

The Death of Joseph

50: 22-26

DIG: Why was it so important to Yosef that his bones be taken to Canaan when his people returned there? Of all the events in Joseph's life, why did the Holy Spirit pick this as an example of faith (Hebrews 11:22)?

REFLECT: Like Joseph, are you feeling positive about the future? Where do you need to be reminded of God's aid right now? What outstanding characteristics of Yosef's life would you like to make a part of yours right now?

Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father's family. He lived a hundred and ten years, or fifty-four years after Jacob's death (50:22). The Egyptians viewed this figure as the ideal lifespan.⁸²⁵ There are twenty-seven references to this in Egyptian manuscripts. This was considerably younger than the age at which Abraham (a hundred and seventy five years), Isaac (a hundred and eighty years), and Ya'akov (a hundred and forty seven years) had died. Mankind's longevity was still declining after the Flood.⁸²⁶

Yosef did live long enough to know some of his great grandchildren. And he saw the third generation of Ephraim's children. Also the children of Makir son of Manasseh were placed at birth on Joseph's knees (50:23). Joseph may have lived long enough to see his great-grandchildren, but he would not live forever.⁸²⁷

In his final statement, Yosef then 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 an oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (50:24). Joseph never had a direct divine revelation from ADONAI, yet he had faith in the word of God passed down from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Yosef had faith in the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant (see Ef - **Abram Believed the LORD and He Credited It to Him as Righteous**). The phrase to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is found here for the first time in the Bible.

And once again a dying man required an oath from the living.⁸²⁸ Joseph made the sons of Isra'el swear an oath and said: God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place (50:25). The writer to the Hebrews tells us that the request to bring his bones up out of Egypt was in itself an act of faith (Hebrew 11:22). Of all the things that the Ruach HaKodesh would pick out of the life of Yosef, it was this. It wasn't that he refused to sin with Potiphar's wife or that he was faithful in Potiphar's prison. It was this: By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the Exodus of the

Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones. Why was that so important? It was important because the promises of **Isra'el** are all wedded to **the Land**. In fact, the prophets mention the fact that in the future, the entire world will go to war over Israel's claim to the land of Palestine, with Yerushalayim as her capital. Has this ever been more true than today?

The fulfillment of this was found in two writings. First, **Exodus 13:19**, which required the removal of **his bones from Egypt; Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons swear an oath** (see my commentary on **Exodus Cf - Moses Took the Bones of Joseph With Him**). And secondly, **Joshua 24:32**, which records the burial of the bones of Yosef in the land of **Isra'el: And Yosef's bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that Jacob had bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. This became the inheritance of Joseph's descendants.**

Like all of us, **Joseph died** - but he died at a full, ripe old age. **So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed** (without the fanfare of his father) **in the coffin in Egypt (50:26). The definite article is used here, and literally reads, the coffin. His bones in the coffin would be a constant reminder to his descendants and those of his brothers that Egypt was not their home. One day they would all return to Canaan, just as ADONAI had promised.**

The word for **coffin** is *aron*, the word used for the **ark of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 31:26; Joshua 3:8; First Samuel 4:3-5)**. Later Jewish tradition did not miss the parallel between **Joseph being placed in an aron, and the Ten Commandments also being placed in an aron (Deuteronomy 10:5)**. When **Isra'el** wandered in the desert **they carried these two shrines with them. The one coffin contained the bones of the dead man Joseph, while the other ark contained the covenant of the living God. The rabbis said that when travelers saw the two side-by-side they would ask, "How does the ark of the dead come next to the ark of the Ever-living?" The answer was, "The dead man enshrined in the one, fulfilled the commandments of the other."** The tradition goes on to document Yosef's supposed faithful observance of the Ten Commandments even though he lived before its announcement at Sinai. For example, **Joseph's rejection of Potiphar's wife's advances is linked with the commandment about condemning adultery and coveting.**⁸²⁹

The book of **Genesis** began with man in the garden of Eden and ends with **him in a coffin in Egypt**. Paradise had been lost and the world needed to be bought back from sin. Thus the groundwork has been laid and the transition is natural to the opening verses of **Exodus**, where **ADONAI** would rise up a new prophet and leader in **His servant Moses**.⁸³⁰

Haftarah Vayechi: M'lakhim Alef (First Kings) 2:1-12

B'rit Chadashah suggested reading for Parashah Vayechi:

Acts 7:9-16 (specifically verses 15-16);

Messianic Jews (Hebrews) 11:21-22;

First Kefa (First Peter) 1:3-9 and 2:11-17

Hazak, hazak, v'nit'chazek!

Be strong, be strong, and let us be strengthened!