

# Grandpa's Shalom

A young man was fishing in his grandfather's lake one afternoon when he asks his grandpa a question. "What does the word 'Shalom' mean?"

His grandfather replied, "It can mean a variety of things. The first time it was used it was by one of the great patriarchs of Israel." His grandfather then told him a story he learned from his grandfather when he was about the young man's age. It was a story from the Bible about a young man named Joseph. Some say he was so excited to see his loved ones that he used a word that only his brothers would have known, "Shalom".

It was a word that meant peace. It had been passed down from the time that God walked with Abraham. It was a comforting word that was used to assure Abraham that his ancestors would be many, and they would last until the end of the world.

## Joseph's Story

I wasn't very old when my mom passed away. She was giving birth to my baby brother Benjamin. He would be the last son born to Jacob. Jacob who was the grandson of the same Abraham that found favor with God. The stories that I heard from my father and grandfather about how great their God was, stayed with me all my life. My mom was my dad's first true love. That is probably why the other brothers were a little jealous.

We had a big family. My dad's first wife Leah, had six sons. My mom had just the two sons, myself and Benjamin. In what I thought was unusual as I grew older, dad had four more sons with two of his wife's handmaidens. There was Dan and Naphtali from my mom's handmaiden and there was, Gad and Asher from Leah's handmaiden. These men would become the twelve tribes of Israel.

I remember my dad telling me the story about how he had wrestled with an angel of God one night. The angel told him his new name would be Israel. It means you have striven with God and with men and you have prevailed. The name didn't really catch on at the time, but gradually we would be known, as the Children of Israel.

By the time I was seventeen I had heard all the stories about my great-grandfather Abraham. I hoped that I too would have that personal relationship with God. Not one of my brothers were impressed when I told them about a dream I had about them. I thought it was a good thing, but it sure made some brothers real mad. They were already mad about not being born to Racheal.

The last time I went out to check on my brothers, they got angry with me and threw me in a pit. They called me names like Dreamer. I understood as I grew older it was part of God's plan all along. My oldest brother kept them from killing me right there on the spot. When he walked off leaving me in the pit, he had no idea my brothers would sell me off to some traders. It

turned out to be how God would save the whole family of Israel for generations to come.

The little boy's grandfather went on to tell him the rest of the story about Joseph that is written in the book of Genesis. Israel's people would both live and multiply in a time of famine because the God of Abraham had provided for them a sanctuary in peace. From that point, up to even today if you go to that area of the world, they still greet you with that word "Shalom".

"Why would you be curious about that word," the grandfather asked him?

"We are studying synonyms in my class and it was the only one I missed on the test," the little boy replied. "I put Jesus, and that was wrong. I knew I had heard it in Sunday School so I just guessed."

"Well, you weren't too far off," Grandpa assured him. "The type of peace Jesus brings to a person's life is often called a Shalom peace. It gives the person the comfort of knowing no matter what happens in your life God will help you through the situation. By the time of Jesus's day, the term had lost a lot of its place as a special greeting of comfort. It was more like something in our day when people say, "How ya doing." It is nice but not sincere."

"When Jesus came on earth and walked with man, that Shalom peace came with Him. From the time He called His first

apostles until the day He ascended into heaven He brought that peace with Him.”

“Jesus met a woman at a well in Samaria and gave her peace. He called it “Living water.””

“There was the time this woman touched His Garment for healing and immediately she was healed. Jesus gave her that Shalom peace that only comes when you experience what God can do in your life. There are so many other stories about Jesus and the peace He brought to so many in His day, If I was to tell you them all we would not have any time to fish,” his grandfather said.

The young man’s grandfather told him that the Shalom peace was available to anyone today. He told him of a scripture that tells it all. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever believes should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Several years later, when the young man had young men of his own, he stood at the graveside of the man that led him to know that Shalom peace for his own life. He stayed back a little longer than the other grandchildren to say good bye. He said a prayer thanking God for that Shalom peace. Then he turned to the grave and with tears in his eyes he said to his grandfather, “Shalom”.