

## CGYG & LIFE Bible Study – Genesis 46:1 – 48:22

### Read Genesis 46:1-34

1. Why did Jacob stop and offer sacrifices to 'the God of his father Isaac' at Beersheba? (cf. 26:1-2, 28:10-13)
  - Beersheba was at the southern end of the land of Canaan (i.e. the land promised to Abraham and his descendants)
  - Isaac & his family had formerly lived at Beersheba (e.g. Gen 26-28)
  - God had previously forbidden Isaac to leave the land during a famine he encountered (26:1-2)
  - Jacob was leaving the land God had promised to him (28:13, 35:12)
  - sacrifice at Beersheba was not just an act of worship, or seeking safekeeping for the voyage; otherwise could have done it before he left
  - implicitly seeking God's permission to leave the land and enter Egypt → God reassured him and told him not to be afraid to go
  
2. Why do you think God chose to grow Israel into a great nation (v.3) in the land of Egypt, rather than in the land of Canaan? (you might consider Genesis 15:12-16; also, contrast Gen. 34:13-23 with 43:32 and 46:31-34)
  - God had told Abraham in Genesis 15 that he would send his descendants into a foreign land (now revealed to be Egypt for 400 years)
  - this was in part to allow the sin of the Amorites (15:16) to reach its full measure – i.e. ripe for judgment by destruction
  - but also to preserve his people from the defilement of that sin and from the consequent judgment
    - the Canaanite people were only too happy to incorporate Abraham's family – e.g. Gen. 34 account of Dinah
    - also constant temptation pulling them away from Godly living (e.g. Lot in Gen. 19, Judah in Gen. 38)
    - in contrast, the Egyptians wanted nothing to do with Hebrews and shepherds – would allow Israel to grow separate from them
  
3. In what ways do we see God's faithfulness to Jacob in this chapter?
  - God appeared to Jacob to confirm His promise to make him into a great nation
  - also reassure Jacob that He would go with him and bring him back to the land; and that Joseph would be with him when he died
  - we see how God has multiplied Jacob's family – now 70 (+wives) going into Egypt
  - preserved Joseph through these years and allowed Jacob to be reunited with him
    - used Joseph to preserve Jacob's family through famine and to prepare a place where they could grow into a great nation

### Read Genesis 47:1-31

1. Why did Joseph tell his family to tell Pharaoh that they were shepherds?
  - so that they would be allowed to settle in the best part of the land for their flocks (i.e. Goshen)
  - shepherds were detestable to the Egyptians (46:34), thus would want to keep them at a distance (46:34)
  
2. Why did Joseph seek Pharaoh's permission for his brothers to settle in Goshen, despite his position of power?
  - though he was second in command to Pharaoh, he was submissive to Pharaoh's authority – would not overstep his bounds
  - all the land in Egypt theoretically belonged to Pharaoh, so the decision was still belonged to Pharaoh
  - very much in keeping with what we've seen of Joseph previously
  
3. What do we see of Joseph's character in his dealings with the Egyptian people in v.13-26?
  - trustworthy; a man of integrity – did not take the money for himself or indebt the people to himself, but to his master (Pharaoh)
  - some people think it wasn't right of him to '[reduce] the people to servitude' (v.21), BUT
    - the people offered themselves willingly and were grateful to him for saving their lives (v.25)
    - in buying their lands he was formalizing what was already considered true in theory, that Pharaoh owned all the land in Egypt (since he was considered a deity)
    - 20% is a lot less tax than most of us today pay
  
4. Why did Jacob request not to be buried in Egypt? How did this request demonstrate his faith? (cf. Heb. 11:21)
  - his ancestors were buried in Canaan, so that's where he wanted to be buried
  - but more importantly, he also knew that his possession was in land of Canaan, not in Egypt → believed the promises God had made to him to give him the land and to bring him (and his descendants) back to it (e.g. 35:11-12; 46:3-4)
  - caused him to worship as he leaned on the top of his staff (or alternative translation, to bow himself upon the head of his bed)

## Read Genesis 48:1-22

1. What was Jacob doing by reckoning Joseph's sons to be his own? (v. 5 cf. Deut. 21:15-17 with 1 Chron. 5:1-2)

- Jacob was giving Joseph the rights of the firstborn son, since Reuben had disqualified himself by sleeping with Bilhah (35:22)
- Joseph would inherit a double inheritance of the Promised Land, through his 2 sons (v.5-6)

2. What are some ways that Jacob's blessing of Ephraim & Manasseh was similar or different from Isaac's blessing of Jacob & Esau (Gen. 27)?

### Similarities:

- both Jacob & Esau were almost blind when they gave their blessing
- in both cases, the younger was blessed over the older
- both included blessing of great numbers of descendants

### Differences:

- Jacob knew what he was doing (i.e. blessing the younger one over the older), whereas Isaac was deceived
- Jacob blessed both boys (albeit one more than the other); Isaac blessed only one, without leaving a blessing for the other
  - Isaac's blessing marked out the lineage that would inherit God's covenant with Abraham
  - Jacob's blessing included both in that lineage; while exalting Joseph & his sons, did not exclude his other sons

3. Why did Jacob bless Ephraim over Manasseh, even though Manasseh was older? (cf. Hebrews 11:21)

- not because of favoritism, but by faith
  - by faith, saw God's purposes for the future to be fulfilled through the 2 boys – that even though both would be blessed (v.20) Ephraim would become greater than Manasseh
    - seeing this, Jacob aligned his blessing with God's purposes
- Ephraim did ultimately become the leading tribe of the Northern Kingdom of Israel
  - the name of Ephraim would come to stand for the whole nation of Israel (e.g. Hosea 4:17; 5:3)

4. What does Jacob's blessing tell us about his relationship with God (v.15-22)? Reflecting on your own walk with God, can you identify with Jacob's descriptions of God in v. 15-16? Why or why not?

- his 3-fold invocation of God gave glory to God and shows how he had come to deep trust in God
  - knew that God was the God of his fathers, Abraham & Isaac
  - recognized that God has shepherded (literally, 'led' or 'fed') him all his life 'to this day' → the picture of a shepherd (which Jacob himself was) speaks of the watchful care and tender provision of the Lord in his life
  - realized that it was God (manifested through the Angel of the Lord) who has protected him and delivered him from all harm → probable reference to Peniel, where Jacob wrestled with God (32:22-30)
- understood that blessing was not his to give, but God's (v.16 – 'may He bless these boys') – so aligns himself with God's purposes by faith in blessing Ephraim over Manasseh
- interesting that his blessing doesn't have too much in the way of material wealth, as do previous blessings, but he asks that the boys may be called by his name and by the names of Abraham and Isaac → seems to place more emphasis on faithfulness to God more than material blessing
- by faith saw that God would bring his descendants back to the land of their fathers ('you' and 'your' in v.21 plural in Hebrew)
  - believing this, left a portion of land to Joseph as his inheritance in the land
    - uncertain whether this refers to Shechem (Gen. 34) or to some other piece of land seized by Jacob but not recorded in Scripture

5. Looking back on Jacob's life, what lessons in faith can you learn and apply to your own life?

- Some possible lessons:
  - true faith perseveres to the end, as Jacob's did
  - God's sovereignty in salvation
  - God uses hardship/suffering as discipline, to shape our faith

## Aliens and Strangers

Now approaching the end of his life, Jacob reaches the pinnacle of faith in his life, as by faith he blesses Joseph's sons and worships as he leans on the top of his staff (Heb. 11:21). In doing so, he gives glory to God, whom he acknowledges has been his shepherd all his life and has delivered him from all harm. Though Jacob began as a deceiver, God in His grace chose him and guided him all the days of his life, shaping him by the hardships and trials he faced.

Jacob's life serves as an example and an encouragement to us who continue to walk by faith today. In his life, we see the mercy of God in choosing to save sinners through faith. At the same time, we see how God faithfully guides and preserves those whom He calls, even as He chastens and disciplines them for their good. Though the trials of life at times obscured Jacob's view of God's hand in his life, he persevered in faith and was thus enabled to look to a greater hope beyond the grave, even as he neared death. In the same way, though we may not always immediately perceive God's hand in the circumstances of our lives, we have assurance through His Word that the faithful Shepherd who called us is always with us, to lead and guide us. And so, let us persevere in the faith as Jacob did, holding fast to the hope to which we were called. Spend some time this evening reflecting on and sharing how God has been faithful in your life. In light of His faithfulness, commit yourself to continuing to run with perseverance – to the finish – the course He's marked out for you.