



Israel Settles in Goshen Genesis 47-48

Introduction

Jacob and his family arrived safely in Egypt and the aged patriarch enjoyed an emotional reunion with his long lost son whom he had thought he would never see again. The broken family was brought together by the sovereign providence of God. However, there were many more arrangements to be made before this little band of God's people could be settled into the strange land to which they had come. Joseph had planned all the details, beginning with the presentation of his family members to Pharaoh. Joseph's loving care for his family and his wisdom and leadership in managing the wealth of Egypt are clearly evident in this week's lesson.

OUTLINE of GENESIS 47-48.

I. Pharaoh Meets Joseph's Family - Genesis 47:1-12

II. Joseph Manages the Wealth of Egypt - Genesis 47:13-27

III. Jacob Looks to the Future - Genesis 47:28-48:22

I. Pharaoh Meets Joseph's Family - Genesis 47:1-12

A. Five Brothers Speak with Pharaoh - Genesis 47:2-6

After informing Pharaoh of the arrival of his family, Joseph chose five of his brothers to personally meet with the great ruler of Egypt. The reason for the choice of five is not known, but the number five may have had some significance to the Egyptians. (Note Genesis 43:34 and 45:22.) The brothers humbly introduced themselves to Pharaoh as "*your servants*" (verses 3 and 4) and, as Joseph had instructed, they acknowledged their occupation as shepherds and requested to dwell in the land of Goshen.

Pharaoh's gracious response showed a largeness of heart, sympathy and a noble generosity which must have "sprung from some Divine influence, however indirect and unconscious" (W. H. Griffith Thomas, Genesis, A Devotional Commentary). Pharaoh not only instructed Joseph to settle his family in the "*best of the land*", he also offered them employment as chief herdsmen over his livestock.

B. Jacob Blesses Pharaoh - Genesis 47:7-10

When Joseph presented his father to Pharaoh, the humble sojourning shepherd blessed "the man of immense worldly power and influence" (Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Genesis). In discussing Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham, the author of the book of Hebrews notes, "*Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better*" (Hebrews 7:7). This shows that bestowing the blessing is a demonstration of superiority.

Perhaps in his old age Jacob was beginning to sense the power and position of Almighty God and His promises in his life. Jacob had struggled with God and had prevailed. God had changed his name to Israel which means "contender with God" (Genesis 32:28). But even after his "*face to face*" (Genesis 32:30) encounter, Jacob continued to struggle with God, often being overcome by his own human lack of faith. However, it seems to have been an upward struggle which gradually softened Jacob's heart and opened his eyes to the power of God. Jacob had become aware of God's continuous efforts to keep him going in spite of his struggles. Along with gratitude for Pharaoh's generous hospitality, perhaps that is what evoked Israel's blessing.

From the passage, it is clear that Jacob still had struggles. He was disheartened that his life had contained more sorrow than joy and that the one hundred and thirty years of his "*pilgrimage*" had not measured up to the 175 years of Abraham and the 180 years of Isaac.

In viewing his life as a "*pilgrimage*", Jacob expressed his understanding that this earth was not his permanent home. He was a resident alien, so to speak. Like Abraham, he "*dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*" (Hebrews 11:9-10).

Applications

1. Do you understand that as a child of God, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you are a pilgrim on this earth (see 1 Peter 2:11)? W. H. Griffith Thomas writes, "it is as true today as ever that this is not our rest, and that here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come. This is the true perspective for every believer. We should regard the present life as a pilgrimage, not

as a place in which we are to live permanently, but one through which we are to hasten, looking off from self and circumstances to Him who has gone before us as the Captain of our Salvation to bring many sons to glory" (Genesis, [A Devotional Commentary](#)).

Are your heart and your desires settled in this world, or are you just passing through with your sights set on the heavenly kingdom? Can you honestly and passionately confess by faith that this world is not your home?

2. Like Jacob, we all sometimes struggle with others and with God. But the mature Jacob, called Israel, shows us that in spite of those struggles and even because of those struggles, we may bless others. Who has God brought into your life for you to bless? How can you be a blessing to someone else this week?

C. Joseph Provides for His Family - Genesis 47:11-12

Joseph settled his family in "*the land of Rameses*" and provided food for all the families of Israel according to their need. Rameses means "Ra (the sun god) has created it" and was simply another name for the fertile region of Goshen. In Psalms 78:12 and 43, the area is also referred to as "*Zoan*".

II. Joseph Manages the Wealth of Egypt - Genesis 47:13-27

The last five years of famine were "*very severe*" and drastic measures were needed to assure survival. Joseph had stored up ample grain for the lean years and when the people of Egypt and Canaan ran out of money to buy what they needed, they appealed to Joseph for help.

A. The People are Saved - Genesis 47:13-26

Joseph's plan provided for the people and caused Pharaoh to prosper. When the people ran out of money to buy grain, Joseph took their livestock for payment (verses 15-17). He took all the land of Egypt except the land of the priests (verses 18-20) and even the people themselves (verse 23). Joseph instituted a feudal system whereby the people worked the land and paid one-fifth of its yield to Pharaoh. Commentators note that considering the fertility of the land, twenty percent was not an excessive amount. The people realized that Joseph had saved them from starvation and gladly submitted to his authority and his regulations.

B. Pharaoh and Israel are Blessed - Genesis 47:14, 20, 23-24, 27

Through Joseph's wise management, God blessed the Pharaoh who had been so generous with the people of

Israel. God used this Pharaoh to bless His people with a home where they became wealthy and numerous. Generations later another Pharaoh would arise who would not receive God's blessing because he treated the Israelites cruelly (Exodus 1:8-14). God used that Pharaoh's evil treatment to implant in His people a desire for deliverance from the land of Egypt, a desire which He would use to fulfill His promise to take them back to the land of promise (Genesis 28:15 and 46:4).

III. Jacob Looks to the Future - Genesis 47:28-48:22

After moving to Egypt, Jacob lived another seventeen years under the care of Joseph. As he drew near to the end of his life, he exhibited his heart's desire for spiritual things quite simply and honestly. There was no more scheming and deceit as in earlier years; all that remained was a pure and sweet expression of hope in the promises of God.

A. Joseph's Vow to Jacob - Genesis 47:28-31

Jacob demonstrated his faith in God's promises by entreating Joseph to bury him in the Promised Land. Commentators have noted that as Joseph's father, Jacob could have had an extravagant burial in Egypt. But his request demonstrated his preference for the promise of God rather than the acclaim of the world. Jacob's desire was to "*lie with my fathers*"; to be buried in the Cave of Machpelah which Abraham had purchased from Ephron, the Hittite (Genesis 23).

With this request, Jacob expressed the certainty that God would fulfill His promise to give that land to him and to his seed. Thomas ([Genesis, A Devotional Commentary](#)) notes, "It was no mere sentiment, but a very definite religious faith that led to his making this request of Joseph." Joseph vowed to carry out his father's wishes by placing his hand under Jacob's thigh. As was noted concerning Genesis 24:2-3, this was a ritual performed in making a solemn promise. Jacob worshiped God for granting what he had requested.

B. Jacob's Blessing upon Joseph - Genesis 48:1-22

Sometime after making the vow, Joseph was informed that his father was sick. He took his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to visit. When Jacob heard they were coming, he gathered his strength and sat up on his bed to welcome them.

1. Jacob recalls God's promises - 48:3-4

Jacob used this opportunity to recall to Joseph how God Almighty had appeared to him many years earlier

at Luz, which he had renamed Bethel. It was there God had revealed to him the covenant blessing, confirming the promises He had originally made to Abraham (Genesis 15:5,18; 17:6-8), and later to Isaac (Genesis 26:3-5), and himself (Genesis 26:10-22). God would surely make Israel fruitful, a “*multitude of people*”, and He would give them the land He had promised as “*an everlasting possession*”.

2. Jacob takes Ephraim and Manasseh as sons - 48:5-11

Jacob blessed Joseph by giving him a double portion of the inheritance, thus elevating him to the rank of firstborn. He accomplished this by adopting Joseph's two sons (his grandsons), Ephraim and Manasseh, and raising them to the status of sons among the twelve. Joseph's sons were given the places of Reuben and Simeon. I Chronicles 5:1-2 explains this: “*Reuben the firstborn of Israel -- now he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's.*”

Verse 7 reveals that Jacob's beloved wife, Rachel, his first wife by intent, was in his mind as he gave a preferential place to Joseph's sons. Perhaps this act was to honor her.

When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he asked, “*Who are these?*” Israel's eyesight had grown dim with age. However, the reason for his question may not have been lack of recognition but rather part of a legal ritual of identifying the beneficiaries of an adoption or blessing (as in Genesis 27:18).

Joseph took his sons to Israel who kissed and embraced them as part of the blessing ritual. Israel then expressed his gratitude to God for something he never thought he would see again --- Joseph's face. Not only that, he had seen Joseph's offspring as well.

3. Joseph bows before Israel - 48:12

Joseph took his sons, stepped back from his father and “*bowed down with his face to the earth.*” What a beautiful display of humility in the sight of his sons! Joseph was second only to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt, but he courteously deferred to the patriarch who was mediating God's promises (The New Geneva Study Bible). This act also showed reverence for God.

Application

What kind of role model do your children see in you? Do you conduct yourself with humility, courtesy and

respect for others, especially older family members? Do you exhibit reverence for God through your speech and actions toward others? How can you better teach your children through your example?

4. Israel crosses his hands - 48:13-20

As Joseph presented his sons for Israel's blessing, he made sure that the eldest, Manasseh, was at Israel's right hand and the younger, Ephraim, at his left. However, when Israel stretched out his hands, he laid his right hand on Ephraim's head and his left hand on Manasseh's. In his blessing, Jacob symbolically transferred a blessing from himself to Joseph's sons (“*let my name be named upon them. and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac*”). This blessing, as with all Hebrew blessings, was far more than wishful words or even a prayer. It was a God-inspired revelation which held an absolute anticipation of fulfillment. (See Numbers 23:20 and Romans 11:20).

a. The blessing - 48:15-16

Israel blessed Joseph, using beautiful descriptive words of God as the God of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, the God who had been his “*shepherd*” (NASB) all of his life and the “*Angel*” who had redeemed him from all evil. With these words of faith, Israel prayed for God's gracious blessing on “*the lads*”.

b. Joseph protests - 48:17-19

Joseph was displeased when he saw that his father had laid his right hand (which customarily was placed on the eldest) on the head of his younger son, Ephraim. He took hold of his father's hand with the intention of correcting him, but Israel refused. He knew what he was doing, “*I know, my son, I know*”.

c. Ephraim is blessed as first-born - 48:19-20

The great patriarch deliberately blessed Ephraim as the first-born above Manasseh, prophesying that he would be the greater and that his descendants would become a multitude of nations. Israel was blessing “according to the divine plan, not according to normal custom” (Walvoord and Zuck, The Bible Knowledge Commentary). Just as Isaac had been blessed above Ishmael and Jacob had been blessed above his twin brother Esau, Ephraim was now blessed above Manasseh. This prophetic blessing found fulfillment years later during the time of the judges when Ephraim became a large and influential tribe. Later, when the nation of Israel was divided, Ephraim took the lead among the ten northern tribes to the extent that the name Ephraim was used interchangeably with the name Israel.

C. Israel Believes - Genesis 48:21-22

Israel expressed his firm belief that God would be with his descendants and take them back to the Promised Land. In giving Joseph one "*portion*" more than his brothers, Israel incorporated a play on words. The Hebrew word for "*portion*" is "*sekem*" and identical to the place-name "Shechem" where Jacob had bought a parcel of land (Genesis 33:18-19). Later, the children of Israel would bury Joseph's bones in Shechem (Joshua 24:32). Even later, in Jesus' day, Shechem (near Sychar) was referred to as "*the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph*" (John 4:4-5).

Application

In contrast to the younger Jacob who looked around him in fear, lacked faith and used manipulation and deception to achieve God's ends, the elderly Israel looked upward in faith. In his old age, he looked back over

his life and saw God's guiding and protecting hand in control of all things. This filled him with gratitude and enabled him to look at the present with a peace which had eluded him for most of his life. Furthermore, he could look forward in faith and hope to the fulfillment of God's promises.

Will you take a few moments to look back over your life and consider how God's guiding and protecting hand has providentially led you and kept you free from harm? Will you thank Him for being your Shepherd and Redeeming Angel and in doing so allow yourself to be filled with His peace? Will you look to Him above your circumstances and begin to build your life from this moment forward on faith and hope? God may not change your name as he did Jacob's, but He will surely change you as you gratefully surrender yourself to Him.