

The Story Beyond the Vale of a Boy Called Joseph

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Abstract

Joseph had packed his bags; prepared to visit his brothers in obedience to his father's instructions. Jacob wanted his sons to be well cared for, and he sends Joseph to the ten siblings with food. At this juncture of the unknown and the uncertain place of hills, a certain man helps him with directions to his brothers' whereabouts. Familial love, relationships and passion lie at the vale of the stories webbed in Joseph's family.

Keywords: Joseph, Israelites, love, family, dreams

Dreams

It was for his dreams that his brothers resisted him. Joseph's dreams of success were beautiful. Innocent as he was, he could not understand the grief, sadness, jealousy and rivalry of the men who had laboured. Joseph loved his family very much. It was this innocent love that bound him close at heart to faithfulness. The bygone days were bygones and Joseph now had a new family. It was in his home in Egypt, he had two children and his wife was a young woman called Asenath. She was the daughter of Potiphera, a priest. It was this innocent love with family that bound him and made him soar. Joseph was noted for his accuracy of translating prophetic dreams and visions and this superior skill granted by the Creator elevated him from the pits of the jail in Egypt to the second to rule Egypt. He has a family and, he is set out to regain the family of his birth. He was thirty.

Some of his dreams were beyond the ordinary -- but the audience - his brothers - was booing him away. Joseph was like a comedian before his brothers; betrayed by his brothers -- in comparison to lovers betrayed. Moses writes of Pharaoh's dreams, "there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fat fleshed; and they fed in a meadow. And, behold, seven other

kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and lean fleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river" (44). The 'comedian's' interpretation: there would be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine in Egypt. Joseph recommended a season of gathering to belittle the season of famine - of the butler's dream: "a vine was before me; And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand" (44). The dream of crows eating up the baker's special food in the three baskets -- Joseph's talent for interpreting dreams of the imprisoned servants of Pharaoh was quite special. He could interpret dreams with the help of the Creator in him -- he was very much true and exact in his translation of events to occur for those who were with him -- of his father, mother and siblings, Pharaoh, the butler and the baker.

Another Dream of Pharaoh

Moses writes: "seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. And behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold it was a dream" (44). The magicians who were always with Pharaoh could not console him or advance him in this regard, "there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh" (45). Joseph interpreted the dreams with flair. His first dream of the sun, moon and the stars bowing before him were poignant of the event of his succession as governor to Pharaoh. The butler's dream meant that he would be reinstated as the butler of Pharaoh. The dream exemplifies the butler squeezing the grapes into Pharaoh's cup -- he would be reinstated as a butler once again. The baker hopes for a similar positive interpretation from Joseph but to his fate Joseph replied that just as the butler resumes his work at the palace in three days, he would be executed within the similar stipulated time. It was the butler who had recommended the dream interpreter to Pharaoh during his dilemma over the meaning of the distressful dreams of Pharaoh.

Favoured Child

Joseph was born at a time when his mother had expected him in the midst of her rival thriving with babies. She was heartbroken that she had no child and so was his father Jacob. So he was a precious child favoured by his father and he was born at the time of his father's latter days. Benjamin was his only full brother. He had ten half-brothers. Joseph's good conduct had impressed his father to buy a beautiful coat, and his brothers were jealous. It was a princely coat; worn by princes and special people. He loved the long sleeved coloured coat. He even obeyed his father when he was told to take food to his jealous brothers who were in a distant place. He was treated as a royal and he was humble in his love for his brothers. He may have been a braggart but it was for the special difference the Maker who had bestowed the dream and the biological father who had blessed him in his heart to grant him a well woven princely coat. Joseph was heartbroken when he found the extreme anger displayed by his jealous brothers in the fields. Benjamin was with his father. It was a time of conflict for the half-brothers. They were working men and they had not received as much as of an attention from their father Jacob.

Braggart

As a young boy of seventeen, Joseph must have been a sprightly young man, bustling with activity and youth. It was at this time that he had acquired the coat and this has been a significant achievement and joy for Joseph. He must have gone off to each of his siblings' tent to show off his prized royal coat. The beauty of the boy in the coat must have caught the brothers off guard, for they were not filled with appreciation and good will. Joseph's manner in displaying such royalty and his heavy headedness must have displayed as a show off -- a king -- a spoilt brat or in better words a spoilt rich kid. Writers aver that Joseph was a "braggart" (70) bragging about his dreams and his coat. His dreams were extra-ordinary as if it were out of nowhere. Ross and Wenham discuss,

Joseph's brothers were already angry over the possibility of being ruded by their little brother. Joseph then fueled the fire with his immature attitude and boastful manner. No one enjoys a braggart. Joseph learned this the hard way. His angry brothers sold him into slavery to ge rid of him. After several years Joseph learned

an important lesson. Because our talents and knowledge come from God, it is more appropriate to thank him for them than to brag about them. (37)

These comparisons are quite colloquial as some critics may aver but they represent the timelessness of such character sketches; that they are relevant portraiture of today. Jealousy had thrived in the family. Potiphar had made him overseer of his household. Joseph had found favour a second time in the eyes of a man, this time an Egyptian. The jealous intent turned away in the case of the dry well, but the house of Potiphar too had a dry well in the form of a woman who was Potiphar's wife. He escaped again leaving behind his garment in the seductive hands of Potiphar's wife. He ran from the scene of lust and adultery. Ross and Wenham state that the two of them -- Potiphar and his wife 'do not accept each other nor do they love each other'. Their external devotion for each other was a show for Pharaoh's court and also a trivial sketch of his life with a woman who could not control her 'passions'. Ross and Wenham further state that Joseph's entry into Egypt was a 'culture shock' to his perceived world i.e., his internal working model. As a 'nomad' he had not traversed beyond his father's boundaries and in time and in the world of Egypt, its fine houses and rich food but poor spiritual understanding was a shocking revelation to him.

Joseph was in Charge of Almost All Matters – Potiphar's Wife

Joseph was seventeen when he was given to the merchants. This moment of devastation could have occurred when he was in his late twenties. After almost ten to eleven years in Potiphar's house, Joseph was in charge of all matters of Potiphar except his wife. His wife after some observation must have sensed the smart worker and the well-dressed prince in Joseph's blood. His father had treated him like a prince and his day to day work experience at his father's house must have exemplified itself in artistic shades. It was quite so much displayed in beautiful youthful chivalry and devotion that the lady of the house attracted by his beauty caught hold of his garment. Joseph must have been shocked by her intention and move. He was so much shamed by her presence close by and her pull of his garment, that he left it in her hands and fled. Potiphar's wife must have dressed very scantily. She had inappropriate behavioral maladjustment

with the servants as critics say. She does not have sound morals. Her behaviour has led to many imprisonments.

Joseph was fortunate to be placed in jail than to be executed or banished the wilderness. He must have been vexed and broken at heart to discover that the jail would be his house for the next two years. He had lived in Potiphar's house for ten to eleven years. It could be said that Joseph lived there for more than a decade. Joseph was true to God and firm in his faith. He would not sway with the evil forces against him whatever be his problem in the wicked world. Even the familial love was retributed for evil. It could be said that the God who had preserved his life from chaos and destruction had lived with him; even though he was far from Canaan; far away in Egypt.

Princely Coat Evoked Resentments

Jacob loved all of his sons but situation and circumstance levied him the bounty of a son named Joseph. His half-brothers were Reuben, Simeon and Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali. Joseph - himself and his only full brother Benjamin. All of the brothers were of four moms. The favourite child - Joseph - a position he should not have disclosed through the coat; for jealousy stung the brothers hearts and they fell disarrayed - of betrayal and cause for murder. Joseph's princely coat evoked resentments. The others did not have one and so they pushed the bringer of good will; Joseph's grief was that of a dead young man.

Joseph Became a Commodity for Sale

A study reveals that the Hebrew names for merchants and traders were different in the Hebrew Bible, and from observation and further analysis it has been discovered that Joseph has been transacted many times before being purchased by the Egyptian Potiphar in Egypt (Wikipedia). No one was there to embrace Joseph. The beloved of the father was very much loved by the brothers and so -- the pit; the heartbreaking battle between brothers. The father of the beloved teenager was informed, of the loss of the favourite son and the coat which was the more fortunate to have escaped (for the sake of the ten other sons). Ross and Wenham discuss,

Ten men were willing to kill their younger brother over a robe and a reported dream. Their deep jealousy had grown into ugly rage, completely blinding them to do what was right. Jealousy can be difficult to recognize because our reason for it seem to make sense. But left unchecked, jealousy grows quickly and leads to serious sins. The longer you cultivate jealous feelings, the harder it is to uproot them. The time to deal with jealousy is when you notice yourself keeping score of other's recognition, awards and achievements. (37)

Prayer in the Flood

In an objective sense of personality traits built in one's mind it is evident that as critics aver, the observation and listing of achievements of another person, over the years, can build the negative emotion - jealousy and lead to physical injury. This in faith could be the prayer of Joseph in the dry well "Let not the water flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me" (Ps. 39.15) and in love his faithful prayer: "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Ps. 69.20b). The film *The Avengers* also presents a similar picture of siblings who are against each other: the fictional characters Thor and Loki are at war on every set of scenes for the audience. Joseph's father mourned; he steadfastly embraced the lessons of faith in the God who created the heavens and the earth. He lived with integrity. He accepted the blood stained coat of Joseph as an evidence of his death.

Dinah - Joseph's Elder Sister

Dinah was Joseph's elder sister. Her episode with Shechem was indeed a painful event in the family. The only daughter of Jacob had gone out to Canaan and Shechem, "the prince of the country" (Gen. 34:2) had seen her, -- the pretty, only daughter of Jacob and carried her away and "defiled" (Gen. 34:2) her. Moses writes about Shechem, "his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel and spake kindly unto the damsel. And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife" (Gen. 34:3,4).

Brothers of Joseph

The descriptive beauty of the brothers who had fought with Joseph and their blessings is worth analysing. The men were talented and had also committed honor killings -- they had killed Shechem and the men and had raided their wealth. Their father had rendered prophesies according to their deeds for them. The following lines are depicted for analysis and beautiful pictures:

Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch. Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.... Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel: Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

(Gen. 49.3-7, 22-26)

These stories were retold for generations to remember the Maker and his children. The blessings of parents are eternal. The lines given below consist of a brief depiction presented by a king named David. The word, 'He' refers to the Maker:

Moreover He called for a famine in the land
He destroyed all the provision of bread.

He sent a man before them -
Joseph - who was sold as a slave.
They hurt his feet with fetters,
He was laid in irons.
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 the people let him go free.
He made him lord of his house,
And ruler of all his possessions,
To bind his princes at his pleasure,
And teach his elders wisdom.
Israel also came into Egypt.
And Jacob dwelt in the land of Ham.
He increased his people greatly,
And made them stronger than their enemies.
He turned their heart to hate his people,
To deal with His servants,

(Ps. 105.16-25)

Significant Dreams

As the story is narrated, the boy Joseph had access to his father's heart. His duties were not the same. His brother's tended their father's flock while Joseph was given the duty of supervision of his brothers' whereabouts and activities. His dreams -- the sun and moon and the eleven stars bowed down before him. Even his father was surprised by the dream but he kept it in his heart, -- careful not to reprimand his son for his big dreams. It was indeed a pity that the other siblings took it as an offense and threw him from their hearts. There were other significant dreams. Joseph was a dreamer, a prophet, a seer: "And his brothers said to him, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or shall thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words" (Gen. 37.8). Joseph must have believed that he would be a leader or an influential person quite superior to his family members and Ross and Wenham

state that his attitude as a youngster who brags about his dreams and his work in the fields is indeed a true personality of his portraiture. He behaved to be a superior person; this attitude is exemplified as such: "And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren and they hated him yet the more" (Gen. 37.5). Joseph was patient. They had sold Jo and he must have cried a lot but his brothers had no pity so they threw him into the pit. The eldest brother Reuben took pity on him and went to see him in the dry well but his brothers had sold him by then. Joseph must have pleaded not to sell him, to help him, to leave him alone, not to sell him to the foreigners. it must have been very hard on Joseph. He was a slave -- worse than a servant. Maybe he would not get proper food but he had a strong sense of not doing evil deeds. As developmentalists state, it is the availability of a personal loving God who could help a person in his loneliness. Joseph was just like an orphan. Orphans, widows and fatherless children shared a same fate. Joseph humbled himself. His personal life is indeed a very interesting topic; his circumstance of betrayal, abandonment and loneliness is indeed a case unwarranted for a prince. The success of the work of his hands was in evidence the truth of supernatural guidance. Anyone may enquire to the necessity of prayer. It is as Peale states, "Man prays not only that God should remember him, but also that he should remember God" (62) and after he was traded into Egypt he had success in his job as overseer of Pharaoh's house, but within some years he had a devastating moment with his master's wife.

Simeon

The splendor of the court of Pharaoh and his governor Joseph tested their hearts for their affection towards Simeon. They were frightened to commit transgression against Simeon as they had done towards Joseph. The confinement of Simeon was indeed a heart wrenching scenario for the nine brothers. They had lost Joseph according to their fun and they were about to lose another sibling to the Egyptian ruler. Carter and McRae aver that "Rochester represented he kind of scandalous extremes of behaviour which both titillate and shock proper society. In any age, if such a figure did not exist, it would be almost necessary to invent him" - and the sketch of the lines discussed exemplify the numerous "liaisons" (Carter, Mc Rae 137) but of different individuals within the family.

Earl of Rochester

The fun moment at the dry well and Earl of Rochester's escapes to fun through his revelry is a comparison. Rochester is "the one individual who epitomises the spirit of the early Restoration". He is called by the name John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. It must indeed be a devastating moment for innocents as they are pulled, pushed, ripped off and thrown around, beaten and then thrown into a waterless well with scorpions; it is also indeed a wonder that Rochester is similar to the brothers of Joseph.

The firstborn son - Reuben, the elder son - Judah and the only sister - Dinah suffered. Rochester's "death bed repentance, and conversion to religion, makes the story complete" (137). Their conversion from their sins of adultery, fornication and wandering is retributed by their father Jacob; in the form of punishment and rendering shelter to the only girl child who was not benefitted of a rich marriage liaison. Her husband was murdered by her own siblings for the sake of honor, which seems justifiable: "And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done" (Gen. 34.7), 'not be done'. Dinah's history after this traumatic incident is unknown.

As in the case of Rochester, it is of souls on earth with ups and downs as said in colloquial words. It also makes Joseph's case, as he was in Egypt and the revealing off the scenario exposed in the following lines, is to reinstate Joseph's family into a reunion of members born of the same father but not affectionate. It was indeed a very disturbing scenario of events occurring in his life. He was at his duties, as second to Pharaoh and like Rochester's diabolic character, his brother's immediate presence at his work must have invoked such a thought in some way but Joseph was to test them. He did something novel. Moses writes,

And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan

to buy food. And they knew not him. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said unto him, Nay but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the son of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest the day with our father, and one is not. And Joseph said unto them. That is it that I spake unto you, saying Ye are spies. Hereby ye shall be proved. By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother (who was Joseph's full brother Benjamin) come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether they be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies. And he put them all together into ward three days. And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do and live; for I fear God,

(Gen. 42.39-40)

Their sacks were filled with corn and their money was kept in the sack and provision. Joseph came them for their journey, such was his affection for his siblings. There was confusion, when one of them found it - the money. It was like *The Rape of the Lock*. As Carter and McRae aver,

It makes a family quarrel over a lock of hair, into the subject of a playful poem full of paradoxes and witty observations on the self - regarding the world it depicts, as the stolen lock is transported to the heavens to become a new star? Four tresses man's imperial race in snare makes Belinda's hair an attractive trap for all mankind - a linking of the trivial with the apparently serious which is Pope's most frequent device in puncturing his target's self-importance.

This Nymph, to the Destruction of Mankind,
Nourish'd two Lock, which gracefully hung behind,
In equal Curls, and well conspir'd to deck
With shining Ringlets the smooth I'vry Neck.
Love in these Labyrinth's his Slaves dtains,
And mighty Hearts are held - slender Chains.

The Rape of the Lock

(143)

Joseph desired to the Prize --The reports of the strict governor were given to the patriarch Jacob. About the father Jacob -- he had deceived his brother over his birthright; taken away his brother Esau's birthright which was his only blessing thereby inflicting familial calamity in the case of his children Reuben, Judah, and Joseph. It seems that some of the characters in the famous fast-selling, most shoplifted books as reported, have people characters famous for some notoriousness. The story of Judah: he had committed fornication with his daughter-in-law Tamar. She had posed as an adulteress after her husband's death due to her father-in-law's negligence to fulfill the law by giving the next son in marriage. So she had veiled her face for the crime. Judah was indeed shamed by her offence. His offence was even greater. He set out to cause her be "burnt in the cheek or forehead, stigmatized for a harlot" (Henry 59). Henry states that "Judah was unjust to his daughter-in-law, either through negligence or design, in not giving her his surviving son, and this exposed her to temptation" (Henry 59). Previous family histories of disorder have found a transit into the next generation of people, of children, of parents, of siblings, of grandparents destined to live a long life on earth; as said by the writer Isaiah -- of peace and the story of "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11.6). Joseph's story ends with the revelation of identity, a re-birth of his father Jacob by the discovery of his son Joseph and the family's settlement in Egypt; as reported, - of seventy people. As writers expound, shepherds were detestable at that moment of history (the life time of Joseph), but Joseph became the governor and sat with kings and with Asenath his wife by his side -- A story with a happy ending -- of a man charged with virtue-less behaviour, a wife was given in marriage by Pharaoh, as a marriage gift; a token for restitution for a baseless accusation of molestation of Potiphar's wife. A wife was given for his faithfulness and loyalty and children - two boys were born to him. It was indeed a happy beginning for Joseph. The story of Joseph is taken from the book – Old Testament Bible.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 17:12 December 2017

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