

Genesis 46-47 • Jacob's Last Journey

Introduction

One of the things to keep in mind in the course of this lesson is why Jacob's journey to Egypt is so drastically different from Abraham's journey to Egypt. They present us with two pictures of living in the world as represented by Egypt, one of failure and one of success. This might seem surprising at first since we place Abraham at the highest point of the faith pyramid, so to speak, but it in this case it is Jacob who outperforms Abraham. As it turns out in both cases, it is not just the personal consequences which are at stake, but the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of our personal witness where it counts upon the unsaved as well. Abraham's journey may be closest to what we personally experience, in that he is called out of the old life to a new life, temporarily backslides in his excursion to Egypt, but ultimately returns to the Lord in the Promised Land, Jacob's journey is more in the character of how we are to live after coming into a right relationship with Christ as we live **IN** the world but not **OF** the world.

¹So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. ²God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob."

And he said, "Here I am."

³He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. ⁴I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes."

⁵Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob and their little ones and their wives in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. ⁶They took their livestock and their property, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and came to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him: ⁷his sons and his grandsons with him, his daughters and his granddaughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

[Read 46:1-7]

Q: What does "Beersheba" mean?

A: It could be literally translated as "the well of the oath".

Q: What might be significant about its geographic location?

A: It is considered the southernmost extremity of the Promised Land, midway between the Mediterranean Sea and the southern end of the Dead Sea. It's the last stop before actually leaving the Promised Land.

Q: What takes place historically at Beersheba which may be pertinent to what is taking place here with Jacob?

1. This is where God appeared to Hagar and provided a promise. (Gen. 21:17-18)
2. This is where God appeared to Isaac and provided a promise. (Gen. 26:23-33)
3. This is where Abraham returned after being prevented from sacrificing Isaac and receiving God's promise on Mt. Moriah. (Gen. 22:19)

Point: This place is named more in line with the oath of God rather than the oath of man.

Q: What did Jacob do which, compared to his predecessors, might be considered unusual?

A: He stops and sacrifices to God. He effectively pauses to inquire of the Lord before proceeding past the proverbial "point of no return".

Q: Why did Jacob need to do this?

A: He knew that his grandfather Abraham had sinned in going to Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20) and that his father Isaac was forbidden by God to go there. (Gen. 26:2).

Q: So what actually convinced Jacob to continue on to Egypt?

A: The reassurance of God's Word through the dream.

Application: We not only seek God's guidance and blessing when it appears there is no obvious way out of adversity, but even when provided an opportunity for what looks like safety and prosperity.

²⁸Now he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out the way before him to Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. ²⁹Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a long time. ³⁰Then Israel said to Joseph, “Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive.”

³¹Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, “I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and will say to him, ‘My brothers and my father’s household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me; ³²and the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock; and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.’ ³³When Pharaoh calls you and says, ‘What is your occupation?’ ³⁴you shall say, ‘Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,’ that you may live in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is loathsome to the Egyptians.”

¹Then Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, and said, “My father and my brothers and their flocks and their herds and all that they have, have come out of the land of Canaan; and behold, they are in the land of Goshen.” ²He took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh.

³Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, “What is your occupation?”

So they said to Pharaoh, “Your servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers.”

⁴They said to Pharaoh, “We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants’ flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now, therefore, please let your servants live in the land of Goshen.”

⁵Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Your father and your brothers have come to you. ⁶The land of Egypt is at your disposal; settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land, let them live in the land of Goshen; and if you

[Read 46:28-34]

Q: What does “Goshen” mean?

A: It can be translated both as “the place or temple of the sun” or as “approaching, drawing near”.

Point: *This appears to have a dual meaning where for Egyptians it is drawing near to one of their chief gods in the form of Ra the sun god, and for Israel as a place where they will be drawn near to the One True God.*

Q: Why should our attention be drawn to Judah’s role in this event?

A: It shows that Judah has gained the leadership role over the others as will be predicted later by Jacob (Gen. 49:8-12) and that he has earned the trust of his father. This foreshadows the work of the Messiah to come through the lineage of Judah.

Q: How is this carried out even further by Joseph?

A: Joseph not only prepares the way for his family, but with Pharaoh. It’s an illustration of believers abiding in Christ while still in the world, who must trust Christ to lead and direct them to what He has prepared for them.

Q: From a strict biblical perspective, what might be the greater meaning of the Egyptians’ disdain for shepherds?

A: This is the designation not only of those who bring God’s Word to and care for the flock, but one of Christ’s personal attributes is that of the Good Shepherd. (Ps. 23; Jn.10) Such are “loathsome” to the unsaved as represented by the Egyptians.

Application: *We must go to the place prepared by Christ so that we may effectively live **IN** the world but not **OF** the world.*

[Read 47:1-12]

Q: Is there any significance in the fact that Joseph selected only five of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh?

A: It is difficult to be dogmatic as five seems to represent a number of things in Scripture, but is most often assigned by many to be a representation of God’s grace and goodness as well as to God’s Word as represented by the five books of the Torah. This might be an affirmation of both, representing that they have been brought safely through by God’s grace according to His Word.

Q: What should stand out to us when they state their intentions to Pharaoh?

A: “*Sojourn*” means to live in or inhabit a place if not permanently, then certainly for the foreseeable future, not just temporarily visit. Their statement, “*We have come to sojourn in the land*” (v.4) is a stark contrast to Abraham, who at most should have only visited long enough to resolve the problem of the famine but had to be kicked out to return to the Promised Land, and Isaac who was prohibited by God from going to Egypt.

Point: *Having received the Word of God through Jacob at Beersheba, they know that they are acting in accordance with God’s will.*

know any capable men among them, then put them in charge of my livestock.”

⁷Then Joseph brought his father Jacob and presented him to Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. ⁸Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How many years have you lived?”

⁹So Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The years of my sojourning are one hundred and thirty; few and unpleasant have been the years of my life, nor have they attained the years that my fathers lived during the days of their sojourning.” ¹⁰And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from his presence.

¹¹So Joseph settled 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 ordered. ¹²Joseph provided his father and his brothers and all his father’s household with food, according to their little ones.

Q: What specifically takes place when Pharaoh meets Jacob?

A: “...and Jacob blessed Pharaoh”. (v.7)

Q: As a greater picture of a meeting between God’s people and the unsaved, why should this not surprise us?

A: The only blessing which anyone still living in the world can receive from God comes through His people.

“You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. — John 4:22

Q: But why is it important for them to have their own place? How might this be related to Jacob meeting Pharaoh but then going out from his presence?

A: It is important for God’s people to never enter into a personal relationship with the unsaved; separation in this regard must always be maintained.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

“I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;

AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD,

AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord.

“AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;

And I will welcome you.

And I will be a father to you,

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,”

Says the Lord Almighty. — 2 Corinthians 6:14–18

*For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore **do not be partakers with them;** for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light — Ephesians 5:5–8*

Q: How might this be at the heart of the problem during Abraham’s stay in Egypt?

A: He settled down in their midst and became such a part of them that Pharaoh was willing to take Sarah as his wife. This ultimately resulted not only in a curse being brought upon the Egyptians, but damaging Abraham’s personal testimony. He had the opposite effect of Jacob and his household.

Application: *When we are living in the world but exclusively according to His Word and ways, the visible testimony of God’s blessing to us in turn makes us a visible testimony and blessing to the unsaved.*

¹³Now there was no food in all the land, because the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. ¹⁴Joseph gathered 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. ¹⁵When the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us food, for why should we die in your presence? For our money is gone."

¹⁶Then Joseph said, "Give up your livestock, and I will give you food for your livestock, since your money is gone." ¹⁷So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses and the flocks and the herds and the donkeys; and he fed them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year.

¹⁸When that year was ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent, and the cattle are my lord's. There is nothing left for my lord except our bodies and our lands. ¹⁹Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we and our land will be slaves to Pharaoh. So give us seed, that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate."

²⁰So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. Thus the land became Pharaoh's. ²¹As for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of Egypt's border to the other. ²²Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh, and they lived off the allotment which Pharaoh gave them. Therefore, they did not sell their land.

[Read 47:13-22]

Q: Looking at this overall, what might this be a greater representation of spiritually?

A: It seems to parallel the greater illustration of dedication.

Q: What was dedicated first?

A: Their money, which is representative of their commerce and interaction with the world.

Q: What was dedicated second?

A: Their land, which is representative of their attachment to the world.

Q: What was dedication third?

A: Their livestock, which is representative of their possessions in the world.

Q: And what was ultimately dedicated?

A: Their own bodies.

Q: How might this be expressed as a similar pattern for New Testament believers?

*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God**, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. — Romans 12:1–2*

*Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now **present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification**. — Romans 6:16–19*

*But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? **For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body**. — 1 Corinthians 6:17–20*

Application: *The work of the Messiah in this life is to facilitate our bringing everything, even our physical being, into complete and total submission to the Father.*

²³Then Joseph said to the people, “Behold, I have today bought you and your land for Pharaoh; now, here is seed for you, and you may sow the land. ²⁴At the harvest you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be your own for seed of the field and for your food and for those of your households and as food for your little ones.”

²⁵So they said, “You have saved our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s slaves.”

²⁶Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt valid to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh’s.

²⁷Now Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, and they acquired property in it and were fruitful and became very numerous. ²⁸Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the length of Jacob’s life was one hundred and forty-seven years.

²⁹When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, “Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, ³⁰but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.”

And he said, “I will do as you have said.”

³¹He said, “Swear to me.” So he swore to him. Then Israel bowed in worship at the head of the bed.

[Read 47:23-26]

Q: Given the overall discussion to this point, what is this addressing in the greater, spiritual context?

A: That which occurs once we have fully dedicated our lives completely to God:

- We plant His seed in the land—do the work of God’s Word in the world;
- We feed our household—do the work of God’s Word in the Body of Christ;
- We give God His tithe—we supply the resources for the working of God’s Word.

Application: *Salvation is worked out in the course of submission.*

[Read 47:27-31]

Q: What is the nature of Jacob’s request?

A: He does not want to be buried in Egypt, but in the Promised Land.

Q: How is this the logical conclusion to our discussion of the greater meaning of this passage?

A: We will not die in the world as represented by Egypt, but ultimately find ourselves in eternity with Christ as represented by the Promised Land. Just as Jacob wants to go to the same place as those who have gone before him, so shall we.

Application: *Whether by death and Resurrection or by the onetime supernatural event we call the Rapture, we will permanently leave the life of the world for the promise of eternity with Christ.*

Overall Application

It was Abraham’s personal decision to “sojourn” in Egypt because it seemed like the best thing to do under the circumstances and ultimately not only brought about God’s wrath, but lost his personal testimony to the unsaved in the process. Jacob, having first sought God’s guidance and blessing, “sojourned” in Egypt and not only became a blessing to the unsaved, but experienced God’s blessing for his whole nation.

- Are we acting more in the character of Abraham in Egypt or Jacob in Egypt?
- How well are remaining separated from the world in the character of Jacob’s family in Goshen as opposed to integrated in the character of Abraham with the Egyptians?
- What kind of spiritual effect are we having on the unsaved around us? On our own household closest to us?