

How You Can Cause a Stir in Heaven

Once upon a time, there were two brothers—one married and the other single. The brothers divided a field in half and lived in peace and harmony.

One night, the unmarried brother was lying in bed, thinking, *My brother must have it really hard. He has a wife and children—many mouths to feed—and he's probably finding it hard to make ends meet.* Therefore, the unmarried man decided to gather up some of his grain and secretly take it to his brother's side of the field as a gift.

Meanwhile, the married brother was lying in bed on that very same night, and he was thinking, *My brother must have it really hard. He's on his own, while I have a wife and children to help me with my work.* So the married brother decided to gather up some of his grain and secretly take it to his brother's side of the field as a gift.

In the darkness of night, the two brothers snuck out carrying their gifts of grain, and they stumbled directly into each other at the boundary between their fields. Immediately, they realized what the other was doing, and they fell into each other's arms and cried with joy and love for each other.

This act of caring between brothers caused a stir in heaven, and that's why it was decided that the Jewish temple—a place of connection and love—would be built on this very spot.

The story is just a fable, and no one knows exactly how old the tale is, but it captures the spirit of this piece of land, which still stands in Jerusalem today. In fact, this plot of land, Mount Moriah, is where Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, to God.

This land is where Solomon built the first temple. It is also where the second temple was built, and King Herod added to its splendor, making it one of the most magnificent places of worship during the time of Jesus. The Romans destroyed the temple in A.D. 70, and control of the spot switched hands over the centuries, eventually becoming a holy site for Muslims today.

I first heard the legend of the two brothers when my wife and I were in Jerusalem this past spring, taking an incredible tour behind the Western Wall. The Western Wall, sometimes called the Wailing Wall, is the only remaining portion of the structure that held up the temple during the time of Jesus; it's the place where Jews and Christians alike write prayers on slips of paper and squeeze them into crevices in the wall.

My wife and I both went to the Western Wall to pray. But our tour decided not to go up on the Temple Mount because we would've had to stand in line for two hours, and the Islamic officials do not allow you to bring a Bible there. But we still got a great view of it from high up on the Mount of Olives to the east.

This plot of land, where the temple once stood, is also where King David purchased a threshing floor (1 Chron. 21). A threshing floor, in Bible days, was typically a circular patch where farmers spread out their harvested wheat. Then they ran over the wheat with a threshing sledge, which we got to see in Nazareth. The sledge was a large piece of wood, riddled with holes. Stones were jammed into the holes so that when the sledge was dragged across the wheat, the rocks would break the grain.

Next, the farmer would use a winnowing fork to scoop up the shattered grain and toss it into the air. The wind would carry away the undesirable chaff, while the grain fell back to earth. The Bible uses the threshing floor as a powerful image of judgment—a place where the chaff and the grain, sin and

goodness, are separated.

Likewise, the temple built upon the threshing floor is the place where good and evil are separated, where evil is blown away by a holy wind, leaving only the pure love of God to fall back to the ground.

The threshing floor on Mount Moriah, which became the temple, is also a place where sacrifices are made—whether you're talking about the sacrifice of Abraham, the sacrifice of unblemished lambs in the temple or the sacrifice that the two brothers in the legend were prepared to make for each other.

For centuries, pilgrims have streamed to Jerusalem to see this singular spot, but you don't need to travel around the world to make the same connection with God. Although I'm not downplaying the thrill of seeing the Temple Mount, it's comforting to know we can have the same dramatic encounter with God in the small, wooden-frame church down the road, and we can meet Him, face to face, in the temple in our hearts. After all, there's a threshing floor within each one of us where good and evil fight it out and where we can encounter the pure love of God.

So tonight when you're going to sleep, be like the two brothers and ask God to stir your heart. Ask God to blow away the chaff from your life. And ask God what you can do to show love for your brother or sister or wife or child or friend.

Isn't it time that you too caused a stir in heaven? {eoa}

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