

Unremembered Loss

For all the news and information from the world of Nathrae, and for the story Unremembered Loss

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Merry Christmas and welcome to the Unremembered Loss newsletter. Last Christmas I wrote *A Shepherd's Story*. Continuing the tradition I give you *An Innkeeper's Story*. If you don't know the story - and want to find out what happens after my story ends - you can read it in Luke 2:1-20. I've used Hebrew names in the story. You can probably guess that Yosef is Joseph, but maybe not that Miryam is Mary, Ya'akov is Jacob, and Adonai is The Lord. To receive future issues of the newsletter sign up at <http://www.douglasclarke.com/lists>

Douglas G Clarke

An Innkeeper's Story

No Room at the Inn

I had just closed the door, having told the traveler that (just as the sign outside said) there were no rooms left, when the next knock came. I waited a moment, trying to calm myself, then gave a quick prayer, "Adonai, grant me peace and be with these travelers who can find no rest.

I opened the door and saw a man - behind him a young woman sat on a donkey. He looked tired and dirty from many days on the road. The woman smiled at me and I could see hope in her eyes - which made my words even harder to say. "I am sorry. I have no room to let you rest in."

The woman's smile faded. She cast her eyes down. The man just nodded his head, turned away, and lead the donkey into the crowd that filled the street.

My heart ached for them, but what could I do? I already had four families in each room.

I continued to open the door for the rest of the day - each time seeing a traveler who was looking for a place to stay while the Romans did their census.

Some just turned and walked away. Others pleaded with me. A few hurled insults at me. One even tried to force his way past me.

When I locked the door for the night and made my way through the crowded inn, I felt as if I had been beaten. I made my way to the inner courtyard and saw that the rest of my family was still as busy as I had been all day. My daughters carried plates of food to the waiting guests. My youngest son put wood on the cooking fire. My wife, bless her soul, stood at the fire, her clothes wet from sweat, keeping everything running smoothly.

As I surveyed the chaos, something caught my eye. Standing just on the other side of our gate was the man from before. I walked over to my wife and asked "How long has he been waiting?"

Sara looked over at him and then back to me. "One, maybe two hours. No one has talked to him."

As I approached him, he said, “Shalom aleichem.” If only Adonai’s peace be could be with my house in these troubled times.

I didn’t acknowledged his greeting - instead I ran my fingers down the knotted threads hanging down from the corners of my tunic. How could I not return peace to him? “Aleichem shalom.”

We stood there for a few minutes - he waiting for me to test him - I not wanting to take the next step. As I considered turning and walking away from him, I saw the young woman again and the hope in her eyes. How could I turn away?

“Who are you?” I said.

“I am Yosef, son of Ya’akov, a descendant of King David, and this is my wife, Miryam.”

“What do you want?” I asked.

“I wish to enter into your household and work beside you.”

“You know that I have no room,” I stated.

“So you have said. My wife has told me that if we honor you, Adonai will provide.”

I opened the gate. “And so he shall. Welcome to my Home.”

Yosef was true to his word. I could see their weariness, but as soon as Yosef had helped Miryam off her donkey, he picked up an axe and started splitting wood for the fire.

That’s when I noticed that Miryam was with child. I was horrified that I had almost sent her away - twice. I brought her a chair and water to clean up with. I then thanked Adonai for sparing me the shame.

Late that evening, after all of our guests were asleep, Sara brought us food. As we ate, I was wondering were I would put Yosef and Miryam.

“Where are you from?” asked Ehi, my youngest son.

“We are from Nazareth, in Galilee,” said Yosef.

“Will your child come soon?”

Miryam smiled. “Yes, he will. Within the week”

My son and Yosef talk for the rest of the meal. They talked about the size of the fish in the Sea of Galilee, the trip to Bethlehem, and about Yosef’s life as a carpenter.

“Where are you sleeping tonight?” Ehi asked Miryam when Sara and his sister started clearing the table.

“I’m not sure, your father has not said,” Miryam replied.

“If you don’t mind watching the sheep for me, you can sleep on my pad in the barn. I’m sure my brothers will let me stay in their room.”

Yosef smiled at Ehi. “That is very generous of you, but I don’t want you to have to move for us.”

“Are we not friends? Have we not shared a meal together? Have we not shared our dreams?” asked Ehi.

Yosef slowly stroked his beard. “I suppose we are.”

“Well then, moving is what a friend would do.”

With that, Ehi jumped up and ran into the stable. Moments later he emerged carrying his things and took them into the house.

I sat there dumbfounded. Had I doubted that Adonai would provide? I thanked Adonai for giving a son like Ehi. I’m not sure how I would have reacted to being offered a pad in the stable, but Yosef and Miryam seemed thrilled and honored at the prospect.

I watched them walk into the barn, hand-in-hand. I remembered when Sara and I use to walk like that - it made me smile. As I prepared for sleep I wondered at what Adonai had already done and at what the week might bring.