

genesis

God's Book of Beginnings

Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers (Genesis 45)

45:1-3 Joseph was so overcome with emotion, "Pharaoh's household" could hear his weeping. After declaring to his brothers "I am Joseph!", Joseph inquired: "Is my father still living?" The brothers were speechless and "terrified" ^{Matthew 17:6}, not believing what Joseph said.

45:4-7 Thinking it would help his brothers recognize him, Joseph told them to "come close". He quickly assured them their selling him into Egypt was really part of God's plan to generally "save lives" and to specifically "save [their] lives". He informed them God was saving them in order to "preserve...a remnant on earth", because of His promise to Abraham to "make [his descendants] into a great nation" ^{Genesis 12:2}. Joseph warned them: 5 more years of famine.

Instead of describing the reason for his journey to Egypt as his brothers 'selling him into slavery', Joseph chose to say: "God sent me ahead of you...to save lives" ^{Genesis 50:20, Psalm 105:16-17}, proving he believed in God's sovereignty (God's divine purposes are far more significant than any act of mortal man). Believers who live in the Spirit are able to perceive God's presence in every life event.

45:8-11 Joseph expanded on his belief of God's guiding hand on his life, saying "[God] made [him] father to Pharaoh". He also told his brothers to return to their father right away, explain to him what happened, and bring him, his family and all his possessions back to Egypt in order to live near Joseph in Goshen throughout the remainder of the famine ^{Psalm 37:19}.

Joseph's statements that God made him "father to Pharaoh" and "lord of all Egypt" both indicated the extremely important position Joseph held. In addition to God making Joseph "lord of all Egypt", He also made him lord over his brothers ^{Genesis 37:5-8, 42:10}, as well as his father & mother ^{Genesis 37:9-10}.

Goshen was a very fertile part of the eastern Nile delta. The area of Goshen was also known as the "district of Rameses" ^{Genesis 47:11, Exodus 12:37, Numbers 33:3} and the "region of Zoan" ^{Psalm 78:12, 43}. At the time of the Exodus, 430 years later ^{Exodus 12:40-41}, the Israelites still lived in Goshen ^{Exodus 9:26}.

45:12-15 Joseph reemphasized to his brothers, and especially to Benjamin, that they could recognize him. Joseph was anxious for his brothers to "quickly" bring their father to him. He then released his emotions by first embracing and weeping with Benjamin, and then with all of his brothers. After the shock wore off, his brothers began to communicate with him.

It finally became obvious to the brothers that Joseph truly held no grudges and had forgiven them. Joseph's actions displayed Christ-like characteristics ^{Colossians 3:13} of a spiritually mature believer.

Genesis 45-47

45:16-20 Being genuinely grateful for Joseph's dream interpretations and saving Egypt through the famine, "Pharaoh and his officials were pleased" that Joseph's brothers had returned. Pharaoh then told Joseph to send them back to Canaan with carts and provisions to bring their father and his family back to live in the "best of the land of Egypt" ^{Genesis 20:15, Isaiah 1:19}.

45:21-24 Joseph provided all new clothing to his brothers, 300 pieces (~7.5 pounds) of silver and five sets of clothing to Benjamin, and many gifts for his father, Jacob. Joseph warned them not to waste any time by quarreling (about their sin) on their trip to/from Canaan.

Joseph received special treatment from Jacob ^{Genesis 37:3}, and he did the same for Benjamin ^{v.22}.

Many years prior, the brothers exhibited hatred toward Joseph ^{Genesis 37:4-5}, but now tears of joy ^{v.15}. However, in spite of the elation of the moment, Joseph was concerned about the surfacing of his brothers' guilty consciences (that did appear later ^{Genesis 50:15}) on their journey to get their father ^{v.24}.

45:25-28 The brothers returned to their father, and surprised him with the news of Joseph. Jacob was naturally skeptical and in shock at hearing Joseph was alive (as were the brothers when they first heard ^{v.3}). However, the stories and gifts convinced him of the truth ^{John 8:32}.

When in Egypt, the brothers exhibited guilt and remorse ^{Genesis 42:21} for their hateful/shameful actions against Joseph ^{Genesis 37:23-28}. However, while telling their father about Joseph being alive, there is no indication they took that opportunity to confess to him about their sin against Joseph.

Jacob's Journey to Egypt (Genesis 46)

46:1-7 Jacob and family left Hebron and headed to Egypt, but stopped in Beersheba to offer sacrifices to "the God of Isaac". God "spoke to Israel", telling him to "not be afraid" ^{John 14:27}, because He would be with him ^{Matthew 28:20b}. God also promised He would make Jacob "into a great nation [in Egypt]", Joseph would comfort him in his death, and He would "bring [Israel] back" to the PL ^{Genesis 50:14}. Jacob then left Beersheba for Egypt with his entire family.



Jacob stopped in Beersheba to ask God's help ^{Genesis 21:33, 26:25} to comprehend the circumstances.

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Genesis 45-47

Abraham went to Egypt ^{Genesis 12:10}, Isaac was told not to go ^{Genesis 26:2}, but Jacob was told to go ^{v.3-4}.

The family's arrival in Egypt was the beginning of the fulfillment of a prophecy of God ^{Genesis 15:13-16}.

They went to Egypt as the family of Israel and left 430 years later ^{Exodus 12:40} as the nation of Israel.

46:8-27 Jacob's descendants are listed. There were 66 ^{v.26} family members who travelled with Jacob to Egypt and a total of 70 ^{v.27} who went to live in Egypt (including Jacob, Joseph, sons).

The phrase "the names of the sons of Israel" ^{v.8} was used here for the first time by Moses.

All OT verses ^{v.27, Exodus 1:5, Deuteronomy 10:22} that quote the number of Jacob's descendants give the total as seventy, but curiously, the Septuagint (LXX) changed the number here ^{v.27} to seventy-five.

So Stephen stated the number as seventy-five in his speech to the Sanhedrin before he died ^{Acts 7:14}.

The only explanation given by scholars is that the LXX also counted additional family born in Egypt.

46:28-30 As they entered Egypt, Jacob sent Judah to Joseph to get the directions to Goshen.

When they arrived, Joseph greeted his father, and they joyously embraced ^{Luke 15:20} and wept.

Israel proclaimed that actually seeing his favorite son Joseph alive made him "ready to die".

Jacob sending Judah ahead ^{v.28} is another example of Judah's leadership role ^{Genesis 44:14-18, 49:8-12}.

It had been 22 years ^{Genesis 37:2, 41:46,53, 45:6} since Jacob had been with his son Joseph ^{Genesis 37:12-14}.

46:31-34 Joseph told the family he would speak to Pharaoh before their formal introduction.

In addition, he gave them advice on how they should speak to the Pharaoh in order to make sure their transition into life in Egypt would go as smoothly as possible. ^{Proverbs 11:14, 19:20}

Joseph prepared his brothers, knowing how the Egyptians generally felt about Hebrews:

"Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews" ^{Genesis 43:32} and "shepherds [were] detestable to [them]" ^{v.34}.

Joseph and Jacob in Egypt (Genesis 47)

47:1-6 Joseph spoke to Pharaoh himself and then presented five of his brothers to him.

Pharaoh invited Jacob and his family to "settle ... in the best part of the land", and Pharaoh also told Joseph to put any of his family with "special ability" in charge of "[his] livestock".

The five brothers told Pharaoh they came "to live [in Egypt] awhile, because the famine is severe in Canaan" ^{Ruth 1:1}. However, their stay lasted a lot longer than "awhile". ^{Genesis 15:13, Exodus 12:40-41}

47:7-12 Joseph brought his father, Jacob, before Pharaoh. Jacob blessed Pharaoh ^{2 Samuel 14:22} both at the start and the end of their time together. In response to Pharaoh's question, Jacob

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declared he was: “a hundred and thirty” years (saying his “years [were] few”, because his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham lived much longer: 180 ^{Genesis 35:28} and 175 ^{Genesis 25:7}, respectively). Joseph helped his father, brothers and their families to settle in the delta region (the district of Rameses ^{Numbers 33:3} ≈ Goshen ^{v.27}), and provided food for them all.

It seems Pharaoh accepted the blessings from Jacob (and his God), probably because of Joseph.

Jacob’s life was a “pilgrimage”, because he had travelled in strange lands (Canaan, Egypt, etc).

Christians are also not “inhabitants of the earth” ^{Revelation 13:8}, but ‘heavenly citizens’ ^{Philippians 3:17-21}.

47:13-22 During the last five years of famine ^{Genesis 45:6}, the food supply was constantly being depleted, so Joseph devised a plan to feed “Egypt and Canaan”, while enriching Pharaoh. First, Joseph collected all the money, then all the livestock, then all the land in payment for the food the people needed to make it through the remaining years of famine. The only land Joseph did not buy was “the land of the priests” ^{v.26}, who received food directly from Pharaoh.

Joseph didn’t do just what had to be done – he worked hard for his true employer: God ^{Colossians 3:23}.

The livestock included every animal important for life (horses, sheep, goats, cattle and donkeys ^{v.17}).

47:23-26 With all the land having been purchased for food, Joseph passed out seed for crops and created a law requiring the people to give one-fifth of the harvested crops to Pharaoh. This approach not only allowed the people to produce enough food for their families, but also created a steady income for Pharaoh in the *post-famine* future. Even with his strict handling of the food distribution during the famine, people could see the wisdom in Joseph’s decisions.

In acquiring all the land for Pharaoh and letting people work the land for Pharaoh and themselves, Joseph created a feudal system many centuries before feudalism became widespread in Europe.

The Joseph-decreed tax of one-fifth sounds stiff, but 20% is much less than U.S. taxes paid today.

47:27-31 The Israelites became very prosperous in the land of Goshen. At the age of one hundred and forty seven, Jacob was approaching the end of his life, so he made Joseph swear that he would “carry [him] out of Egypt” and bury Jacob with his “fathers” (in “the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre in Canaan” ^{Genesis 49:29-32, 50:12-14} in the Promised Land).

As discussed in an earlier situation with Abraham and Eliezer ^{Genesis 24:2-9}, Jacob wanted Joseph to use an ancient custom to make the solemn oath by placing his hand under Jacob’s thigh ^{v.29}.

Was Jacob’s insistence for Joseph to make the strange, but customary oath necessary? ^{Genesis 46:4}

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