

Pharaoh Meets Joseph's Family

Genesis 47:1-12

Genesis 47:1-12 - *"Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said, "My father and my brothers, their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; and indeed they are in the land of Goshen." ² And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. ³ Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?"*

And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers." ⁴ And they said to Pharaoh, "We have come to dwell in the land, because your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen."

⁵ Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. ⁶ The land of Egypt is before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock."

⁷ Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. ⁸ Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How old are you?"

⁹ And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." ¹⁰ So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

¹¹ And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. ¹² Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number in their families."

Background Notes

Jacob and all his family arrived in Egypt in Genesis 46. They joined Joseph at the invitation of Pharaoh, because there were still five years of famine left. After Joseph's emotional reunion with his father, he brought five of his brothers before Pharaoh to make a formal request to reside temporarily in Egypt. Why only five brothers, and which five? We don't know. Judah was probably included, however, because he had become the chief spokesman for the brothers.

Pharaoh confirmed that they could stay in Goshen, the best of the land in Egypt. The land of Goshen was also called the land of Rameses (v11). Rameses I and Rameses II were well known Pharaohs in Egyptian history. Both of them came to power long after Joseph's time. Most likely these pharaohs took the name "Rameses" from the name of this area of Egypt, rather than this area being named for them (as some people have assumed).

After Joseph's brothers had presented their official request to dwell in Egypt, Joseph then brought his father forward and introduced him to Pharaoh. Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and later in this chapter we'll see that Jacob's blessing was fulfilled. Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh, by the way, certainly fits in well with the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant. In Genesis 12:2-3 God promised Abraham: *"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* Pharaoh had certainly "blessed" (been kind to) these 70 descendants of Abraham who had come to live in Egypt, and he would be blessed in return.

Doctrinal Points

1. God moves the hearts of people for divine purposes.

Proverbs 21:1 says, *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD. Like the rivers of water, He turns it wherever He wishes."* That verse is essentially our doctrinal point, and we certainly see that truth here. God's divine purpose was to bring Jacob and his family to Egypt. In Egypt, they would be separated from the idolatry and immorality of Canaan. In Egypt, they would be less likely to intermarry with the pagan Egyptians because the family occupation was shepherding, and *"every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians"* (Genesis 46:34).

In Egypt, God would forge this small family of shepherds into a great nation - a nation that would outlive all other nations! Already we have seen how God used circumstances to bring this about: Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph becoming prime minister over all of Egypt, the famine. God used these circumstances (and more) to bring about His divine purposes. In Genesis 47 God moved the heart of Pharaoh to react with kindness toward Jacob and his family. *"Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, 'Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock'"* (v5-6).

What an offer! New job opportunities! Here they were, a small group of nomadic shepherds, an abomination to the Egyptians - and yet the best of the land of Egypt was offered to them! Why such kindness? We know the answer! God moves the hearts of people for divine purposes.

Can God move the hearts of people today for His divine purposes? Of course He can -- and not just the hearts of Christians. He can move **anyone's** heart to accomplish His divine purposes. For example, when the modern state of Israel was born in 1948, God moved the hearts of prime ministers and presidents all over the world in order to accomplish His divine purpose for Israel. As a result, after almost 2000 years of Jewish dispersion, the nation of Israel was reborn! God can move the hearts of people today for divine purposes in your life as well - in reference to a job, or in reference to buying or selling a home, for example. Whatever it may be, God can move the hearts of people for His divine purposes. And He does!

Proverbs 21:1: *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD. Like the rivers of water, He turns it wherever He wishes.”*
The heart of the king, or the heart of the boss, or the heart of the state official – the heart of any person! *“The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord. Like rivers of water, He turns it wherever He wishes.”* God moves the hearts of people for divine purposes.

2. God measures the status of people by divine standards.

“Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh” (v7). You may be thinking, “Wait a minute - I thought the Bible says that the lesser is blessed by the greater!” Well, it does. That verse is found in Hebrews 7:7, *“Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.”*

There was the great Pharaoh of Egypt, sitting in splendid robes on his throne in the royal palace, with many servants attending him, thought by the Egyptians to be the embodiment of the gods! And in came Jacob, an elderly man, perhaps bent over and needing his staff to support him, dressed in his best - but still a shepherd, and despised by the Egyptians. And yet **Jacob blessed Pharaoh!** In fact, Jacob blessed Pharaoh **twice** - in verse 8, when he came into the throne room, and in verse 10 when he left. Why this seeming reversal of roles? From **God’s** perspective, Jacob was greater than Pharaoh. God measures the status of people by *divine standards*.

The world measures the status of people by how much money they have, or how much power they have, or how much prestige or social status they have. And it’s very easy for us to fall into the trap of that worldly mindset. Our fallen human nature values people more highly if they have money or power. But God doesn’t look on the outward appearance - **God looks at the heart!**

God measures the status of people by His divine standards, and God’s standard is **Christ**. God looks at how a person has treated His beloved Son. Sadly, most of the people who have status in this world have rejected Jesus Christ. So be encouraged, if you feel that somehow you haven’t made it in this world’s eyes. So what?! Do you love the Lord? Then you have status with **God!** God measures the status of people by **divine standards**.

Practical Applications

1. Let’s have a pilgrim mindset.

“And Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage” (v9).

What did Jacob mean when he said that his “years have been few”? He was 130 years old! How many of us would consider that “a few”? Jacob was 130 years old, but his grandfather, Abraham, had lived to 175 (Genesis 25), and his

father, Isaac, had lived to 180 years (Genesis 35), so in comparison his years were few. And Jacob had gone through some very unpleasant and difficult times in his 130 years. Think how he cheated and escaped from Esau, was cheated by Laban, was horrified by the massacre at Shechem. Think of the death of his beloved wife Rachel, and the loss of his dearly loved son, Joseph.

However, the point here is that **Jacob considered his life as a pilgrimage**. His ultimate home was not in Egypt or in Canaan. Jacob looked forward to his eternal home with God in Heaven. Regarding the Patriarchs (including Jacob), Hebrews 11:16 says, *“But they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.”* They considered their lives to be a pilgrimage to that heavenly city. Because of this realization, all the Patriarchs, including Jacob, had a pilgrim mindset. About these men of faith, Hebrews 11:13 says, *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”*

A paraphrase from Psalm 84 beautifully describes a pilgrimage: *“What joy for those whose strength comes from the Lord, who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs... They will continue to grow stronger, and each of them will appear before God in Zion.”* Notice that these pilgrims had **“set their minds** on a pilgrimage.” The goal of their pilgrimage was to worship the Lord in Jerusalem, so their mindset was to endure the long and difficult journey. And the Lord provided them with strength and joy along the way.

The Patriarchs had a “pilgrim mindset” - and we, too, should have a pilgrim mindset. If we have a pilgrim mindset, a biblical lifestyle will follow.

Think about it. Do we *really* have a pilgrim mindset? We’re not permanent dwellers, putting down roots in a home in this world. We’re pilgrims! We are **going Home!** We have a home, but it is not here on this earth. Let’s have a pilgrim mindset!

2. Are you ashamed of your family?

Joseph’s regard for his family is an excellent example for all of us, of all ages! Joseph was not ashamed of his family, even though they were a group of nomadic shepherds who were on the bottom rung of the social ladder in Egypt. Joseph was now a sophisticated, educated man who was in a very high position in the Egyptian empire, but he didn’t look down on his family. He respected them. He honored them. He even introduced them to the most powerful man on earth at that time, the Pharaoh of Egypt.

I have always been impressed with the upright character of my students who speak well of their parents and families. What about you – especially you young people who are listening to these “Talks from Genesis”? Are you ashamed of your family? Remember the example of Joseph!