

Pentwater Bible Church
Pharaoh's Welcome & The Famine
Genesis Message Eighty - Four
Genesis 47: 1-26



Joseph in Pharaoh's Palace by Jacopo Amigoni 1682-1752 Madrid

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Pentwater Bible Church

Genesis Message Eighty-Four

PHARAOH GREETES THE FAMILY OF ISRAEL

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Review:

THE FAMILY OF ISRAEL THE JOURNEYED TO EGYPT

Genesis 46: 8-27

It is important for us to remember that one principal reason that God took the Hebrews down to Egypt was to keep them from intermarrying into the Canaanites. Shaul was the son of a Canaanitish woman and that means he had a different mother than the other sons of Simeon. So Shaul's mother was either a concubine or she was a second wife since only he is listed as her son. Most of Jacob's sons were not married to Canaanite women. There had been some intermarriage though such as Judah and Simeon and that was why God wanted to move them out of Canaan. They had to remain pure. It is quite clear from Exodus chapter one that they did remain separate and a pure race of people.

Three times in the Old Testament, it is stated that seventy people from the house of Jacob went down into Egypt. Here is Genesis 46:27, *and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, that came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.* In the first few verses of the book of Exodus, Jacob's sons are named, and then it states, there were seventy persons" (Exodus 1:1,5). The third Old Testament reference to this number is found in Deuteronomy 10:22, where Moses spoke to the Israelites about the "*great and awesome things*" that God had done for them (10:21). He then reminded the children of Israel of how their "*fathers went down to Egypt with seventy persons,*" which Jehovah made "*as the stars of heaven in multitude*" (Deuteronomy 10:22). One issue to resolve is how the number seventy can be understood in light of Stephen's statement recorded in Acts 7:12-14. *Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people*" Skeptics, criticize the authority of the Bible when they see the Acts passage while Genesis 46:27, Exodus 1:5, and Deuteronomy 10:22 mention only "seventy persons." Exactly how many of Jacob's household went to Egypt? Stephen did not contradict the Old Testament passages where the number seventy is used. He used the Septuagint which says seventy-five. That was the preferred Old Testament Bible in the first century A.D. The Septuagint number is supported by the Dead Sea Scrolls (written between 200 B.C.-68 AD). Stephen stated that seventy-five persons were in Jacob's family, but the Hebrew text has "seventy" in both Genesis 46:27 and Exodus 1:5. In both places the Septuagint has seventy-five. So then, Stephen, a Greek-speaking Jew, would have used the Septuagint.

The Septuagint was written between 200-300 B.C. by seventy Hebrew Scholars in Alexandria Egypt. It is not clear which Hebrew text they used for the translation. The Septuagint is older than the current Hebrew Masoretic (600-1000 A.D.) text, from which our Bibles are translated. This means that the wording can be no more accurate than the abilities of the purported seventy Jewish translators who each translated a portion of the

Ancient Scriptures of Israel into Greek to create the Greek Septuagint. Most modern Bibles use the Masoretic text rather than the Septuagint.

This difficulty of the two numbers of Jacob's family going to Egypt, however, can be resolved in other ways. One of the most widely accepted solutions is to recognize that the Hebrew text includes Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (a total of seventy), but that the Septuagint omits Jacob and Joseph but includes Joseph's seven grandchildren (mentioned in 1 Chronicles 7:14-15, 20-25). This is supported by the Hebrew in Genesis 46:8-26 which enumerates 66 names, omitting Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's two sons. Another solution is that the Septuagint's seventy-five includes the sixty-six plus the nine wives of Jacob's twelve sons (Judah's and Simeon's wives had died and Joseph's wife was in Egypt). In short the lists are complete yet it differs in which individuals are counted. The differences between the Masoretic text and the Septuagint are miniscule. The Hebrews, since the tenth-century have used the Masoretic text for all their Bibles. This is the authoritative Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible. While the Masoretic Text defines the books of the Jewish canon, it also defines the precise letter-text of these biblical books, with their vocalization and accentuation known as the Masorah. In short it teaches how to pronounce previously pronunciations that had not been passed down. Prior to the Masoretes only the consonants were written much like modern Hebrew.

JOSEPH MEETS HIS FATHER

Genesis 46: 28-34

Jacob sent Judah ahead since he had the most interaction and negotiation with Joseph to map out the route to Goshen. Judah would meet with Joseph and determine exactly which spot in Goshen he had selected for the family to settle. The text says that *Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen.* He had to make this arrival to meet with Jacob his father a royal event. Joseph was going in the second royal chariot given to him by pharaoh. He was also probably dressed accordingly as the viceroy of Egypt reminiscent of the coat of many colors given to him by his father twenty-two years ago. The reunion showed Joseph to Jacob as stunning, because Jacob would see Joseph in full regalia. Joseph had to consider the politics of appearance to the Egyptians as well.

The meeting was an exceptionally emotional one as Joseph *presented himself unto him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.* Jacob being entirely satisfied with seeing his favorite son whom he thought dead for these twenty-two years exclaimed, " *Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive.*" Jacob could see that Joseph had not changed spiritually over this long absence. He was reassured that he go to his eternal rest with peace of mind not expecting that he would live another seventeen years with Joseph in Egypt.

Joseph now had placed the family in Goshen but he still required confirming this with pharaoh. Joseph was confident that this blessing would be received from pharaoh if they followed some cultural instructions so as to accede to Egyptian internal politics. If they family would do exactly as he said they could easily fit in to the culture, Native Egyptians did not like shepherders and foreigners. They were an abomination to them. By inviting the Jews down to Egypt pharaoh was creating a problem of assimilation for

the Jews. There were two situations that added to the assimilation issue. *One*, the country was governed by Semites (occupiers not Egyptians) and *two*; they were in the early stages of a seven-year famine. The shepherds and their flocks would eat any crops still in the fields and use precious grain stored for the famine. So Joseph gave the family instructions to say, “*Thy servants have been keepers of cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and our fathers.*” If they did this they would be able to stay by stating that they have done this all their lives and had no transferrable skills. This was all they could do. One of the reasons for locating them in Goshen away from Memphis was to avoid the social unrest their immigration would cause.

Today’s Message:

JACOB IS WELCOMED BY PHARAOH

Genesis 47: 1-10

¹ Then Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen. ²And from among his brethren he took five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. ³And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and our fathers. ⁴And they said unto Pharaoh, To sojourn in the land are we come; for there is no pasture for thy servants’ flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen. ⁵And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: ⁶the land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and thy brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any able men among them, then make them rulers over my cattle. ⁷And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. ⁸And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How many are the days of the years of thy life? ⁹And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. ¹⁰And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from the presence of Pharaoh (ASV 1901).

Jacob had arrived in Egypt and was met with the royal procession led by Joseph to give them the best welcome imaginable. Joseph approached Pharaoh to let him know that his brothers had returned with his father to immigrate to Egypt. It was Pharaoh that had extended the invitation so it was only proper that Joseph announced their arrival to him upon their arrival. He let Pharaoh know that they had arrived along with their flocks and herds as well as their possessions. Joseph told him that according to plan they are now in Goshen. Pharaoh was probably in Memphis. Joseph then selected five of the

brothers to represent the entire family and presented them to Pharaoh. Just as Joseph had anticipated Pharaoh asked them what their occupations were. This was a question that would give Pharaoh some insight as to their ability to earn a living in Egypt. He would not want a family coming into the countries that were not able to provide for themselves. They did not respond as Joseph had instructed them to reply to his question. Joseph told them to use the term cattle not shepherds. They ignored Joseph's instructions and told Pharaoh that they were shepherds and have always been shepherds. They followed this with their reasons for coming, which were due to the famine that it had reached everywhere. Then very politely they requested if they could stay in the land of Goshen. Pharaoh did not seem to mind their occupation and even suggested there would be additional work for some of them keeping his cattle in the kingdom. Pharaoh as promised told them that they have free and unlimited access to the best facilities in Goshen.

At this juncture Joseph brought in Jacob his father to meet Pharaoh. Here were two great men meeting for the first time. Pharaoh the mightiest ruler of the greatest nation on the earth at that time, and the man God had chosen to develop His Covenant and build the nation Israel into a mighty force in the world. Jacob's first expression of greeting to Pharaoh was to bless him. It is not clear if Pharaoh realized the power that could come through Jacob as a child of Jehovah God. He blessed him for all he had done for Joseph and now for his family rescuing them from the famine and giving them a safe place to live. Interestingly Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he was by saying, "*How many are the days of the years of thy life?*" Jacob responded by saying that he was a hundred thirty but added that, "*few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.*" What Jacob was saying was that the "few" meant that they went by quickly and he probably looked older than he actually was. His use of the term evil was meant to express that fact that his life had been filled with toil and trouble or calamities. He was comparing his life to that of Abraham and Isaac who had appreciably less trouble in their lives and lived longer. Abraham made it to one hundred seventy five and Isaac the longest living patriarch lived to be one hundred eighty years old. After this conversation Jacob again blessed Pharaoh then went out from his presence. The finality of the text here implies that the two never met again.

THE FAMILY SETTLES IN GOSHEN

Genesis 47: 11-12

¹¹And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, 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. ¹²And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families (ASV 1901).

Joseph then installed his family under Pharaoh's command in the best spot he could provide for them in Egypt. They were given the property in which they would reside. They owned it and Joseph made them permanent residents. The text here calls the

area of Goshen the land of Rameses. Rameses was a latter Pharaoh. The word Goshen does not appear in some ancient Egyptian writings but the name it had in latter times was the district of Rameses (Exodus 1:11). It is quite probably that Moses when he was compiling the various different authors who had written segments of Genesis decided to call this area Rameses after the name of the region when he was in Pharaoh's household. The district of Goshen is now the modern province of el Sharkiyeh on the east side of the Nile, towards Saudi Arabia, and is still the most fertile and productive province of Egypt.

THE FAMINE IN FOUR STAGES

STAGE ONE

Genesis 47: 13-14

¹³And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. ¹⁴And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house (ASV 1901).

Within the Bible there is a Law of Recurrence. It introduces a concept in one section and adds color and details later. This one such sections. It gives additional details about the famine that was introduced earlier. In the first stage of the famine all the liquid funds were depleted. The famine was affecting the land of Egypt and Canaan as well which of course affirmed the need for the Jews to leave Canaan and sojourn in Egypt for food and as it were protection under Joseph. Joseph was wholly honest and brought all the revenues collected into the government treasury. He did not siphon any off for himself. He trusted God and followed God's ways which so far had always been the best way in the long run. So the need of the populations of both Canaan and Egypt to purchase grain had depleted both their treasuries.

STAGE TWO

Genesis 47: 15-17

¹⁵And when the money was all spent in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for our money faileth. ¹⁶And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail (ASV 1901).

When their money finally was expended the Egyptians came to the government asking for food. They said they did not want to die, especially in front of the government. Joseph remained in control of the situation and did not simply give them what they asked for. He had planned well and would have a good idea how much grain was already used, the rate the population was using it and, how much he would need to last throughout the seven-year famine. He had to ration the grain so it would last and he would not resort to welfare at this point in the famine. So he told them to trade their cattle for the grain if they wanted to eat since they were out of money.

STAGE THREE

Genesis 47-22

¹⁷And they brought their cattle unto Joseph; and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, and for the flocks, and for the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread in exchange for all their cattle for that year. ¹⁸And when that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide from my lord, how that our money is all spent; and the herds of cattle are my lord's; there is nought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: ¹⁹wherefore should we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, and that the land be not desolate. ²⁰So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine was sore upon them: and the land became Pharaoh's. ²¹And as for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of the border of Egypt even to the other end thereof. ²²Only the land of the priests bought he not: for the priests had a portion from Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them; wherefore they sold not their land (ASV 1901).

It was now the second year of the famine and there was no abatement. It would run for the seven years that Joseph had prophesied in response to Pharaoh's dreams. They did bring their livestock in to him in exchange for bread during the first year. So now in the second year with the need for additional food and no livestock to trade they offered themselves as bondservants and to sell their land to the government in exchange for food. Joseph did not force this upon the Egyptian citizens. He knew he had to ration the food and still have resources to last throughout the famine. If the people bought the food themselves either with cash, barter or indenturing themselves they would be more frugal with the food than if it was simply given to them. If it were just given to them they would not be frugal with it, because it would have come too easy. When one works for something its value is realized. So in exchange for their land and servitude they wanted food and seed for which to try and later plant crops themselves. The famine would not last forever and when it did some meaningful crops would be ready to sow near the end of the seven years. Their new role would be sharecroppers of the land they previously had owned.

As Joseph accepted their offer he implemented it right away. He bought all their land for the government and the land became Pharaoh's. Then he moved all the people from the rural areas into the cities where the grain had been stored. There was one exception to the land acquisition and that was the property owned by the priests. They received a governmental grant. The priesthood in Egypt was a very powerful organization in ancient times, which was supported by the government. It would continue to be supported regardless of the status of the famine. Joseph also had a vested interest in preserving this group, as his father in law was Potiphera the priest of On. He would provide for him and others in that class which was the elite in Egypt.

STAGE FOUR

Genesis 47: 23-26

²³Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. ²⁴And it shall come to pass at the ingatherings, that ye shall give a fifth unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. ²⁵And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. ²⁶And Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; only the land of the priests alone became not Pharaoh's (ASV 1901).

Joseph now announces the status of the land transfer and his offer to lease the land back to them as sharecroppers. They were removed from the land and settled in the cities and were about to go back when the time was right to start working the land. This time however they would give twenty percent of the harvests to Pharaoh. They agreed because Joseph and his prudent planning had saved their lives and their country. This was a small price to pay for what they had received. In any event they had given the government twenty percent tax in the seven years just prior to the famine. This would not be a hardship for them. Joseph enacted this agreement into law. The priesthood would also be exempt from this tax Here the text *unto this day* means that this law was in effect at least to the time when Moses (Cir. 1443 B.C.) compiled the various individual accounts of the segments of Genesis. This further means that the Pharaoh of the Exodus was still realizing the benefit of Joseph's careful planning and astute implementation of his plans even though he did not realize or appreciate it (Exodus 1: 8).

NEXT WEEK: JACOB IN EGYPT & EPHRAIM & MANASSEH ARE BLESSED

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

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