

Upon arrival in Egypt Jacob, the patriarch of the incubating nation of Israel, was greeted by his long lost son Joseph. Note the care Joseph took to arrange everything needed to accommodate his father and brothers and their families. As planned he soon arranged an interview with five of his brethren before Pharaoh. He carefully coached them to request they be granted the prime pasture lands of Goshen because of their livestock. They referred to their stay as a sojourn, not permanent. Pharaoh requested Joseph select some among them that were competent and ambitious who he could assign to manage his livestock.

Then Joseph brought His father, Jacob, before Pharaoh. There was no pomp or grandeur surrounding Jacob's entrance. Jacob's God given name Israel, "prince of God," was not used in this narrative, not by Joseph or others when speaking of Jacob. As far as we know Jacob had not blessed anyone before. But the first thing Jacob did upon entering the presence of Pharaoh was to bless him. The scripture state "*And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better,*" Hebrews 7:7 (KJV). If taken aback Pharaoh did not react in rage as a proud despotic ruler would. He was respectful of the elderly man's age and politely inquired how old he was. Perhaps the normal life span of the Egyptians was closer to the threescore and ten Moses later declared as normal in Psalm 90. Jacob's age was remarkable. His humble response was also.

"The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

This confession was a touching affirmation that the "heel-grabber," self-reliant son of Rebekah and Isaac, had truly yielded to God. His God. Praise God!

NoteThe word "evil used here is to be taken in the sense of "unpleasant and difficult" not necessarily as sinful.

After introductions and arrangements for the guests the account switches to telling the story of God's preservation and long range blessing of Egypt. How gracious God was to warn Pharaoh and to provide a wise savior for Egypt and the surrounding nations. Joseph's wise counsel and management of the resources he had accumulated before the famine hit assured Israel's survival to fulfill God's purposes.

But hadn't God sent the famine in the first place? And why? He had promised Abraham his descendants would be outside of Canaan for four generations, afflicted for part of that period, multiplying until powerful enough to conquer and populate Canaan, Genesis 15:13-16. The rest of the Pentateuch and Joshua record God's active involvement in their history to bring about fulfillment of His prophetic blessing. He was able to work all things together for good throughout. He continues today. Be assured the promises as yet unfulfilled have not been forfeited due to immense passages of time or enormous

intervening events.

Status Today: Christ, the "Seed," has been crucified, is risen, and is soon returning for us. Soon after He will come to save Jacob's descendants (Israel) and the earth from utter destruction. Meanwhile He constantly works with individuals, families, cities and nations inviting all, and bringing some, to blessing in Himself. Are we thinking and working in sync with Him and His purposes? We can't if we remain ignorant of His overall plan revealed throughout scripture. Yes, Israel as a nation has a future under its "Joseph," the Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour of the world.

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, which was composed about 300 year ago under England's monarchy, gives interesting insights into Genesis 47.

*<<http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/genesis/47.html>> The arrangements Joseph established with the impoverished Egyptian people systematically provided for their perpetual benefit and stability under the protection of their now beneficent king. While Pharaoh now "owned" them, his agent Joseph "grub staked" them so they could resume a normal and blessed life. A life more abundantly. He did not enslave them as so many greedy, power hungry rulers have done. But he did abruptly uproot them all and resettle them in cities so they became dependant upon him. They were obligated to him for their very lives, but he set them free. Free to live and manage their own lives. He only required a 20% share of their harvest. His government did not interfere with their individual initiative or the decisions each head of household made, wise or unwise. No controls, no incentives no bailouts. For the citizens, it was liberty with personal dignity and responsibility. Success depended upon personal wisdom, shrewd individuality, mutual cooperation and hard work. Government was there to protect them from attack, maintain peace and safety, law and order with justice. It could provide assistance in national crises such as a famine. Otherwise neighbors were left alone to help one another through local or personal adversity.

Joseph's arrangements reflect the spiritual responsibilities and privileges we have received from God. He sent His one and only Son who died to save us from our sins in our hopelessly lost condition. He has set us free from the bondage of sin to voluntarily love and serve Him, and one another, to live together in unity in the community of the Assembly and to tell the story of His love to others.

(Note: Perhaps we can envision in Joseph's government the future order for earthly believers under the blessed reign of the benevolent King of Glory during his Millennial reign on earth.)

At this point experiencing the famine hopefully helped the Israel and Egypt realize their dependance upon the true God of all creation, the God of the Hebrews. (We need to take that lesson to heart also. We are all only a year or so from starvation except for the merciful providence of God.)

Later, nearing death Jacob acted again by faith. He urgently demanded that Joseph swear to return his body to the promised land for burial with his fathers, in the cave Abraham had bought there. This act appointed the

nation's ultimate departure from Egypt to the Promised land.

By Ronald Canner, March 2, 2011