

Contemporary Mystic Christianity **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

The Spritual Allegory of Judah and Tamar

The story of Joseph is apparently interrupted by the insertion of a chapter (XXXVIII) dealing with Judah's children by Shuah and Tamar. While it does not deal with incidents in the life of Joseph, it is not irrelevant to processes by which he attained to a position of power and a place of spiritual illumination.

Shuah and Tamar represent the feminine or love principle-Shuah in its fall; Tamar in its upliftment. Shuah means fall, Tamar, fruitful. Tamar also means palm tree-a tree used frequently in the Bible as a symbol of purity through regeneration. The Chaldeans called it the "Tree of Life."

Later, when Judah saw Tamar, she was veiled after the manner of a harlot. As such he took her unto himself, and she conceived and bore him two sons, Pharez and Zarah. When Judah learned later that Tamar, who was his daughter-in-law, had played the harlot, and not knowing that it was by his own act that she was with child, he ordered her brought forth and burned. When she appeared she produced the signet, bracelets and staff he had given her. He recognized his guilt and acknowledging the objects

she presented as his gifts to her, and said: "She is more righteous than I."

Added sorrow came upon Judah. Through this came a chastening and the realization that the greater good he was seeking was not to be found on the path of the senses, that "broad road" so many take to their destruction. The way of transmuted desire is the "narrow way" and few there be that find it.

When Judah expresses the heart qualities of his sign (Leo) on the plane of animal passion, he experiences disgrace, sorrow and bereavement. When he has suffered sufficiently from such painful consequences and comes into a recognition of his mistaken conduct, he repents and alters his course, entering upon a regenerate life. When he does this Tamar is no longer veiled to him. He sees her in her true nature, for she is representative of the awakened feminine love principle divorced from desire. Tamar's sons become the head of a line whence descends David and all the kings of Israel after him. From the line of Judah comes the master Jesus, vehicle of the Christ, the Savior of the world.

The sons, Er and Onan, are slain for displeasing the Lord (Law). Later, twins are born; the feminine love power is uplifted and the dual powers are again in equilibrium. From these twins (equilibrated powers) springs the royal line of

rulers. He who becomes master of self becomes the ruler of many.

The secrets of life belonging to the feminine principle are concealed from the eyes of the profane and the uncomprehending. This is the significance of the veiled Tamar. She is identical in meaning with the veiled Isis, the feminine patron saint of Egypt. This points the occult reason for the custom among oriental women of veiling their faces. The practice originated as a token of reverence for that which is too noble and holy to be exposed to the common gaze. That this custom is now rapidly passing is indicative of a new era in which a spiritual power, long hidden and submerged, is coming forth into manifestation. In the deeper significance of the term, the coming Aquarian Age will see woman in a position of equality with man. Intuition, the faculty of direct perception of truth, will become generally operative; and love, in its highest aspect, a living, moving power in the heart of mankind.

The concealed Eternal Feminine asks of the approaching neophyte, as did Tamar of Judah: "What wilt thou give me, that thou mayst come in unto me?" To this question Judah replied: "I will send thee a kid from the flock." The kid (goat), symbol of Capricorn, refers to the powers of the mind in process of spiritualization. Tamar then asked of him if he would give her a pledge until such time as he would

send the kid. "And he said: What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him."

The staff is representative of the awakened and conserved life force which, when sufficiently developed, reveals the magical properties so often ascribed to it. The bracelets and signet are outward manifestations of this inner power, in thought and in deed. Before the veil is lifted which guards the sacred sanctuary of Truth, an aspirant must be able to produce these evidences of his worth.

Later, when Judah sent a friend with the promised kid to Tamar, she was not to be found. Like the aspirant's search for hidden wisdom, Judah's search for Tamar continued, and for a time in anguish "lest he be shamed." When she was found Judah failed to recognize her and commanded that she be burned as a harlot. Judah here gives expression to the fires of uncontrolled passion that would destroy all means of contact with the inner feminine sanctuary. But when he comes into knowledge and recognizes her identity, she is spared. Then, though it be through travail, new powers are unfolded. Twins come to birth.

The story of Judah and Tamar is a spiritual allegory, outwardly repugnant but inwardly sacred and profound. While it refers primarily to Joseph, it is built around Judah

(Leo) and the heart. When Joseph had developed qualities fitting him for larger responsibilities, he became the overseer of Potiphar's estate and, later, ruler of all Egypt. His character was of such integrity that Potiphar entrusted to him completely "all that he had," henceforth knowing naught of what he had "save the bread which he did eat."

Joseph had learned the ways of the Lord (Law) and worked so closely in harmony with them that "the Lord was with him" and "made all that he did to prosper." His very presence brought Jehovah's blessing upon Potiphar's house and field and all that he possessed.

Joseph had traveled far on the path of regeneration, yet he was not past being tempted. Again and again man is tried. The further he progresses the subtler become the temptations. Joseph was a "goodly person and well favored" and Potiphar's wife "cast her eyes" upon him. Joseph resisted her enticements though day by day she pursued him with illicit solicitations. But Joseph, unwavering in his faithfulness to Potiphar, his master, and in his obedience to the voice of conscience and the law of God, "fled, and got him out." He remained steadfast in his chosen path of virtue. His strength increased. His power grew. Like Sir Galahad, he could say,

My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.

Potiphar's wife was wroth. The lower nature is loath to surrender its very existence. So she called in the men and put Joseph in prison. Was this virtue's just reward? No consequence of right action can be other than seeming ill. Jehovah, we read, "was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper." (Genesis 39:22-23)

In a poem entitled Joseph and Zuleika, Jami, the last and greatest of Persian poets, gives a rendering of the biblical account of Joseph in his relation to Potiphar's wife. With but slight variations in detail, the stories are the same. Zuleika, according to Jami's version, was a beautiful princess who lived in a country neighboring on Egypt. For three nights in succession she dreamed of a handsome man who came to woo her. Immediately afterward she received an offer of marriage from Pitiphar and, believing him to be the subject of her dreams, she hastened to accept his proposal. Zuleika then started for Egypt, accompanied by a retinue of followers. As they neared Memphis, their destination, Potiphar sent a caravan of splendor exceeding any thing the world had ever seen to meet the coming princess.

In the exquisite imagery of the East, the poem describes the wealth that was showered abroad at the time of her arrival. Gold, silver and pearls were scattered in the Nile in such abundance that ever after oysters have yielded up pearls; and the waters, gold and silver fish.

When the princess discovered that Potiphar was a middle-aged man her disappointment was very great. Her chagrin became the greater upon meeting Joseph, the comely youth of her dreams. From this point the poem closely follows the biblical narrative.

Repulsed by Joseph, Zuleika seeks revenge by inciting Potiphar's jealousy against Joseph, with the result that he is sent to prison for three years. When Joseph successfully interprets Pharaoh's dreams he regains favor with the ruler and is elevated by him to a position of command second only to his own.

Potiphar dies, and Zuleika is shorn of her wealth, position and beauty. A shriveled old woman, she dwells in a hut of reeds across the river from Joseph's palace. Only one attribute of the former princess remains: her great love for Joseph. So ardent is her devotion that she finally renounces her faith and embraces his spiritual ideals. Then it is that a complete transformation occurs. Her rags fall away and her youth returns. Once more she is the beautiful princess. Joseph comes to claim her, and the poem concludes in a

rhapsody of happiness. It is a superb portrayal of the transforming power of love.

Dream Interpretations

That Joseph had progressed and come into greater understanding as the result of his experiences is indicated by his ability to interpret dreams. He did so, not in the light of his own personal knowledge but, as he indicates, by inspiration from above. "Do not interpretations belong to God?" he queried.

He then asked his two fellow prisoners, the butler and the baker, each of whom had dreamed, that they tell him what they had dreamed.

And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, 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. And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days. Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver

Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house.

For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon. (Genesis 40:9-15)

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and, behold I had three white baskets on my head.

And in the uppermost basket there was all manner of bake meats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.

And Joseph answered and said; This is the interpretation thereof- The three baskets are three days.

Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them. (Genesis 40:16-22)

This dream runs in threes; it has to do with the three steps that lead to self-mastery: self control, conservation and transmutation. When these steps have been taken, the vine (spinal cord) will bud, blossom and bear fruit (opening of head centers); and the holy grail cup will have been formed to receive the wine of spirit. Man will then have developed the body in which the New Race will function. Again, the three baskets represent the three steps on the path of illumination. They are filled with bread, the bread of life made of the passionless fruits of the field. They are on the head for therein the Ego is enthroned; also the organs which, when awakened by means of the conserved and transmuted life force, give insight into the spiritual world. The birds represent the winged faculties of the spirit in expansion and activity, and their substance is the conserved bread (augmented forces of life).

The baker was hanged. The Christ was crucified. These events represent the final surrender of the physical and liberation of the spirit from the cross of matter.

There is yet another dream in the life story of Joseph. Pharoah is the dreamer and Joseph the interpreter-for wiser than those upon earthly thrones are those who have gained the key that unlocks heavenly mysteries,

Genesis 41:1-7

And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that

Pharaoh dreamed; and, behold, he stood by the river. And behold, there came up out of the river seven well favored kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. And behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. And he slept and dreamed the second time; and, behold, 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.

The humility of one who really knows the deeper and greater truths stems from a realization that all we are and all we have comes not from ourselves, but from God. And so, when Pharaoh called on Joseph, he who was reported wiser than all known magicians of the land, to interpret his dream, Joseph said: "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Joseph interpreted the two dreams, as one, the dreams having been double because the thing was "established by

God." Looking into inner worlds, he was able to perceive the cyclic action of cosmic law. Said Joseph:

The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dream is one.

And the seven thin and ill favored kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh; What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt.

And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land.

And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.

(Genesis 41.26-31)

What Joseph foretold came to pass. There was plenty, then poverty followed. Such a play of opposites in nature is but an externalization of the dual consciousness in which the race now lives. There is continual oscillation between high and low, good and bad, spiritual and material. When the race consciousness becomes completely polarized in

divine consciousness, alternating states of mind and conditions under which we now live will cease.

According to the Talmud, seven steps led up to the throne on which Pharaoh was seated while interviewing Joseph on the third. The positions occupied indicated their degree of attainment.

— ***Corinne Heline***