

September 15 - Genesis 46-48 Jacob's family moves to Egypt

Chapter 46

As with every major transition point in Genesis, chapter 46 outlines the genealogy of Jacob. All told, 70 members of the family travel to Egypt. God has kept God's promise to make of Abraham a great nation, and that promise will be continued from one generation to another throughout Israel's history. When they arrive in Egypt, Joseph (who already lives in Goshen) comes out to meet his family. He embraces and cries when he meets his beloved father, now a very old man. Jacob says that he can now die in peace having seen his favorite son still alive. Joseph hatches a plot to ensure that his family will be given the run of Goshen to settle in. Livestock herders were viewed as abhorrent to Egyptians because Egyptian agriculture was grain-based and herds were likely to eat up that precious grain. Goshen was a region of Egypt perfect for pasturing flocks, but isolated from the rest of Egypt so their herds would be unlikely to wander and interfere with Egyptian agriculture. For this reason, Joseph insists on his brothers highlighting their occupations as herders so that they would be sure to be given the land of Goshen to settle in.

Chapter 47

Joseph's plan works, and when Pharaoh hears that Joseph's family are successful herders, he not only gives them the land of Goshen but offers some of them the opportunity to become herders of the king's flocks! Joseph introduced his father to Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh in thanksgiving for Pharaoh's care of his son. Joseph and his extended family were taken care of, but the famine continued in the land of Egypt and Canaan. The people of Egypt first gave Joseph all their money, next year all their livestock, finally all their land and even themselves in exchange for grain to eat. This process shows how Egypt went from being a free society with Egyptians holding their own property, to a system more akin to serfdom, where all the land belonged to the king and the Egyptians farmed it and gave 1/5 of what they grew to the king and were able to keep the rest for food for their tables and seed for their fields. It's ironic that Joseph was responsible for the enslavement of the Egyptians in this economic system, but in 400 years it will be the Egyptians enslaving the Hebrews for their economic gain. The Hebrews were fruitful and multiplied (which is God's good command), and when Jacob drew near to death, he made Joseph make an oath to him to bury him in the burial place of his ancestors (the land Abraham bought from the Hitites to bury Sarah in).

Chapter 48

Now that Jacob is truly drawing near to death, he calls for Joseph and his two sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) to pass down his blessing to them. Jacob adopts Ephraim and Manasseh as his own sons, placing them on par with his two oldest sons Simeon and Reuben. In later genealogies of the children of Jacob, Ephraim and Manasseh's names appear in place of Joseph's. This is a touching scene of an elderly grandfather seeing the grandchildren he never thought he'd lay eyes on. Overcome with emotion, he blesses the boys, but he is so old and blind that he places the wrong hand on the wrong son, which creates a scene very similar to that of when his own elderly father Isaac blessed the younger son instead of the older (as would have been appropriate). In some ways this

blessing of the younger instead of the older son is used after the fact to explain theologically why the descendants of the younger son became more prominent than the descendants of the eldest. Both the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh would be important at different times in Israel's history. Instead of giving Joseph the inheritance appropriate for the 11th born son, he gives in addition to his normal inheritance all of the spoils that Jacob's family received when they laid siege to Shechem (after the rape of Dinah). This would have been an enormous sum.

September 22- Genesis 49-50 Jacob dies

Chapter 49

Now that Joseph and his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, have received the important, good blessing from their father Jacob, Jacob now turns to his remaining sons to bless or curse each of them according to what he's witnessed in them throughout their lives: Reuben is cursed because he had sex with his father's concubine, Simeon and Levi are cursed because of their anger and callous disregard for life (as evidenced by their leadership in the siege of Shechem) -Simeon's tribe will be absorbed into Judah and Levi's tribe will become the landless priestly class. Judah is praised extravagantly and blessed with victory and royalty (King David comes from this line). Zebulun is blessed to settle by the sea and be a haven for ships, Issachar's strength will lead to forced labor, Dan's name is a play on the word for judge, Gad's name is a play on word for raider. Asher is blessed with rich food to eat, Naphtali is blessed with beautiful children. Vs. 22-26 celebrate the future fruitfulness of Joseph. This praise celebrates Joseph's strength and resilience in the face of adversity he experienced. Jacob blesses Joseph extravagantly. Finally, Benjamin is described as never being satisfied. Jacob again makes his sons promise to bury him in the family burial plot in Canaan, and then dies.

Chapter 50

Joseph mourned mightily for his father, but kept his solemn oath by having his father embalmed in the custom of the Egyptians. This process takes 40 days, and the mourning of Jacob in Egypt went on for 70 days, and then he was given a royal burial procession from Egypt all the way back to Canaan to the family burial plot. After they returned from burying their father, the brothers became concerned that perhaps Joseph still bore a grudge against them after all this time, so they begged his forgiveness for their crimes against him. Joseph once again reassured his brothers of his forgiveness and promise to provide for them and their children. The book of Genesis ends with Joseph's death at 110 years old. Joseph lived to a ripe old age in Egypt, seeing his descendants to the 3rd generation. Before he dies, he reminds his family of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that God will come to the descendants of Abraham and will carry them out of the land of Egypt and back to Canaan, the land that God promised to Abraham and his descendants. Joseph makes his family promise that when that happens they will carry his bones with them on their journey to the promised land. This promise is fulfilled in Exodus 13:19 and Joshua 24: 32.