

# GRACE GAZETTE

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*Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

*Hebrews 12:12-13*

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## THE STRONG BULLS OF BASHAN

*Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. Psalm 22:12*

The land of Bashan is mentioned fifty-nine times in the Old Testament. Twenty-two times when Bashan is mentioned, we also read that Og was her king. We are told very little about King Og and/or Bashan but we do know that he was one of two kings of the Amorites which the Israelites did battle with in their journey through the wilderness. (see Deut. 3:8) Sihon was king of Heshbon and Og of Bashan. These Amorites had taken these cities/kingdoms from the Moabites.

The Israelites had made a request of Sihon that he would allow them to pass through his land peaceably but he refused and attacked them. During the ensuing battle Israel prevailed, overthrowing Sihon and taking Heshbon and ultimately sixty cities ruled over by Og, king of Bashan.. *“Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites. And Moses sent to spy out Jaazer, and they took the villages thereof, and drove out the Amorites that were there. And they turned and went up by the way of Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he, and all his people, to the battle at Edrei. And the LORD said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land.”* (Num 21:31-35)

This King Og of Bashan was quite a man of renown in those parts being one of the last of the race of giants which dwelt in the land at that time (see Deut. 3:11) It is mentioned in the scriptures (as a means of testifying to his size) that he had an iron bedstead which was nine cubits long and four cubits wide (approximately 13 feet six inches by six feet). In fact Bashan is described as “the land of the giants” Deut. 3:13; Josh. 13:12).

So while the word “*Bashan*” literally means, “fertile”, it does indeed represent a land of great strength and presents itself as a producer of strong opposition which was a formidable foe for the Israelites as they came to do battle, most especially due to the gigantic king who was their leader.

While Bashan is known as a land of strength it had also become renown as a territory which produced livestock which was recognized as both strong and productive, (see Deut.32:14; Ezek. 39:18) as well as a haunt for beasts of prey such as lions and bears (see Deut. 33:22) and a land known for its mighty trees (see Ezek 27:6; Zech. 11:12)

Yet it appears that the cattle of Bashan were especially well known for their aggressive, and even oppressive tendencies as we see them referred to by the prophet Amos, *“Hear this word, ye kine (i.e.; cattle) of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.”* (Amos 4:1) Now no doubt he is specifically referring to the inhabitants of the land of Bashan, but he uses their cattle as an illustration of their own tendencies.

Thus we see the LORD JESUS CHRIST, whose prayer David records in the twenty second Psalm, referring to the fact that HE was surrounded by the “*strong bulls of Bashan.*” It is impossible for mere mortals, as we are, to fully comprehend the depths of the sufferings and the

utter darkness of despair that gripped the heart and soul of our SAVIOR as HE entered into the very anteroom of hell in order to deliver that people whom HE loved with an everlasting love. *“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”* (Isa 53:3-8)

We are surely dumbfounded as we read of the barrenness of HIS soul as HE undertook the redemption of that Bride which is HIS. Can any man fathom the depths of HIS sorrow? None eye did pity HIM as HE hung between heaven and earth. For in that day, did HIS own FATHER forsake HIM and the heavens became dark and foreboding as HE cried out in HIS thirst. Yet in such a time, when it was obvious to the passerby that HE was even cast out from the gaze of HIS Heavenly FATHER, yet did HIS soul cleave unto HIM who had sent HIM to accomplish such a thankless task for those who mocked HIM and turned their eyes away from seeing HIS visage so marred more than any man.

When any man (by his own logic) would have cursed GOD and blasphemed, yet did this perfect MAN cry out the more for the aid of HIM whom HIS soul loved more than life itself. Would any man boast of faith, let him be ashamed to compare his best estate, to that of HIM who did no sin neither was guile found in HIS mouth as HE committed HIMSELF unto HIM in whom HE would safely trust, though HE slay HIM with the horrors of hell itself.

Yes the *“mighty bulls of Bashan”* did beset HIM as they compassed around HIM, snorting and pawing the ground in anticipation of HIS demise. At that moment HE was powerless to effect HIS own deliverance, not due to any lack of innate strength, but because HE willingly became weak for our sakes. HE who is the AUTHOR of LIFE itself, HE who spoke the worlds into existence, HE who makes peace and creates evil, did give HIMSELF up to HIS tormentors, that HE might bring in an everlasting PEACE and RIGHTEOUSNESS for the objects of HIS love.

O you men of religion, who would go about to establish your own righteousness, and dare to speak of your duty and obedience, let your mouths be silent and your heads hang in abasement as you look upon HIM who is the RIGHTEOUSNESS of GOD. What would you offer in light of that which HE has undertaken to illustrate the only STANDARD of righteousness which is accepted in the courts of heaven. How foolish to seek a refuge in your own pitiful offerings, compared to that which is wrought by HIM who is the MEDIATOR and CHAMPION of that people whom HE loved from before the foundation of the world.

HE was despised and mocked, especially in light of the fact that the LORD had delivered others who trusted in HIM. *“But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”* (Psa 22:6-8) When HE should have been pitied, men laughed at HIM.

Yet HIS trust in HIS FATHER was so strong and natural that HE could never find any place of refuge but there. *“But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.”* (Psa 22:9-10) HE came forth from HIS mother's womb as the mighty SAVIOR of HIS people, and it never occurred to HIM to do anything but to perform HIS FATHER's will.

Though HE was compassed about with HIS destroyers, yet HE shrank not back from the task at hand. *“And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.”* (Isa 63:5) mam