

The Story of Joseph

Finishing Well

Part 60 – September 15, 2013



The brothers feared that their father's death signaled the end of Joseph's compassion and devotion to their families in Goshen.

[Joseph is like, "What do I got'a do to *prove my love, live with you?!"*]

Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father's family. – Genesis 50:22a NIV



Some translations say, "*together with*"; and, many take this to mean that, like Jesus with mankind, (John 1:14) Joseph dwelt *among* them.

They lived in the district of Rameses,¹ where the remains of a city of Egyptian style homes with Canaanite contents have been discovered and dated to mid-1800^{BC}; scriptural timespans place Jacob's entry at or about 1876^{BC}.



And, in 1997, a 12-pillared palatial apartment, of a high ranking official, dated to the reign of little Sen, (Senusret III) was excavated. And, its garden tombs contained many Canaanite artifacts.



This is a reconstruction of what might have been Joseph's dwelling in Goshen. It appears he ended his official Egyptian duties, although he likely continued serving as advisor to Little Sen.

The main tomb, a small pyramid, was an odd combination of Egyptian and Semitic styles. The vault was empty, but unlike most ransacked tombs, it had been *carefully* opened. How odd.



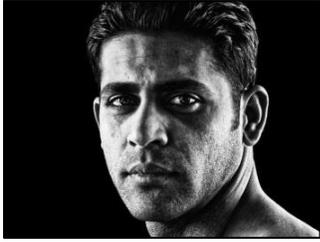
He lived a hundred and ten years ... [So, Joseph lived for 53 years after his father's death and burial] – Genesis 50:22b NIV

Joseph lived out the reign of Little Sen, Little Sen's son, Amenemhat III (who became co-regent a year before Jacob's death), and Little Sen's grandson, Amenemhat IV.



If I had to choose *one thing* about Joseph, as the most outstanding, most inspiring, I think it would be that **Joseph bore no bitter fruit. The fruit reveals what's in the tree.** Always.

¹ Genesis 47:11. The city of Rameses was formerly known as Avaris, and before that, Rowaty.



Think about all he went through, put up with, and yet, as his life dims, his light brightens. That’s something I greatly desire for *my* life. **There’s little that’s more tragic than a bitter old man or woman heading toward the inevitable, growing ever more irritated and demanding and self-centered ... and missing the point entirely.** Joseph did what God expects His faithful fruit to do as it ripens: **he presented himself as an ever sweeter, brighter offering unto the Lord.** You see, the greatest challenge to Joseph’s faith, trust, and joy came in his old age.

... and **[Joseph]** saw the third generation of Ephraim’s children. Also the children of Makir son of Manasseh were placed at birth on Joseph’s knees. – Genesis 50:23 NIV

See that? “Ephraim’s” kids are listed before “Manasseh’s”, in obedience to Jacob’s cross-armed blessing, (Gen 48:14) extending God’s seemingly unfair custom of the older serving the younger. **Question is: which kid received the *greater blessing*?** At the Last Supper, *no less*, the disciples were arguing about which would be considered the greatest. *Let that soak in for a moment!*

[Jesus said] “... the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.” **[I just love Jesus’ ironic logic]** – Luke 22:26b-27 NIV

In all those blessings, God was *never being unfair, but most fair.* So, know this: **the more you serve, the younger you get.** And, now we come to Joseph’s final and finest, most faithful words.

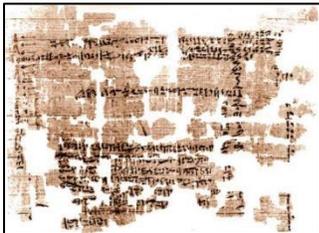
Then Joseph said to his **[surviving]** brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place.” – Genesis 50:24-25 NIV



[Hebrews considers this Joseph’s shining moment] By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones. – Hebrews 11:22 NIV

That’s it. Out of all his accomplishments, that’s what’s singled out for Joseph’s Hall of Faith moment. Why? What are we missing? All of chapter 50, up to this point, had to do with Jacob’s death and burial, 53 years earlier. Why are they back-to-back? Are we supposed to compare them? Contrast them? Is it a mystery? Jacob got an Egyptian funeral caravan into the Promised Land. So why doesn’t Joseph? Why’s he say “God will surely come to your aid” ... *twice*? Why’s he say, “then you must carry my bones up from this place”? He’s back in bondage! Only, this time his *entire family* is in it with him!

God had said to his great-grandpa, Abraham, “Your descendants will be ... enslaved and mistreated 400 years.” (Gen 15:13) And, Moses will later say that he led the Nation of Israel out of Egypt “430 years, to the very day” that Jacob moved his family *into* Egypt. That means Joseph’s family was enslaved, 30 years after settling in Goshen, which was right about 1846^{BC}, when Amenemhat III was assuming most of the control as a 31-year co-regent.



And, he had a pet project: a temple (in the Faiyum oasis region created by Joseph’s canal), dedicated to Renenutet, cobra goddess (*it’s always a snake!*) of the *harvest*;² and, I’m guessing Joseph’s God was getting far too much credit. So, Joseph was stripped of power, marginalized, enslaved, and forgotten ... *again!* That was 40 years before the deathbed oath with his brothers! He knows the promise God made to great grandpa. He’s thinking, “Only 360 years to go, boys! We could do that with *one hand*. No offense, Amenemhat.”

At 110, the pit was no match for the fire in Joseph! He’s in his prime! At his peak! Says Hebrews. As He well knows, **the pit is the place where God’s glory and grace will always shine brightest!** He wasn’t about to let death keep him from leading ‘em to life!

So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt. – Genesis 50:26 NIV

He’s laid the groundwork for the next great foreshadow, and his bones will serve as a steady reminder of God’s sovereign plan. Four years later, the 12th Dynasty is done. As a 13th Dynasty limps into power, more and more Canaanites move into Egypt. And, judging by the Hayes papyrus, 1740^{BC},³ wherein 48 of 77 listed servants are Semitic, and the most common male title is Household Servant, it seems it was the fad to hire a Joseph-type.

The balance of power tips, and the foreigners, known as Hyksos, seize control of northern Egypt for about 100 years, until Amosis I conquers them. The Hyksos hightail it, but Jacob’s family, and Joseph’s body, stay put and suffer the consequences, as prisoners of war. Then, in 1526^{BC}, 333 years after Jacob’s death, and 555 years after God made His covenant with Abraham, Thutmosis I begins his reign, and Moses is born.

Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them. Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. – Exodus 1:6-8 NIV

² Medinet Maadi, a temple to Renenutet, was founded during the reigns of Amenemhat III and Amenemhat IV.

³ William Hayes Hieratic Papyrus, circa 1740 BC, Brooklyn 35.1446



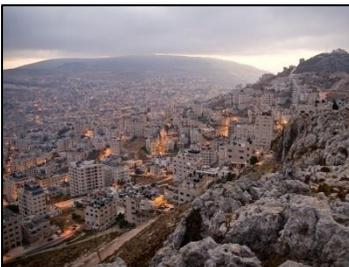
80 years later, as God's people gathered up the gold and silver of the Egyptians, (Ex 3:22, 11:2, 12:35) just as God had promised Abraham, (Gen 15:14) Moses gathered up the bones of Joseph.



Inside that odd little pyramid tomb were a few paint-flecked pieces of a double life-size, royal-like statue, violently, utterly, destroyed, its eyes gouged out! Its face was ochre, an Egyptian standard for Asiatics; its Semitic mushroom hairdo was red (like Uncle Esau's); and, it held a throw-stick, both a sign of authority *and* the hieroglyphic symbol for a foreigner. Oh! And, it wore a very colorful robe of authority! Red hair was most unusual. If Joseph shared his uncle's color, he would've seemed, when he came to Pharaoh from the prison, almost *magical*. It's as though, after the exodus, the Egyptians took out their rage on the only symbol of Hebrew authority left.



The Hebrew word for Joseph's 'coffin' is the same used for the Ark of the Covenant⁴ that housed God's Word, *before* it wrapped itself in flesh and made its dwelling among us. **The bones of the earthly foreshadow met up with the divine Forerunner on the way to the Promised Land!** And, they accompanied Israel for 40 years in the wilderness. And, when they finally arrived, they built a tomb near Jacob's well, and Ephraim's descendent, Joshua (Yeshua) buried Joseph where he'd been betrayed: Shechem. (Josh 24:32)



His tomb's location is known with the highest degree of certainty, thanks to continuous documentation since biblical times. Times change, but Joseph still serves as a silent reminder of God's steadfast promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, accomplished, of course, through Jesus. *Silent* reminder? Just type 'Joseph's tomb' in Google's news search! Moses. David. Not big newsmakers. But, Joseph! He reminds us of the darkness we're dwelling in. Here are some of the headlines for the last four weeks: "Palestinians Attack Jewish Worshippers at Joseph's Tomb", "2,500 Jews Gather to Pray at Joseph's Tomb Overnight", "Arab Rioters Open Fire on Jewish Worshippers at Joseph's Tomb", "Palestinians Riot as Hundreds of Jewish Worshipers Visit Joseph's Tomb", "Clashes in Nablus area as Israeli troops, Settlers Enter Joseph's Tomb".



Joseph bore no bitter fruit. Amazing. He stayed in God's will in the pit.

Well, **if you want to be an heir you got'a be in His will!** Those in His will *will* descend in the well as a lamp of truth in a dark abyss as part of His story reflecting His glory, lighting the path, leading the way, to a Promised Land that has a name: Jesus. **When life is most dark, our light can most shine!**

Darkness will always eventually give way to the light.

⁴ Strong's H727, 'arown, is used in Genesis 50:26 and then in Exodus 25:10, 16