

# **GENESIS 47: JOSEPH SAVES THE WORLD**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. Have you ever been in a life or death situation?
  - i. Hopefully this is a rare occurrence
- B. This chapter is split into two parts
  - i. The first deals with Israel being provided abundant life in Goshen
  - ii. The second deals with Egypt and then Jacob facing impending death
  - iii. We will see this theme of life and death play out and how people respond

## **II. OVERVIEW**

- A. Joseph went and told Pharaoh his family had arrived in Egypt
  - i. His brothers came to meet Pharaoh
  - ii. He asked them questions about their occupation
  - iii. Then he gave them the land of Goshen
- B. Jacob went in to meet Pharaoh
  - i. He blessed Pharaoh
  - ii. Then Joseph gave his family the land and food
- C. The famine became so severe that there was no food anywhere
  - i. Everyone spent all their money buying food from Joseph
    - a. So they traded their livestock for food
  - ii. The next year the livestock was gone and there was still no food
    - a. So they traded their land and lives for food
- D. Joseph traded food and seed for all the land in Egypt
  - i. Except for the land of the priests
  - ii. He gave them seed to plant and grow food
  - iii. They had to give one-fifth of their food to Pharaoh
- E. Jacob lived in Egypt for 17 years
  - i. He made Joseph promise not to bury him in Egypt
  - ii. So Joseph promised to bury him in Canaan

## **III. TOLD PHARAOH – V. 1**

- A. Joseph will tell Pharaoh everything he said he would in the previous chapter
  - i. Repetition proves God's hand is in these events as well

#### **IV. FIVE MEN – V. 2**

- A. Because they were seeking Pharaoh's favor
  - i. But they receive God's favor
- B. Unclear which five men were there

#### **V. WE HAVE COME TO SOJOURN – V. 4**

- A. Or, dwell as foreigners
  - i. They didn't want Pharaoh to think they had come to stay permanently
  - ii. A family of their size could present a significant military threat
- a. Genesis 14:14-15 ***When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus.***

#### **VI. HAVE COME TO YOU – V. 5**

- A. They didn't come to Pharaoh, they came to Joseph

#### **VII. THE LAND OF EGYPT IS BEFORE YOU – V. 5**

- A. Similar to what he told Joseph when he put him in power
  - i. Genesis 41:41 ***And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”***
  - ii. Pharaoh is reminding Joseph he is in charge
    - a. He didn't need permission to settle his family in Goshen

#### **VIII. ABLE MEN – V. 6**

- A. Implies not just ability but integrity
  - i. Ruth 3:11 ***And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman.***

#### **IX. PUT THEM IN CHARGE OF MY LIVESTOCK – V. 6**

- A. Just like pharaoh placed Joseph in charge of Egypt
  - i. He wanted more people like Joseph in charge of his property

#### **X. JACOB BLESSED PHARAOH – V. 7**

- A. Pharaoh was considered to be a god
  - i. Shows how highly he thinks of Joseph's family to allow Jacob to bless him
- B. God's promise to Abraham is beginning to be fulfilled

- i. Genesis 12:3 “**I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**”
- C. Jacob gives us a good example of how to conduct ourselves among unbelievers<sup>1</sup>
  - i. 1 Peter 2:11-17 **Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.**

## **XI. THE YEARS OF YOUR LIFE – V. 8**

- A. Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he was after he blessed him
  - i. He believed he was a god
  - ii. So he wanted to know Jacob's life experience that gave him a right to bless him<sup>2</sup>

## **XII. SOJOURNING – V. 9**

- A. Abraham's family understood their life in this age was temporary
  - i. Genesis 23:3-4 **And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, “I am a sojourner and foreigner among you; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”**
  - ii. Genesis 26:1-3 **Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines. And the LORD appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father.”**
  - iii. Unlike the men who built the tower of Babel

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (2010). *Be Authentic: Exhibiting Real Faith in the Real World: OT Commentary, Genesis 25-50*. David C. Cook.

<sup>2</sup> Armstrong, S. (2013, June 16). *Genesis 2011 - Lesson 47B*. Verse By Verse Ministries. Retrieved March 9, 2024, from [https://versebyversemministry.org/lessons/genesis\\_2011\\_lesson\\_47b](https://versebyversemministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_47b)

- a. Genesis 11:4 *Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”*

### **XIII. FEW AND EVIL – V. 9**

- A. Abraham lived 180 years and Isaac lived 175
- B. His years weren't evil as in wicked
  - i. But as in, bad or unpleasant
    - a. He did not enjoy the peace and the long life his fathers enjoyed
    - b. Could also refer to his bad choices<sup>3</sup>
      - i. Many of his struggles were his own fault
- C. Jacob deceived his father to acquire a blessing
  - i. Deuteronomy 5:16 *Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.*
  - ii. Jacob didn't honor his father resulting in a shorter life and a death in Egypt<sup>4</sup>
- D. Contrasted with Abraham who lived a long life and followed God's laws
  - i. Genesis 25: 7-8 *These are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years. Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.*
  - ii. Genesis 26:4-5 *“I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”*

### **XIV. JACOB BLESSED PHARAOH – V. 10**

- A. Repeated a second time from verse 7
- B. Reveals that the purpose of these events for God to keep his promise to Abraham
  - i. Not only is Jacob blessing Pharaoh
  - ii. But Joseph is blessing the nations by giving them food during a famine

### **XV. IN THE BEST OF THE LAND – V. 11**

- A. This is like a new Eden

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<sup>3</sup> Armstrong

<sup>4</sup> Sailhamer, J. H. (2008). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis* (T. Longman III & D. E. Garland, Eds.). Zondervan.

## XVI. JOSEPH PROVIDED – V. 12

- A. He gave them everything they needed
  - i. They only looked to Joseph for what they needed
- B. Jesus will provide everything we need if we only look to him
  - i. Matthew 6:25-33 **“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”**

## XVII. NOW – V. 13

- A. The author returns us to the beginning of the famine where we left off previously
  - i. Genesis 41:56-57 **So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.**

## XVIII. NO FOOD – V. 13

- A. Except for in Goshen
  - i. God took care of his people first

## XIX. INTO PHARAOH'S HOUSE – V. 14

- A. Joseph was honest and didn't keep any money for himself<sup>5</sup>

## XX. WHY SHOULD WE DIE – V. 15

- A. All the land of Egypt and Canaan went to Joseph for food so they wouldn't die

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<sup>5</sup> Guzik, D. (2018). *Genesis 47 - Jacob Meets Pharaoh; The Family Settles in Egypt*. Enduring Word. Retrieved March 9, 2024, from <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-47/>

- i. Just like Jacob sent his sons to Joseph for food so they wouldn't die
  - a. Genesis 42:2 **And he said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die."**
- B. Continues the theme of life and death
- C. Joseph had brought life to his brothers
  - i. Now he is bringing life to the whole world

#### **XXI. IN EXCHANGE FOR ALL THEIR LIVESTOCK – V. 17**

- A. Three reasons why Joseph did this<sup>6</sup>
  - i. That's how people would have expected him to handle the situation
    - a. It would have been wrong to receive food for free when they were able to pay
    - b. It allows them to keep their dignity
  - ii. It was a good use of his resources
    - a. Livestock also needed grain but the people didn't have any
      - i. So eventually they would have eaten the livestock
      - ii. And no one would have anything
  - iii. It displayed a good understanding of economics
    - a. Resources available for free will be used up quickly
    - b. Especially when they are scarce

#### **XXII. THE FOLLOWING YEAR – V. 18**

- A. Or, the second year
- B. Judah asked his father to go to Egypt a second time in the second year
  - i. Genesis 43:8 **And Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones."**
  - ii. Genesis 45:6 **For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest.**

#### **XXIII. OUR BODIES – V. 18**

- A. Hebrew usually refers to a dead body
  - i. If alive, the body is defeated or humiliated
- B. They are saying they are as good as dead unless they become Joseph's slaves

#### **XXIV. BUY US – V. 19**

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<sup>6</sup> Armstrong

- A. Joseph previously took all their money
  - i. Now he is purchasing the nation as his slaves
  - ii. Just like his brothers took money and sold Joseph into slavery
- B. This isn't slavery the way we think of it
  - i. More like, they just can't afford to quit their jobs<sup>7</sup>

**XXV. LIVE AND NOT DIE – V. 19**

- A. Judah asked Jacob for permission to go to Egypt so they would live and not die
  - i. Genesis 43:8 ***And Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones.”***
- B. These parallels show that Joseph will do for the world what he did for his family
  - i. Repetition of the story shows this is God's plan

**XXVI. THAT THE LAND MAY NOT BE DESOLATE – V. 19**

- A. The land will die if the people die

**XXVII. BECAME PHARAOH'S – V. 20**

- A. Joseph is not benefitting from this at all
  - i. Shows that at least his intentions are pure

**XXVIII. MADE SERVANTS OF THEM – V. 21**

- A. Some translations will say, he removed them to the cities
  - i. This seems to be the literal translation
  - ii. In other words, relocated them around the land of Egypt
  - iii. Several possibilities why Joseph would have done this
    - a. To make it more difficult for them to reclaim their land after they sold them
    - b. To prevent uprisings
  - iv. It is questionable whether or not this was a good thing to do
    - a. Comparable to what Sennacherib intended to do with the kingdom of Judah
      - i. 2 Kings 18:31-32 ***“Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make your peace with me and come out to me. Then each one of you will eat of his own vine, and each one of his own fig tree, and each one of you will drink the water of his own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive***

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<sup>7</sup> Armstrong

*trees and honey, that you may live, and not die. And do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, “The LORD will deliver us.””*

- B. Joseph arrived in Egypt as a slave
  - i. But now he has enslaved Egypt
    - a. Joseph has been a picture of Jesus
    - b. But everyone who foreshadows Jesus will fall short
      - i. To show us our need for one who is greater

#### **XXIX. A FIFTH – V. 24**

- A. This is the same tax as during the seven years before the famine
  - i. Genesis 41:34 *Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years.*
- B. It's twice what God would require of the Israelites
- C. This seems high but it's less than our current tax burden in the U.S.
  - i. Average federal tax burden is 25-30%
    - a. Includes federal and state income tax, social security tax and Medicare tax
    - b. Not including sales and property taxes

#### **XXX. YOU HAVE SAVED OUR LIVES – V. 25**

- A. Joseph told his brothers he was sent to save lives
  - i. Genesis 45:5 *And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.*
- B. Provides clear parallels between the story of Joseph's brothers and this chapter
  - i. Reveals Joseph's role as not just saving Israel but the whole world

#### **XXXI. SERVANTS TO PHARAOH – V. 25**

- A. Joseph's dreams when he was a teen only showed his family bowing to him
  - i. They said nothing about the nation of Egypt
  - ii. So the people are not Joseph's slaves but Pharaoh's

#### **XXXII. IT STANDS TO THIS DAY – V. 26**

- A. As in, the day of Moses
- B. The Torah would not look kindly on Joseph's actions
  - i. Neither land nor slaves were supposed to be sold permanently
    - a. Leviticus 25:23 *“The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me.”*

- b. Deuteronomy 15:12 ***If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you.***
- C. The Bible presents land as a significant part of the Jews' heritage rather than a commodity<sup>8</sup>
  - a. I Kings 21:2-3 ***And after this Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money."***  
***But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers."***
  - b. Leviticus 25:10 ***And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan.***
- D. Joseph may have been justified in doing this for the short term until the famine was over
  - i. But he should not have enslaved the people long term
  - ii. It created an economic system where another Pharaoh could enslave the Hebrews<sup>9</sup>

#### **XXXIII. MULTIPLIED GREATLY – V. 27**

- A. Israel is fulfilling God's command to Adam
  - i. Genesis 1:28 ***And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."***
- B. Israel is restarting the human race

#### **XXXIV. SEVENTEEN YEARS – V. 28**

- A. We now move ahead after the famine is over
  - i. Jacob and his family have survived the famine
- B. Same amount of time Jacob had lived with Joseph before he was sold into slavery

#### **XXXV. PUT YOUR HAND UNDER MY THIGH – V. 29**

- A. Just like Abraham made his servant swear to find a wife for Isaac from his family
  - i. Genesis 24:1-4 ***Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years. And the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household,***

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<sup>8</sup> Held, S. (n.d.). *Saving and Enslaving: The Complexity of Joseph*. Hadar Institute. Retrieved March 11, 2024, from <https://www.hadar.org/torah-tefillah/resources/saving-and-enslaving-complexity-joseph>

<sup>9</sup> Held

*who had charge of all that he had, “Put your hand under my thigh, that I may make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”*

#### **XXXVI. LET ME LIE WITH MY FATHERS – V. 30**

- A. God had promised land and a people to Abraham
  - i. Abraham preserved the people by finding a wife from his family for Isaac
  - ii. Jacob preserved the land by being buried there
- B. Jacob wanted to be resurrected in the land that had been given to him

#### **XXXVII. HE SWEARED TO HIM – V. 31**

- A. Joseph would later keep his promise

#### **XXXVIII. POINTS TO JESUS**

- A. Joseph provides a parallel to Jesus
  - i. He saved Israel first in the narrative
  - ii. Then the narrative flips to Joseph saving the whole world
  - iii. Romans 1:16 ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.***
- B. Jacob's burial in Canaan was an act of faith in the resurrection
  - i. The land had been promised to him and he would be there to inherit it one day
- C. The phrase *give us seed* in verse 19 is a play on words
  - i. Hebrew also means offspring or child
  - ii. They are asking for seed to plant and grow so they will live and not die
    - a. But they are also asking for a child that would give them life instead of death
    - b. This theme fits with the whole book of Genesis

#### **XXXIX. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

- A. When have you seen God's provision in your life during difficult times?

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- B. What are some specific ways you can keep your conduct honorable among unbelievers?

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C. How would you describe your life so far? What are some things you can do to make sure you don't waste the time you have left?

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D. How does the way we conduct our lives change under the reality that we are sojourners and foreigners in this world?

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E. Do you get anxious about the things you need? What are some ways you can seek God's kingdom first instead of seeking your needs first?

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F. Do you think Joseph acted wisely and ethically toward the people of Egypt? Why or why not? Would you have done the same thing or would you have done differently?

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#### **XL. FURTHER STUDY**

A. What did the sojournings of Abraham and his family point to? What does this mean for those who are in Christ who have been joined to the family of Abraham? See 1 Chronicles 29:14-15 and Hebrews 11:8-16.

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B. Why do you think worshipping in the Lord's house is compared to sojourning (Psalm 15:1; Psalm 61:4-5)?

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C. Do you think there was wisdom in Jacob's words about the shortness of his life? Why is it important to remember how short our lives truly are (Psalm 39:4-6; James 4:13-16)?

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D. How does Exodus 22:21 say the Israelites should treat foreigners? How do you think this would apply to us today?

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E. What was David's attitude toward God like knowing that even he was a sojourner like Jacob (1 Chronicles 29:14-16)? What can we learn from this?

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