised the grazing grounds, because of the unclean, uncultured herdsmen] you, your children and grandchildren, **your flocks and herds, and all you have**.” – Genesis 45:8b-10 NIV

His plan seemed simple. Obvious even. He just needs Pharaoh's approval, and Pharaoh loves him, and *that's* what blindsided him.

Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers ... ‘I will give you the **best** of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the **fat** of the **land**. [Uh-oh. How do you tell a man venerated as a god that his blessing is a curse, and that manure-land is preferable to the royal land of his father?] ... Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt [and the worst of all temptations] will be yours.” – Genesis 45:17-20 NIV

And, as the esteemed savior of Egypt, whatever he does, and where his family lives, will reflect honor *or dishonor* directly onto little Sen, the prince he mentored, and now serves, the son of the king he's indebted to for his freedom, his fortune, *and* his family.

But when [the brothers] told [Jacob] everything Joseph had said to them ... the spirit of their father Jacob revived. [So, what did Joseph tell his brothers to do? **God's will!**] ... So Israel set out with **all that was his** ... They also took with them their **livestock** and the **possessions** they had **acquired** in **Canaan** ... – Genesis 45:27; 46:1, 6 NIV

¹ We covered all this in, “Dating Joseph” (10/7/12), and “Lord of the Feast” (12/16/12)



God called them to separate from surrounding nations, to protect them from annihilation, they're prone to violence, and assimilation, they're also prone to pagan women. Unlike Joseph, **they weren't prepared to live in the pagan world, and bless the pagan world**, without becoming like the pagan world. So, for now for them integration isn't an option.



Joseph's father, Jacob, at 130, has paid a steep price a self-absorbed life, deceiving men, tempting fate, and wrestling with God. But, Jacob's spirit has *revived!* He's a new man with a new lease. And, Joseph knows what's coming: Pharaoh will kindly offer his *very best* ... and father will boldly reject it! **"My kids ain't livin' in your Royal City! With all their high-fivin', and your hula dancin', and pop singin'!"** Or *something* like that. And, rejection, and dishonor from his highest-in-command, and public humiliation, isn't something a young demigod handles well.



Joseph's in a bit of a pickle. But, with quiet calm, and trust in God, he explains his plan to his brothers: Pharaoh simply needs to see that they are, hmm, how should he put this ... *detestable?*



Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, **"Okay. Work with me"** "I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were living in the land of **Canaan**, have come to me. The men are **shepherds**; they **tend livestock**, **"with the stinking and the trampling and the manuring"** and they have **brought along** their **flocks** and **herds** and **everything they own.**' **"Go figure! Then ..."** When Pharaoh calls **you** in and asks, 'What is your occupation?' you should answer, 'Your servants have **tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did.**' Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of **Goshen**, for **all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians.**" **"Sound like a plan? Go team!"** – Genesis 46:31-34 NIV



"Despised shepherds" is *good!* What's good in God's eyes greatly differs from ours, because **God's eyes are always on the next page.** This same prejudice that'll isolate Israel, will insulate them, and strengthen them into a great nation, blessed to be a blessing, by ushering in the greatest blessing of all. **Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd despised by the world.** He said, **"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me"** and **"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."** (John 10:14, 27)

And, **He's calling us to bless our world, to serve it without being seduced by it**, to be shrewd as serpents, innocent as doves, (Mat 10:16) and **to speak truth, and to lead, in quiet calm and becoming beauty.**

Joseph went and told Pharaoh, **"Remember how I rode out to reunite with my father? Well, prepare yourself"** "My father and brothers, **with their flocks** and **herds** and **everything they own**, have come from the land of **Canaan** ...

["Oy vey! But, don't worry. I *stopped* 'em. *Quarantined* 'em"] and [they] are now in **Goshen.** ["But, I brought some back so you could meet 'em! Again, prepare yourself. They're not like me. Different mothers."] He chose **five** of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh. [There's that five again! Five plates of food. Five sets of clothes. Now five brothers. More on that next time!] – Genesis 47:1-2 NIV



Christmas Vacation, Warner Bros.

But, *why these five?* Why no names? *Every* brother who does *anything* in this story is singled out by name. So, why not *these* five? The oral tradition, taught by the rabbis, says he took, not the strongest, but weakest, for fear the king would recruit them, and they'd be mingled with the Egyptians. And, ever the calm and gracious, Joseph records this, while protecting their dignity, saying so much without so much as a word, or rather, a name: he took the five who aren't worth mentioning. Picture Clark Griswold's cousin Eddie ... *times five!*

... Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?" "Your servants are **shepherds,**" they replied to Pharaoh, "just as our **fathers** were." ["**Shepherds! All shepherds!** Every last one. All the way back. **Shepherds!**"] They also said to him, [as directed by Joseph] "We have come to live here awhile, ["Not stayin' long"] because the famine is severe in Canaan and your servants' **flocks** have no **pasture.** ["Just need a place for the goats, and sheep, and cattle, and oxen, and camels, and donkeys, till the famine ends. And those grazing lands are sure nice country; just smells like, stuff is getting' done!"] So now, please let your servants settle in **Goshen.**" ["Our stuff's already there and all." Then, after they left] Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you, and ["They're *blood* relatives, *right?* Are the others more, um, *smarter,* I mean, like, special skills or abilities? No? Well, they sure like Goshen! Go figure. Asked if they could *settle* there! But, well, anyway, as I told you,"] the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land. ["And, um, no offense, but, I'm thinking we should"] Let them live in Goshen. ["If *that's* what makes 'em happy. Don't you think?"] And if you know of *any among them* with *special ability,* put them in charge of *my own livestock.*" [And Pharaoh wasn't very surprised when no brother was found for the task] – Genesis 47:3-6 NIV

And, then it was time to lead his father through the magnificent polished halls amid the grand pillars to Pharaoh's throne. Talk about revived! He's on pins and needles. "**I can't wait to see the little guy!**" "**Dad, there's protocol.**" "**Protocol. I'm 130! I've got things to say.**" "**Dad, most men crawl in. Nobody speaks unless asked a question. He's considered a demigod. Some of these people even pray to him. He'll probably bless you. I'll help you bow.**"

Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. ["Bless you! Bless you! Look at that face! How precious is that face! May the One true God grant you long life and joy and peace!"] After Jacob blessed Pharaoh, [the first time Jacob is recorded blessing anyone, and surprisingly, it's the pagan king of an idolatrous nation! Truly fascinated] Pharaoh asked him, "How old are you?" [Seems the miraculous longevity of the patriarchs was just as astonishing to their own contemporaries as it is to us²] And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The years of my pilgrimage [He now sees that his life has been a journey with purpose. He's been looking back. And He can see God's hand ... in *everything,* and leading to this moment] are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, [Humility! Transparency! Authenticity! Who are you and what have you done with Jacob?!] and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers." – Genesis 47:7-9 NIV

² Jacob's grandpa, **Abraham**, died at **175** (Gen 25:7); Jacob's father, **Isaac**, died at **180** (35:28), just 10 before.



Senusret II, 12th Dynasty



The Faiyum Oasis, Egypt



Nomes of the 12th Dynasty



The Faiyum Oasis

Sending little Sen wondering how *he'll* compare to *his* father, who died young yet did much: he promoted Joseph, created a 570-square-mile Oasis³ and the 10-mile-long “Bahr Yussef”⁴, convinced 42 governors to commit man and money to seven years’ of harvesting, storing, rotating, guarding, *and* saving the world, and ...

["Bless you!"] Then **Jacob blessed Pharaoh** [Again! “Bless you beyond your God-send of a father, who I will cherish forever! May *your* pilgrimage surpass even *his*! That’s what we want! And, you’ll do it! I can see it! You’ve got a good face! Oops ... My son is making me leave. So, may the One True God bless you and keep you; may The Only God of Light make *His* face shine on you and be gracious to you! May He lift up His countenance upon you and give you the peace that can *only come* from the God of peace!”] and went out from his presence. – Genesis 47:10 NIV

“Now, that’s how you bless someone! Did you see?” “Yes, father, I’m actually quite pleased. You offered many nice prayers.” “I’m not talking about the prayers. I’m talking about the humility! Transparency! Authenticity! That’s what touches the soul. That’s how you bless!”

Is it clear to those closest, that you really care? Do you care? Really? Would they say, “Land O’Goshen! They light up a room with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control!” (Gal 5:22-23)

We can’t just speak a blessing; we must be a blessing. (James 2:16) For no other reason than the sheer joy of *knowing* we’re a blessing; because, **if you’re not a blessing, you’re a cursing**. This is Jacob’s *shining* moment. The covenant God made with his Grandpa Abraham includes a promise to bless the nations through them. **In blessing a pagan king, he’s professing his faith in God!** “Land O’Goshen!” came to mean, “My goodness gracious!”. How appropriate. Because, **the blessing of Goshen is a surprise of grace when and where it’s least expected**. That’s why Pharaoh received it, *twice!* Hebrews (7:7) says “without doubt, the lesser person is blessed by the greater.” The palace would’ve been abuzz about the ancient shepherd from Goshen that Pharaoh had deemed greater than himself!

So [this is how] Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in [what was truly] the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, [a later name for Goshen] as Pharaoh [ever convinced it was his own idea,] directed. – Genesis 47:11 NIV

However difficult *your* journey has been, there’s an eternal purpose. **Your life is a pilgrimage, equipping you to bless.** You’ll see it someday. *All* of it. Some here. Some now. And some later, in the land O’Goshen! Little Sen has no idea he’s on the verge of becoming, far and away, the most powerful Pharaoh Egypt had ever seen. Historians can tell you *just* what happened ... just not *how*. But, Joseph can ... next time.

³ We covered all this in, **The Harvest Years**” (12/2/12)

⁴ Translating to, the **Canal/Waterway of Joseph**, the only name documented for the canal in recorded history