



Notes

If you have questions during the week, please drop us an e-mail at jimsuttle@calvarychapel.com or philquintana@calvarychapel.com



Thru the Scriptures 2006-08



Nile Valley, with Pyramid in Distance

Genesis 42-50
 Feb 9th – Feb 15th, 2006

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Ti 3:16-17)

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Genesis—Theme

Book of Beginnings...of foundations. The beginning, the pattern and all beginnings are found in Genesis. All of our problems, and yet all of our hopes have ties back to

Other Helpful links

Charles Spurgeon on God's Providence
<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/3114.htm>

Gleanings in Genesis by Arthur Pink
http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Gleanings_Genesis/genesis.htm

Daily Bible Study

Thursday, February 9, 2006



Passage for today: **Genesis 42**

Quick Notes

- Look at Joseph's first dream—Gen 37:5-7
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Questions to Ponder

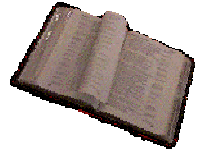
This encounter is a fulfillment of Joseph's first dream. What do you learn from this? How do you think Joseph might have felt?

How do you see providence at work in these situations?

Obviously what Joseph's brothers did to him has stayed fresh in their minds. How do they see what they have done now? What does this tell you about how these years have effected them?

Daily Bible Study

Friday, February 10, 2006



Passage for today: **Genesis 43**

Quick Notes

Jacob's responses mirror our responses to God's providential disciplines: "Everything is against me!" (42:36); "Why didn't you do it differently?" (43:6); "Take a gift along" (43:11 [always the schemer!]); "If it has to be, it has to be!" (43:14). From pessimism to fatalism, and very little faith.

Questions to Ponder

How could Jacob's Responses to this situation have been better? How can and should we apply it to our lives?

Imagine being Joseph's brothers, how would you see all these things that are happening? What would be your feelings?

As Joseph responds to seeing his brother...what does this help us to understand about Joseph?

Daily Bible Study

Saturday, February 11, 2006



Passage for today: **Genesis 44-45**

Quick Notes

Questions to Ponder

What situation has Joseph set up for his brothers? In what ways is it similar to what happened when they sent him to Egypt?

We do you think Joseph is setting all this up for his brothers?

Does God ever give us such tests? Why or why not?

What does Joseph want his brothers to understand about his purpose and feelings towards them?

Daily Bible Study

Sunday, February 12, 2006



Passage for today: **Genesis 46**

Quick Notes

Questions to Ponder

What does God communicate to Jacob in Beersheba? Why was this important? What do you think about the timing of this communication with Jacob?

What things does God assure Jacob about as he heads to Egypt?

Why is important that we begin to understand that “every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians”? How is this practically important? Is there a spiritual picture here for us?

Daily Bible Study

Monday, February 13, 2006



Passage for today: **Genesis 47**

Quick Notes

Questions to Ponder

How does Jacob “bless” Pharaoh? What are lessons for us in this “blessing”?

What changes does Joseph bring to Egypt? Why? Lessons for us?

Where does Jacob want to be buried? Why? What is the application for our lives?

Daily Bible Study

Tuesday, February 14, 2006



Passage for today: **Genesis 48-49**

Quick Notes

What should believers do for their family before God takes them in death? Just what Jacob did.

- He praised God for the past.
- He gave a blessing while he could.
- He warned about the future.

Questions to Ponder

As you survey the blessings given, seek to understand and gain some principles about God's blessings.

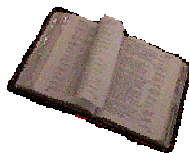
Who is passed over for some blessings? Why?

How are God's ways and orders different than mans? How should we respond to that?

What does Jacob specifically speak of in Joseph's blessing? How is this a good example for us?

Daily Bible Study

Wednesday, February 15, 2006



Passage for today: **Genesis 50**

Quick Notes

Like his father, Joseph knew what he believed and where he belonged. If we consider all the difficulties he had experienced in life, it is remarkable that Joseph had any faith at all.

Questions to Ponder

How is the closing verse of Genesis an appropriate verse to cap off the message of Genesis? What is it that this verse communicates?
How does Joseph deal with his brothers fears? How was he able to do this and overcome any bitterness he had? How can we do this?
How is Joseph's view of his death a good one for us to understand and adopt?

God's Purposes

Overnight, Joseph goes from the pit to the pinnacle! Joseph came to Egypt with an iron chain around his neck. Now his neck is adorned with a gold neck. It was an amazing turnaround.

Joseph was probably 17 when he arrived in Egypt. He may've spent 10 years in prison. I'm sure there're many ways God could've gotten Joseph from Canaan to Egypt. We cannot say that God "made" Joseph's brothers sin and send Joseph here—God could have used many other means. But one thing we can see is that by doing it this way God not only made a way, He made a man!.

The circumstances Joseph went through caused him to understand that God's privileges don't justify a pride. Many lessons Joseph learned and that we learn cannot be taught in a book...they are life lessons—in the toughness of life.

In the end, Joseph is greatly promoted. Promotion is from God, and it's a result of His grace, not our greatness. While in the pit, Joseph got the point.

*Genesis 50:20, "you meant evil against me;
but God meant it for good."*

The key to avoiding bitterness is a strong trust in the providence of God. If God had wanted to He could've stepped in and rescued Joseph from the pit. He could've stopped Mrs. Potiphar from telling her lies. He could've even jarred the memory of the butler. But He didn't... God had His purposes...

And now with perfect vision – 20/20 hindsight - Joseph sees that God's providence was at work in his life. Remember, God's intention was not simply to position Joseph's career – it was to prepare His character. And that's God's intent for you. God is using the circumstances in your life to both position you and prepare you.

So in the most simple way, can I encourage you with Joseph's life and God's intended end...trust God with your life!

The end of Genesis

Thus ends Genesis.

- It begins with creation and ends with a coffin.
- It begins with the perfectness of God's presence and ends with the ultimate separation of death
- It begins with the glory and ends with a grave.
- It begins with the vastness of eternity and ends with the shortness of time.
- It begins with a living God and ends with a dead man.
- It begins with a blaze of brightness in heaven and ends with a box of bones in Egypt.

Thus began the human race and in the book of Genesis we have see the origin of all things...of all problems. The coffin becomes one of the best pictures of the problem of mankind, the death sin brought in.

Until Shiloh Comes

Genesis 49:10 records one of the most fascinating prophecies in the Bible. *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.”*

“Shiloh” means “He whose right it is”. Since the ultimate right to the throne of God’s kingdom belongs to the Messiah, the rabbis always took “Shiloh” to be another name for the Messiah.

This prophecy says the scepter, or the right to self-rule, which was commonly associated with the right to capital punishment, would not pass from the kingdom of Judah until the Messiah had come.

This is why the rabbis in Jerusalem wept in 19 AD when the Romans stripped them of their right to capital punishment. This is why later the Sanhedrin had to seek Pilate’s approval to execute Jesus. In AD 19, when the edict was issued by the Roman authority the Jews were crestfallen. The Babylonian Talmud records their reaction, “Woe unto us, for the scepter has been taken from Judah and the Messiah has not appeared.”

In the minds of the rabbis Shiloh had not come, yet the scepter had passed from Judah. God’s prophecy had failed. But what they didn’t realize is that Shiloh had come! At that very moment He was working in a carpenter’s shop in Nazareth.

Morning and Evening (05/12/PM)

-- C.H. Spurgeon

"Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again." --Genesis 46:3,4

Jacob must have shuddered at the thought of leaving the land of his father's sojourning, and dwelling among heathen strangers. It was a new scene, and likely to be a trying one: who shall venture among couriers of a foreign monarch without anxiety? Yet the way was evidently appointed for him, and therefore he resolved to go.

This is frequently the position of believers now--they are called to perils and temptations altogether untried: at such seasons let them imitate Jacob's example by offering sacrifices of prayer unto God, and seeking His direction; let them not take a step until they have waited upon the Lord for His blessing: then they will have Jacob's companion to be their friend and helper.

How blessed to feel assured that the Lord is with us in all our ways, and condescends to go down into our humiliations and banishments with us! Even beyond the ocean our Father's love beams like the sun in its strength. We cannot hesitate to go where Jehovah promises His presence; even the valley of deathshade grows bright with the radiance of this assurance. Marching onwards with faith in their God, believers shall have Jacob's promise. They shall be brought up again, whether it be from the troubles of life or the chambers of death.

Jacob's seed came out of Egypt in due time, and so shall all the faithful pass unscathed through the tribulation of life, and the terror of death. Let us exercise Jacob's confidence. "Fear not," is the Lord's command and His divine encouragement to those who at His bidding are launching upon new seas; the divine presence and preservation forbid so much as one unbelieving fear. Without our God we should fear to move; but when He bids us to, it would be dangerous to tarry. Reader, go forward, and fear not.

Morning and Evening (02/22/AM)

-- C.H. Spurgeon

"His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." --Genesis 49:24

That strength which God gives to His Josephs is real strength; it is not a boasted valor, a fiction, a thing of which men talk, but which ends in smoke; it is true--divine strength. Why does Joseph stand against temptation? Because God gives him aid. There is nought that we can do without the power of God. All true strength comes from "the mighty God of Jacob."

Notice in what a blessedly familiar way God gives this strength to Joseph--"The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Thus God is represented as putting His hands on Joseph's hands, placing His arms on Joseph's arms. Like as a father teaches his children, so the Lord teaches them that fear Him. He puts His arms upon them. Marvellous condescension! God Almighty, Eternal, Omnipotent, stoops from His throne and lays His hand upon the child's hand, stretching His arm upon the arm of Joseph, that he may be made strong!

This strength was also covenant strength, for it is ascribed to "the mighty God of Jacob." Now, wherever you read of the God of Jacob in the Bible, you should remember the covenant with Jacob. Christians love to think of God's covenant. All the power, all the grace, all the blessings, all the mercies, all the comforts, all the things we have, flow to us from the well-head, through the covenant. If there were no covenant, then we should fail indeed; for all grace proceeds from it, as light and heat from the sun. No angels ascend or descend, save upon that ladder which Jacob saw, at the top of which stood a covenant God.

Christian, it may be that the archers have sorely grieved you, and shot at you, and wounded you, but still your bow abides in strength; be sure, then, to ascribe all the glory to Jacob's God.

The Fundamentals of Forgiveness

(Genesis 45:1-28)

By: Bob Deffinbaugh

Introduction

Near a town in the state of Washington, millions of gallons of radioactive atomic wastes are being stored in huge underground tanks. The tanks have a life expectancy of 20 or 30 years. The wastes within them will remain deadly for about 600 years.

We live in a society which, like those tanks in Washington, is trying to store up anger that sooner or later is going to break forth, causing pain and misery for many. We are all familiar with the popular bumper sticker in Dallas which reads, "I'm Mad Too, Eddie." The other day I saw one that said, "I'm Mad At Eddie." Basically, there are far too many hostile people going around looking for some way to unload their anger. Anger takes a tremendous toll on those about us:

Eighty percent of all murders are committed by people who have some relationship with the victim. Somebody gets angry, there's a gun or knife handy, and tragedy results. According to hospital records, innumerable parents have inflicted serious injuries upon their small children in fits of temper. One authority estimates that 60,000 children a year in America are beaten to death, that more children under five years of age are killed by their parents than die of disease.

Besides hurting others, anger is killing us. Suppressed anger and bitterness are eating away at our health and peace of mind:

Research indicates that unprocessed anger can produce all sorts of physical disorders. Dr. Leo Madow in his book, *Anger*, suggests that these physical problems range all the way from arthritis to asthma, from urinary disorders to the common cold. And we have known for a long time that anger can cause serious emotional disorders when it is not handled effectively.

All of this should compel us to conclude that anger is one of the great problems of our time.

Dr. Leon Saul, psychiatrist and author, writes, “I believe man’s hostility to man is the central problem in human affairs ... that it is a disease to be cured and prevented like cancer, TB, or smallpox, and that its cure will result in healthier, better living—not only for society in general but for each individual in particular.”

While it is not the solution to every instance of anger, forgiveness is the answer to much, if not most, of the anger we experience in life. Unresolved anger leads to bitterness, hostility, and revenge. Forgiveness leads to freedom and reconciliation. No character in the drama of the book of Genesis better illustrates the fundamentals of forgiveness than Joseph, and no chapter more clearly defines and describes the essentials of forgiveness than chapter

Those years which Joseph spent in slavery and prison could have been the occasion for a slow burn that might have ignited into an explosion of anger at the sight of his brothers. How angry Joseph could have been with God for getting him into such a situation. But Joseph recognized that God was with him in his sufferings and that these were from the loving hand of a sovereign God. Most of all, Joseph could have been angry with his brothers, who had callously sold him into slavery.

The high point of Joseph’s relationship with his brothers comes in chapter 45, for it is here that there is a reconciliation brought about between them. This was made possible on the brothers’ part by their genuine repentance, regretting their sin with regard to Joseph, and reversing their actions when a similar situation was presented with regard to Benjamin. But on Joseph’s part, reconciliation was achieved through his sincere and total forgiveness of his brothers for the evil they had committed against him.

Forgiveness is a vital part of the Christian experience. It is necessary in terms of our relationship with God:

For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions (Matthew 6:14-15).

Forgiveness is also an essential part of our responsibility toward others, both friends and enemies:

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:31-32).

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you; in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous (Matthew 5:43-45).

Let us, then, seek to learn the lessons on forgiveness which this chapter offers us.

A Speech to the Speechless (45:1-15)

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, “Have everyone go out from me.” So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it (Genesis 45:1-2).

It may appear at first glance that Joseph simply was overcome by his emotions so that he was compelled to disclose his identity. I have already suggested that this was not the case.⁸⁵ Even when his emotions did involuntarily emerge, Joseph simply left the presence of his brothers, wept, and returned (cf. 43:30-31). Joseph revealed himself to his brothers because they had evidenced real repentance, which made reconciliation possible.

Now that it was time to reveal himself, Joseph wished this to be done alone. I find several possible reasons for Joseph expelling the Egyptians from his presence before he made himself known to his brothers. First, this was a family matter. It was to be an intimate time, and outsiders would not add anything to that moment. Perhaps also Joseph felt that the full release of his emotions, held in check for years, would cost him the esteem of his servants. Mainly, however, I believe that it was for another reason that Joseph commanded everyone to leave except his brothers: it was in order to deal with the matter of the sin of his brothers in strictest privacy.

If Joseph intended for no one but his brothers to observe the outpouring of his emotions, it didn't work, for "the Egyptians heard it" (verse 2), and this report even reached Pharaoh's ears (verses 2, 16).

Previously, I have tended to read verses 3-15 from Joseph's perspective without much attention to how his brothers must have responded, but Moses carefully describes the emotional trauma they underwent:

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they come closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. And you shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, lest you and your household and all that you have be impoverished.'" And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth which is speaking to you. Now you must tell my father of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen; and you must hurry and bring my father down here.'" Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin wept on his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him (Genesis 45:3-15).

Put yourselves in the sandals of these brothers for a moment. They had been treated graciously by Joseph, given the hospitality of his home and his table and bountiful provisions for their families back

in Canaan (cf. 43:32-44:1). Then they were stopped and searched, each of them being found with their money in their sack and Benjamin with Joseph's cup in his possession (44:6-13). Their guilt was acknowledged and all were willing to remain as Joseph's slaves, but Joseph refused to detain any except Benjamin, the "guilty" party (44:14-17). Judah then made an impassioned appeal for mercy on his aged father, offering himself in place of Benjamin (44:18-34).

It is at this point that chapter 45 begins. Judah and his brothers anxiously await a verdict from Joseph, one that will affect the course of their lives. Without knowing who Joseph is or what he intended to do, the brothers saw this potentate send everyone out of the room. They could perhaps see the tears flowing down his cheeks and his chest heaving with emotion. But what was the source of this great emotion? Was it anger, which would lead to further trouble? How could it be otherwise?

If they thought the worst had come, it had not, at least in their minds, for now this Egyptian blurted out in their own tongue, "I am Joseph!" That was the worst news they could ever have hoped to hear. It brought them no relief, but only new avenues of anxiety. It was bad enough to stand before a powerful Egyptian governor who was angered at the theft of a cup, but to realize that he was their brother whom they had sold into slavery—that was too much! Before, they at least had a hope that this judge would be impartial and that mercy might motivate him to accept their appeal. But now their judge must surely be their enemy, whom they had unjustly condemned. How could they hope for better treatment from him? No wonder they were petrified (cf. verses 3ff.).

Fear and guilt were written on their ashen faces, and their silence confirmed this to Joseph. They had nothing more to say, no more appeals left, no hope for mercy. Every word recorded in the first 15 verses of chapter 45 is spoken by Joseph because his brothers were speechless (verse 3). Not until Joseph had demonstrated that he had forgiven them and loved them did they speak (verse 15).

Joseph's first words declared his identity, followed quickly by an indication of concern about his father (verse 3). He, like Judah and the others, cared greatly for his elderly father. The thought of

Jacob's grief was unbearable to Joseph as well as to the rest. But he also cared for his brothers. They must have shrunk back from him in horror, but Joseph asked them to draw near (verse 4).

Nowhere in this chapter is the sin of his brothers minimized. At the very outset Joseph identified the treatment they had given him as sinful. Forgiveness, you see, does not seek to minimize sin, but to neutralize it. We must remember, though, that they have already come to the point of recognizing their actions as sin (cf. 42:21) and of repenting of it (chapter 44). Since they have come to recognize the magnitude of their sin, Joseph need not belabor that point. The stress, instead, falls upon the totality of the forgiveness he has given them or, as the song writer has described it, "grace greater than all my sins."

Joseph's words are filled with hope and encouragement. Verses 5-8 assure these men that their sin had not thwarted the purposes of God. "You sold me," Joseph said, "but God sent me" (verse 5). Their purpose was to destroy, but God's was to save. Men may sin by attempting to do what is unacceptable to God, while at the same time they are accomplishing what God has purposed.

... this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death (Acts 2:23).

The doctrine of the sovereignty of God assures us that while men may do the wrong thing for the wrong reasons, God can cause that "evil" to accomplish His good and perfect purposes.

We know that the righteous God hates all sin with a perfect and irreconcilable hatred; but it is his prerogative to bring good out of evil, and no sin can be committed without his knowledge, or in opposition to his holy counsels. Sinners are as really the ministers of his providence as saints, and he glorifies himself by the wickedness which he hates and punishes, as well as by that holiness which he loves and rewards.⁸⁶

In the words of sacred Scripture, "For the wrath of man shall praise Thee; ..." (Psalm 76:10).

Salvation, not destruction, was the purpose of God in what had

happened. How, then, could Joseph even consider doing to his brothers what they feared? The famine, now two years long, had five years remaining before it had run its appointed course. Jacob and his sons must come to Egypt where Joseph could provide for them, thus sparing the nation. While God did not sanction their means or their motives, Joseph was destined to go to Egypt where he would be the instrument by which Israel would be spared as a remnant and which would later be kept alive by a “great deliverance” (literally, an “escaped company,” verse 7, margin, NASV).

This prophecy goes beyond the previous revelation given to Abram concerning Israel’s sojourn in Egypt:

And God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions” (Genesis 15:13-14).

Abram was not told that the “land that is not theirs” would be Egypt, nor was he told how Israel would come to live there. Neither is it mentioned that their “exodus” would be some kind of escape. The point of all this is that even if Joseph was aware of God’s words to Abram, he could not have known all that he spoke here to his brothers. There may well be, then, an element of prophecy here. God may have revealed to Joseph at some time (such as when he was in prison?) His purposes in allowing him to suffer rejection and persecution.

In the final analysis, it was not his brothers who were responsible for sending Joseph to Egypt, but God, for the purpose of bringing about their salvation. And in the process Joseph was elevated to his position of power and prominence, advisor to Pharaoh⁸⁷ and ruler over all of Egypt. We have a saying, “All’s well that ends well,” which finds a measure of truth in these words of Joseph. Joseph’s explanation of all that had happened and God’s reason for it is followed by an exhortation to return quickly to the land of Canaan, get their father, their families, and their flocks and return to Egypt (verses 9-13).

Approximately a year had passed since Joseph's brothers had first arrived in Egypt, but this delay was not due to any apathy or aloofness on Joseph's part—he simply had to wait patiently until his brothers had evidenced a change of heart and mind (repentance). Now Joseph urges his brothers to quickly bring their father down to Egypt (verse 9) where they would live near him in the land of Goshen. Here, it would seem, his family would be able to pasture their flocks, be relatively close to him, and yet remain somewhat distant from the urban populace of Egypt, who disliked Hebrews (cf. 46:34).⁸⁸

In these verses there is a noticeable emphasis upon the glory and splendor which Joseph has attained in Egypt. For some this appears to be out of character for Joseph, who has previously been marked by modesty and humility. Why would he now flaunt his position before his brothers? There are several explanations, one or more of which may satisfy our concerns.

First, the glory which Joseph now possesses would serve to encourage his brothers, who are guilt-ridden for the wicked deed they committed against him by selling him as a slave. Joseph would thus be reminding them that his humiliation and suffering were the means to his promotion and exaltation. Look what their sin had brought about in Joseph's life! Second, it would comfort Jacob and assure him of Joseph's ability to provide for the entire family during the famine. Finally, it was a glory which Joseph desired to share unselfishly with his brothers. His motive would thus be Christ-like:

These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee, even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life. And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do. And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I ever had with Thee before the world was, ... And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; ..." (John 17:1-5, 22).

With this, Joseph fell upon the neck of his closest brother, Benjamin, and wept. Benjamin likewise wept on his neck. Finally, Joseph wept on the rest of his brothers, who, in the end, were relieved sufficiently to begin conversing with him. It would be a long time before these men could fully grasp the grace of forgiveness which was granted by Joseph.

Pharaoh Is Pleased (45:16-20)

It is incredible that Joseph's desire was to save his family rather than to seek revenge. He virtually insisted that his brothers leave quickly and bring down their entire family as soon as possible. But the icing on the cake was the confirmation of Joseph's hospitality by none other than Pharaoh himself.

Now when the news was heard in Pharaoh's house that Joseph's brothers had come, it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your beasts and go to the land of Canaan, and take your father and your households and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you shall eat the fat of the land.' Now you are ordered, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father and come. And do not concern yourselves with your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours'" (Genesis 45:16-20).

Pharaoh had received the report (if indeed he had not heard Joseph weeping loudly himself, cf. verse 2) that there was a reunion between Joseph and his brothers. We almost expect Pharaoh to be pleased, but such a response would have to be unusual. We know that Hebrews were not well thought of by Egyptians (43:32; 46:34). If Pharaoh knew the specifics of how Joseph had come to Egypt, he would certainly not have any warm feelings toward his brothers. I can think of only two reasons why Pharaoh should be so pleased to hear of the arrival of Joseph's brothers. The first reason is obvious: Pharaoh had the greatest respect for Joseph. Joseph had virtually saved his kingdom and would greatly enhance his position in Egypt (cf. 47:13-26). Anything that pleased Joseph would make Pharaoh happy.

There is yet another explanation for the joy of Pharaoh which I believe to be very instructive. It also helps us to better understand

why Joseph sent out his Egyptian servants when he revealed his identity to his brothers. It would seem that Joseph never informed Pharaoh of the injustice done to him by his brothers. Joseph did insist to the butler and the baker of the Pharaoh that he was innocent, yet he did not reveal the guilt of his brothers:

Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon (Genesis 40:14-15).

While Joseph maintained his own innocence, he never exposed the guilt of his brothers or of Potiphar's wife. As a result, Pharaoh did not have to overcome any feelings of anger toward Joseph's brothers and thus could warmly welcome them as long-lost relatives who had finally found their way to their brother. Silence about the sins of others makes their restoration a much easier process.

Joseph was a very capable administrator, as we have already seen (chapter 41). While it is not stated, Joseph surely had spoken with Pharaoh about his brothers before he asked them to come to Egypt and promised them the land of Goshen (verse 10). It was no coincidence, then, when Pharaoh confirmed Joseph's offer, extending the offer of Egypt's finest and commanding them to take wagons on which to bring Jacob and the women and children (verses 17-20). His generosity extended even beyond that which Joseph had indicated. The goodwill of both Joseph and Pharaoh were confirmed. The sooner they returned to Canaan for their families and flocks, the better.

Joseph's Journey Instructions (45:21-24)

Before their departure to Canaan, Joseph gave his brothers provisions for their journey, as commanded by Pharaoh, as well as some last minute instructions.

Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey. To each of them he gave changes of garments, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five

changes of garments. And to his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and sustenance for his father on the journey. So he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, “Do not quarrel on the journey” (Genesis 45:21-24).

Provisions for the journey would probably have been as before (42:25), including grain, bread to eat, something to drink, and fodder for their animals. Also, each of the brothers was given a change of clothing. This should come as no surprise, for when the silver cup was discovered in Benjamin’s sack, all of the brothers tore their garments as a sign of mourning (44:13).

Benjamin was given five changes of garments and 300 pieces of silver. We have seen partiality before. Isaac preferred Esau above Jacob. Jacob favored Rachel above Leah. In every instance, partiality had disastrous effects. Why, then, did Joseph also show partiality to Benjamin? Of course, Benjamin was the only other son of his mother. And Benjamin did not have a part in the sale of Joseph either. But was this partiality toward him wise?

I believe that Joseph’s actions were deliberate and with good intention. Partiality was one of the factors in Joseph’s rejection by his brethren (cf. 37:3-4). Joseph had shown partiality toward Benjamin just as his father had persistently done, but now his brothers had chosen not to sacrifice him for their own gain. Joseph, I believe, did not avoid showing partiality toward Benjamin because that is the way life is. Some people are better looking than others. Some are good athletes, while others are not. Some are smarter than others. Life is full of distinctions. Joseph did not stop making distinctions because they would always exist, and his brothers would have to learn to live with them. Our Lord seemed to place Peter, James, and John in a privileged position, and John was called “the one whom Jesus loved.” Repentance and conversion do not make our problems go away, but they do give us the strength to deal with our problems.

Joseph sent his father ten donkeys loaded with the best that Egypt had to offer, the “first fruits” of what lie ahead (cf. verse 18). I would imagine that this gift far outclassed the “best of the land”

which Jacob had sent by his sons (cf. 43:11). As they parted Joseph gave his brothers one last word of instruction, “Do not quarrel on the journey” (verse 24). As we read this Scripture before preaching on this text, a number of people in the audience laughed. I don’t blame them, because I have to smile each time I read it. Joseph knew his brothers well. I imagine that quarreling was a part of the bad report that he had given his father many years before (37:2). Being sons of four mothers, such rivalry would not be uncommon. Probably the only thing they ever agreed upon completely was doing away with Joseph. They, like the many rival groups in Jesus’ day, could unite when it came to rejecting one who threatened them all.

Joseph had good reason for supposing that his brothers might quarrel on the journey home. Not long before this he had overheard a conversation which they did not think he could understand:

Then they said to one another, “Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us.” And Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not tell you, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood” (Genesis 42:21-22).

Although they were forgiven, they would face a great temptation to try to assess the precise measure of guilt of each person. The buck would be passed, and a heated argument would no doubt ensue. All of this was profitless since all had been forgiven. Their trip would be a happier one if they focused upon grace and not guilt.

Jacob Rejuvenated (45:25-28)

I can visualize what the return of Jacob’s sons must have been like. Jacob, like the father of the prodigal son, must have anxiously waited for any sign of his returning sons. Since Benjamin was among them, his interest was intense. Every passer-by was carefully scrutinized to see if he were one of his sons. Jacob’s fears probably intensified as the days passed. Every conceivable mishap would be considered. Finally the silhouette of the sons appeared on the horizon. Meticulously, each head was counted, and to his great relief, all were present, especially Benjamin. But what of all those extra persons and the carts which accompanied his sons? What did this mean?

Then they went up from Egypt, and come to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. And they told him, saying, “Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” But he was stunned, for he did not believe them. When they told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. Then Israel said, “It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die” (Genesis 45:25-28).

The words “Joseph is alive” were impossible to believe. How could this be true? Hadn’t his sons assured him that Joseph had died? Wasn’t the evidence compelling? Now Jacob may have been old, but he was far from senile. Things just did not add up. There had to be some explaining by his sons. Painful though it was, I believe that the whole sordid story was spelled out. I am persuaded that confession was made because it was necessary in order to convince Jacob that Joseph was alive. It also seems to underlie the prophecy Jacob made concerning Joseph:

Joseph is a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a spring; Its branches run over a wall. The archers bitterly attacked him, And shot at him and harassed him; But his bow remained firm, And his arms were agile, From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel)” (Genesis 49:22-24)

Isn’t it interesting that Joseph is never said to command his brothers to confess to their father, nor is their confession reported by Moses. But why should it be made public? This was a family matter that was dealt with in private. Just as Joseph had asked the Egyptians to leave his presence when he dealt with matters between himself and his brothers, so we are not present for their confession to Jacob. Moses wrote these things for our instruction (I Corinthians 10:11), not to satisfy our curiosity.

All of the evidence led to the conclusion that Joseph was indeed alive. The broken spirit of Jacob was immediately revived. He now yearned to see his son before his death. And lest we think that Jacob was on the verge of death, let us recall that he had yet seventeen years to spend with his son in Egypt (47:28). All that Jacob had feared was going against him suddenly appeared in its true light. It was the hand of God in his life, sparing him from the physical and

spiritual death of Canaan by preparing a place for him in Egypt.

Conclusion

If the key word for chapter 44 is repentance, then the key to chapter 45 is forgiveness. These two elements are essential for any genuine and lasting reconciliation: repentance and forgiveness. Let us give careful attention to this matter of forgiveness as it is illustrated in the life of Joseph.

A Definition of Forgiveness

If we are to be a forgiving community, we must first of all know what forgiveness is. While several Greek and Hebrew words are employed to convey forgiveness, essentially forgiveness means to release or set free. It is used of the cancellation of a debt, of release from a legal obligation, and of the termination of marriage by divorce (which frees the divorced party to re-marry, cf. Deuteronomy 24:1-4). In general, we can say that forgiveness is a conscious decision on the part of the offended party to release the offender from the penalty and guilt of the offense committed. This release not only frees the offender from guilt and punishment, but it also frees the forgiver of anger and bitterness.

Forgiveness is not leniency or overlooking sin. Only once in the New Testament do we find reference to sin being “passed over”:

... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed, ... (Romans 3:23-25).

Here, God “passed over” man’s sins not because He took them lightly, but because He took them so seriously that He shed the blood of His only Son. He “passed over” the sins of the past, knowing that the price would be paid when Christ appeared and was rejected of men and put to death on the cross of Calvary. When we pass over sins, it is because we do not wish to deal with them—ever, now or later.

Forgiveness is not free. Sin must always have a price that is paid. But forgiveness is the decision on the part of the offended to suffer

the penalty due the offender. If a banker pardons a loan, it means that the borrower does not have to repay his debt, but it also means that the lender suffers the loss of the money loaned and not repaid. If society pardons a criminal, it means that society suffers the consequences of the criminal's act, not the criminal. If I go to your house and break a vase and you forgive me for my error, you suffer the loss of the vase, not I.

This definition of forgiveness perfectly describes the pardon which God offers to men through the cross of Jesus Christ. All men have sinned against God and deserve the penalty of eternal destruction (Romans 3:23; 6:23). But God loved us and sent His Son to die for our sins so that we might have eternal life (John 3:16). God did not overlook our sins, but He bore the penalty for them. That is genuine forgiveness. And all who place their trust in Jesus Christ as the One who died for their sins will experience this forgiveness. It is this forgiveness which all men must either accept (resulting in salvation) or reject (resulting in damnation):

He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:18).

Finally, our definition of forgiveness must include the fact that true forgiveness is not earned. If a man commits a crime and he serves out his prison sentence, he is not forgiven; he has simply paid his debt to society. If a man cannot pay back a loan within the time allotted but is forced to pay it out over some more extended period of time, his debt has not been forgiven. If our forgiveness is the kind that demands that the person "pay for it" before we will forgive, then we are not giving forgiveness. That may be justice, but it is not mercy. It may be law, but not grace. Just as we can in no way contribute to the forgiveness and salvation which Christ has accomplished on the cross of Calvary, so no one we forgive can be forgiven and yet forced to pay for their offense against us.

Principles of Forgiveness

Having defined biblical forgiveness, let us seek to lay down some principles of forgiveness which we learn from the example of Joseph in Genesis 45.

(1) Biblical forgiveness should be granted quickly. Joseph could

hardly have granted forgiveness to his brothers here in chapter 45. The forgiveness that was expressed for the first time here by Joseph was first experienced here by his brothers, but long before this, Joseph had forgiven these men in his heart. How else could he have walked so closely to his Lord and so cheerfully and faithfully served, regardless of his circumstances? Joseph had experienced the freedom of forgiveness long before his brothers.

In the New Testament, anger is always to be dealt with quickly: Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity (Ephesians 4:26-27).

The sooner forgiveness is granted and reconciliation is achieved, the better it is for all involved:

Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way; in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison (Matthew 5:25).

(2) Biblical forgiveness should be granted privately. I see a great deal of wisdom in Joseph requiring his servants to leave the room while he dealt with the sins of his brothers. It made matters much easier for Pharaoh and the Egyptians to be ignorant of all the injustices these brothers had committed against Joseph. This, too, is according to biblical instruction:

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions (Proverbs 10:12).

A fool's vexation is known at once, but a prudent man conceals dishonor (Proverbs 12:16).

He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends (Proverbs 17:9).

And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother (Matthew 18:15).

We should always seek restoration and reconciliation on the lowest,

most private level so that the fewer there are who are aware of the sin, the easier the offender can be forgiven and forgotten.

(3) Biblical forgiveness must be given freely and unconditionally. Forgiveness is free in that the forgiver willingly accepts the loss or pain personally. In brief, forgiveness is a matter of grace, not works, and grace does not make demands upon the one who receives it. Joseph must have forgiven his brothers long before they had come to repentance. He did not wait to see the anguish of their souls until he forgave them, but he did so freely and without requirement. This suggests also that forgiveness may be refused. As He was dying upon the cross, our Lord said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

That forgiveness accomplished by His death on the cross is rejected by many. Those who perish do not do so because there is no forgiveness, but because they have rejected God’s forgiveness.

(4) Forgiveness that is biblical must be granted sacrificially. The price of Joseph’s forgiveness was more than twenty years of separation from his father, slavery, and even a sentence in prison. Not a small price to pay, but then forgiveness does not come without sacrifice. Because of this, forgiveness is better shown than said. Joseph never actually used the word “forgive,” but his words and actions conveyed it. Just as it is too easy to say, “I’m sorry,” so it is possible to glibly say, “I forgive you.” Genuine forgiveness has a price tag, and few are those who are willing to pay it.

(5) Biblical forgiveness is not provisional, but permanent. Just as conditions cannot be demanded before forgiveness is granted, neither can they be laid down for forgiveness to remain in force. Seventeen years after Joseph assured his brothers they were forgiven, they feared that this grace had terminated at the death of their father (50:15-21). While we will hardly “forget” the transgressions of others against us, we can certainly refuse to call them to remembrance or to dredge them up in the future.

For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more (Jeremiah 31:34).

(6) Biblical forgiveness seeks the correction and restoration of the offender. I fear that what has been said might lead to the conclusion that once forgiveness is granted, all need for correction is gone. Not so! I believe that Joseph forgave his brothers years before he saw them, but remember that it was a year or so until he disclosed his identity to them. This was because he needed to be assured that they had changed their attitude toward their sin (repented).

When our children sin we may very well need to spank them as well as to forgive them. We may forgive the thief for stealing our money, which we may never see again, but the law still exacts a punishment for theft. A forgiving spirit dissolves our anger and animosity toward the offender, and it commits our vengeance to God, since He alone knows the extent of the sin (cf. Romans 12:11-21; I Peter 2:21-25).

Forgiveness, as I understand it, deals first of all with our personal animosity and violated rights in such a way that we can deal with sin impartially and lovingly, or we can commit the matter entirely to God where we cannot or should not take matters into our own hands. Forgiveness, like one facet of love, seeks the best interest of another, even at our own expense. But since we do seek the good of the other party, correction may be required (cf. Matthew 18:15ff.; Galatians 6:1).

Perhaps the best analogy comes from the dealing of God in the life of the disobedient saint. Since all the sins of the Christian, past, present, and future, are forgiven at Calvary, God will not punish the saint who is forgiven once for all. But there is still the need for discipline and correction. The forgiveness of our sins assures us that God is rightly related to us, but discipline causes us to draw more closely to him.

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.” It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them; shall we not

much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:5-11).

The Basis of Forgiveness

All of us should realize that forgiveness is a mark of godly character and conduct. Our problem is not knowing we should do it, but the doing of it. How can we forgive those who have hurt us so deeply? Let me make several suggestions.

(1) Seriously consider the Scriptures which command us to forgive (cf. Ephesians 4:25-32; Colossians 3:12-17, etc.). Recognize that forgiveness is not an option, but a command.

(2) Consider your own sinfulness and the forgiveness which God has freely given you.

And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." "A certain money-lender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more. And He said to him, "You have judged correctly." And turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much, but he who is forgiven little, loves little." And He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven" (Luke 7:40-48).

The more we are aware of our own sinfulness and the forgiveness we have received, the easier it is to forgive others.

(3) Meditate upon the sovereignty of God in the offense committed against you. Can you say, like Joseph, "And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good ..." (Genesis 50:20)? The doctrine of the sovereignty of God means that whatever evil is

committed against us has been designed by God to come into our lives for a purpose that is good (Romans 8:28). Job's suffering at Satan's hand (and by God's permission—Job 1, 2) resulted in praise to God, instruction for Satan, and a lesson for Job. In the final analysis, Job was blessed far more than he had been before his trials began (cf. Job 42:10-17). When a messenger of Satan buffeted Paul, it was to produce humility and to teach him that God's strength comes in our weakness (II Corinthians 12:7-9). Behind our enemy is a loving God, who brings affliction and suffering into our lives for our good and His glory.

(4) Give careful consideration to the matter of servanthood. Usually we find that when others mistreat us we battle with our offended pride, and we struggle because our rights have been violated. Forgiveness originates from a servant-like attitude.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:3-8).

The supreme example of humility is our Lord Himself. He set aside His rights and prerogatives in order to be rejected of men and hanged (innocently) upon a cruel cross. Servanthood for our Lord spelled out suffering and shame for the good of others. Forgiveness is not so difficult for the humble as it is for the haughty. If our sinless Savior was willing to die on the cross for sinners, is it such a great thing for Him to ask us to sacrifice our own interests for those of others?

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For

you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls (I Peter 2:18-25).

(5) Meditate on the characteristics of biblical love. It is not an emotional feeling, but a decision of the will. Its earmarks are described by Paul for us to contemplate:

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (I Corinthians 13:4-7).

Have you found the forgiveness of your sins in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary? Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, came to earth and took upon Himself the reproaches of men and the rejection of God. He became sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21) and suffered its painful consequences. You may find forgiveness from your sins by trusting that Jesus Christ died in your place and bore your sins on the cross.

My Christian friend, are you harboring anger and bitterness because of the sins others have committed against you? I pray that you will find the freedom of forgiveness that Joseph experienced which enabled him to be reconciled to his brothers and to minister to them for his own good, the good of his brothers, and the glory of God

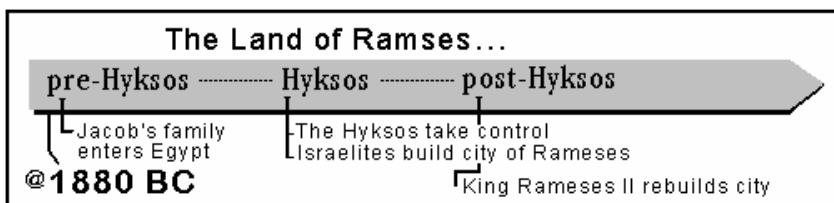
Is there evidence that the Israelites once lived in Egypt as the Bible says? Has Joseph's original tomb been found?

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The Bible tells us that when Jacob and his family migrated from Asia to Egypt, they were settled in "the land of Rameses" and that they became property owners there (Genesis 47:11, 27). Eventually, the Israelites were used as slave laborers to build the city of Rameses (Exodus 1:11), and when they left after 430 years (Exodus 12:40), they departed from Rameses (Exodus 12:37). From these references, we can conclude that the Israelites spent the years of the Egyptian Sojourn in and around Rameses.

The name Rameses actually comes from a later period than the Israelite Sojourn. It was the name given to a city built by Rameses the Great (Rameses II) in the eastern Nile Delta in the 13th century BC. This more familiar name was then used retrospectively by later scribes when copying the Biblical texts. Although the location of Rameses was in dispute for some years, that dispute has now been settled. We not only know where Rameses was located, but we know much about the history of the ancient site.

Since 1966, extensive excavations have been undertaken there under the direction of Manfred Bietak of the Austrian Archaeological Institute, Cairo (for previous reports, see Shea 1990: 100-103; Wood 1991: 104-106; Aling 1996: 20-21). It is possible that Prof. Bietak may have, for the first time, found physical evidence for the presence of the Israelites in Egypt.



We can divide the history of the site into three periods: pre-Hyksos, Hyksos and post-Hyksos. The Hyksos were a Semitic people from Syria-Palestine, who took up residence in the eastern Nile Delta and eventually ruled northern Egypt for some 108 years, ca. 1663-1555 BC (15th Dynasty).[1] Jacob and his family arrived in Egypt around 1880 BC, based on an Exodus date of ca. 1450 BC. That was in the pre-Hyksos period when the name of the town was Rowaty, "the door of the two roads" (Bietak 1996: 9,19). [2]

Could this be the Israelites?

The earliest evidence for Asiatics at Rowaty (the city that later named Rameses) occurs in the late 12th Dynasty (mid 19th century BC). [3] At that time a rural settlement was founded. It was unfortified, although there were many enclosure walls, most likely for keeping animals. The living quarters consisted of rectangular huts built of sand bricks (Bietak 1986: 237; 1991b: 32). It is highly possible that this is the first material evidence of Israelites in Egypt. It is the right culture in the right place at the right time.

Not all residents of the first Asiatic settlement at Tell el-Dab'a lived in huts. One of them, evidently an important official, lived in a small villa. The Bible tells us that Joseph became a high official after he correctly interpreted pharaoh's dreams (Genesis 41:39-45). We are not told where Joseph lived while serving in the Egyptian bureaucracy. It seems logical to assume, however, that after discharging his duties associated with the famine, he would have moved to Rameses to be near his father and brothers.

Could this villa have been Joseph's house? [4]

The villa was 10 x 12 meters in size, situated on one side of an enclosure measuring 12 x 19 meters. It consisted of six rooms laid out in horseshoe fashion around an open courtyard. The most striking aspect of the house is that the floor plan is identical to the Israelite "four-room house" of the later Iron Age in Palestine (Holladay 1992a). In this type of house two side rooms and a back room were arranged around a central space, or courtyard. [5]

Nearby, arranged in a semi-circle around the villa, were poorer two-roomed homes, approximately 6 x 8 meters in size. If the villa was the home of Joseph, then the surrounding huts might have been those of Joseph's father and brothers. Approximately 20% of the pottery found in the settlement debris was of Palestinian Middle Bronze Age type (Bietak 1996: 10). In the open spaces southwest of the villa was the cemetery of the settlement. Here, some of the most startling evidence was found.

Hebrew Tombs?

The tombs were constructed of mud bricks in Egyptian fashion, but the contents were strictly Asiatic. Although they had been thoroughly plundered, 50% of the male burials still had weapons of Palestinian type in them. Typically, the deceased males were

equipped with two javelins, battle-axes and daggers. Tomb 8 contained a fine example of a duckbill-ax and an embossed belt of bronze (Bietak 1996: 14). One of the tombs, however, was totally unique and unlike anything ever found in Egypt...

Joseph's tomb?

At the southwest end of the burial area, some 83 meters from the villa compound, was a monumental tomb, Tomb 1. It was composed of a nearly square superstructure containing the main burial chamber, and a chapel annex. In a robbers' pit sunk into the chapel, excavators found fragments of a colossal statue depicting an Asiatic dignitary. The likeness was of a seated official 1½ times life size. It was made of limestone and exhibited excellent workmanship. The skin was yellow, the traditional color of Asiatics in Egyptian art. It had a mushroom-shaped hairstyle, painted red, typical of that shown in Egyptian artwork for Asiatics. A throwstick, the Egyptian hieroglyph for a foreigner, was held against the right shoulder. The statue had been intentionally smashed and defaced (Bietak 1996: 20-21).

In his book *Pharaohs and Kings: A Biblical Quest*, David Rohl suggests that this is the tomb of Joseph himself (1995: 360-67).[6] The evidence seems to support this hypothesis. We must assume that Tomb 1 was that of the occupant of the villa, and thus possibly of Joseph himself. The Bible is very specific as to what became of Joseph's body.

"So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

-Genesis 50:26

Moses took the bones of Joseph with him during the Exodus because Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear an oath.

Joseph had said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place."

-Exodus 13:19; cf. Genesis 50:25

Inside the burial chamber excavators found fragments of an inscribed limestone sarcophagus and a few bone fragments, but no intact skeleton as in the other tombs in the cemetery (Bietak 1991a: 61). Sometime after the burial, a pit was dug at the end of the

chapel and a tunnel dug into the burial chamber. The "coffin" (sarcophagus) was then broken and the remains of the deceased removed by these "tomb robbers" (Rohl 1995: 363). It was common for tombs to be broken into in antiquity and the valuables removed, but to have the body taken is highly unusual. Was the statue broken at the time the bones were removed, or was that done at another time? Archaeology cannot tell us the answer; we can only speculate.

It is likely that the statue was broken during a time of political turmoil (Bietak 1996: 21), possibly when the Hyksos took over rule of the region. It appears most likely that the "new king, who did not know about Joseph" (Exodus 1:8) was the first Hyksos king who came to power ca. 1663 BC.[7] At that time, the Israelites came under intense oppression (Exodus 1:9-11). Perhaps the Hyksos destroyed the statue when they overthrew local Egyptian authority. Since the remains in the tomb would also have been in danger, faithful Israelites may have removed them for safekeeping at this time.

Evidence that the Hyksos took control

In the next phase of occupation, [8] the humble dwellings of were covered over and a huge palace complex constructed. It is obvious that the newcomers, although Asiatic, were different from those in the previous period. [9]

The palace complex comprised several large buildings, purely Egyptian in style. It included upper stories, porticos, courtyards, pools, gardens and cemeteries (Bietak 1996: 21-30). The rich finds of this phase suggest that the occupants were high officials engaged in foreign trade. It appears that this was the initial phase of Hyksos settlement at the site. [10] With the coming of these peoples, the fortunes of the families of Jacob's sons declined (Exodus 1:8-12a).

Without identifying inscriptions, we will never know for sure if the earlier people were Israelites. [11] Contemporary references to Jacob's 12 sons have not been found. Since the sons of Jacob were humble shepherds, we should not expect to find such records, except possibly for Joseph.[12] However, there are ancient references to several of the tribes of Israel which, of course, were named after the sons of Jacob. So, in an indirect way, we do have inscriptional references to the sons of Jacob, albeit from a later

This much we can say about the discoveries in Rameses. The finds represent exactly what we would expect to find from Israelite occupation in Egypt.

Notes

1. The Egyptian word Hyksos means "foreign rulers." In common usage, however, the term is used to refer in general to the Asiatics who settled in the eastern Delta of Egypt in the Second Intermediate Period. The dates for Hyksos rule are not known precisely. Those used here are based on the following:
 - A. Expulsion of the Hyksos in approximately the 15th year of Ahmose (Bietak 1991b: 48)
 - B. A total of 108 years for the rule of the Hyksos according to the Turin papyrus (Bietak 1991b: 48)
 - C. The chronology of Wente and Van Siclen for the 18th Dynasty (Wente and Van Siclen 1977: 218). This chronology gives a death date for Tuthmosis III of 1450 BC, which correlates with the Biblical date for the Exodus. According to Scripture, the Pharaoh of the Exodus perished in the Yam Suph (Exodus 14:5-9, 18, 28; 15:4, 7; Psalm 106:9-11; 136:15), therefore, we correlate the date of the Exodus with the death date of the Pharaoh of the Exodus. The chronology of Wente and Van Siclen also incorporates the low date of 1279 BC for the accession of Rameses II accepted by most scholars today.
2. In the 14th Dynasty, toward the end of the 18th century BC, the name of the town was changed to Avaris, "the (royal) foundation of the district" (Bietak 1996:40). When the Hyksos later established their capital there, they retained the name Avaris. It was probably the Hyksos rulers who forced the Israelites to build the store cities of Pithom (= Tell el-Maskhuta) and Rameses (= Tell el-Dab'a = Avaris) (Exodus 1:11). When Rameses II rebuilt the city in the 13th century in the post-Hyksos period, and long after the Israelites had left Egypt, the name was changed to Rameses. The location of Pithom has also been a matter of some debate. Now, however, it seems quite certain that it should be located at Tell el-Maskhuta at the eastern end of the Wadi Tumilat, 15 km west of Ismailiya. Asiatic remains similar to those found at Tell el-Dab'a have been found there and attributed to the Hyksos (Holladay 1992b: 588-89; 1997:332-34). According to Holladay, the Hyksos occupation at Tell el-Maskhuta took place ca. 1750-1625 BC. It would have been sometime during this time period, then, that the Israelites built the store city of Pithom.

3. Area F/I, Str. d/2, and Area A/II, Str H
4. Str. d/2 at Tell el-Dab'a
5. In Palestine, the side rooms were usually delineated by stone columns. With the scarcity of stone in Egypt, this feature would not be expected. Holladay suggests that the ground floor of such a house was primarily utilized for the economic aspects of family life such as the storage of food, tools and supplies, and the housing of animals. The family living space, on the other hand, was most likely on the second floor.
6. As a result of his nontraditional chronology of ancient Egypt, however, British historian David Rohl dates Tomb 1 to the late 17th century BC (1995: 339), rather than the mid-nineteenth century as determined by the excavators. Since Rohl believes the Sojourn to be only 215 years based on the Septuagint (1995: 329-32), Joseph and Tomb 1 end up being approximately contemporary by his chronology. The present author, however, disagrees with both of these views and holds to conventional Egyptian chronology and a Sojourn of 430 years (Ex 12:40) as recorded in the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, Rohl places Joseph and Tomb 1 in Str. d/1, while the present author accepts the excavators' dating of Tomb 1 to Str. d/2, and believes Str. d/2 to be a more compatible context for Joseph and the Israelites.
7. We are not certain of the name of the first Hyksos king. Redford suggests Salitis/Saites based on literary references (1992: 342), while Ward suggests Khyan based on inscriptional evidence (1984:162-72).
8. Str. d/1 dating to the early 13th Dynasty (early 18th century BC)
9. Str. d/2
10. Str. d/1
11. Str. d/2
12. There is a canal connecting the Nile with the Faiyum in the western desert named Bahr Yusuf, the "canal of Joseph." Development of the Faiyum is associated with Dynasty 12, the time when Joseph was in Egypt carrying out land reforms (Genesis 41:46-49; Gardiner 1961: 35-36). Whether the name of the canal is ancient or from a relatively modern tradition is not known. Otherwise, the name of Joseph has not turned up in Egypt (see Aling 1996).