

Monologue – Jacob’s Letter to his Son, Joseph

A Christmas Reading

Son,

I hope you don’t find this letter until you are well into your trip. By hiding it deep into you fig and date rations, you should find this about a day or two prior to your arrival in Bethlehem. Some letters are best read at a distance. I trust you’ll understand.

Your mother and I are at a loss at how to respond to your, might we say, stubborn, insistence on taking that pregnant girl as your wife. Socially it’s disastrous. The tongues are still wagging around here and your poor mother has to endure a lot of questions whenever she goes to market or the well to draw water.

Naturally, I have it a bit easier, except for when I see the rabbi. He glares at me with “how can your family allow this?” type of stare. He’s good at it. Got it down just right. I can feel the embers of his pupils warm the back of my neck whenever I shrug and continue on my way.

Still, I sometimes wonder whether he is right. How can we allow this? Pregnant while betrothed. The order seems backward, wouldn’t you agree?

But it is not an issue of allowing it. You are of age. Now for us, it is a matter of accepting it. Hence this letter.

This woman, this wife of yours, Mary, just doesn’t seem like the type to go out and do this to you. There is a disconnect here which we fail to grasp. She seems so nice

Or perhaps it was done to her? Vanquish the thought! (This is the last we’ll mention it—if this letter ever found its way into some of the local soldier’s hands I would not want to answer for that allegation. So please be discreet once you’ve read what I’ve written.)

These questions aside, here she is in her condition, and together you are on your way to be enrolled.

And you've based this on one night's dream? I know you're certain that dream was from God, but have you considered it possibly a by-product of one of your mother's quiches? I always do a lot of nocturnal rumbling and turning after I've had too many of them (as good as they are).

Of course, I'm not serious. I believe in the power of dreams but it's message of acceptance is contrary to what our synagogue community would say.

The purpose of this letter, though, was not to rehash all of this stuff again, but it does feel good to have put it to papyrus. The reason why your mother and I are writing is simple: when you and Mary return . . . we will welcome both of you (all three of you!) home.

The past is what fades immediately behind us and that is where it should remain. What counts most is our present and our move toward a shalom-filled future. Family squabbles, nagging questions will, in due time, all be put to rest. We look forward to a new beginning with both of you. We believe that, somehow, the baby is part of that peace-filled future for which we all yearn.

Together, we are one family under God.

We look forward to your return.

Love,
Dad (and Mom)

Harold Schilk (Canada), 2009. Springridge Mennonite Church.

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