

Genesis

Creation. Covenants. All Grace — study 32



EGYPT the END?

JACOB'S HOPE -- TIED to the LAND (49:29-50:13)

49:29-33 What is closest to Jacob's heart at his end? (Heb.11:17-21; -- check ch.49 blessings? e.g. 49:7,10,13,15,19,20,25,26)

(1) Again Israel strictly charged his sons that they were to bury him with his fathers in the cave in the field of Machpelah, with Abraham and Sarah, with Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah. This is in itself significant of his faith in God, and his passion for identification with the purposes of God. Had he followed merely the dictates of human affection, he would certainly have chosen to be buried with Rachel; but in this last outlook he accounted association with Abraham and Isaac in the sleep of death of more value. Thus in faith Jacob passed unto his people. ... Thus at last, after a career checkered from the beginning, Jacob entered into rest. The study of his life reveals little to his own credit, but much to the glory of the grace of God. And yet there was never wanting in his history evidence of the presence of that principle of faith, which is the basis of Divine operation. -- **G. Campbell Morgan, *The Analysed Bible: Genesis* pp.287,288**

Finally, Jacob's life
more notable for
grace than faith, but
at the end ...

(2) Once more the patriarchal sepulchre is prominent in the story as the one remaining stake in the promised land, and Jacob's family, with its attendant company of Gentiles rehearses, so to speak in miniature and in the minor, the ultimate homecoming of his sons, one day to be escorted to their inheritance 'from all the nations ... upon horses, and in chariots' (Is.66:20). -- **Derek Kidner, *Genesis* p.223**

50:1-13 As indicated by the extraordinary mourning rituals of both Jew and Egyptian, how did the ancients view physical death in comparison to modern western man? (Isa.38:18,19)

(3) 'Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him' (50).

Love must weep. The Book of Genesis indicates that man as we know him, man the image of God, ought to live for ever, death being an intruder upon the joy of life -- the dark shadow of sin. Our instincts confirm this teaching. ... The Egyptians, according to their custom, mourned for Jacob seventy days (50), while the Hebrews themselves mourned but seven, and the difference may indicate that death was somewhat less awful to those who had the clearer and stronger faith. -- **James Strahan, *Hebrew Ideals in Genesis* p.351**

(4) We all feel as if somehow our bodies remain a part of ourselves even after death, and we have wishes where they shall lie. ... What theory of another life does an Egyptian mummy express? Why all that sedulous care to preserve the poor relics? Was it not a consequence of the belief that somehow or other there could be no life without a body, and that in some mysterious way the preservation of that contributed to the continuance of this? -- **Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture: Genesis* p.312**

GRACE & SIN'S ETERNAL (?) ECHO -- GUILT (50:17-21)

50:14-18 Is there any basis for the brothers' fear? (Prov.1:33)

(5) Have they really been regarding their father as the only bulwark between themselves and a brother's wrath? Must they persist in thinking of him as a judge and a foe? Yet their suspicions only serve to display the generous sympathy of his nature. As he realises what they have been suffering, he cannot keep back his tears. 'He wept when they spake unto him'. These are not hot tears of wounded vanity and fretful impatience. They are tears of compassion, overflowing from a heart full of love. We read of many occasions on which Joseph weeps -- when he hears his brothers' first confession, when he meets his young brother after a long separation, when he makes himself known to his brethren, when he embraces his father again after many years, when he sees his father still in death, and now when his brothers doubt his love. It is never the thought of himself, but always the thought of others, that moves him. -- **James Strahan, *op. cit.*, p.352**

(6) ... their fear that Jacob's death would be followed by an outbreak of long-smothered revenge betrayed but too clearly their own base natures. They thought him like themselves, and they knew themselves capable of nursing wrath to keep it warm through long years of apparent kindness. They had no room in their hearts for frank, full forgiveness. So they had lived on through numberless signs of their brother's love and care, and still keep the old dread, and, probably, not a little of the old envy. How much happiness they had lost by their slowness to believe in Joseph's love! Is there nothing like this in our thoughts of God? Do men not live for years on His bounty, and all the while cherish suspicions of His heart? 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.' It is hard to believe in a love which has no faintest trace of desire for vengeance for all past slights. It is hard for hearts conscious of their own slowness to pardon, to realise undoubtingly God's infinite placability. -- **Alexander Maclaren, *op. cit.*, p.305**

50:19-21 Joseph can forgive, his brothers can accept this grace, but what can only God do?

(7) Joseph's tears were a good answer. No doubt they were partly drawn out by the shock of finding that he had been so misunderstood, but they were omens of his pardon. So, when they were reported to the brothers, they came themselves, and fulfilled the old dream by falling down before him in abjectness. -- **Alexander Maclaren**, *op. cit.*, p.306

(8) This is one of the clearest declarations of divine providence anywhere in Scripture. It serves as an important reminder that while the evil of men may appear to be to the disadvantage of the saints, the purposes and plans of God will ultimately prevail. -- **John J. Davis**, *Paradise to Prison* p.303

The COVENANT -- IN FORCE, IN ABEYANCE (50:22-26)

50:22-23 Joseph dies at a younger age than his fathers, but what point might we miss without a knowledge of the Egyptian background? (cf. 47:9; 35:28; 25:7,8; 11:32)

(9) Another item of interest to Egyptologists is the age of Joseph at his death, for one hundred and ten years was considered to be the ideal lifespan in ancient Egypt. This notion is exemplified by the words of one vizier who writes:

What I have done on earth is not inconsiderable. I attained 110 years of life.

So far, no less than 27 such references to this ideal age limit have been noted in Egyptian texts. -- **Nahum M. Sarna**, *Understanding Genesis* p.226



Nahum Sarna

(10) And incomplete as his creed was, Joseph may have been a better Christian than some of us, and was so, if what he knew nourished his spiritual life more than what we know nourishes ours, and if his heart and will twined more tenaciously round the fragments of revelation which he possessed, and drew from them more support and strength than we do from the complete Gospel which we have. ... Let us always remember that it is not amount of religious knowledge which I have got, but the amount which I use, that determines my religious position and character. Most of us have in our creeds principles that have no influence upon our moral and active life; and, if so, it matters not one whit how pure, how accurate, how comprehensive, how consistent, how scriptural my conceptions of the Gospel may be. If they are not powers in my soul, they only increase my responsibility and by liability to condemnation. -- **Alexander Maclaren**, *op. cit.*, pp.316-317

50:24-26 What do we detect in Joseph's last words? (Ps 137:1-6)

(11) He spoke the Egyptian language, married an Egyptian wife, served an Egyptian king, but he was never Egyptianised. His heart was 'true to the kindred

points of heaven and home'; and if he could not live in Canaan he was minded at least to sleep his last sleep in it. We feel that it is characteristic of him that his last recorded utterance contains the name of God. His ruling passion is strong in death. His loyalty to the God of Israel is the outstanding fact in his story. In the wealth of Egypt's commerce, in the magnificence of her temples, in the learning of her colleges, he saw nothing to make him swerve from his allegiance to the God whom he learned to love as a child. -- **James Strahan**, *op.cit.*, p.357

(12) The contrast between Jacob's state funeral and his burial in the ancestral vault at Machpelah, and the quiet burial of Joseph in Egypt is most striking. One can sense the deterioration in the situation of the Israelites that had taken place in the intervening fifty-four years. Both Jacob and Joseph die with the divine promise of redemption on their lips. The patriarchal period thus opens and closes on the same note. The formal period of Israel's history is over and the great national drama is about to unfold. "God will surely take notice of you and bring you up from this land to the land which he promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob." -- **N. Sarna**, *op.cit.*, p.226

(13) The impulse of faith was in those days towards Canaan. Canaan was then the present form of the blessing of salvation. Itself of an earthly nature, it acquired as the promised gift of grace, a spiritual and to a certain extent a heavenly character. Buried there, the patriarchs believed that they rested in the love of God. Marching thither, Israel hoped to enter into the peace and glory of God. -- **Franz Delitzsch**, *New Commentary on Genesis* p.407

(14) The book of Genesis, like the Old Testament in microcosm, ends by pointing beyond its own story. Man had travelled far from Eden to a coffin, and the chosen family far from Canaan to Egypt, but Joseph's 'charge concerning his bones' was a gesture of faith (Heb. 11:22), which would not be disappointed (Ex. 13:19; Jos. 24:32). No funeral procession like Jacob's was to set out for Canaan: the matter could bide God's time and a better exodus. So the promise was signified as well as spoken, and would germinate one day in the mind of Moses (cf. Acts 7:23,25) to awaken him to his mission. Joseph's dying words epitomized the hope in which the Old Testament, and indeed the New (cf. Rev. 22:20), would fall into expectant silence: *God will surely visit you*. -- **Derek Kidner**, *Genesis* p.224

(15) Thus ends the book of Genesis, and it is evident that it is indeed a book of beginnings, and not of consummations. To leave everything at this point is to end what commenced with the majestic declaration, "In the beginning God," and the account of the creative movement of God, in "a coffin in Egypt." Genesis demands a way out of Egypt for that coffin, or else the faith of the man whose bones rest therein, was of none effect. The name of the next book is in itself the answer to that demand -- Exodus. The going out is to follow, and the coffin to find rest in the land of promise. Regeneration is not complete, but its gracious operation moved forward, and all that men of faith by faith have seen, must finally be accomplished. -- **G. Campbell Morgan**, *op.cit.*, p.292

From creation to coffin? No, to Canaan & the new creation