

## Genesis 47

God's people have arrived in Egypt, to wait out the five years that remain of the famine. Joseph will see his father for the first time in more than twenty years. Joseph will introduce his father to Pharaoh. Then Jacob will be prepared to die. We know that Jacob lived an additional seventeen years in Egypt (47:28), which parallels the first 17 years he had with his favorite son (37:2). Moses jumps those seventeen years from 47:27 to 47:28. Chapters 48 and 49 are now at the end of Jacob's life, seventeen years in the future, a full twelve years beyond the extreme famine which brought them into Egypt at the beginning. Jacob will die at 49:33.

### TRANSLATION - 47:1-6:

**1** Then Joseph came and announced to Pharaoh and said, "My father and my brothers and their flock and their cattle and all which [is] theirs have come from the land of Canaan and behold, they [are] in the land of Goshen. **2** And from among his brothers he took five men and he presented them to the face of Pharaoh. **3** Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What [is] your occupation?" And they said to Pharaoh, "Shepherds of flock [are] your servants, both ourselves and our fathers." **4** And they said to Pharaoh, "To dwell in the land, we have come because there is not pasture for the flock which [belongs] to your servants because heavy [is] the famine in the land of Canaan. So now let your servants dwell, please, in the land of Goshen."

**5** So Pharaoh said to Joseph, saying, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. **6** The land of Egypt before you it [is]. In the best of the land, settle your father and your brothers. They will settle in the land of Goshen and if you know that there is with them men of wealth, then put them chiefs of the property which [belongs] to me."

### WORDS:

"To present" (verse 2; appears 17 times) means to "set, place, establish, take one's stand." The word "best" (verse 6) is related to the adjective "good." "Wealth" (verse 6; 246 times) means "strength, wealth, army." It is the word used in Proverbs 31:10; 12:4 and Ruth 3:11 to describe a "worthy" or "virtuous" woman. "Chiefs" is the word often translated "prince," which is related (the masculine form) to the name "Sarah" (feminine form).

### ARCHAEOLOGY:

Joseph had told his brothers that they will live in the land of Goshen in 45:10. See comments there.

### COMMENTS:

Once Joseph's brothers arrive in Egypt, Joseph goes to Pharaoh to inform him. Although Joseph has been given a considerable amount of authority in Egypt, he never oversteps that boundary between the second-in-command and the pharaoh. He tells Pharaoh his brothers are in Goshen. When he took his brothers, he limited the number to five. We have no idea which five he took.

Just as he had predicted, Pharaoh asked the brothers what their occupation was (cf. 46:33). The brothers respond that they are shepherds, as their ancestors had been, just as Joseph had told them to say (cf. 46:34). They further inform Pharaoh that they are there to "sojourn" since they had no pasture in the land of Canaan. They, also, do not abuse the relationship between Pharaoh and Joseph as they politely ask, "Please" let the servants live in the land of Goshen. They, also, know that it would be Pharaoh's decision.

In verses 5-6, Pharaoh acknowledges that these men are Joseph's family and the whole land of Egypt is at their disposal. He consents to let them live in the land of Goshen and, Pharaoh asks Joseph, if he had any "capable men," men of "wealth," Joseph should put them in charge of Pharaoh's livestock.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - We noted in chapter 39 how frequently God blessed Joseph and the household of Potiphar. Because Joseph has continued to live a life honoring God, God has continued to bless Joseph and those around him. Not only has Pharaoh been blessed but now Joseph's brothers, who had made themselves Joseph's enemies at one time, are now being blessed. They have land. They have food. They have pasturage for their flocks. They have respect in the eyes of Pharaoh.

*Contemporaries of Moses* - Since Israel would "sojourn" in Egypt, God commanded Israel to support those who would "sojourn" among Israel: Exo. 22:20; 23:9; Lev. 19:34; Deut. 10:19.

#### TRANSLATION - 47:7-10:

**7** So Joseph came to Jacob, his father, and he presented him before Pharaoh and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. **8** So Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many [are] the days of the years of your life?"

**9** And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my sojourns [are] one hundred, thirty years. Few and evil the days of the years of my life have been but they did not overtake the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their sojourns."

**10** So Jacob blessed Pharaoh and he went out from the face of Pharaoh.

#### WORDS:

"Sojourn" (verse 9) is used 11 times, six times in Genesis (17:8; 28:4; 36:7; 37:1; 47:9). It is related to the verb "to dwell temporarily" (82 times) and the noun "stranger or alien" (92 times).

#### COMMENTS:

Finally, Joseph presents his father, 130 years old, to the most powerful man in the world, at that time. Multiple Egyptian sources suggest that 110 years is the ideal time to live (cf. Joseph's age at death: 50:26). Jacob had surpassed that already. Then, the greater, Jacob, blessed the lesser, Pharaoh (cf. Heb. 7:7).

As many elderly do, Pharaoh asked Jacob his age. Jacob responds with his age but his life has been "few and evil" in comparison with his forefathers. Indeed, Abraham lived to be 175 years old (25:7) while Isaac lived to be 180 years old (35:28). Jacob's life had been "evil" (in a generic sense) or "unpleasant," much more unpleasant than his father's and grandfather's. Yet, he brought most of his problems on himself.

The famine was not his fault, of course. But, the fact that his youngest, favorite son was "stolen" from him by envious brothers resulted from Jacob's favoritism of Joseph over the other sons. Furthermore, Jacob would not have had twelve sons (likely) had he not married both Rachel and Leah. The reason he married both women was because he fled from his homeland without a dowry to offer someone. If he had had a dowry, he probably could have paid for Rachel's hand in marriage and hers only and he would not have had the rivalry among his sons which he had.

Jacob had to flee his homeland because he had made his brother, Esau, mad when Jacob swindled and lied and deceived the birthright and the blessing from the hands of his older brother. That whole scenario was motivated, at least partially, by the favoritism of Rebekah for Jacob versus Isaac's partiality for Esau. So, we have a full circle where the next generation suffers for the sins of the prior generation.

Jacob blessed Pharaoh a second time or, perhaps, verse 10 is simply repeating the fact that Jacob blessed the king of Egypt. Then Jacob leaves Pharaoh's presence.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - The Bible certainly teaches that we often suffer for the sins we commit. Jacob has been blessed in the end of his life by His Father in heaven who loved

him. However, God did not stop the negative consequences of Jacob's behavior from punishing him with their repercussions.

*Contemporaries of Moses* - God will remind Israel that their sins will eventually catch up with them (Num. 32:23).

*Later Hebrew writers* - Solomon tells his audience in Ecclesiastes 11:1 that our sins will find us in the end.

*NT writers* - Paul will share with Christians the principle illustrated here in the life of Jacob that if we sow to the flesh, we will reap from the flesh because whatever we sow in life, we will reap (Gal. 6:7-8).

#### TRANSLATION - 47:11-26:

**11** So Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave to them possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses just as Pharaoh commanded. **12** And Joseph provided his father and his brothers and all the house of his father bread, according to the dependents. **13** For there was no bread in all the land because heavy [was] the famine extremely and the land of Egypt wilted and the land of Canaan from before the famine.

**14** So Joseph gathered all the silver found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan for the grain which they were buying and Joseph brought the silver to the house of Pharaoh.

**15** Then the silver was spent from the land of Egypt and from the land of Canaan and all Egypt came to Joseph, saying, "Provide for us bread. For why will we die, before you because the silver has run out?" **16** So Joseph said, "Provide from your livestock and I will give to you for your livestock since the silver ran out." **17** So they brought their livestock to Joseph and Joseph gave to them bread for horses and the flock and for livestock and for donkeys and he fed them grain for all their livestock in that year.

**18** And he provided that year and they came to him in the second year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that since the silver is completed that from the livestock of the animals to my lord. We have not remaining before my lord except our bodies and our land. **19** Why will we die before your eyes, both ourselves and our lands? Buy us and our lands for food and we will be ourselves and our land servants to Pharaoh and give seed and we will live. If not, we will die that our land will not be desolated."

**20** So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh because Egyptians sold, a man, his field because heavy on them [was] the famine and he gave the land to Pharaoh. **21** And the people he caused to move to the cities from one end of the boundary of Egypt even until its end. **22** Only the land of the priests he did not buy because an allotment to the priests from Pharaoh and they ate their allotment which Pharaoh gave to them; therefore they did not sell their land.

**23** Then Joseph said to the people, "Thus I have bought you today and your land for Pharaoh. Here, to you [is] seed and your seed for the land. **24** And there will be in the harvest that you will give a fifth to Pharaoh and the land, four-fifths will be to you for seed of the field, and for you to eat and for which in your house and to eat for your little ones."

**25** Then they said, "You have caused us to live! Let us find grace in the eyes of my lord and we will be servants to Pharaoh!"

**26** So Joseph put them for a statute until today on the land of Egypt for Pharaoh for a fifth. Only the land of the priests alone will not be for Pharaoh.

#### WORDS:

"To provide" (verse 12) comes from the verb "to comprehend" (38 times). In its *piel* form (as here), it means to "provide, support." "Dependents" is a rare word and refers to small children. "Wilted" (verse 13) is only found here. It means to "languish."

“To gather” (verse 14) is used 37 times and means to “gather, glean, collect.” The word “grain” and “buying” are related words. “To spend” (verse 15) translates a verb meaning “be complete, finish, come to an end, be spent.” It is used 64 times. “To provide” is different from the verb at verse 12. This verb was seen at 11:3-4, 7; 29:21; 30:1; 38:16 and here, 47:15-16. “To run out” comes from the noun which means “end, nothing.” The verb is only used here (47:15-16), Isa. 16:4; 29:20; Psa. 77:9.

“To feed” (verse 17) is used 10 times, meaning “to lead, guide, escort, provide food.” “To cover” (verse 18; appears 32 times) means to “be hidden, to conceal.” “To be desolate” (verse 19; appears 92 times) means to be “deserted, uninhabited.” “Allotment” (verse 22; appears 131 times), and means “statue, appointment time, portion.”

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Land of Rameses” (verse 11) is found only here in the OT; “Ramses” is found here, Exo. 1:11; 12:37; Num. 33:3, 5. It will be the place from where the Israelites begin their exodus. As far as written records are concerned “Rameses” has referred to this area of Egypt since the 1300s B. C. Pharaoh Rameses II built his capital, Pi-Ramesses here. It is possible that Moses updated the designation for “Goshen” for the sake of his audience who knew the land as “Rameses.” Yet, it is also possible that *this* is a written record of the area being known as “Ramses” *before* other written records so identify it.

This is the first time “horses” are mentioned in the Bible. Horses were, of course, valuable property for their use in work as well as transportation.

#### COMMENTS:

Joseph settled his father and brothers into the land of Goshen so that they could receive the “best” part of the land of Egypt, the pastures for their flocks. This area at some point was known as the land of Rameses. Joseph saw to it that his family was provided the food (literally, “bread”) which they needed, right down to their little ones.

Beginning in verse 13 we see the results of the extensive famine as it wore on into its third, fourth, fifth years and beyond. There was no food for the common people, neither in Egypt nor in Canaan, which sustained a long trade relationship with Egypt. The verb “withered” in verse 13 illustrates the depth of the famine’s impact.

Joseph did not hand out food for free. In the first round of “stimulus,” Joseph required money be paid for food. The money went into Pharaoh’s treasury. But the money (literally “silver”) eventually ran out, both in Egypt and in Canaan. When the money ran out, the people asked Joseph what to do.

The second round of “stimulus” was the people’s livestock. So, they brought their livestock to Joseph in exchange for food. Verse 17 is the first mention of “horses” in the Bible. They exchanged cattle, flocks, horses, and donkeys for food all that year.

When that year ended, and we do not know which year exactly this was, the people came to Joseph to ask what else could be done. “There is nothing remaining except our bodies and our lands” (vs 18). The word “bodies” might suggest the idea of “corpses.” It was common in ancient times for debtors to “sell” themselves into servitude in order to work off their debt. That is what we see here in verse 19. The Egyptians, perhaps also Canaanites, offered themselves as servants to Pharaoh. This was “stimulus” part three.

Through this whole process, Joseph enriches Pharaoh considerably. He now owns all the livestock and the land and the Egyptians themselves are now tenant farmers and were required to give a 20% tax to Pharaoh. That was a common percentage but much higher taxes were not unusual. In verse 21, Moses tells us that Joseph moved the people into cities as they plowed the lands for grain. In this way, it would also be easier to provide the food distributions.

Moses writes in verses 22 and 26 that the priests received a food allotment from Pharaoh so that they were not required to sell their land, livestock, or themselves. Apparently, as we see in verse 23, the famine was coming to an end as the people are given seed in order to plant so that they might have food at the end of the harvest. The people believed that was a

great offer so they accepted it. That was, apparently, still the procedure by the time Moses wrote the book of Genesis for his generation (vs 26): “until today.”

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - Among other nations, an interest rate of 20% was common but rates considerably higher were not unusual.

#### TRANSLATION - 47:27-31:

**27** So Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they acquired in it and they were fruitful and they multiplied greatly. **28** And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years and the days of the years of the life of Jacob were one hundred, forty-seven years. **29** So the days of Israel approached to die and he called to his son, to Joseph, and said to him, “If, please, I have found favor in your eyes, put, please, your hand under my thigh and do for me loving loyalty and truth. Don’t, please, bury me in Egypt. **30** But let me lie with my fathers and carry me from Egypt and bury me in their place.” And he said, “I, myself, will do according to your word.” **31** And he said, “Swear to me.” And he swore to him. And Israel worshipped on the head of the bed.

#### WORDS:

“To acquire” (verse 27; appears 63 times) can mean to “seize, grasp, take hold.” It is related to the word “property” (66 times). “Thigh” (verse 29) and this procedure relating to an oath is found also at 24:2. “Favor” was first found at 6:8. “Loving loyalty” was first found at 19:19. “Truth” was first seen at 24:27. “To lie down” (verse 30; appears 213 times) can mean to have sexual relations. “To carry” is used 659 times in the OT. Its fundamental meaning is to “lift, carry” but it can also mean to exalt oneself. “Worshipped” was seen at 18:2. It is the word which can mean to “bow down” out of respect but also to “worship” God as at 22:5. “Bed” (29 times) can also be a couch. In Genesis, it only refers to Israel’s bed.

#### COMMENTS:

Moses summarizes again what has been said in the chapter up to this point: Jacob (“Israel”) settles in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen, and they begin acquiring wealth. They are fruitful and the family multiplies considerably. The verb “to be fruitful” and “to multiply” are often found together. They were found first in God’s command to the animals (1:22) but then to Adam and Eve (1:28). After the flood, God wanted the animals to be fruitful (8:17) and He commanded Noah and his family to be fruitful (9:1, 7). God told Abraham that He would multiply him (17:2) and had made him fruitful (17:6) and He would make Ishmael fruitful (17:20) and multiply Ishmael (16:10). God would multiply Abraham’s seed (22:17).

Isaac recognized that God had made him fruitful and had promised to multiply him (26:4, 22, 24). Isaac prayed that God would make Jacob fruitful and multiply him (28:3), the point we see fulfilled in this text. God commanded Jacob to be fruitful and multiply (35:11). Joseph believed God had made him fruitful (41:52; cf. 49:22). Jacob tells Joseph that God promised He would make him fruitful (48:4).

Jacob lived to be 147 years old, outliving the famine by twelve years. But the time for his death came close (vs 29). Moses has jumped the last 17 years of Jacob’s life to present the last words of the patriarch. Jacob called Joseph and, deferring to the son who is now second-in-command of Egypt, asked him if he would put his hand under his thigh (we do not know the origin or significance of this phrase; see 24:2) and promise to treat the father with loving loyalty and in faithfulness. Jacob does not want to be buried in Egypt. He is the only patriarch to die outside of Canaan but he wants to be buried in Canaan, in the grave of his family.

When he dies (vs 30), he wants Joseph to carry his body out of Egypt and place him in the burying place, the cave of Machpelah, with his ancestors. This request shows that Jacob believed God (46:4), that he would return to the promised land. Joseph responded that he would. But Jacob wants Joseph to swear an oath to that effect. Joseph so swears. He fulfills

his oath (50:13). Finally, Israel worshipped at the head of his bed. He has one more thing to do: bless his sons.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - Jacob will be the only patriarch who will die outside of the Promised Land; however, he will be buried in Machpelah. See chapter 23 for the purchase of the cave of Machpelah by Abraham for Sarah. Abraham was also buried there (25:9) and we'll learn from the mouth of Jacob that Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah were all buried there (49:30-31).

*Contemporaries of Moses* - A pharaoh will ascend to the throne of Egypt who did not know or remember the works of Joseph (Exo. 1:8). One or more of his successors (cf. Exo. 2:23) will also be ignorant of Joseph and will defy Joseph's God (Exo. 5:2). He will be punished at the Red Sea, immortalized in Moses' sister's song (15:4-10). The growth of Israel's family foreshadows what will happen to the Israelites in Egypt over the next few centuries: Exodus 1:7, 10, 12; 7:3. Moses will remind God of this promise to the patriarchs when Israel builds a golden calf, worships it, and God threatens to destroy the whole nation (Exo. 32:13). Once Israel lives in the Promised Land, God will again make them fruitful (Exo. 23:30).

*Later Hebrew writers* - Isaiah will share a message about Egypt which will culminate in a preview of Egypt, Assyria, and Israel worshipping God together (19:23-25). The prophet Ezekiel will devote several chapters to the judgment of Egypt and lament her destruction (chapters 29-32).

*NT writers* - The LXX translators interpret the "bowing" of Jacob as worshipping, translating the word with *proskuneo*. The same translators will translate the Hebrew word "bed" as "staff." The Hebrew noun has only consonants and the vowels would distinguish "bed" from "staff." The points that designate vowels were not added to the Hebrew text until 800 A. D. The Hebrew writer, in Hebrews 11:21, will quote the LXX as he points to Jacob who, by faith, "worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff."