

CHAPTER XXXIX

JOSEPH IN EGYPT [58B. ii.]

THE fourth descent was (when) He descended into Egypt, (as it is said),¹ "I will go down with thee into Egypt" (Gen. xlvi. 4). Jacob heard concerning Joseph that he was living, and he was thinking in his heart, saying: Can I forsake the land of my fathers, the land of my birth, the land of the sojournings of my fathers,² the land where the Shekhinah of the Holy One, blessed be He, is in its midst, and shall I go to an unclean land in their midst,³ for there is no fear of Heaven therein? ⁴ The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Jacob, do not fear; "I will go down with thee into Egypt,⁵ and I will also surely bring thee up again" (*ibid.*).

Jacob heard this word, and he took his ⁶ wives,⁷ and his sons, and his daughters, and the daughters of his sons.⁸ Another Scripture says, "With his daughter Dinah"

(*ibid.* 15). And all that he had, and he brought them to Egypt, as it is said, "His sons, and his sons' sons || with him," etc. (*ibid.* 7). Another Scripture says, "With his daughter, Dinah" (*ibid.* 15). Whereas another text says, "His daughters" (*ibid.* 7), to teach thee that the daughters of Jacob were the wives of his sons.¹ And all the seed of Jacob ² married their sisters and their blood-relations, so that they should not intermarry with the people of the lands, therefore they were called a true seed, as it is said, "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine,³ wholly a true seed" (Jer. ii. 21).

When they came to the border of Egypt,⁴ all the males were enrolled (in genealogical lists to the number of) sixty-six, Joseph with his two sons in Egypt (made the total) sixty-nine.⁵ And it is written, "With seventy persons ⁶ thy fathers went down into Egypt" (Deut. x. 22).⁷ What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He entered ⁸ into the number with them, and the total became seventy, to fulfil that which is said, "I will go down with thee ⁹ into Egypt" (Gen. xlvi. 4). When Israel came up from Egypt all the mighty men were enrolled, (amounting to) 600,000, less one. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He entered ⁸ into the number with them, and their total amounted to 600,000, to fulfil that which is said, "I will go down with thee into Egypt,¹⁰ and I will also surely bring thee up again" (*ibid.*).

Rabbi Ishmael said: Ten times¹¹ did the sons of Jacob

say to Joseph, "thy servant, our father." Joseph heard the word, and was silent. Silence gives consent; therefore were ten years deducted from his life.¹ Joseph heard || that his father had come to the border² of Egypt, and he took all the men who had intercourse with him,³ and he went to meet his father. All the people go forth to meet the king, but the king does not go forth to meet any man. But this teaches thee that the father of a man is like his king.

Rabbi Phineas said: The Holy Spirit⁴ rested on Joseph from his youth;⁵ and it led him in all matters of wisdom like a shepherd who leads his flock, as it is said, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,⁶ thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that sittest upon the cherubim" (Ps. lxxx. 1). In all his wisdom a certain woman⁷ enticed⁸ (him), and when he wished to accustom himself to sin,⁹ he saw the image¹⁰ of his father, and repented concerning it.¹¹

Three people conquered their passion¹² before their Creator, and they were Joseph, Boaz, and Palté, son of Laish. It was fit that twelve tribes should have arisen from Joseph,¹³ as it is said, "And the seed of his hands was active"

(Gen. xlix. 24), but there remained two (tribes), Manasseh and Ephraim. The woman brought grave charges against him to vex him, and he was confined in prison¹ for ten years. There he interpreted the dreams of the servants of Pharaoh, (he interpreted for) each one according to his dream just as though the events were taking place before him, as it is said, "And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was" (*ibid.* xli. 13).

And he interpreted the dream of || Pharaoh when the Holy Spirit rested upon him, as it is said, "And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this,² a man in whom the spirit of God is?" (*ibid.* 38).

All the nations came to Joseph to purchase food from Joseph. And Joseph spoke to each people according to their different tongue. And he knew what they were speaking. Therefore his name was called Jehoseph,³ as it is said, "For Joseph understood them, for there was an interpreter between them"⁴ (*ibid.* xlii. 23).

Moreover, when he went into the market-place he saw the people forming themselves into various companies and groups, and each one would speak in his own tongue, and he knew what they were saying,⁵ as it is said, "He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony,⁶ when he went out over the land of Egypt, when I heard the speech of one that I knew not"⁷

(Ps. lxxxii. 5). Further, when he was riding in the chariot, and passed through all the borders of the land of Egypt, the Egyptian girls were climbing¹ up the walls for his sake, and they threw to him rings of gold, so that perchance he might look at them, and (they could) see the beauty of his² figure, but nobody's eye degraded³ him, for he was highly esteemed⁴ in the eyes of everyone, as it is said, "Joseph is a *fruitful* bough⁵ . . . his daughters run over the wall" (Gen. xlix. 22).⁶

All the nations came to purchase food. And they brought to Joseph their tribute (and) a present (and money) to purchase (food). And he spoke to each people according to their different tongue; || therefore was his name called Turgeman,⁷ as it is said, "For there was an *interpreter* between them"⁸ (*ibid.* xlii. 23), therefore was he speaking.⁹

Some of them were buying grain on account of the famine in their houses, and they went forth, and others came to buy food; and one asked his fellow as to the price in the market. From their reply they opened the price of the market.¹⁰ When they came to Joseph he said to them: Just as ye have heard, so it is; in order that the market should not be scarce (and prices dear). Hence (the sages) said: He who makes a corner in the market will never see a sign of blessing.¹¹

Rabbi Tanchum¹ said: Joseph commanded and they built the treasure-houses in each city, and he gathered all the produce of the lands into the treasure-houses. The Egyptians were scoffing at him, saying: Now the worms will eat the stores of Joseph. But no worm had any power over them; neither did the (stores) diminish until the day of his death.² And he supported³ the land in the famine of bread, therefore was his name called Kalkol.⁴ And Kalkol is Joseph, as it is said, "And Joseph nourished"⁵ (*ibid.* xlvii. 12). Moreover, he nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's house, in the famine with bread to their satisfaction. "And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families" (*ibid.*).⁶ ||

Rabbi Eliezer said: In the hour of the death of Jacob he called to his son Joseph, and said to him: O my son! Swear to me by the covenant of circumcision that thou wilt take me up to the burial-place of my fathers in the land of Canaan to the Cave of Machpelah. The⁷ ancients used to swear by the covenant of circumcision prior to the giving of the Torah, as it is said, "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh" (*ibid.* 29), and "he sware unto him" (*ibid.* 31). He kept (the oath) and did (accordingly), as it is said, "And he said, Swear unto me" (*ibid.*). And all the mighty men

of the kingdom went up with him to bury him, and to show loving-kindness to Jacob his father, as it is said, " And Joseph went up to bury his father " (*ibid.* l. 7). The camp of Israel numbered 5040 (people). All the (people of the) land were bringing food on account of the famine to the camp of Joseph.¹ The Holy One, blessed be He, said to them : Ye have shown loving-kindness² to Jacob, My servant, I also will give you your reward, and also unto your children in this world. When the Egyptians died in the Reed Sea they did not die in the water,³ but they were deemed worthy to be buried in the earth. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to them : Ye have submitted yourselves⁴ to the divine punishment ; I also will give you a place of burial, as it is said, " Thou stretchedst forth thy right hand, the earth swallowed them " (*Ex.* xv. 12).⁵

When they came to the Cave of Machpelah, Esau came against them || from Mount Horeb⁶ to stir up strife,⁷ saying : The Cave of Machpelah is mine.⁸ What did Joseph do ? He sent Naphtali to subdue the constellations,⁹ and to go down to Egypt to bring up the perpetual deed which was between them,¹⁰ therefore it is said, " Naphtali is a hind let loose " (*Gen.* xlix. 21). Chushim, the son of Dan, had defective hearing and speech,¹¹ and he said to them : Why are

we sitting here ? He was pointing (to Esau) with his finger. They said to him : Because this man will not let us bury our father Jacob. What did he do ? He drew his sword and cut off Esau's head with the sword, and took the head into the Cave of Machpelah. And they sent his body to the land of his possession, to Mount Seir.

What did Isaac do ? He grasped the head of Esau and prayed before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said : Sovereign of all the universe ! Let mercy be shown¹ to this

wicked one, for he had not learnt all the precepts of the Torah, as it is said, " Let favour be shewed to the wicked,¹ yet will he not learn righteousness " (*Isa.* xxvi. 10). He was speaking in iniquity concerning the land of Israel and the Cave of Machpelah, as it is said, " In² the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully " (*ibid.*).

The Holy Spirit answered him, saying : As I live ! he shall not see the majesty of God.³