

WAY TO SHILOH

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THE STORY OF THE LAMB

I will relate to you a story. It took place away from here, in a land very like ours, but in the land of the story, the animals speak. I rather think they speak to us, for there are no humans there, but we are very like them.

The animals dwelt in a place called Elagiel, amongst the vast landscape of mountains, hills and rocks, at a time of trouble. You see, the land was stricken by drought and the animals plagued with famine. The reason for this was a great and terrible curse that came from the breaking of the universal land laws. Therefore swarms of locusts came and stripped the land of all its vegetation regularly. All the animals were under this curse and their trouble was common to all, even the fish. There had been a good lake, but all that was left of it now was a cracked lakebed, and the fish that lived had buried themselves in the mud for emergency hibernation. Among those that dwelt there were a large number of sheep and goats, some pigs, two donkeys, hens and chicks, sparrows, an oxen, some dogs and a fox.

The situation was becoming so bad that none of them expected to survive for much longer. However, at this time there was great excitement amongst the sheep, for one of their number had given birth to a male lamb, and as they looked upon him, an old sheep said, "He's just perfect", and they named him Shiloh. The times were still troubled indeed but, to their surprise, he started to give them hope. For he professed to know of an underground spring that would renew the land. How he could know of this spring, as he had never left their village, they didn't know, but he seemed quite sure and spoke with some authority on the matter.

As time passed, Shiloh busied himself by creating a small garden and trying to grow vegetables from seed he had found. The others told him it was a waste of time, but incredibly, he did yield a small crop, but not enough to feed anyone for long.

Then, one day when he was older, he saw a sparrow lying dead on the ground, and he started to bid the animals to follow him. After some deliberation, a group of them set off. Shiloh even asked them to dig up the fish and bring them along, so they did. But, amongst them was the fox, who had been

desirous to kill and eat Shiloh ever since his birth, but his plans had been frustrated, never seeming to work out. This journey, the fox saw as his greatest opportunity yet, so he recruited some of the dogs, and, when they had travelled a few days, they seized their moment and surrounded Shiloh the lamb. But, at that time, to their great surprise, a large earthquake hit the area, and large fissures opened up into which the fox and the dogs plunged. The pigs, possessed with fear, rushed in the wrong direction and headlong into another crevasse, for they lived by their appetites and feelings and were driven by them. As the land shook, the ox stumbled in as well, but was caught just in time by the sheep and pulled up. Shiloh then did a remarkable thing, he commanded the earthquake to stop, and it obeyed him! He then commended the sheep for their actions, and the travellers continued their journey wondering at what they had been witnesses of.

The days passed and the animals became tired and hungry, and so Shiloh fed them with the provision of some fruit and vegetables he had brought along from his garden. As they ate, the chicks stood beneath him to shade themselves from the sun. Soon they came to the neighbouring region of Babylon and, as the evening drew in, Shiloh beckoned them towards the city of Edom. It was there that the snakes and the locusts dwelt with the king snake Tyrus.

As they approached, the goats and dogs murmured against Shiloh saying, "Why do we follow him? Can he be right about the spring? We're better off going our own way." It was then that they saw what looked like a well-fed sheep coming to meet them from Edom, and so the goats went to see whom it was, and what he had to say. As they got closer, they saw it was a wolf in a sheepskin covering and he welcomed them with fine words. The goats explained everything to him and, after hearing of their predicament, the wolf replied, "You are not to worry, for all is well, as the good king Tyrus is prepared to have you stay with him in the city as his servants and to lavish you with all the city's dainties. What say you?" Well, they returned, excitedly, to Shiloh with the proposition, but he refused, saying that they had no business with that monstrous monarch Tyrus or his deceitful gifts, but must, never the less, enter the city to find the spring. Shiloh warned them not to trust Tyrus, but to watch, as the spring would be revealed.

The donkey, which had carried the supplies that were now finished, offered to carry Shiloh the rest of the way, and as they entered Edom they rejoiced at how far he had brought them and how they would now see the spring. However their joy quickly turned to gloom, as upon entering, there was no spring to be seen, only slithering snakes and creeping locusts, and other goats, dogs and pigs in slavery to the king.

Then Tyrus crawled up before them, and accused Shiloh of bringing them on a pointless journey, promising them a dream that was not true, for there was no spring in the city. He declared to the group that he, as king, was still graciously prepared to have them as his servants, and that they could enjoy all the pleasures of the city if they handed the lamb over to him. The animals looked at Shiloh for a response, but he made no reply. Tyrus laughed Shiloh to scorn amongst the snakes and locusts. He said that he would give the animals the night to think it over. He then slithered away into his dark chambers.

That night the group didn't know what to think, but Shiloh urged them to trust in him. However, one of the goats had had just about enough, and slipped away to see the wolf. After his meeting he returned, and as the night grew dark the soft hiss of the king's army of vipers could be heard, and the goat shouted, "Ambush! Ambush! Quick, this way!" and led them into a trap. They had followed him in their panic, but Shiloh had not, and he was left where he was. "Do what you must." Said Shiloh. "How did you know I was hear?" Replied Tyrus from the shadows. Shiloh remained silent. "Answer me!" Shouted Tyrus as he came into the light with the wolf. "Don't you know I could kill you now." Shiloh replied, "You would have no power over me if it wasn't given you by another." "Enough of this foolishness. Bind him!" commanded Tyrus. So the snakes did so, and placed him on a great altar. There they announced that he would be killed as a ringleader and for speaking false things, but the truth was, they wanted to consume the group of animals themselves, or press them into slavery.

So, at the appointed time the wolf severed a symbolic silver chord, and the grisly deed was done, a knife was plunged into Shiloh's heart and he gave up the ghost.

As the scorching sun rose on the parched land, the animals returned to the scene and saw Shiloh's blood on the altar. They wailed and mourned him, saying, "He was our guide, we are sheep without a shepherd. They have struck him and we are scattered." The goat who had betrayed Shiloh and received a reward from the king, was stricken and withdrew having the delights of Edom, which had been sweet in his mouth, turn as it were, into gravel in his stomach. He departed into the desert, where he fell head long before the heat of the sun and died.

Back at the altar, one of their number, who had knelt before the altar crying, exclaimed, "Look, look at the ground!" And they stood amazed as the blood from off the altar seeped into the soil and a shoot began to appear. It grew and grew before them, until it broke the altar and stood in its place as a great tree bringing forth ripe fruit to eat. Its roots were so big, that they broke up the hard ground and, sure enough, as Shiloh had said, the spring was revealed in that place, and flowed from beneath. First a trickle, then the torrent of a river. As their eyes followed the water, they saw it flow over someone's feet, and as they looked up, they saw what seemed to be a lion, with a cross shaped scar on his chest, standing in the river. "Who are you?" They inquired. The animal replied, "Don't you know me, not even after our journey together?" Then they realised it was Shiloh back from the dead! He then gave such a roar that it sounded like many thunders in one. At this, the locusts at once took flight, and the wolf, snakes, pigs, dogs and goats, hurried for cover as Tyrus fled all the way into the region of Gehenna.

The days following this event were blessed days for the land. The spring had irrigated the soil, the lakes were replenished and crops were cultivated into a great harvest. The animals were fed and watered, and Shiloh re-named the entire country Canaan, and the city Horeb-Salem, although, he promised a land flowing with milk and honey was just over the mountain called Jerusalem, and one day he would take them there. The fish were placed in the river where they shook off their muddy cocoon, and breathed again, living to swim into the seas of the world and spread the message about the sacrifice of Shiloh and the resulting spring.

Shiloh, however, announced he was leaving, but would send a friend of his to bring a message of comfort, council and word from him of how they should continue living. So, as always, what Shiloh said came to be, and he left. As they watched him walk up a great mountain, he grew ever smaller in their sight until the clouds obscured him from their view in the distance. Then they heard him say, "I am with you always."

Then, with peace in their hearts, they rejoiced at what they were witnesses to in knowing Shiloh, and returned to Shalem. As they approached its walls they saw a light flickering in the sky above the city, curiously they proceeded, and saw it was a white bird that descended and landed in the branches of the great tree. They rushed to meet him and inquired after his name. He replied, "I've been sent by your friend, my name is Jah the Dove."

