

12 not 2

I was listening to a sermon in our church. The preacher was talking about Joseph and his stay in Pharaoh's prison. He said that Joseph was in prison for two years, and immediately I knew he had not studied his topic properly. I wondered what Jesus would say to preachers who preach on topics, without preparing properly.

What respect does a cook receive when he makes sub-standard meals, or a Doctor, who prescribes the wrong medicine? Would people be as keen to support them, or do they look for a more reliable supplier? Why should the Word of God be taught at a lower standard than everything else? Its consequences are eternal.

Thank goodness I've read the Book of Jasher, the second witness to the early books of the Bible. It has provided me with much revelation on scripture. Reading these accounts with a slightly different perspective, give me what I need to visualise what happened.

I wondered if I could convince people of what really happened if they don't respect the Book of Jasher. Then I thought, could I prove it from Genesis text's alone, without quoting what Jasher says. I studied this for a few hours, before I noticed the author's comment, at the bottom of my Study Bible's page.

"Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river. (Gen 41:1) - Joseph languished in prison for two full years before he gained his freedom. Yet he did not blame God, but continued to serve Him. He learned, as we must, that God acts on behalf of those who wait for Him."

So it seems like other preachers make the same mistake. Is it because they focus on individual scriptures, instead of reading the book as one account, to be read in its entirety? I am reminded of the text: *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. (Jam 3:1-2)*

So there is a stricter judgment for people who would preach to others, shouldn't I therefore make very, very sure of my facts before I try to preach to others?

Well let me illustrate what I am talking about, before referring to the Book of Jasher.

This is the history of Jacob, Joseph being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. (Gen 37:2)

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. (Gen 41:46)

So from these scriptures we can see that there was a period of thirteen years between them. Joseph was sold into slavery and lived in the house of Potiphar, becoming the manager of his estate. He was a year older when he was thrown into jail. Joseph had been there for quite a while, and had been made the manager of the prisoners, when the Butler and Baker were put in jail. Pharaoh had executed the Baker, but released the Butler, after their short stay in the prison.

So the period of time between the Butler and Baker being thrown into prison and Pharaoh's dream was two years, but Joseph had been there for much longer. Joseph spent twelve years in prison, which is one year for every tribe of Israel! Another detail which is interesting and missed, is that Joseph was sold four times!

So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened. Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt. (NKJV – Gen 37:23-28)

Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard. (NKJV – Gen 37:36)

Looking at this account I see mention of Midianites and Ishmaelites. Joseph is pulled up out of the pit by his brothers, and sold to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver - but the Midianites sell him to Potiphar! Looking at the bottom of the page there is a note which says, "37:36 -Masoretic text reads Medanites." So it seems it was Medanites not Midianites which sold Joseph to Potiphar, but how did they get hold of Joseph from the Ishmaelites? – that is not revealed in this text. Let's look at the KJV.

And it came to pass, when Joseph had come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; and they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt. (KJV – Gen 37:23-28)

And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's and captain of the guard. (KJV – Gen 37:36)

Now according to this text, the Midianites pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmeelites, and the brothers received nothing. Then the Midianites sold him to Potiphar, how did they sell Joseph twice? Without looking at any further texts, one is confused as to what really happened, apart from knowing that Joseph was sold for twenty silver shekels, and then sold to Potiphar.

Now if we look at the Book of Jasher all is revealed, the hints as to what happened in Genesis, are revealed in this full account.

The Pit

When Joseph came to his brothers he sat before them, and they rose upon him and seized him and struck him to the earth, and stripped the coat of many colors which he had on. They took him and cast him into a pit and in the pit there was no water, but serpents and scorpions. And Joseph was afraid of the serpents and scorpions that were in the pit. Joseph cried out with a loud voice and the Lord hid the serpents and scorpions in the sides of the pit, and they did no harm to Joseph. And Joseph called out from the pit to his brothers, and said to them, "What have I done to you, and in what have I sinned? Why do you not fear the Lord concerning me? Am I not of your bones and flesh, and is not Jacob your father, my father? Why do you do this thing to me this day, and how will you be able to look up to our father Jacob?" And he continued to cry out and call to his brothers from the pit, and he said, "O Judah, Simeon, and Levi, my brothers, lift me up from the place of darkness in which you have placed me, and come this day to have compassion on me, you children of the Lord and sons of Jacob my father. And if I have sinned to you, are you not the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? If they saw an orphan they had compassion over him, or one that was hungry, they gave him bread to eat, or one that was thirsty, they gave him water to drink, or one that was naked, they covered him with garments! And how then can you withhold your pity from your brother, for I am of your flesh and bones, and if I have sinned to you, certainly you will do this on account of my father!"

Joseph spoke these words from the pit, and his brothers could not listen to him, nor incline their ears to the words of Joseph, and Joseph was crying and weeping in the pit. And Joseph said, "O that my father knew this day, the act which my brothers have done to me and the words which they have this day spoken to me. All his brothers heard his cries and weeping in the pit, and his brothers went and removed themselves from the pit, so that they might not hear the cries of Joseph and his weeping in the pit. (Jasher 41:27-34)

They went and sat on the opposite side, about the distance of a bow-shot, and they sat there to eat bread; while they were eating they held counsel together what was to be done with him, whether to kill him or to bring him back to his father. They were holding the counsel when they lifted up their eyes, and saw at once there was a company of Ishmaelites coming at a distance by the road to Gilead, going down to Egypt. And Judah said to them, "What gain will it be to us if we kill our brother? Perhaps God will require him from us; this then is the counsel proposed concerning him, which you shall do to him: Look at this company of Ishmaelites going down to Egypt, so now let us dispose of him to them and let not our hand be on him; they will lead him along with them and he will be lost among the people of the land and we will not put him to death with our own hands." And the proposal pleased his brothers and they did according to the word of Judah. (Jasher 42:1-4)

1) The seven Midianites

While they were discussing this matter and before the company of Ishmaelites had come up to them, seven trading men of Midian passed by them; as they passed they were thirsty and they lifted up their eyes and saw the same pit in which Joseph was held, and they looked and saw every species of bird was on him. These Midianites ran to the pit to drink water for they thought that it contained water, and on coming to the pit they heard the voice of Joseph crying and weeping in there, and they looked down into the pit, and they saw there a youth of good-looking appearance and well-favored.

They called to him and said, "Who are you and who brought you here, and who placed you in this pit in the wilderness?" And they all assisted to raise up Joseph and they drew him out and brought him up from the pit, and took him and went away on their journey and passed by his brothers. And these said to them, "Why do you do this, to take our servant from us and to go away? Certainly we placed this youth in the pit because he rebelled against us, and you come and bring him up and lead him away; now then give us back our servant." And the Midianites answered and said to the sons of Jacob, "Is this your servant, or does this man attend you? Perhaps you are all his servants, for he is more handsome and well favored than any of you, and why do you all speak falsely to us? So we will not listen to your words nor give you our attention, for we found the youth in the pit in the wilderness and we took him; we will therefore go on." And all the sons of Jacob approached them and rose up to them and said to them, "Give us back our servant, and why will you all die by the edge of the sword?" And the Midianites cried out against them and they drew their swords and approached to fight with the sons of Jacob.

Then Simeon rose up from his seat against them, and sprang on the ground and drew his sword and approached the Midianites and he gave a terrible shout before them, so that his shouting was heard at a distance, and the earth shook at Simeon's shouting. The Midianites were terrified on account of Simeon and the noise of his shouting, and they fell on their faces and were excessively alarmed. Simeon said to them, "Surely I am Simeon, the son of Jacob the Hebrew, who have only with my brothers destroyed the city of Shechem and the cities of the Amorites; so shall God moreover do to me if all your brothers, the people of Midian, and also the kings of Canaan, were to come with you; they could not fight against me. Now therefore give us back the youth whom you have taken, or I'll give your flesh to the birds of the skies and the beasts of the earth."

The Midianites were more afraid of Simeon, and they approached the sons of Jacob with terror and fright, and with pathetic words, saying, "Certainly you have said that the young man is your servant and that he rebelled against you, and therefore you placed him in the pit; what then will you do with a servant who rebels against his master? So now sell him to us, and we will give you all that you require for him." The Lord was pleased to do this in order that the sons of Jacob should not kill their brother. And the Midianites saw that Joseph was of good-looking appearance and well-favored; they desired him in their hearts and were urgent to purchase him from his brothers.

The sons of Jacob listened to the Midianites and they sold their brother Joseph to them for twenty pieces of silver. Rueben their brother was not with them, and the Midianites took Joseph and continued their journey to Gilead. They were going along the road, and the Midianites repented of what they had done, in having purchased the young man, and one said to the other, "What is this thing that we have done, in taking this youth from the Hebrews who is of good-looking appearance and well favored? Perhaps this youth is stolen from the land of the Hebrews, and why then have we done this thing? If he should be sought for and found in our hands we shall die through him. Now certainly hardy and powerful men have sold him to us, the strength of one of whom you saw this day; perhaps they stole him from his land with their might and with their powerful arm, and have therefore sold him to us for the small value we gave to them. While they were thus discussing together, they looked and saw the company of Ishmaelites which was coming at first, and which the sons of Jacob saw, was advancing toward the Midianites; the Midianites said to each other, "Come let us sell this youth to the company of Ishmaelites who are coming toward us.

We will take for him the little that we gave for him, and we will be delivered from his evil. (Jasher 42:5-23)

2) The company of Ishmaelites

And they did so, and they reached the Ishmaelites, and the Midianites sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver which they had given for him to his brothers. And the Midianites went on their road to Gilead, and the Ishmaelites took Joseph and they let him ride on one of the camels, and they were leading him to Egypt. When Joseph heard that the Ishmaelites were proceeding to Egypt, Joseph lamented and wept at this thing that he was to be so far removed from the land of Canaan, from his father, and he wept bitterly while he was riding on the camel. One of their men observed him, and made him go down from the camel and walk on foot, and still Joseph continued to cry and weep, and he said, "O my father, my father." One of the Ishmaelites rose up and struck Joseph on the cheek, and still he continued to weep; and Joseph was fatigued in the road, and was unable to proceed on account of the bitterness of his soul; they all struck him and afflicted him in the road, and they terrified him in order that he might cease from weeping ... (Jasher 42:24-27)

... And they said to each other, "We now know that it was on account of his affliction that this evil befell us; now why shall we bring this death on our souls? Let us hold counsel what to do to this slave." And one answered and said, "Certainly he told us to bring him back to his father; so come, let us take him back and we will go to the place that he will tell us, and take from his family the price that we gave for him and we will then go away." One answered again and said, "Behold this counsel is very good, but we cannot do so for the way is very far from us, and we cannot leave our road." One more answered and said to them, "This is the counsel to be adopted, we will not swerve from it; behold we are this day going to Egypt and when we shall have come to Egypt, we will sell him there at a high price, and we will be delivered from his evil. And this thing pleased the men and they did so; they continued their journey to Egypt with Joseph. (Jasher 42:49-53)

3) The four Medanites

The sons of Ishmael who had bought Joseph from the Midianites, who had bought him from his brothers, went to Egypt with Joseph. They came on the borders of Egypt and when they came near to Egypt, they met four men of the sons of Medan the son of Abraham, who had gone forth from the land of Egypt on their journey. The Ishmaelites said to them, "Do you desire to purchase this slave from us?" And they said, "Deliver him over to us, and they delivered Joseph over to them; they observed him that he was a very good-looking youth and they purchased him for twenty shekels. The Ishmaelites continued their journey to Egypt and the Medanim also returned that day to Egypt. The Medanim said to each other, "Look we have heard that Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, seeks a good servant who will stand before him to attend him, and to make him overseer over his house and all belonging to him. So let us sell him for what we may desire, if he is able to give us that which we shall require for him. (Jasher 44:1-4)

4) Potiphar

And these Medanim came to the house of Potiphar, and said to him, "We have heard that you seek a good servant to attend you; here we have a servant that will please you, if you can give to us that which we may desire and we will sell him to you." And Potiphar said, "Bring him before me, and I will see him; if he please me I will give to you that which you may require for him."

And the Medanims went and brought Joseph and placed him before Potiphar, and he observed him, and he pleased him greatly and Potiphar said to them, "Tell me what you require for this youth." And they said, "Four hundred pieces of silver we desire for him." Potiphar said, "I will give it if you bring me the record of his sale to you and will tell me his history for perhaps he may be stolen, for this youth is neither a slave nor the son of a slave, but I observe in him the appearance of a goodly and handsome person.

And the Medanims went and brought to him the Ishmaelites who had sold him to them, and they told him, saying, "He is a slave and we sold him to them." And Potiphar heard the words of the Ishmaelites in his giving the silver to the Medanims, and the Medanims took the silver and went on their journey; the Ishmaelites also returned home. Potiphar took Joseph and brought him to his house that he might serve him, and Joseph found favor in the sight of Potiphar; he placed confidence in him and made him overseer over his house, and all that belonged to him he delivered over into his hand.

And the Lord was with Joseph and he became a prosperous man; the Lord blessed the house of Potiphar for the sake of Joseph. And Potiphar left all that he had in the hands of Joseph; Joseph was one that caused things to come in and go out, and everything was regulated by his wish in the house of Potiphar. And Joseph was eighteen years old, a youth with beautiful eyes and of very good appearance, and no one was like him in all the land of Egypt. At that time while he was in his master's house, going in and out of the house and attending his master, Zelichah, his master's wife lifted up her eyes toward Joseph and she looked at him, and behold he was a youth handsome and well-favored. And she coveted his beauty in her heart, and her soul was fixed on Joseph, and she enticed him day after day, and Zelichah persuaded Joseph daily, but Joseph did not lift up his eyes to give attention to his master's wife. (Jasher 44:5-16)

Potiphar and Joseph came before the priests who were the king's judges, and he said to them, "Decide I beg you, what judgment is due to a servant, for thus has he done." And the priests said to Joseph, "Why did you do this thing to your master?" And Joseph answered them, saying, "Not so my lords, thus was the matter;" and Potiphar said to Joseph, "Certainly I entrusted in your hands all that belonged to me, and I withheld nothing from you but my wife, and how could you do this evil?" And Joseph answered saying, "Not so my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, my lord, the word which you did hear from your wife is untrue, for thus was the affair this day. A year has elapsed to me since I have come to your house; have you seen any iniquity in me, or any thing which might cause you to demand my life?" (Jasher 44:70-73)

Potiphar heard their words and he placed him in the prison house, the place where the king's prisoners are confined, and Joseph was in the house of confinement twelve years. (Jasher 44:76)

And the butler, to whom Joseph had interpreted his dream, forgot Joseph and did not mention him to the king as he had promised, for this thing was from the Lord in order to punish Joseph because he had trusted in man. And Joseph remained after this in the prison house two years, until he had completed twelve years. (Jasher 46:19-20)

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, and Joseph went out from before the king and became the king's second in command in Egypt. (Jasher 49:38)

Joseph was the first son of Rachel, the woman that Jacob had wanted to marry; but he had had to serve Laban fourteen years for her; because Laban had tricked him into marrying Leah first. Joseph's brothers who sold him, were the sons of Leah and the sons of Leah's and Rachel's maids, Bilhah and Zilpah. Ishmael was the son of Hagar, Sarah's maid. The Ishmaelites were descended from him.

Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. (Gen 25:2)

The Medanites and the Midianites were descendants from Keturah, Abraham's second wife. So all those involved in selling Joseph to Potiphar had less of a claim to the birthright than Joseph. The Book of Jasher provides details which augment the Genesis account, and fill in the missing details. It's almost like the Genesis account is a quick summary which provides the very basic requirements for understanding and faith.

There were seven good years before the seven bad years of drought. There were seven good Midianites and I guess the company of Ishmaelites were seven too. The Midianites were kind to Joseph and the Ishmaelites were very abusive. The descendants of Abraham were strangers in the land for four hundred years and Joseph was sold to Egypt for four hundred silver shekels. The parallels are too strong to be just mere coincidence.

O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake You shall be ashamed. "Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters." (Jer 17:13)

I was paging through the Book of Enoch, and I came across this verse.
Woe to you who drink water from every fountain (drink water all the time), for suddenly shall you be consumed and whither away, because you have forsaken the fountain of life. (Enoch 96:6)

'Every fountain' being worldly wisdom, and 'the fountain of life' being the Word of God, Jesus Christ, who is the Word and the Wisdom of God.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2Ti 3:16-17)

People who want to be thoroughly equipped for every good work, should study all available scripture thoroughly, not just the Books of the Bible. The Books of Jasher and Enoch are also powerful testimonies, which contain details not mentioned anywhere else. Who can afford not to read this information? It is far better to have read it and reject it, than to have never read it at all. It is also far better to discover you have made a mistake, and to still be able to correct it, than to be informed of your error in understanding on Judgement Day!

-oOo-

The Book of Jasher – by Joseph B. Lumpkin – ISBN : 9781933580890

The Lost Book of Enoch – by Joseph B. Lumpkin – ISBN : 0-9746336-6-6