

# GENESIS

Why The Beginning Matters

Study 24

Jacob's Faith and Family Reconciliation

Genesis 46-50

Genesis 46-47: The family comes to Egypt

Genesis 46:1-7

So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, "Jacob! Jacob!"

"Here I am," he replied.

"I am God, the God of your father," he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. "I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes."

Then Jacob left Beersheba, and Israel's sons took their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the carts that Pharaoh had sent to transport him. So Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt, taking with them their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in Canaan. Jacob brought with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters—all his offspring.

**1) a) Discussion question. God speaks directly to Jacob and reassures him. Why would Jacob fear going down to Egypt?**

Jacob and the family might fear going to Egypt because Jacob's grandfather Abraham had gone down to Egypt during a famine but he was cast out of Egypt after the Lord brought plagues upon Pharaoh's house. Isaac also faced a similar situation, and the Lord directly told Isaac "Do not go down to Egypt." Egypt harshly treated them the past few times (even though it was their brother Joseph), so Egypt is a place they feared, not the promised land.

Genesis 46:28-34

Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen. When they arrived in the region of Goshen, Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time. Israel said to Joseph, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive."

Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were living in the

land of Canaan, have come to me. The men are shepherds; they tend livestock, and they have brought along their flocks and herds and everything they own.' When Pharaoh calls you in and asks, 'What is your occupation?' you should answer, 'Your servants have tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did.' Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen, for all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians."

Genesis 47:1-12

Joseph went and told Pharaoh, "My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen." He chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh.

Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?"

"Your servants are shepherds," they replied to Pharaoh, "just as our fathers were." They also said to him, "We have come to live here for a while, because the famine is severe in Canaan and your servants' flocks have no pasture. So now, please let your servants settle in Goshen." Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you, and the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land. Let them live in Goshen. And if you know of any among them with special ability, put them in charge of my own livestock."

Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed Pharaoh, Pharaoh asked him, "How old are you?"

And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers." Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from his presence.

So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh directed. Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children.

**b) Objective question. Select all that apply. Which of the following is true?**

- A. Judah is seen as the representative of Jacob rather than Reuben the firstborn
- B. In the genealogies such as Genesis 46:8-25, any pagan wife is mentioned intentionally such as a Canaanite woman (Gen 46:10) and Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On (Gen 46:19)
- C. Joseph teaches his brothers how to be tactful when talking to Pharaoh
- D. Joseph's brothers didn't follow the tactic Joseph asked them to do
- E. The Pharaoh didn't give them the best land because they didn't follow Joseph's tactic
- F. It was unusual for Jacob to bless the Pharaoh because normally the "greater" blesses the "lesser" and Pharaoh was considerably more powerful in human eyes.

Genesis 47:13-26

There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine. Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace. When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? Our money is all gone."

"Then bring your livestock," said Joseph. "I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone." So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock.

When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, "We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. Why should we perish before your eyes—we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate."

So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh's, and Joseph reduced the people to servitude, from one end of Egypt to the other. However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land. Joseph said to the people, "Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you so you can plant the ground. But when the crop comes in, give a fifth of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children."

"You have saved our lives," they said. "May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh."

So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt—still in force today—that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh's.

**c) Discussion question. What do you think of Joseph's methods during the famine?**

## Genesis 48-49: Family Blessings

### Genesis 47:28-31

Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number. Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven. When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt, but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried". "I will do as you say," he said. "Swear to me," he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

### Gen 48:12-14

Then Joseph removed them from Israel's knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. And Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel's left hand and Manasseh on his left toward Israel's right hand, and brought them close to him. But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn.

### Genesis 49:28-33

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate to him. Then he gave them these instructions: "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites." When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people.

**2) Objective question. Select all that apply. According to the video lecture, which of the following is true?**

- A. Jacob wants to be buried in the promised land, pointing out that the ultimate destination is still there.
- B. Jacob accepted the half-Egyptian children but mistakenly blessed the younger son of Joseph first.
- C. Judah had the blessing that stands above his brothers, and the royal line will come from him Gen 49:10, the other brothers will bow to him.
- D. Most of the blessings to the sons points back towards the promised land

## Genesis 50: The End of the Beginning

Genesis 50:12-26

So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them: They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, together with his brothers and all the others who had gone with him to bury his father.

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father's family. He lived a hundred and ten years and saw the third generation of Ephraim's children. Also the children of Makir son of Manasseh were placed at birth on Joseph's knees.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place."

So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

**3) a) Discussion Question. What is the most important element at the end of Genesis in Genesis 50?**

The story looks beyond back to the promised land, even Joseph who prospered in Egypt looks towards the future in the promised land.

**b) Reflection Question. Where is the "promised land" for Christians and what makes it good?**

### Takeaway

Jacob reunited with Joseph in Egypt and ends with the whole family looking towards a future in the promised land under God.

### Case Study

#### Case 1 – God’s Promises

Roger is a Christian who has been faithfully attending the Gamma Baptist Church since he was a child. He met his wife there and they had children and grandchildren together.

As he was approaching his 62nd birthday, he developed a stammer and also blurry vision. He went for a regular medical check-up and the doctor detected multiple brain tumors (one of which was pressing on his optic nerve). The doctor diagnosed him with stage 3 brain cancer and prescribed chemotherapy.

Roger was hopeful and prayed continuously and fervently with his family and his LG members at church. He believed that God heals all diseases as stated in Psalm 103:3.

Over the course of the next year, Roger underwent the whole chemotherapy treatment. Nevertheless, soon after, his symptoms deteriorated further and he became partially blind. Upon visiting the doctor, he was told that the chemotherapy was ineffective and that the cancer progressed to stage 4.

Roger became extremely downcast and discouraged. As a Christian, he always believed that God was a God of miracles and that He should have intervened when he prayed. After all, he had been so faithful in attending church and also in prayer. Through the unanswered prayers, Roger felt that God has abandoned him and that He is an unfaithful God who does not keep His promises.

**1) a) Discussion question. Was Roger right to think that God had to heal him? Why or why not?**

#### Model Answer

The Lord is a God who heals as mentioned in Psalm 103:3.

However, although He is powerful enough to heal, it does not mean that He will do it all the time. He is able but not obligated to do so. God can but does not promise to heal all illnesses. Roger mistakenly believes that Psalm 103:3 is a personal promise to him.

**b) Discussion question. Job was afflicted with material loss and deterioration in health. Nevertheless, he could still say "... the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21).**

**i) What does Job recognize about his position before God?**

Model Answer

Job recognizes that all he has in his possession are gifts from God and that he is not entitled to any of it. It is given freely to Him by God's grace.

**ii) Many believers have quoted Job's famous "the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away". But not many fully quote the verse till the end:**

**"... blessed be the name of the LORD"**

**Job praised God despite his situation. Why could he do it?**

**iii) Job exhibited exemplary faith that looked far beyond his life on this Earth. We see this in Job 13:15 – "Though He slay [kill] me, yet will I trust in Him".**

**Essentially, even if God were to take Job's life, he still trusted the Lord through those circumstances.**

**How would you comfort Roger with Job's experience?**

**c) Discussion question. Joseph went through deep hardships in his life. We have considered how he was thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, falsely accused, and put in prison.**

**i) Did God have a reason for putting Joseph in the situations that he went through? If yes, what was it?**

Model Answer

Genesis 50:20 – "God meant it unto good"

**ii) Reflection question. Has there been a time that you have undergone hardship in your life but in retrospect, God meant it for good for someone else? Discuss and share.**

**d) Discussion question. Joseph's perspective went far beyond the grave. He was not as concerned about his health as he was about his bones (body) after he dies.**

**In Genesis 50:24-25, Joseph gives instructions to the children of Israel to "carry up my bones" when God visits them to take them out of this land unto the land that He promised to Abraham.**

**i) When was this fulfilled?**

Model Answer  
Joshua 24:32

**ii) What was so significant about this to Joseph? Why couldn't he just have his bones rest in Egypt?**

Model Answer  
Joseph was essentially claiming God's promise towards Abraham, his great-grandfather. Joseph knew that he would not live long enough to see the promises fulfilled in his lifetime but he believed in God and trusted Him to keep His promises.  
  
Only then could Joseph make such an extraordinary statement.

**iii) In Hebrews 11:22, it says "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."**

**Focus on the term "By faith". By faith, Joseph saw God's promise being fulfilled beyond the grave.**

**How do we apply this to ourselves? [Hint: What is God's promise to us in Christ?]**



Model Answer

By faith, we like Joseph can see God's promise being fulfilled beyond the grave.

God has promised us eternal life when we believe in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Practically speaking, applying this means that we can trust God that He will be faithful to His Word, even when we die.

**iv) How would you comfort Roger about God's promises to us about eternal life?**