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Blessed Be My People Egypt

- *An open letter to my Arab friends from an Israeli Messianic Jew.*

I am impressed by how much biblical material there is about the relationship between Israel and Egypt, or Jews and Arabs in general. Major portions of Genesis and Exodus deal with this interaction. There is a "joint destiny" between Arabs and Jews, particularly between Christian Arabs and Messianic Jews.

The Bible speaks of Egypt over 600 times. The passages come to a "peak" in Isaiah 19, which speaks of a peace treaty and "highway" (mesillah **מסילה** in Hebrew) between them. Verse 24-25: *In that day Israel will be a third (shlishiah, **שלישיה**) with Egypt and Assyria; a **blessing** in the midst of the earth, that YHVH of hosts has **blessed**, saying, **blessed** My people Egypt, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.* The repetition of the word "blessing" may be a reference to God's initial promise to Abraham to be a "blessing to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3).

While it is not possible to determine what is the exact fulfillment of this prophecy, nor the exact people involved, it certainly involves a "happy ending" to all the conflict in the Middle East. There is hope for a positive and mutual destiny for Jews and Arabs in the plan of God.

The Family of Faith

Abraham was the father of both peoples ethnically, and the father of faith for all peoples spiritually. Abraham was the patriarch of the family of God. He started alone (Isaiah 51:2). The covenant plan starts with him.

Then He married Sarah. They were two. In the sovereign plan of God, Sarah's womb was barren for many years. Hagar was brought in to carry a child for her. The Angel YHVH watched out for Hagar when she ran away from Sarah (Genesis 16 and 21). Ishmael was given his name BEFORE he was born. The naming of the child before birth was an indication of a prophetic destiny for his life. He was promised to be the leader of 12 tribes, similar to the later promise to Jacob.

Ishmael was born before Isaac; in fact, he was even **circumcised before Isaac** (Genesis 17:23-26). Ishmael was the first to receive the covenant sign of the Abrahamic family. God honors covenant, and covenantal order. Ishmael would have had all the firstborn rights; however, Abraham was married first to Sarah. Therefore, in honoring the marriage covenant with Sarah, the firstborn rights came to Isaac (Genesis 17:18-21). Yet, the family covenant was still in effect with Ishmael.

There may be some hint of the family blessing in the Hebrew word for family, **משפחה** mishpachah, which comes from the root **ש-פ-ח**, from which we also have the word for handmaiden, shiphchah **שפחה**. The "handmaiden" was Hagar. There is a special gift of hospitality among the Arab peoples. This as a gift from God. Arab Christians have brought a warm, "family" feel to the global "family" of believers from every nation of the world.

Egyptian Empire

At the time of patriarchs, Egypt was the greatest empire of the world. Despite the petty jealousies of Jacob's sons, God sovereignly had Joseph sent down to Egypt. This brought the

covenant faith into the center of world power. Egypt's Pharaoh appointed Joseph as the leader of the nation. The covenant son of faith, Isaac's grandson, became the leader of the known world.

The Pharaoh who appointed Joseph was a good king. The nation was at its prime. It had financial prosperity, a righteous judicial system, and religious freedom for the people of faith. Egypt was the most blessed nation of the world at that time. People from all the surrounding nations came to live there during the years of drought. The people from every nation were exposed to the faith of the God of Joseph.

Years later, during the Exodus, there were Egyptians that left with the Israelites, and people from a mixed multitude of nations. The Israelites and the Internationals became part of the people of God during the time of Moses.

As the Pharaoh of Joseph's time was good; so was the Pharaoh of Moses' time evil. It is interesting to note that it was the daughter of the evil Pharaoh who felt compassion on the baby Moses (Exodus 2:6). She "saved the savior" by having him pulled out of the water. She defied the king's order. Pharaoh's daughter was not the only secretly-righteous Egyptian during the evil reign of her father. There was a remnant of faith among the Egyptians even then.

The Egypt of Joseph's generation was righteous; while the Egypt of Moses' generation was evil. While that is an over-simplification and generalization, the point is that there were both good and bad times in Israel-Egypt relations. The same range of good and bad relationships with the surrounding Arab nations occurred throughout the generations of the Israelite kingdom.

The majority of the time the surrounding nations acted un-righteously; however, there were times of positive relationships as well. Let's not forget that Israel as a nation also acted un-righteously for the majority of her history; resulting in punishment and even exile.

Even in Israel's exile, God used the situation for redemptive purposes. And Egypt, in her sin, was also used by God for redemptive purposes. Isaiah 43:3 – *I YHVH your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior, have given you Egypt as your ransom*. The word here for "ransom" could also be translated as "**atonement**." Egypt plays an atoning role for Israel even in time of her punishment; just as Israel does for the nations as well.

Out of Egypt

The prophet Hosea noticed this biblical covenant pattern of the Israelite patriarchs going in and out of Egypt. He described it as *Out of Egypt I have called My son* – Hosea 11:1. Matthew noticed the same prophetic pattern, and said that it also applied to Yeshua's going down into Egypt as a baby (Matthew 2:15). Joseph and Miriam's (Mary) taking Yeshua down to Egypt was not a coincidence but a fulfillment of covenantal prophecy, going back to the time of the patriarchs.

It would be scriptural and logical to see this pattern continue into the future. We sense in prayer that the Holy Spirit outpouring and the gospel message of the Son will once again be "called out of Egypt"; meaning that the Arab Christians in the nations around Israel will play a significant role in bringing revival to Israel in the end times, leading up to the day that "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26).