The Questor

Bible history….
….The end of the beginning

The last thirteen chapters of the book of Genesis make for a good read. They describe the last episode in the story of the development of the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The key figure in these chapters is Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob. He and his brother Benjamin were Jacob's favourites. That fact was not lost on Jacob's other sons who clearly resented the special attention these boys received – exemplified by the 'technicolour dream coat' that Jacob gave to Joseph.

Joseph's major asset was that he could interpret dreams – both his own and those of other people. He had two dreams which he interpreted to mean that he would become the most important member of the family and everyone else would have to bow down to him. When he told that to the rest of the family his other brothers were furious to the point of wanting to kill him.

They got an opportunity when Joseph visited them while they were away from home tending their flocks. But the oldest brother, Reuben, persuaded them not to and instead they sold Joseph to some passing traders who were on their way to Egypt. There, he was sold to an official of Pharaoh's court. His name was Potiphar and he was very impressed with Joseph's management and administration skills so he put him in charge of his household.

That was great until Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph. He resisted her advances and she turned against him and told her husband that Joseph had molested her. He was furious and had him thrown into jail.

Once again, Joseph's managerial skills shone out and after some time he was put in charge of prison administration. After a while he was joined in the prison by Pharaoh's baker and cup bearer who had displeased their master. Both these men had dreams that Joseph interpreted for them. The cup bearer's dream meant that he would be restored to his position in Pharaoh's household – and he was.

In Egypt at the time of Joseph the interpretation of dreams was a big deal. The court magicians and wise men had 'dream manuals' to help them make their interpretations. So when Pharaoh had a dream, he called them in and asked for their interpretation.

One night Pharaoh had a dream in two parts that none of the wise men could interpret. So the cup bearer told Pharaoh about Joseph. Joseph was called in and he interpreted the dreams. He told pharaoh that Egypt was going to have seven years of bumper harvests followed by seven years of severe drought and that he ought to put someone in charge of storing food during the good years so that there would be sufficient when the drought came. Because of his track record as an administrator, Pharaoh gave the job to Joseph who was able to use the well developed 'civil service' – which included regional superintendants of granaries.

When the famine came, it hit Canaan hard too and Jacob and his family eventually ran out of food. So he sent his sons to Egypt to see if they could buy some food from there. When they got there they were confronted by Joseph who was now Governor of all Egypt. What followed is an interesting part of the story because he didn't at first reveal who he was.

Eventually, the brothers were reconciled and Joseph told them that it had been God's plan all along to put him in a position where he could save the family from starvation. He arranged for them to bring their father and the whole entourage to Egypt where, with Pharaoh's blessing, he settled them on prime land in the Nile delta. Jacob died there and was taken back to Canaan to be buried with his ancestors. The end of the beginning.

God had protected this family from when they left Mesopotamia, through their time in Canaan and now left them safe and secure in Egypt – *safe and secure for now that is!*