

It was enough. Joseph was alive. But Jacob does not “turn cartwheels.” “And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.” And he did so. Jacob spoke as a thoroughly beaten man. Numb. Maybe he was, for God had been chastening him his whole life. God softened Jacob’s inborn grasping, self-reliant nature, turning him more and more to rely upon Himself. This turned out to be a lifetime project, but He persisted and He succeeded.

Jacob made his decision and set out toward Egypt. It had been the source both of riches and stumbling to Abraham and Sarah. It was where they had acquired Hagar. Jacob’s father Isaac had consistently avoided Egypt his entire life. (He had gotten into trouble with the Philistines when he had fled a famine, as had Abraham.) Showing some godly caution Jacob stopped at Beersheba, where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt. There he offered sacrifices and inquired of God before he left the land of his pilgrimage. The land where his forefathers, Abraham and Isaac had walked as pilgrims and aliens. There God spoke to him in visions of the night. He reaffirmed His promises to Jacob’s father and grandfather and reassured him it was OK to take his family to Egypt. In fact, He affirmed that He would there make of Jacob a great nation. And best of all, He reassured him He would go down into Egypt with him, and would surely bring them up again. And, yes, Jacob would die there and Joseph would tenderly close his eyelids. Jacob would be brought up to his burying place. He would be forerunner, with his parents and grandparents, of the ultimate return of his children to their promised inheritance in Canaan. A major attitude change had taken hold. Though he was head and patriarch of his family, Jacob had personally operated for decades in a mostly self centered mode. But upon the restoration (“resurrection”) of Joseph to him he seems to have taken his role as spiritual leader seriously. And his sons seem to have begun to show more respect and care for their father and his feelings. How good is God to have patiently orchestrated all of the troubles (and blessings) of Jacob’s life for good. At the age of one hundred and thirty years, an alien in a foreign land, armed with the promises of God, Jacob began to live a truly spiritual life and walk with God.

Here the narrative pauses while his whole family is named. A list that is lovingly repeated several times throughout scripture, lastly in Revelation. There representatives of the twelve tribes are sealed for preservation through the great tribulation about to fall upon the earth, Revelation 7. Their history will end as it began, preserved by One sent ahead, as was Joseph. His name is Jesus of the tribe of Judah.

There have been some questions raised over the list given here in Genesis. We should not be stumbled by apparent discrepancies with other passages of scripture. Most have

readily evident explanations and all should be humbly accepted by faith acknowledging they are inspired by God Himself. If we do not immediately understand, we can patiently await God’s good time for understanding. Greater familiarity with the scriptures, greater spiritual maturity and greater familiarity with God’s thinking and ways may be necessary before He will open some passages to us.

With touching confidence and respect Jacob sent Judah ahead to alert Joseph of their impending arrival. Joseph now prepared his chariot and rode out to meet them. There beloved father and beloved son were reunited after nearly forty years apart. Similarly we are currently on the roadway to our reunion with the Lord. He went ahead (was sent ahead) to provide for our salvation.

The duplication of affirming statements assigning choicest land in Egypt by Joseph then by Pharaoh illustrate their remarkable unity of thought and intent throughout their reign. Perhaps they remind us faintly of the relationship of God the Father and the Son. Though two Separate Individuals, they are of one purpose, one mind and one will. God’s Unity is marked by an order that differentiates Them into specific roles in whatever they do. One in thought, generated by the Father, and in action, carried out by the Son, accomplishing the one will of the One God. Remarkably, Joseph speaks of himself being a father to Pharaoh.

*Genesis 45:8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.*

(Was Pharaoh younger than Joseph, a “child king,” like King Tut?)

While “every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians” the occupation of shepherd is highly regarded in God’s sight. He speaks of Himself as a shepherd both in the Old and New Testament. The passages are familiar to every Bible reader. For instance:

*Genesis 4:2 Abel was a keeper of sheep*

*Psalms 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

*John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

*1Peter 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

So they settled down in the normally lush land of Goshen. It is said to have been located in the northeast corner of Egypt, closest to the promised land. They brought with them all their flocks and herds—their wealth and livelihood—their life. And 400 years after God’s promise to Abram (Genesis 15) they would leave this spot in Egypt to return to the land of their inheritance with their flocks and herds.

By Ronald Canner, February 23, 2011