

### Jacob and His Family Join Joseph in Egypt

#### Genesis 46:1-7

Genesis 46:1-7 - *"So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. <sup>2</sup> Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" And he said, "Here I am."*

*<sup>3</sup> So He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. <sup>4</sup> I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes."*

*<sup>5</sup> Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. <sup>6</sup> So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him. <sup>7</sup> His sons and his sons' sons, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt."*

#### Background Notes

In Genesis 45, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers. Even though Joseph's brothers had hated him, betrayed him, and sold him as a slave, Joseph was willing to forgive and forget the past. Joseph didn't take revenge. He didn't hold a grudge, and he didn't extend his "tests" of his brothers when there was evidence of repentance. Joseph forgave his brothers, and he was reconciled with his brothers. Family fellowship was restored.

This is a great picture of how the Lord is willing to forgive us reconcile us to Himself. And Joseph is a great example for us to follow. We should be willing to forgive - even if we have been hated or betrayed, perhaps even by member of our own family.

After the reconciliation, Joseph told his brothers to go home, pack up, and move their father and their families to Egypt. After all, there were five more years of famine yet to come. So Jacob and his family left Hebron, where they were living at this time, and started out for Egypt.

But apparently Jacob had some misgivings about going to Egypt. After all, many years before, God had spoken to Jacob and specifically said to him, *'I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land'* (Genesis 31:13). Now, when Jacob was 130 years old, was it **really** God's will for him to leave his native land?

Furthermore, Jacob knew that his grandfather, Abraham, had gone to Egypt in a time of famine, and doing this was against God's will (Genesis 12). His father, Isaac, had been warned by God **not** to go down to Egypt (Genesis 26:2). Jacob wanted to be sure that it was God's will for him to go to Egypt. So he did the right thing. Jacob stopped at BeerSheba and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. He didn't just look at circumstances. He asked the Lord! BeerSheba was the place where Abraham had "*called upon the Name of the LORD, the Eternal God*" (Genesis 21:33). The Lord had appeared to Isaac at BeerSheba (Genesis 26). It was from BeerSheba that Jacob had left home to run from his brother Esau, more than fifty years earlier.

This was at least the fourth time that the Lord had spoken to Jacob at night. "*Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" And he said, "Here I am"* (v2). At Bethel, the Lord spoke to Jacob at night with the vision of a ladder or the staircase to Heaven (Genesis 28). At Padan Aram, when Jacob was about to leave Laban, the Lord spoke to him at night (Genesis 31). At the Jabbok River, where Jacob wrestled with Angel of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Jacob at night (Genesis 32). And now here at BeerSheba, the Lord spoke to Jacob at night. Sometimes in the quietness of the night, when we are not busy or distracted, we are better able to hear what the Lord is saying to us.

At BeerSheba, God told Jacob that it was OK to go to Egypt. "*I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there*" (v3).

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God confirms the decisions of His obedient children.

Jacob did the right thing. He wanted to be sure that he was making the right decision, so he asked the Lord. Obedient Christians look to the Lord when making important decisions! The Lord has promised to guide His obedient children. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*"

How does God direct our paths? How does He guide us and help us in the decision-making process? He uses several means. He gives us the inner convictions of the Holy Spirit. He gives us common sense. He controls circumstances to guide us. He gives us biblical guidelines in His Word. He provides godly counsel from other believers. But we must seek God in prayer and trust that He will give us guidance and direction. He expects us to pray! And God will confirm the careful and prayerful decisions of His obedient children. (For more detail, see \* below.)

God confirmed Jacob's decision to go to Egypt. Circumstances and common sense definitely favored moving to Egypt. There was a famine, and food was available in Egypt. Jacob's son was now prime minister of Egypt. He had invited his father and the family to come and settle there, and he had promised that he would provide for them and care for them. Jacob had based his decision on common sense and circumstances, and God confirmed his decision to go to Egypt.

Notice that Jacob didn't "set out a fleece"! He didn't say, "Lord, I'll go to Egypt if I see exactly ten camels between Hebron and Beersheba." No, "putting out a fleece" is **not** evidence of a strong faith. (Read the story of Gideon!) When we "put out a fleece," we're asking God to do something that's more or less miraculous **on our terms**. That's like telling God what to do! We're putting God in a box, and forcing Him to comply with **our** terms before we'll obey! Let God confirm your decision on **His terms**, and in **His way**, and in **His timing**. That's very different from demanding that God conform to the terms of your "fleece" - and your timing!

Jacob asked God to confirm his decision to go to Egypt, and God did confirm that decision. God confirms the decisions of His obedient children.

I've used this illustration before, but it may be helpful here. Recently Margie and I made the major decision to downsize - to sell our home of 21 years, where we had raised our family. In making this decision, we used the means of guidance that God has given to all His children. Common sense! Circumstances! Counsel of other believers! And we also prayed that the sale would not take a lot of time from the ministries that God had given us when we made this move.

God answered that prayer and confirmed our decision. Shortly after we listed the home, I was teaching a seminar on the West Coast. I was giving two lectures during the evening with a short break between the lectures. 45 minutes before the first lecture, Margie called to say that an offer had been made for the house. The offer was lower than our listing price, so we decided to tell our agent that we would come down a little in our price. I called back five minutes before the first lecture to hear what had happened, and the buyers had come up significantly in their offer.

We decided to split the difference between the two amounts. After giving my first lecture, I learned that the buyers had agreed to the new price. So I asked Margie to sign the contract and fax it to me for my signature. Two minutes later the contract was in my hands, I signed it and faxed it back. House sold! Praise the Lord! Thank you, Lord! I went on to my second lecture with one minute to spare, and **no ministry time was lost** in the sale of the home!

It seemed to us that the Lord was saying, "I'll confirm your decision by showing you that I can sell your house quickly, so you won't have to lose a minute of ministry time." God confirms the decisions of His obedient children.

## 2. God superintends the decisions of His finite children.

In verse 3, God said to Jacob: *"I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there.* When Jacob made his decision to go to Egypt, little did he know that God was superintending his decision. It was God's purpose to bring Jacob's family to Egypt, because He planned to form the nation of Israel in Egypt. We should allow God to superintend our decisions. We are finite. We don't have all the facts. We're not always able to see the big picture. But God is infinite, and He **does** have the big picture. Our job is to make the best decisions we can, by using the means that God has given us. In His infinite wisdom, God will superintend these decisions and work out His greater plans.

A number of years ago when I was still working as a research engineer, I made a job change that involved a change of location. We decided to rent a house temporarily while we looked for a house to buy. The house we rented wasn't really adequate for our family's needs, but - it was less than a block from the local high school. To make a long story short, less than a week after renting that inadequate house, we found ourselves leading a large high school Bible study group! The teens spilled out of the living and dining rooms, up the stairs, and onto the porch of that little rented house! In the subsequent few months, we became more and more involved in teen ministry. To our amazement and joy, our small decision to rent that particular house eventually led to our major decision to leave secular employment and serving the Lord full time!

When we made the decision to rent that house, *we had no idea what God had in mind!* God was working out His plans by superintending our decisions. That was true in Jacob's life, and it can be true in our lives as well. God superintends the decisions of His finite children

## Practical Application

### **Remember, the Lord is with us in death as well as in life.**

Look at God's promises to Jacob in verse 4: *"I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes."*

What a great promise! *"I will go down with you to Egypt"* – that was God's promise that His presence would be with Jacob. *"I will bring you up"* - that was God's promise of the Exodus, when Jacob's descendants would finally return as a nation to the Promised Land.

*"Joseph will close your eyes"* - that was God's promise of a peaceful death for Jacob, with his beloved son Joseph at his side. And it was not only a promise of a peaceful death- it was a promise of a death that God would control as to time and circumstances. What a wonderful and reassuring promise! God promises to be with us and care for us in death as well as in life.

In Hebrews 13:5 we read, *"For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."* We tend to apply this promise only to our lives - but it applies to death as well! God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you."

A few weeks ago I spoke at the funeral of a young Christian who died from cancer. During the final weeks of her life, we visited her in the hospital, and on more than one occasion she told us that the Lord was especially close to her during this time. And the Lord was with her during her life, and He was with her as He took her Home to Heaven.

Remember - the Lord will be with us in death as well as in life!