# EGYPT HATES SHEPHDERS

# Text: Genesis 46:31-34

**31** And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me;

**32** And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.

**33** And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation?

**34** That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

# “Egypt Hates Shepherds”

The Book of Genesis, the book of beginnings, is home to many of the most famous characters and stories in all of Scripture. Adam and Eve, their temptation and fall in the garden. Noah, and his building of the ark to save his family and the human race. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the called-out patriarchs, who would make and keep covenants with God to bring about a nation for God.

The final chapters of Genesis introduce us to one last

significant character; his name was Joseph. You know Joseph’s story. He was the eleventh, yet favorite, son of Jacob. Jacob preferred and blessed Joseph over his brothers publicly and often, highlighted by his giving to Joseph a beautiful coat of many colors. This enraged Joseph’s brothers, and if it were not insulting enough that their father favored Joseph, so too did God.

God, on two separate occasions, gave Joseph dreams of being elevated to the highest station in his family, where he would become the leader of his family, in place of his older brothers.

The combination of their father’s, and apparently God’s, favor on Joseph made Joseph’s brothers so angry they faked his death and sold him into slavery, so they could rid themselves of Joseph.

This would lead Joseph on a wild journey that seemed as if he were getting further and further from the promises of God, and yet he was actually getting closer and closer to God’s promises (finish the story ending with his brothers).

This story is one of the most beautiful and wonderful stories in all of Scripture. We get to see Joseph’s life play out like an impossible novel, with twists and turns that seem so unlikely, that there must have been a divine hand working on behalf of Joseph, and likewise on behalf of His people Israel.

However, toward the resolution of this magnificent story that shows God’s redemptive plan at work on behalf of His people continuously, there is an oft overlooked passage that deserves our attention. We read it just a few moments ago.

As Joseph’s father, brothers, sister, sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews (about 70 total) begin migrating to Egypt, so that they can survive the crushing famine, they are invited to meet Pharaoh. Pharaoh, no doubt wants to meet the family that produced such a wise and honorable man like Joseph, but Joseph gathers his family first to prepare them for this meeting.

Now, Joseph’s family needs this meeting with Pharaoh to go well. They have no food. They cannot go home. The last thing they want to do is offend Pharaoh. So, they begin strategizing, they clean up real nice, they threaten their kids, and then Joseph tells them, “I’m going to go up first, and when I get

there, I’m going to tell Pharaoh, you guys are shepherds. When he calls for you, he is going to ask you what your occupation is, and you need to tell him, you are shepherds. This is why:

Egyptians hate shepherds.”

Now, I can see Judah, Ruben, and Simeon, Joseph’s brothers who had questionable morals to say the least, scratching their heads. “Joseph if we need Pharaoh to like us, and Egyptians hate shepherds, wouldn’t we be better off for us to

hide who we really are? Wouldn’t we be better off to act like Egyptians? Wouldn’t it make more sense to go along to get along? To just blend in.”

“You know Joseph, we shepherds have some ways that are odd, different, and even offensive to this world. We can’t afford to stick out, look out of place, or behave differently than Egypt. We need the approval and blessings of this world if we have any hope of surviving.”

But Joseph was clear, “We are not here to survive; we are here to thrive. You might survive for a while living like the world, but the only way to thrive is to be what God called us to be. We are shepherds!!”

Why was Israel shepherds? You see, it wasn’t just these Israelites who were shepherds. Shepherding was a way of life for God’s people, and shepherds always seemed to find the favor of the Lord. Among these shepherds were the patriarchs

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the leaders of the twelve tribes, the prophet Moses, King David, and the Old Testament prophet Amos were all shepherds? In the New Testament, God chooses to announce His birth not to kings or priests, but to shepherds. Furthermore, there is a common analogy throughout Scripture that refers to men and women of God, specifically pastors, as shepherds.

And why does Egypt hate shepherds? Why does God seemingly choose an insignificant occupation to bless, and why does Egypt find such distance for these sheep herders? The answers are one and the same.

First, shepherds are nomads. Egypt was one of the first great civilizations and empires of the world. It had palaces, temples, pyramids, schools, religion, and written language long before most people of the world. They built extravagant homes, and worshiped nature, like the Nile and the sun. They had planted roots and were determined to perfect life on Earth.

God’s children were different. Hebrews tells us…

# Hebrews 11:8-10

**8** By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

**9** By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

**10** For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

That’s Bible for: Abraham wasn’t living for this world. The children of Israel weren’t meant to live for this world. Egypt, you can take this world’s wealth and riches. I’m living for another world.

“This world is not my home, I’m just passing through. My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue.” Joseph said, “Make sure Egypt knows, we aren’t moving here to be Egyptians. One day we are getting out of here.”

The elders used to sing…

“*In that city where the Lamb is the light, The city where there cometh no night;*

*I’ve a mansion over there,*

*And when free from toil and care,*

*I am going where the Lamb is the light.”*

Over the past few months as the pandemic has ravaged our world, millions have lost their jobs and security. Racism has crept out of the ugly dark corners that it tries to hide in. Riots and death and destruction have filled our streets, and while my heart breaks for this world, my soul cries out for another world.

You have to get a revelation of Heaven. I’m living for God until that trumpet sounds. I’m living for God no matter who the president is. I’m living for God no matter how long Covid-19 lasts. I’m living for God if everyone else in the church walks away, because I’m not living for this world. I want to go there.

I want to be like those old shepherds who looked at

Pharaoh and said, “We aren’t like everybody else. We don’t covet houses, land, wealth, or riches. We are living for a better tomorrow. We aren’t like Egypt. We are shepherds.”

Egypt hates that lifestyle. Egypt which is a type of the world, hates any life that says Hollywood isn’t my destiny, DC isn’t my destiny, sex isn’t my destiny, drugs aren’t my destiny, fame and fortune isn’t my destiny. I’m living for something

greater!! I’m living for streets of Gold. I’m living for gates of pearl. I’m living for walls of jasper. I’m living for a glorified body.

But, there is another reason commentators say Egypt hated shepherds. Shepherds were defined by their nomadic way of life, and they were defined by never building homes, but there was one thing they did build. Every time the camp of Israelites would pack their tents and gather their herds, and head in whichever direction the Lord was sending them, there is one thing they would leave behind. Abraham never built a palace.

Isaac never built a temple. Jacob never built a monument, but shepherds built altars.

Everywhere Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob went, they built an altar. Joseph wanted to insure that altars of sacrifice didn’t die with the previous generation, so he told his brothers, “You make sure to let Pharaoh know, we are shepherds, and there will be altars wherever we go.”

Egypt doesn’t understand sacrifice. They are turned off by sacrifice. They are annoyed by sacrifice. They will mock your sacrifice and even be offended by your sacrifice. They will hate that you are separate from the world. They will hate your faithfulness to the house of God. They will call you a bigot. They will call you crazy. They will call you old fashioned. They will call you unreasonable. They will say you are a part of a cult. You just square your shoulders, hold your head up high, and say, “You can call me what you want to. I’m a shepherd. I know we are different. I know we don’t make sense to you, but I’m a shepherd. I would rather be rejected by you, and accepted by Him.”

Let me tell you something tonight young people, if there are no altars in your life, if there’s no sacrifice in your life, you

aren’t a shepherd. Let me make it really plain: if there are no altars in your life, you aren’t Apostolic. The apostles of the bible, and the Apostolics of previous of previous generations were defined by sacrifice. Their lives were defined by altars. Their lives were defined by rejection, insults, strange looks, working tirelessly, preaching the gospel, teaching Bible studies, winning souls, planting churches, sending missionaries, giving offerings, and all-night prayer meetings. It’s true they saw rejection and mocking, but they also saw millions filled with the Holy Ghost and baptized in Jesus’ name. They saw miracles, signs, and wonders. They saw addicts set free, families put back together, the sick healed, and the dead raised.

Many of them never attained wealth or riches, and died with little material gain to their name, but they did unto the glory of God. And for the next generation of the church to exist, we cannot only emulate their worship, their holiness, or even their doctrine. For the next generation of the church to exist, we must emulate their sacrifice.

Every church that has been planted required sacrifice. Every mission field that has been opened required sacrifice. Every Bible study that has been taught required sacrifice. Every prayer warrior and intercessor, that has prayed the prayers that have kept you saved, required sacrifice.

The life of a shepherd is defined by sacrifice. Joseph knew, Egypt hates shepherds, but Israel dies without shepherds. Our world hates lives defined by sacrifice unto our Lord, but the church dies, if the next generation is unwilling to pick up the mantle of sacrifice.

# Hebrews 11:33-38

33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.

34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

# Closing:

**Luke 9:23-24**

**23** And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. **24**For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

# Luke 14:25-27

**25** And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

**26** If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

**27** And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

# Romans 12:1-2

**1**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

**2** And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

I know this isn’t popular, but it’s biblical. I know this isn’t popular, but biblical Christianity is unpopular, and popular Christianity is unbiblical.

The world doesn’t understand it, but we are living for another world, and sacrifice is our way of life. Joseph told his brothers, “You can’t hide who you are.” I think that’s part of our problem today: we want to be anonymously Apostolic, but that’s impossible. It’s impossible to live for Heaven, and live a life of sacrifice, and nobody notice.

So, I have a question for you tonight. Who is going to pick up the mantle of a shepherd? Who is going to get a burden for your school? Who is going to hear the call of God to start a P7 club? Who is going to pick up the mantle of a shepherd? Who is going to hear the call, and be a next generation of church planters? Who is going to hear a lost people in a foreign land calling out, waiting for you to pick up the mantle of a missionary?