

Slip the Surly Sights of Simeon

Genesis 42:5-6 (KJV)

5 And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan. **6** 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.

Genesis 42:13-14 (KJV)

13 And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not. **14** And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies:

Genesis 42:19-20 (KJV)

19 If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: **20** But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

Genesis 42:24 (KJV) And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

Genesis 42:36-38 (KJV)

36 And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me. **37** And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. **38** And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Simeon the Man

In this story, we see Joseph face his brothers, the men who sold into slavery in Egypt. It would've been completely understandable for Joseph to take some revenge on his brothers. He was a young man living in Canaan, the 11th out of 12 sons, but his father favored Joseph and gave him an ornamental tunic to wear. Joseph also had a dream about his brothers bowing down to him. These were all considered very arrogant activities for an 11th brother to do. Normally, it was the 1st born son (Reuben) who would take over the role as head of the family when the father died. The first born got a double portion of the inheritance. Influence within the family normally followed a strict hierarchy from oldest to youngest. The 2nd born (Simeon) might boss around the other sons when the oldest was out in the field. You might even have the 3rd born (Levi) try to exercise some influence by acting as a Drill Sergeant, forcing the younger siblings to carry out the orders of the 1st born. But to have 11th son act like he was in charge? Never.

To have the 11th born wear the coat of a tribal elder? Never heard of such a thing. To have everyone from the 1st born to the 12th born bowing down in front of the 11th born? Never going to happen...

Some of Joseph's brothers sought to kill him, but Reuben (1st born) talked them out of that idea. Reuben had an affair with Bilnah, his father's concubine who also happened to be his aunt by the fact that she was mother to two of his brothers: Dan (4th born) and Naftali (5th born). So, Reuben probably thought that he could win back some good will with his father by restoring the favorite son, Joseph, and turning the other brothers into bad guys.

Before he had a chance to do that, his brothers sold Joseph to some slave traders. This seemed to solve everyone's problems: the brothers got rid of this trouble-making kid and they got a few bucks in their pockets as well.

Fast forward a few years and now Joseph a Vizier in Egypt. Canaan is suffering a tremendous drought, so Jacob and the 11 brothers are starving to death. The one place that still has food is Egypt, because it had the Nile river to provide water, Joseph who had stored up plenty of grain from previous years of record harvests, and God who had told Pharaoh and Joseph that it was going to happen.

The 10 oldest brothers come to Egypt to buy some food. Joseph recognizes them, but they don't recognize him. He sends them back home with food and a pretext to get them to bring back his baby brother, Benjamin. To make sure that they bring him back, he takes the 2nd-oldest brother, Simeon, and puts him in jail.

Now I can understand Joseph's position: he was put into an empty cistern, then sold into slavery, then spent 7 years in an Egyptian jail on a false accusation. Now that he has a little influence over how things are in the country, It's time for a little payback. I completely understand Joseph's position. What I don't understand is Jacob and the other 10 brothers; they completely abandon Simeon to rot in an Egyptian jail for the rest of his life.

Genesis 42:36 (KJV) And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

You think your family has issues? How would you like to be in jail for driving without a license? Your brothers go home and say, "Dad, we need to take a copy of Simeon's driver's license down to the police station," and your dad responds, "Well, I guess it sucks to be him."?

That's kind of like the situation here; Simeon was in jail because Joseph said he didn't believe their identity. Benjamin would be 'proof' of their identity (like a driver's license), but Jacob won't let him go. Jacob just writes Simeon off ("Simeon is no more") and doesn't even consider trying to get him out of jail. Simeon is more. Simeon is still alive. His brothers were trying to kill Joseph, because he had a fancy coat, but they aren't willing to even sneak out of town with Benjamin to save Simeon's life.

It's only after several months have passed that Jacob finally allows Benjamin and the other brothers to go back to Egypt. He does only because they had run of the food they purchased from Joseph on their first trip.

Genesis 43:2 (KJV) And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.

Jacob still is not concerned about the fate of Simeon; he only cares about himself. He only sends the boys out when he himself is hungry.

Genesis 43:14 (KJV) And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

He can't even bring himself to say Simeon's name; he just calls him the "other brother." Benjamin, the son who was so valuable he couldn't risk a trip back to Egypt to free Simeon is suddenly expendable when compared to Jacob's stomach. "If I am bereaved, I am bereaved."

Simeon the Tribe

The sons of Jacob were of course the foundation of the tribes of Israel who left the land of Egypt to settle in the Promised Land. The tribes took on the names of the brothers who went into the land of Egypt after Joseph invites them to come live with him in Egypt permanently. When they get to the Promised Land, the tribe of Simeon gets a piece of land that is completely land-locked inside that of Judah.

Joshua 19:1 (KJV) And the second lot came forth to Simeon, even for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah.

Someone in Simeon territory can't get from Beersheba to Gaza without someone in Judah asking him where he's going and what he plans to do there. If you look in the book of Numbers, there are 2 times that Simeon is mentioned in the book. The first is at the beginning of chapter 1:

Numbers 1:22-23 (KJV)

22 Of the children of Simeon, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, those that were numbered of them, according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; **23** Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Simeon, were fifty and nine thousand and three hundred.

By the time we get to chapter 26, look at what happens:

Numbers 26:14 (KJV) These are the families of the Simeonites, twenty and two thousand and two hundred.

I mentioned in a message several years ago that when the Bible gives you a list of numbers, it expects you to do the math. When most of us read the Bible through every year, we get through the book of Numbers in about 20 minutes. Not because it's a short chapter, but because we skim over these long lists of "begat, begat, begat" all in a row. Reading a census is boring enough in modern times, let alone reading a census that's 4,000 years old. Yet, hidden in those numbers are nuggets of gold. God expects us to do the math.

In this case, we see that during the time from Numbers chapter 1 to chapter 26, the tribe of Simeon shrank from 59,300 to 22,200; a decrease of nearly 66%. Not only is Simeon locked inside of Judah, but their numbers are decreasing rapidly. In fact, by the time of the Song of Deborah in Judges chapter 5, Simeon isn't even mentioned any more.

Where did the tribe of Simeon go? Apparently, they were simply absorbed by Judah. Having your territory inside of Judah means that no one will notice if you just disappear. For example, at the time of Joshua, the allocation was:

Joshua 19:1-5 (KJV)

1 And the second lot came forth to Simeon, even for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah. **2** And they had in their inheritance Beersheba, and Sheba, and Moladah, **3** And Hazarshual, and Balah, and Azem, **4** And Eltolad, and Bethul, and Hormah, **5** And Ziklag, and Bethmarcaboth, and Hazarsusah,

But at the time of David, we see that the Philistine king gives Ziklag to David:

1 Samuel 27:6 (KJV) Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day.

So, Ziklag went from being a Simeonite city to a Judahite city and no one made a big fuss about it. Deborah sings a song in Judges chapter 5 where she mentions all the active tribes, but she completely leaves out Simeon and nobody noticed.

There was no great prophecy about Simeon's demise. There was no prophet saying, "Because Simeon has sinned, I will wipe him from the inheritance of Jacob." There was nothing; no one even mentions Simeon's name. In fact, the only way we realize the Simeon was missing was by his absence. It's only when we do the math and count the number of tribes in a song and count the cities in a census that we realize we're missing one.

Just like their patriarchal namesake, no one tries to save Simeon; no one even bothers to mention his name after he's gone. Even as a tribe, Simeon is simply the "other brother." The tribe of Simeon disappears as a separate identity and is simply transformed into part of the tribe of Judah.

Simeon the Concept

When Simeon was born, his mother, Leah, gives him a name that reflects his origin and his place in the world.

Genesis 29:33 (KJV) And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the Lord hath heard I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon.

The word we pronounce as Simeon ("sh'mon") is the same root as the Hebrew word "sh'ma" meaning "listen." So, because God listened to her, she gave her son the name "listen up." This same word is used in Deuteronomy 6:4.

Deuteronomy 6:4: Sh'ma Israel. Adonai Elohaenu. Adonai Echad!

Deuteronomy 6:4 (KJV) Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:

So, Leah gives her second son the name "Listen" and her third son the name "Praise."

Genesis 29:35 (KJV) And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the Lord: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

Leah named her second son, Simeon, (“Listen”) and her third son, Judah (“Praise”). Years later, the tribe of Simeon gets a territory that’s wrapped up within the tribe of Judah. Over the course of time, the tribe of Simeon is absorbed by the tribe of Judah.

Simeon the Church

In 1992, some Pastors in the city of Cincinnati had the idea that they wanted to have a huge celebration on Pentecost Sunday. The idea was to have all the Oneness organizations come together for a big church service together at the convention center. I was familiar with the three biggest Oneness organizations; United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI), Assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ (ALJC), and Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (PAW). What I didn’t realize at the time is the number of smaller Oneness organizations that exist. There were probably close to 30 different organizations, each of which had pastors in the greater Cincinnati area; some of which were right across the street from each other and didn’t even know it.

We wanted the Pentecost 92 event to be a big soul-winning rally, of course, so part of the build-up to the event were rallies in public places around the city. One even that I helped with was in an urban park where two of these unaffiliated pastors each had churches. They had a little stage with singing and preaching. At one point, a young man walked up and started listening to the music and the singing. I went over and started talking to him.

He told me that his grandmother was Pentecostal and he remembered the songs as things she used to sing when he was a kid. He went out of his way to tell me, however, that he wasn’t Pentecostal. He had converted to Islam a few years before that and wasn’t at all interested in converting to Christianity.

He was not there for the preaching; he was there for the music. He was not there to praise; he was only there to listen. Many people come through our doors with the same intention. They come to this church because we have good music, fancy

lights, cushions on our pews, and a young pastor who gets up and runs around the church telling funny stories. **They don't come here to praise; they only come here to listen.**

"Don't ask too much of me, Pastor; I don't want to get involved."

"You know that altar is so far away. I think I'll just sit back here and watch the other folks pray."

"That Pastor PJ is so uplifting. I just want to listen to what he has to say."

"I think I'll skip that boring bible lesson stuff. I'll just go into church at 10:30 when they have the music."

We make a place for folks like that. We allow the listeners to take their place in the middle of the worshipers. We allow Simeon to have their little territory in the middle of Judah. But God's plan isn't for Simeon to be by himself. Simeon's brothers may have forgotten him in the Egyptian jail, but God never did. God made sure that Simeon was restored to his brothers.

Genesis 43:23 (KJV) And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them.

Simeon, the man, was restored and it was God who made sure that it happened. Likewise, when the tribe of Simeon was given its territory, it was God who selected the land. It was God who decided that Simeon would be surrounded by Judah. It was God who determined that Simeon would not only be surrounded by Judah, but it would be absorbed by Judah as well.

Simeon didn't disappear; Simeon became Judah.

If you're in this church and you're just here to listen; you're a member of the modern-day tribe of Simeon. You have your allotment; you can sit in your favorite pew if you like. But be aware that your territory is surrounded by Judah; by people of praise.

God's plan was and is for Simeon to be surrounded by Judah; for listening to be surrounded by praise. But His long-term plan is for Simeon to be an island permanently inside of Judah. He doesn't plan for those of you here just for the

show to remain independent from the praise. God's plan has always been for Simeon to change from being surrounded by Judah to becoming part of Judah; for those of you who are here only to listen to become people of praise.

Praise is where the Lord lives. Praise is how we invite Him into our presence. If you make yourself an island in a sea of praise, you will get to see the Lord work in miraculous ways... In other people's lives. But if you join us in praise, you will see the Lord move in your own life.

Don't be the "other brother." Raise your hands. Make the journey to the altar. Don't just watch and listen to the praise; become part of it. It's the natural order of God's plan.