

and ten years. ²³Joseph lived to see children of the third generation of Ephraim; the children of Machir son of Manasseh were likewise born upon Joseph's knees. ²⁴At length, Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. God will surely take notice of you and bring you up from this land to the land that He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." ²⁵So Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "When God has taken notice of you, you shall carry up my bones from here."

מפסטר ויחי יוסף מאה ועשר שנים: ²³ וירא יוסף לאפרים בני שלשים* גם בני מכיר בן-מנשה ילדו על-ברכי יוסף: ²⁴ ויאמר יוסף אל-אחיו אנכי מת ואלהים יפקד אתכם והעלה אתכם מן-הארץ הזאת אל-הארץ אשר נשבע לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב: ²⁵ וישבע יוסף את-בני ישראל לאמר פקד יפקד אלהים אתכם והעלתם את-עצמותי מזה:

regarded as the ideal life span in ancient Egypt. In Israel it seems to have been 120 years.

23. children of Machir Machir, the most important of the clans of Manasseh, at one time was identified with the tribe as a whole.

24. his brothers "Brothers" here has the same sense as "sons of Israel" in the next verse.

God will surely take notice of you This profession of faith, made 54 years after Jacob's death, seems to carry with it resonances of a serious deterioration in the circumstances of the Israelites in Egypt. The repetition of the statement in verse 25 heightens its importance. It is used as a rallying cry in Exod. 3:16 when Moses appears as the national savior.

Abraham . . . Isaac . . . Jacob This clustering of the three Patriarchs for the first time sets the pattern for all such subsequent citations in the Torah, which are invariably in a context of the divine promises of national territory for the people Israel.

25. you shall carry up my bones Why Joseph does not request immediate interment in the land of his fathers is not explained; no doubt he knows that present conditions are unfavorable. The oath he extracts was carried out at the time of the Exodus (reported in Exod. 13:19) and he is laid to rest in a plot of land that Jacob once bought in Shechem (see Josh. 24:32; Gen. 33:19).

26. Looking back at Joseph's long and full life, what are we to make of it? On the surface, it was crowned with success. His childhood dream of having his father and brothers bow down to him was fulfilled. He came to know wealth and power and the satisfaction of having saved many people's lives. At the same time, though, his success frequently provoked jealousy and resentment, from his brothers and from the Egyptians who had to sell themselves into serfdom for food. He prospered as an Israelite in a foreign land, but to what extent did he have to compromise his Israelite identity in the process? Jewish tradition will speak of him as Joseph the *tzaddik*, the righteous one, because

of his moral restraint with Potiphar's wife and his foregoing revenge against his brothers. Our evaluation may be more ambivalent.

a coffin in Egypt The last words of the Book of Genesis, "a coffin in Egypt," foreshadow the events of the opening chapter of Exodus, the enslavement of the Hebrews, the killing of the Hebrew babies, and the birth of Moses who will be placed in a coffin-like basket on the Nile. The last words in each of the five books of the Torah, "Egypt, journeys, Sinai, Jericho, Israel," are a virtual summary of the Torah's narrative about the people Israel, from slavery to Sinai to the Promised Land.

HALAKHAH L'MA-ASEH

50:25 swear The last wishes of the dying must be obeyed as long as they do not contravene Jewish law. Deathbed instructions have the same force as a legal contract duly delivered under Jewish law (BT Git. 13a).

23. ו. ס רבתי לפי מהדורת לעטעריס

²⁶Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף בְּן־מֵאָה וָעֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים וַיִּחַנְטוּ אֹתוֹ וַיִּשֶׂם בָּאָרוֹן בְּמִצְרַיִם:*

v. 26. למדינתאחי סכום הפסוקים של הספר 1,534 וחציו 27:40

חֶזֶק חֶזֶק וְנִתְחַזַּק

26. a coffin The use of a coffin is uniquely Egyptian and is never again mentioned in the Bible. In sharp contrast to the honors accorded Jacob, no ritual or time of mourning is recorded

with the death of Joseph. The formative period in the history of ancient Israel has come to an end.

HALAKHAH L'MA-ASEH

50:26 Joseph died In accordance with Prov. 10:7, we say of an individual we remember with love and respect, "May his or her memory be a blessing": *Zikhrono/Zikhronah livrakhab.*