

THE PROSTRATION OF THE SHEPHERDS¹

Joseph was the ruler of the land, he was the supplier of food to all its people; and the brothers of Joseph came [to Egypt] and prostrated themselves to him.

And Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed about them ...
(Genesis 42:6-9)

Almost twenty-two years earlier. Joseph had dreamed two dreams which foretold the events of that day. In his first dream, "We were bundling sheaves in the field. And behold, my bundle arose and stood upright; and behold, your bundles stood round it and bowed down to my bundle."⁽¹⁾ **In the second. Joseph saw "the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowing down to me."**⁽²⁾

Joseph's brothers, who were already jealous of their father's special affection for him, "hated him even more for his dreams and his words"⁽³⁾ Jacob, however, "kept the matter in mind" and "awaited and anticipated its fulfillment."⁽⁴⁾

For that to happen, twenty-two years had to pass, during which Jacob would mourn the loss of his beloved son, Joseph would suffer slavery and incarceration, and Joseph's brothers would experience anguished remorse: twenty-two painful years so that the sons of Jacob might prostrate themselves before the viceroy of Egypt, who, unbeknownst to them, was the very dreamer they had sold into slavery. **Why was it so important that this submission take place?** Why did Jacob "await and anticipate the fulfillment" of Joseph's dreams, despite his realization⁽⁵⁾ of the terrible animosity they provoked among his children?

THE NEW JEW

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were shepherds, as were the sons of Jacob.⁽⁶⁾ They chose this vocation because they found the life of the shepherd a life of seclusion, communion with nature, and distance from the tumult and vanities of society-most conducive to their spiritual pursuits. Tending their sheep in the valleys and on the hills of Canaan, they could turn their backs on the mundane affairs of man, contemplate the majesty of the Creator, and serve Him with a clear mind and tranquil heart.⁽⁷⁾

Joseph was different. He was a man of the world, a "fortuitous achiever"⁽⁸⁾ in commerce and politics. Sold into slavery, he was soon chief manager of his master's affairs. Thrown into jail, he was soon a high-ranking member of the prison administration. He went on to become viceroy of

Egypt, second only to Pharaoh in the most powerful nation on earth, and sole supplier of food for the entire region.

Yet none of this touched him. He remained the righteous Joseph who had studied Torah at the feet of his father.⁽⁹⁾ Slave, prisoner, ruler of millions, controller of an empire's wealth-it made no difference: the same Joseph who had meditated in the hills and valleys of Canaan walked the streets of depraved Egypt. His spiritual and moral self was derived utterly from within, and was totally unaffected by his society, environment, or the occupation that claimed his involvement twenty-four hours a day.

The conflict between Joseph and his brothers ran deeper than a multi-colored coat or a favorite son's share of his father's affections. It was a conflict between a spiritual tradition and a new worldliness; between a community of shepherds and a politician. The brothers could not accept that a person can lead a worldly existence without becoming worldly, that a person can remain one with G-d while inhabiting the palaces and government halls of pagan Egypt.

This is the deeper significance of the fact that when the brothers first meet in Egypt, "Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him."⁽¹⁰⁾ The sons of Jacob were incapable of perceiving a "brother" (i.e., one who is their spiritual equal) in one so involved in the material world.

This is not to say that Joseph represents a more worldly approach to life, while the brothers and the patriarchs were more transcendent in their attitude toward the material world. On the contrary: The very fact that the "shepherds" felt the need to escape human society and its materialistic pursuits lest these distract them from their connection with G-d and hinder their service of Him, indicates that worldliness was real enough to them to pose such a challenge. Joseph, on the other hand, so completely transcended the material reality that he could be fully involved in it and fully connected to G-d at the same time. Because the material "garments" that cloak the divine presence in the world were utterly transparent to him,⁽¹¹⁾ they could not in any way interfere with his bond with G-d.

For the first three generations of Jewish history, the shepherd's credo held sway. But Jacob knew that if his descendants were to survive the Egyptian *galut* (exile) and the millennia of other economic, religious, and cultural *galuyot* that history held in store for them, his own approach must be subordinated to that of Joseph. If the children of Israel are to pass through every social and cultural convulsion of the next four thousand years and persevere as G-d's people, they must become subjects of Joseph, internalizing Joseph's vision and his approach to life in the material world.

(1) Genesis 37:7

(2) Ibid., verse 9. The second dream was only partially fulfilled on the day that the brothers first came to Egypt to purchase food, as only ten of the "eleven stars" were bowing to Joseph. Eventually, Benjamin, Bilhah and even Jacob (the elev-

enth star, the moon, and the sun in Joseph second dream) would also come to Egypt and bow to Joseph. See Genesis 43:26 and 28; 44:14; 47:31; 50:18; and Rashi on Genesis 37:10.

(3) Genesis 37:8.

(4) Ibid., verse 11; Rashi, ad loc.

(5) See Rashi to Genesis 37:10.

(6) See Genesis 46:34

(7) Bechayei² to Genesis 46; Rabbi Shalom DovBer of Lubavitch, *Sefer HaMaamarim* (Book of Discourses) 5565, p. 192.

(8) *Ish matzliach*—Genesis 39:2.

(9) Rashi on Genesis 47:31, See the essay, "Joseph's Calf" pp. 399-402 below.

(10) Genesis 42:8,

(11) See the essay, "The Garments of Nature," pp. 365-370 above.

1. *In the second (dream). Joseph saw "the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowing down to me:"*

a. Genesis 37:10

¹⁰When he told his father as well as his brothers, 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?**"

b. Revelation 12:1-5

¹A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with **the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head**. ²She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. ³Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. ⁴Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born. ⁵She gave birth to a son, a male child, who "will rule all the nations with an iron scepter" (Psa 2:9). And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

1) **1-2** The pageant opens with the display of a great marvel-in the sky. A woman appears who is arrayed with the sun, crowned with twelve stars, and **standing upon the moon**. As in 12:3 and 15:1, the word "sign" is to be understood as a great spectacle which points to the consummation (cf. Lk 21:11, 25; Acts 2:19). Elsewhere in Revelation the word is used of the deceptive miracles performed by the representatives of Satan (13:13, 14; 16:14; 19:20). The woman is not Mary the mother of (Yeshua) **but the messianic community, the ideal Israel**. Zion as the mother of the people of God is a common theme in Jewish writings (Isa

54:1; II Esdr 10:7; cf. Gal 4:26). **It is out of faithful Israel that Messiah will come. It should cause no trouble that within the same chapter the woman comes to signify the church** (Vs. 17). The people of God are one throughout all redemptive history. **The early church did not view itself as discontinuous with faithful Israel** (cf. D'Aragon, p. 482).³

As God covers himself "with light as with a garment" (Ps 104:2), so the woman is arrayed with the sun. The world may despise the **true** Israel and hold it in lowest esteem, but from God's point of view she is a radiant bride (cf. Jer 2:2). She stands as an obvious contrast to the scarlet whore of chapter 17. **The moon beneath her feet speaks of dominion**, and the crown of twelve stars depicts royalty.

a) Luke 1:67-80

⁶⁷(John's) father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: ⁶⁸"Praise be to the Lord, **the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them**. ⁶⁹He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David ⁷⁰(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), ⁷¹salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—⁷²to show mercy to our ancestors **and to remember his holy covenant**, ⁷³**the oath he swore to our father Abraham** ... ⁷⁶And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him ... ⁸⁰And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

b) Revelation 12:17

¹⁷Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Yeshua.

2) **The moon under her feet**. See Cant. vi.10. **The symbol is usually taken to represent the Church**.⁴

a) Canticles 6:10

¹⁰Who is this that appears like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession?

1] In a nutshell, Solomon was conveying to his bride that in his eyes, she was the only woman in the world who mat-

2 Bahya ben Asher ibn Halawa (1255-1340) was a rabbi and scholar of Judaism, best known as a commentator on the Hebrew Bible.

3 Robert H. Mounce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Book of Revelation*, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), p. 236.

4 Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Volume II, *The Writings of John*, (MacDonald Publishing Company), p. 521.

tered to him. She was one of a kind in his love. She had no equal.⁵

2] Who is this nation **that arose from slavery in Egypt**, growing in greatness like the dawn's increasing light: being first a pale reflection of the moon, and then becoming as pure as the strength of the sun itself, until it became as 'awe inspiring as an army with banners'?⁶

3] ... she grows more magnificent with age; at first she appeared like the morning star, then like the moon, and then like the sun. **This is a metaphoric allusion to the Jewish people**, whose devotion to God increases with time ...⁷

3) **Foreshadowings:** Some Bible interpreters see in Song of Solomon **an exact symbolic representation of (Messiah) and His church.** (Messiah) is seen as the king, while the church is represented by the Shulamite. While we believe the book should be understood literally as a depiction of marriage, there are some elements that foreshadow the Church and her relationship with her king, the Lord (Yeshua).⁸

a) **Perhaps this is where the idea comes from that just as Israel is the "bride" of God, the Father, so the Church is the "bride" of Messiah.**

b) Revelation 21:9-14

⁹One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, **I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**" ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, **and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.** ¹¹It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. **On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.** ¹³There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. ¹⁴The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

4) The text means what it meant when the original author spoke/wrote to the original audience—or the text cannot mean today what it could NOT have meant then.

2. *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were shepherds, as were the sons of Jacob.*⁽⁶⁾ *They chose this vocation because they found the life of the shepherd a life of seclusion, communion with nature, and distance from the tumult and vanities of society—most conducive to their spiritual pursuits. Tending their sheep in the valleys and on the hills of Canaan, they could turn their backs on the mundane affairs of man, contemplate the majesty of the Creator, and serve Him with a clear mind and tranquil heart.*

a. Matthew 14:12-14

¹²John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Yeshua.

¹³When Yeshua heard what had happened, **he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.** Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴When Yeshua landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

b. Matthew 14:22-25

²²Immediately Yeshua made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³After he had dismissed them, **he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone,** ²⁴and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. ²⁵Shortly before dawn Yeshua went out to them, walking on the lake.

c. Mark 6:30-32

³⁰The apostles gathered around Yeshua and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, **"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."** ³²**So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.**

d. Matthew 26:36-39

³⁶Then Yeshua went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here **while I go over there and pray.**" ³⁷He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." ³⁹**Going a little farther**, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

5 Tommy Nelson, The Book of Romance, (Thomas Nelson Publishers), p. 146.

6 Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, Ed., *Shir haShirim, Song of Songs*, (Mesorah Publications, Ltd.), p. 170.

7 *The Living Nach, Sacred Writings*, (Moznaim Publishing Corporation), p. 520.

8 <https://www.gotquestions.org/Song-of-Solomon.html>

3. *The brothers could not accept that a person can lead a worldly existence without becoming worldly, that a person can remain one with G-d while inhabiting the palaces and government halls of pagan Egypt.*

a. 2Kings 5:15-19

¹⁵Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, "Now **I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel.** So please accept a gift from your servant." ¹⁶The prophet answered, "As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing." And even though Naaman urged him, he refused. ¹⁷"If you will not," said Naaman, "please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for **your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the LORD.**" ¹⁸But may the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I have to bow there also—**when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this.**"

¹⁹"Go in peace," Elisha said ...

1) 1Corinthians 10:6-14 (1John 5:21)

⁶Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. ⁷**Do not be idolaters**, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry" (Exo 32:6). ⁸We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died (Num 25:1ff). ⁹We should not test Messiah, **as some of them did**—and were killed by snakes (Num 21:5). ¹⁰And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel (Num 14:2). ¹¹These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us ... ¹²So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! ¹³No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

¹⁴Therefore, my dear friends, **flee from idolatry.**

b. John 17:15-19

¹⁵My prayer **is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.** ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

c. Genesis 42:6-8

⁶Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. ⁷As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but **he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them.** "Where do you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food." ⁸**Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.**

- 1) Why didn't Joseph's brothers recognize him? Was it because he hadn't seen them in over twenty years? **Not likely, after all, he recognized them!**
- 2) It probably has to do with the fact that he didn't "look like" Joseph. Joseph was the "governor of the land"—he was dressed like an Egyptian; he spoke like an Egyptian, he followed the "protocols" of the Egyptian government, etc.
- 3) When asked why many of the Jewish people do not accept Yeshua as the Messiah, I often share with them this story. Why? Because the same is true today that was true them.
- 4) The Christian Jesus does not "look like" the Messiah, the Son of David as described in the Bible.
- 5) The Bible does describe the coming of a Messiah that suffers and dies on behalf of his people—the Messiah ben Joseph—but both Christians and Jews today universally recognize that **the Messiah is the Son of David.**
- 6) When the Son of David comes, he will:

Zechariah 14:4

¹⁴On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and **the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west**, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south ...

⁸On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter.

⁹The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, **and his name the only name.**

Isaiah 11:10-12

¹⁰In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; **the nations will rally to him**, and his resting place will be glorious.

¹¹In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from

Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the Mediterranean. ¹²He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; **he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.**

Jeremiah 23:7-8

⁷"So then, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when people will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' ⁸but they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, **who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.**' **Then they will live in their own land.**"

Isaiah 2:1-4 (Micah 4:2-3)

¹This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: ²In the last days the mountain of **the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains**; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. ³**Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths."** The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴**He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples.** They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. **Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.**

Jeremiah 33:15-18

¹⁵"In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. ¹⁶In those days **Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.** This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior."

¹⁷For this is what the LORD says: 'David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of Israel, ¹⁸nor will the Levitical priests ever fail to have a man to stand before me continually to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to present sacrifices. '"

Ezekiel 43:1-5

¹Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, ²and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory ... ⁴**The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east.** ⁵Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

Ezekiel 44:15-16

¹⁵"But the Levitical priests, who are descendants of Zadok and who guarded my sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me, are to come near to minister before me; they are to stand before me to offer sacrifices ... ¹⁶They alone are to enter my sanctuary; they alone are to come near my table to minister before me ...

Ezekiel 47:8-12

⁸"This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. ⁹Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows ... ¹⁰Fishermen will stand along the shore; **from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets.** The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea. ¹¹But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. ¹²**Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."**

Zechariah 14:8

⁸On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter.

Ezekiel 48:1ff

¹"These are the tribes, listed by name: At the northern frontier, Dan will have one portion ... ²"Asher will have one portion ... ³"Naphtali will have one portion ... ⁴"Manasseh will have one portion ...

Matthew 24:29-31

²⁹"Immediately after the distress of those days '"the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' ³⁰"Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then **all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.** ³¹And he will send his angels with a loud (shofar) call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.