

(#17) Long Predicted Results

“The predictable -- but not immediate -- result would be the baby boy’s death.” (see #16)

Earlier (#11), I shared snippets of commentary from *Dick Gregory’s Bible Tales*, which has been a personal favorite for a long time. Rereading in the process of preparing *Rereading Exodus*, I am struck by what has changed and what has not since the early 1970s. Much of both this book’s content and history is relevant to this journey.

Dick Gregory’s Bible Tales

One obvious change between Gregory’s 1974 writing and today is a shift in language: Men are rarely called “cats” these days, for example, and we have “areas of disinvestment” rather than “ghettos.” I still use “folks” for small and large groups of people, but it’s not common usage these days -- although gender-conscious folks now use “folx.”

In addition, some readers might have to do a little Duck-Duck-Going (or use a search engine that tracks, records and sells one’s every move, if preferred) to get the full meaning in references to “blockbusting” or for passages like this one:

House Majority Leader Thomas P. (“Tip”) O’Neill (D-Mass) says there’s a line going around Washington suggesting if Rose Mary Woods had been Moses’ secretary, we’d only have three commandments. There’d be seven unaccounted for.

-- *Dick Gregory’s Bible Tales*, p.94

But the main themes, and many of the facts he cites, have not changed at all. In some cases, things have gotten worse. So, consider for a moment some implications here: We are reading a passage from 1974, and basic conditions described are still easily recognizable after 40+ years. That means that we have whole generations born into those conditions. And that, in itself, is a worsening of conditions, bringing a longer and deeper legacy of death. As Gregory says about the plagues of Exodus --

The plague of blood symbolizes a tragic reality....

Pharaoh was willing to negotiate in earnest only after his own son was killed. Countless Hebrew mothers and fathers had lost sons. But Pharaoh only listened when death came to his own household. The loss of a loved one caused Pharaoh to change his oppressive ways.

I wonder how many wars would be avoided if the loved ones of the national leaders were the first soldiers to face enemy fire?

-- *Dick Gregory’s Bible Tales*, p.87

We’ll return to the abandoning of babies at the start of Exodus, with another Gregory excerpt, shortly. But first...

Bible Tales Today

I strongly recommend reading this book. Used copies are rare, now, and priced way too high, though.. Library copies are not common, either (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at NYPL has one). Stein and Day publisher -- more history worth exploring, BTW -- has been gone for decades. Perhaps it’s time to lobby for re-releasing this valuable resource.

A Blast from the Past

This is the Kirkus Review from October 1, 1974:

Gregory's hip-talking, jive-assed renditions of Adam and Eve, Abraham and Isaac, Joseph and his brothers, Samson and Delilah, etc., are his way of preachin' and teachin' to white folks about God's priorities and how people have messed them up. From the examples of biblical folk disobeying the Lord (who frequently comes off like a mean, spiteful, s.o.b.) Gregory extracts neat little moralisms re racial bigotry, pollution of the planet, male chauvinism, Watergate, etc. Consider that forbidden apple in the Garden: "'Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. If there had been any Black folks in the garden, the serpent would have blamed us.'" That's about as funny as any of this gets. And when Gregory starts pushing "'fruitarianism'" (fruit is all he eats) and birth control as a genocidal trick directed against Blacks, you do begin to wonder if he's really got as direct a line to the Almighty as he thinks. -- <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/a/dick-gregory/dick-gregorys-bible-tales-with-commentary/>

Disclaimer: I (primary author) value safe, affordable birth-control for everyone and access to abortion and sterilization for all who seek those. Moreover, I have zero patience for men seeking to restrict women's healthcare options. Therefore, I was tempted to skip, or severely trim, this passage. However, Gregory's birth-control positions were strong and lasting, and he is not alone, historically or today, in these positions. So I am sharing an uncensored, but shortened, passage from his chapter, "Up the River and into a Foster Home":

Pharaoh's genocide plan was a lot more up front than many of the genocidal schemes practiced against Black and other minorities today. Today it's called "birth control."

...One of the definitions of *genocide* is "imposing measures intended to prevent births within a group." Government programs for poor Black folks that emphasize birth control, sterilization, and abortion availability obviously fit into that category.

But there's also a more subtle strain of genocide in the background. Black people are herded into small, over-crowded areas called ghettos, made to live in substandard housing where heat, water, and plumbing facilities are lacking and adequate public services like garbage removal are withheld, making the ghetto areas breeding grounds for rats, disease, and death. Add to this the poor food found in ghetto supermarkets, the absence of health services, and the fires that consume the rundown houses and the little kids who live in them.

The result is an infant mortality rate that is at least twice as high for Black folks as it is for white folks. The same pattern is true for Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, and Indians. The combination of birth control, abortion, and infant mortality produces a genocide plan a lot more subtle than Pharaoh's. -- *Dick Gregory's Bible Tales*, p.76-77.

More on "genocide" to come.

Sefira: Counting Days & Weeks/Marking the Journey

What were the long-term effects of oppression for the people of Exodus?

What about the U.S., since the 1970s?
or for the last 400 years?

**After nightfall, see Appendix and note --
Yesterday we counted sixteen.**