

On the verge of death, Jacob prophetically blessed his sons. His last words finished, he gathered himself into his bed and died. He was a man of faith and persistence despite his troubles and episodes of self reliance. Joseph expressed his love for his father affectionately weeping and kissing him. How the others reacted is not reported but their state of mind was revealed after the elaborate funeral and burial were over. Apparently they had harbored guilty consciences all the years while Jacob lived amongst them. They displayed the same reasonings of mind their father had labored under all his life. Indeed, they had apparently never openly confessed their sin against Joseph, against Jacob and against God. They had been forgiven, but were not free from a feeling of guilt. In their (unfounded) fear of Joseph they resorted to a ruse involving a false story about their father directing them to go to Joseph confessing their sins and requesting his forgiveness. Joseph wept. Why? Because of their lack of trust in his love for them? Because they had been living all those years under the burden of a guilty conscience? Because they had unnecessarily lived in torturing fear of his retribution when their father died?

How many today live in torturing fear of God's judgement for their sins? They know they are sinners and that Christ has died on the cross. But they have not believed that His death was enough to make them righteous in God's sight, giving them peace with God. Have you grasped this? Despite knowing about the cross of Christ many reason they must surely do something to gain favor with God, somehow pay for their sins to avoid punishment. Many believe the teaching that salvation is by their good deeds offsetting their bad deeds. Does Jesus weep as Joseph did? Weep because His all sufficient sacrifice on the cross is mocked by disbelief? His loving-kindness is deflected by self centered inhibitions due to a guilty conscious. In their anxiety the brothers finally confessed their sins to Joseph. He simply reassured them of his love and promised his continuing care.

1John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Romans 5:1 *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

Jacob had made Joseph promise to bury him back in the land of Canaan in the cave with Abraham, Isaac, and Leah, who had died there after Rachel. But while carrying out Jacob's dying request Joseph did not forget the highest authority in Egypt, Pharaoh. He went to him and formally requested permission to carry Jacob's corpse out of Egypt for burial in Canaan. Pharaoh still respected Joseph and freely granted permission. Joseph was highly respected by the Egyptian hierarchy he had governed for Pharaoh. Apparently he did not fear being unseated by rivals while he was away. A very large company of

Egyptian dignitaries accompanied the funeral procession to a threshing floor, (a level area) located outside Canaan. What an impressive sight for the natives. Moses described it as "beyond Jordan" as viewed by one in the promised land. The Egyptians did not cross Jordan into Canaan but Jacob's twelve sons did. (Joseph took his place as a son with his brethren.) They carried their father's mummy into the land and buried him in the cave with his ancestors. There they are, still awaiting resurrection. The brothers returned to their homes and families in Egypt. Joseph continued using his powerful place below Pharaoh to protect them and nourish them there. And so they all lived there happily ever after. Yes?

No? Jacob was about ninety years old when Joseph was born so Joseph was about fifty seven when Jacob died. He lived another 53 years to an age of 110. Then, before he died, he took an oath from the children of Israel as Jacob had of him years before. He admonished them that God would surely visit them (as He had promised Abraham). And when He did they were to carry his bones up to Canaan with them. The sequel to this story tells that story. Exodus and Joshua tell of their departure about 144 years later when they faithfully carried the bones with them. Until then the coffin remained among them for years, a mute reminder of God's promised return for them.

Hebrews 11:21 *By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.*

Exodus 13:19 *And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.*

Joshua 24:32 *And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.*

Acts 7:9 *And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, 10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. 14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. 15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, 16 And were carried over into Sycem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sycem. 17 ¶ But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, Stephen reminds us that all eleven brothers were returned*

and buried in Canaan, a sign in the end of their own faith in God. Their dead fathers continually beckoned them to return to the promised land and possess it. Where is our

hope? In heaven, where our risen Savior awaits us.

By Ronald Canner, March 23, 2011