

October 28, 2007 (LS)

## DEATH AND PRESERVATION

### GENESIS 50.1-26

*God is preserving his people even through death until the time that he raises them up again to enter into their inheritance.*

#### A ISRAEL IS EMBALMED (1-3)

Jacob's death as well as Joseph's response to that death once again reminds us where we are in God's history. Whatever God has done up to this point—and there have been many great and glorious promises realized—we have not arrived at God's end.

Our enemy, death, still has power in the world. Death is not only a separation of the breath from the body of the man, but it is also a separation of the man from the community. Part of what makes me me—i.e., my relationship with you—is ripped from me.

Joseph's presence at the death of his father fulfills God's promise in 46.4.

Death of significant figures is not the end of God's purposes. God's history moves on. This chapter embodies that.

Embalming of Israel: Practice of the Egyptians. Israel had gained great respect among the Egyptians. He was obviously held in high esteem and treated as a dignitary among the Egyptians. cf. v. 3

Embalming preserves the body. "Practical" purpose: to prevent decay and stench. Also of theological importance in the chap.: God preserves us through death until the time of the resurrection.

Note: *Israel* is embalmed. At his death in the last chapter he is called Jacob. Israel is the mature one who has wrestled with God and man and has prevailed. The wrestler has now fought his last match, but he is being preserved through his children who will be called by his name and continue the war.

#### B THE OATH TO BURY ISRAEL IN CANAAN MUST BE FULFILLED (4-6)

Joseph doesn't talk to Pharaoh directly. Don't know exactly why. Might have something to do with corruption, coming in contact with a dead body.

Joseph's oath to Jacob: 47.27ff.

Promise to return to Egypt is significant. Joseph is a "father to Pharaoh" (45.8). Probably taught him all about YHWH and his promises. Pharaoh is assured that Joseph is not going up to conquer the land of Canaan.

Joseph's promise to return is the recognition that this was not the time to realize those promises.

#### C JOSEPH GOES UP TO CANAAN (7-9)

(1) Joseph's "going up" to Canaan is geographically north. But Canaan is the promised "sanctuary land;" it is the holy place, the new Garden. (The boundary of the Promised Land was the Euphrates; cf. 15.18.) "Go up" into God's presence.

(2) Joseph's entourage: Egyptians and family. Note the relationship between Egypt and the children of Israel: Egypt is the protector of Israel (see vv. 7, 9). Egypt protects and preserves Israel until the time when they are ready to go inherit the promises.

Later in Israel's history we will see that the Egyptians abandon their trust and turn on the children of Israel. And those same "chariots and horsemen" that protected Israel at one time will be drowned in the Red Sea as God's enemies (cf. e.g., Ex 14.6-28; 15.19; Dt 11.4; Isa 43.17).

Who and what did *not* go up with the company: the little ones, the flocks, and herds. Token of promise to return (cp. Ex 10.9ff.)

#### D MOURNING ISRAEL'S DEATH AT THE THRESHING FLOOR OF ATAD (10-11)

"Beyond the Jordan" - could refer to land east or west of the Jordan. Possibly taking the same route that Israel will take later.

At the least emphasizes that this is the "sanctuary land." (Note that Canaanites see them mourning.)

Threshing floor: a place where wheat is gathered to be threshed or separated. It is a place where the seed (i.e., the wheat) is separated from the husk/chaff. Cp. Ruth 3; 2 Ch 3.1 (Temple built on); Mt 3.12 (Jesus will cleanse).

It is a place of separation. Israel is being separated from his family. His time has passed, but the seed will live on.

The threshing floor of *Atad*, “bramble” or “buckthorn.” Associated with thorns which means that this is a revelation of the curse.

Death as come to Israel. Cp. 3.19: Ground will produce thorns and thistles and man will return to the dust.

They mourn for seven days. This is the old creation week in which they still live. Here death still reigns.

Canaanites name the place Abel-Mizraim, “mourning of Egypt.” Naming things is a privilege of authority (cf. Gen 2). Canaanites still have dominion of the promised land.

#### **E. ISRAEL’S SONS BURY THEIR FATHER (12-14)**

Place of burial—the cave in the field of Macpelah, in the land of Canaan—is not “sentimental.” This was a matter of faith. Jacob was “planted” in the land of Canaan with a view to God’s promises being fulfilled in his resurrection and inheritance of the land.

This particular piece of land was bought by Abraham from the sons of Heth (the Hittites). It was a down-payment, as it were, on the whole land that would later be theirs. It was an investment in the future promises of God.

#### **D’ COMFORT FOR THE BROTHERS IN EGYPT AFTER THE FATHER’S DEATH (15-21)**

Joseph’s brothers *see*. They are making a judgment based on father’s death and their past sins.

Joseph’s brothers have been living in Egypt for 17 years at this time. [Jacob’s age (47.9, 28)] Jacob has been seen as a “restrainer” by the brothers for these years. Now Joseph might “hold a grudge” and fully repay them for their evil.

Brothers say that father commanded Joseph to forgive them. Joseph weeps when he hears. 2 possibilities for why: (1) It could tell us that he is highly disappointed that his brothers believe that he would take vengeance on them at this time. Or (2) it could tell us that he is relieved that they have finally asked forgiveness explicitly (something that we have not seen up to this point).

When his brothers come in person to bow before him and declare themselves to be his servants and the servants of the God of their father, we see that they have fully submitted to all that God has declared. Cp. ch. 37.

The brothers show their repentance by bowing to Joseph. The first time they attacked him. Now they are submitting to God’s word and respecting the position of Joseph.

“Am I in the place of God?” Joseph’s question seems to imply that God has not given him the prerogative of judgment in this case. They have broken no laws in Egypt and he cannot abuse his authority by taking out personal vengeance from his position.

v. 20 - Joseph understand the situation. God has orchestrated everything for his good purposes.

(1) Joseph does not minimize evil. He calls it by name and identifies the motivations of his brothers as *evil*. (Not all things *are* good, but all things work together for good.) (2) God is in control even of the evil events in the world and is using them to bring about his good purposes. If this is not true, then we can be sure of nothing. We may not understand *how* he is doing it, but we can know *that* he is doing it.

#### **C’ GOD WILL CAUSE ISRAEL TO GO UP OUT OF EGYPT (22-24)**

Joseph dwelt in Egypt. (This covers about another 54 or 55 years.)

Joseph makes preparations. God will “visit” them; i.e., God will come and remember his promises, deliver his people and punish their enemies(cf. Ex 4.31; 20.5; 32.34; Ruth 1.6; Ps 106.4; Isa 23.17; Jer 27.22; 29.10; Amos 3.14; Zech 10.3; Lk 1.68; 1 Pt 2.12).

#### **B’ THE OATH TO CARRY UP JOSEPH’S BONES MUST BE FULFILLED (25)**

Cf. Heb 11.22 - act of faith. Cf. also Ex 13.19, Josh 24.32

#### **A’ JOSEPH IS EMBALMED (26)**

God will preserve them in Egypt. “Ark” = same word as “ark” of the covenant.

(1) Death is our enemy that must be defeated.