

Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church

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DHW

LESSON 36

The Book of Genesis

Chapters 46 & 47

INTRODUCTION

This was a great moment for Jacob. He had mourned and grieved for twenty two years for his long lost favourite son, Joseph. The prospect of seeing him and being reunited with him was beyond his expectation and yet true. How God can spring surprises on His chosen people is indeed marvellous. One of the greatest surprises God will give to us is the return of our Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory. At this moment we only believe that He is in Heaven, but when He returns we will see Him face to face and every knee shall bow acknowledging Him as Lord!

Once again we learn that God is faithful to His covenant-promises, which He had made with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-2) and Isaac (Genesis 26:3-4). The overriding theme is the providential preservation of God's people and His sovereignty over the affairs of man. God even uses Pharaoh

and the land of Egypt to provide for His own as all things under the sun and on earth belong to Him. Four hundred years later, when the Egyptians oppressed Israel, God would take them out of Egypt.

A very happy note in these two chapters is the account of the reunion and restoration of Jacob's family in Egypt. The family had gone through times of strife among themselves. But now they had learned to forgive one another and respect their father Jacob. Another important lesson is the teaching of separation between God's people and others. This is clearly seen in Joseph's arrangement before Pharaoh to settle his people in Goshen. This is important to every child of God as he sojourns in the world. There should not be any compromise in terms of his religious conviction.

The following is an outline of the two chapters:

- 1) God reassured Jacob about going to Egypt (46:1-27);
- 2) Joseph met his father and brothers (46:28-34);
- 3) Joseph informed Pharaoh of the arrival of his father and brothers (47:1-12).

- 4) Joseph governed Egypt wisely and increased Pharaoh's wealth (47:13-26);
- 5) The children of Israel increased in numbers and wealth (47:27-31).

STUDY THE WORD

God Reassures Jacob about Going to Egypt

Joseph had sent his brothers back to Canaan and charged them to bring their father and all their families to settle in Egypt because the famine would continue for five more years. Having been convinced by his sons that Joseph was still alive and governor of Egypt, Israel (Jacob) exclaimed at the end of the previous chapter, *Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die*. Israel made his journey to Egypt with all his family, livestock and cattle. They moved south-west to Egypt via Beersheba, where they stopped. Beersheba was a city which was very much associated with his forefathers, Abraham and Isaac. Abraham had made a treaty with Abimelech, and there he planted a tree *and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God* (21:33). The LORD had also appeared to Isaac, and commanded him not to go down to

Egypt but to stay in the land (26:2-4). Beersheba was the last city before entering into the land of Egypt. There Jacob offered sacrifices unto God. The sacrifices were not burnt offerings. Probably, they were petition sacrifices seeking God's will concerning his going to Egypt and his future. Even though he earnestly looked forward to see Joseph, he refused to move farther until he had a final confirmation that this move was in accordance with God's will. This was exemplary on his part acting in faith. His grandfather Abraham had been summarily expelled by Pharaoh when he fled to Egypt to escape from the famine in the land (12:10-20). And when his father, Isaac, had similarly faced famine, God had explicitly forbidden him from going to Egypt (26:1-6).

God answered Jacob *in the visions of the night*. God called Jacob by his name. God said to him, *I am God (Elohim)*. The name signifies His power and sovereignty over the whole earth. In addition, God reminded Jacob that He is the God of his father, Isaac, and reassured him that his move to Egypt was in His Directive Will for him. God gave a fourfold promise to Jacob. Firstly, God promised that He would make him *a great nation* just as He had promised Abraham (12:2-4). Secondly, God promised that He would

go with him to Egypt. Previously, God had forbidden his father to go to Egypt when there was famine in the land. Jacob had God's blessing. Thirdly, God promised him that he would return to Canaan. And finally, God said that Joseph *shall put his hand upon thine eyes* (46:4). This is an expression that when he dies, Joseph would close his eyes. All the people who went down to Egypt with Jacob numbered sixty-six, and including Joseph, his wife and two children (Manasseh and Ephraim), the number was seventy.

Joseph Meets His Father

Jacob and his entourage arrived in Goshen in the land of Egypt. Judah rode ahead and directed them to the land of Goshen, which was the best of the land situated in the Nile Delta. Then Jacob sent Judah to inform Joseph that they had arrived. It is interesting to note that Jacob appointed Judah to represent them, instead of his elder brothers Reuben or either Simeon or Levi. This showed that Judah now had his father's fullest confidence taking the leadership role of his father's family.

When Joseph heard that his father and brothers had arrived in Goshen, he did not wait in his palace in Egypt for his brothers to bring their father to him. Instead he prepared his

royal chariot *and went up to meet Israel his father*. The phrase *went up* expresses his humbleness. When he saw him, *he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while* (46:29). Joseph was overcome with emotion for he had not seen his father for the past twenty two years. Joseph was the second most powerful man in Egypt, and his demeanour before his father was one of respect, honour, humility and affection. He received his father and brothers with the airs of a high dignitary. Israel, his father gratifyingly replied that he was now ready to die since he had seen his face and that he was yet alive (46:30).

Having greeted his father and the family, Joseph carefully prepared them to meet Pharaoh. He was aware that the Egyptians despised shepherds. Since his brethren were all shepherds, they should conduct themselves sensibly before Pharaoh. Joseph did not tell them to lie about their occupation. He was not ashamed that he was brought up as a shepherd. Most people, in similar circumstances, would have introduced their relations as having positions of honour and wealth so as to avoid being despised but not Joseph!

Joseph Informs Pharaoh of the Arrival of His Father and Brothers

Joseph wisely settled his family in Goshen first and then obtained Pharaoh's official confirmation. Earlier Pharaoh had promised that he would give *the good of the land of Egypt* for Joseph's father and his brothers (45:18). The conversation was directed in such a way that the decision that Israel should settle in fertile Goshen came openly from Pharaoh. In spite of all this planning, Goshen had been foreordained of God to become Israel's temporary dwelling place.

There were many reasons why Goshen was suitable for Israel. It was the best part of the land and provided excellent pasture for grazing. It was a place of segregation that enabled Israel to escape from spiritual corruption through contact with the people of the land. It suited the Egyptians for they disliked shepherds. While Israel would be exposed to the education, culture and civilisation found within Egypt's borders, God would protect and polish them. He was preparing them to be instruments of His will and purpose.

Joseph Governs and Increases the Wealth of Pharaoh

Pharaoh showed his gratitude to Joseph who had been a great blessing to him. He instructed Joseph to settle

his father and his family in the best land in the country. Jacob was one hundred and thirty years old when he came to Egypt. When he was presented to Pharaoh, he spoke of his age of *one hundred and thirty years as few and evil* and confessed that he was a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. This thought of pilgrimage is ever present in the language of the patriarchs. Jacob blessed Pharaoh. These blessings from Jacob were not mere sweet words or just empty wishes for Pharaoh. Such blessing was a prayer to God, who had promised Abraham (12:3): *And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* Jacob blessed Pharaoh because he was indebted to Pharaoh for raising Joseph from the position of a slave in prison to such a high position in his palace. Jacob's blessing was soon fulfilled. Joseph, in his God-given wisdom, ruled Egypt and accumulated much wealth for Pharaoh. He deposited all the money from the sale of corn to Pharaoh's treasury. When the people had run out of money, they sold their livestock and cattle, in exchange for food. When all the people's livestock had run out, they sold their land for food, and finally they themselves became Pharaoh's servants. Pharaoh

became rich and powerful *for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's* (47:20b). God blesses those who bless His people! He is no debtor to any man.

The Children of Israel Increase in Numbers and Wealth

Israel now settled in Goshen in Egypt. The term *Israel* used in verse 47:27 is a reference to the children of Jacob, his sons and families. They had brought their livestock and possessions. They grew exceedingly in population and wealth (47:27). God blessed Jacob with another seventeen years in Egypt. He died at the age of one hundred and forty seven. Before his death, he exacted a promise from Joseph to bury him in the cave in Machpelah which is in Hebron, where his grandfather, Abraham and his father Isaac, were buried. After Joseph promised that he would carry out his father's wish, Jacob *bowed himself upon the bed's head* (47:31). Jacob was too weak to get down from the bed.

Jacob's instructions indicated his absolute confidence in God's promise concerning Canaan. To the people of Israel, the burial place is all-important. It must be in the midst of one's family. His desire to be buried in the land of

Canaan impressed upon his children that Egypt was not the land that God had intended for them, and that Canaan was to be their permanent dwelling place. When they travelled to Machpelah to bury him, they would be reminded of God's promise and covenant that they would, one day, leave Egypt and return to the Promised Land.

PRACTICAL VALUE

God is faithful to His promises. He cared for His own. He used, even, the non-believers to provide and protect His people. We worship the same God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We must, in all circumstances, love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and spirit. We must not waver in our trust in Him for ultimately He will work all things well according to His divine plan and purpose. This is clearly seen in the reunion of Joseph and his father Jacob and all his brothers. God changed the weather and controlled the land in order to accomplish His purpose for the good of His people.

We must strive to be godly like Joseph. The Lord was pleased with him and was with him in all that he did. Surely these were recorded for our learning. Let us be humble and not take pride in our achievements and position.

All our blessings come from God. Therefore to a Christian, the boastful words of one who is successful in life saying: *I am a self-made man* would be utter foolishness and nonsense.

We must seek to identify with the people of God. The world will hate and despise us, but we must remain strong and steadfast in the Lord. We must not be found wanting in doing good to others, especially to those who have helped God's people. Never forget to bless them, and if they are unbelievers, the greatest and best gift that you can give them is the gospel of salvation. In comparison to the glory awaiting us, our days on earth are but "few and evil". An anonymous French proverb puts it succinctly: "Life is an onion and one cries while peeling it." Therefore, do good and glorify God.

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