



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Genesis (Part 2)

Lesson 12: Genesis 47:1-48:22

If the good Lord is willing, we are going to finish the book of Genesis! There is only one more lesson after this one! Thank you for hanging in there with me even through the starts and stops of the holidays. It feels like we are on the home stretch of a marathon – way to go, ladies! If you remember, we left off last time with Joseph’s big reveal to his brothers and the exciting reunion of Jacob and Joseph as the Israelites begin their sojourning in the land of Egypt. In these next two chapters, we will be looking at Israel settling in to their new, temporary home in Egypt and Jacob preparing for his departure from this temporary life on earth. If you have prayed, let’s begin!

Read Genesis 47:1-26

Joseph takes five of his brothers before Pharaoh to represent his family that have made the long journey to Egypt. Pharaoh receives them gladly and provides them with land and even jobs if Joseph deems them capable and worthy of the task. Then Joseph presents his father, Jacob, to Pharaoh. We find out that Jacob is 130 years old when he arrives in Egypt. He describes his years as “few and unpleasant” and not as long as his fathers’ years. Jacob’s father, Isaac, lives to be 180 years old (Gen. 35:28). Knowing that Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob and Esau were born (Gen. 25:26), we know that he died about 10 years before Jacob moves to Egypt. With Abraham living to be 175 years old (Gen. 25:7), we can

understand why Jacob feels he has not lived that long.

At first, it seemed sad to me that Isaac did not live to know that his grandson Joseph was not mauled to death, but rather alive and well and playing a big role in God’s plan. Then I remembered, Isaac probably knew before Jacob or anyone else on earth what happened to Joseph. He was in the waiting place being comforted. How could I be saddened by that? Not in a morbid sort of way, but we as Christians should anticipate eagerly the day our faith is realized. God’s people have no need to be sad about missing out on anything in this life. If we only believed God about what He has prepared for us, we would know we have missed out on nothing. We have only gained.

In verse 10 of chapter 47, it says that “Jacob blessed Pharaoh”. I think it is important to pause here and contemplate the implications of this statement. Pharaoh is the leader of the world power at the time and is believed by his people to be a god. Yet, this old man from Canaan shows up and he blesses Pharaoh instead of the other way around. Remember that this is long before Moses and the ten plagues, long before nations had a big reason to revere the Israelites. Perhaps Pharaoh was just honoring an old man or honoring the father of Joseph, who obviously had the Spirit of God. Whatever the reason, we know from Heb. 7:7 that “the lesser is blessed by the greater”. The act of Jacob blessing Pharaoh is a



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statement of his being greater than Pharaoh. He was greater. He was wealthier. He was more powerful. Not by the world’s standards, but by the true standard. Not because of who he was, but because he was known by God. As unworthy as I am, praise God He knows my name! I am one rich lady.

As the Israelites are settling into Goshen, there are still five more years of the famine left. The text says that Egypt and Canaan “languished” because of how severe the famine had become. The Hebrew word for “languished” in verse 13 includes the meaning of “mad, crazy”. I believe that helps describe how drastic this famine was. It was so severe that it was driving people mad from their destitution. Have you ever seen someone so desperate that they are almost driven crazy? Perhaps you have even been that person. Envision, if you can, being so starved that you are losing your mind. I imagine people were doing drastic things to survive this catastrophic famine. This could not have been a pretty scene in Egypt and Canaan.

Because they have no other choice, after the people have expended all their money, they begin to beg Joseph. They end up handing over all their livestock in exchange for more grain. When that is all bought up, they are left with selling their land and themselves in servitude. Pharaoh not only has Joseph to thank for his entire country surviving the famine, but also for making him even more incredibly wealthy and powerful. Joseph collects all the people’s money, all their livestock, and all the land in Egypt (except for the priests’ land). On top of all that, all the people would continue to “pay” Pharaoh one-fifth of

their harvest, thereby supplying him with even more wealth year after year.

Why do you think Jacob called his years “unpleasant”?

Fill in the blank: I would like to live long enough to _____.

Knowing God’s promises, do you really need to?

What types of things have you or someone you know done out of desperation?

In what way do you think Jacob blessed Pharaoh?

How would you bless someone who thought they were a god?

Read Genesis Chapter 47:27-48:22

As the end of Jacob’s life draws nearer, he takes steps to prepare for his departure. The first order of business that is recorded concerns his burial place. He calls on Joseph to swear that he



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will not bury him in Egypt, but rather return him to Canaan to be buried with his fathers. Surely his request comes at least partially from the faith he has in God's promise to someday give his descendants the promised land of Canaan. In an act similar to the one Abraham's servant took in order to find Isaac a wife from Canaan, Joseph places his hand under Jacob's thigh and makes an oath to do as Jacob has requested. I still find this to be a very strange way of making a vow, but there are a lot of other traditions that don't make sense to us either. These confusing traditions remind me of how differently we can think and feel about things based on our own experiences and culture. Sometimes we do not have to understand people's ways, we just need to respect them. I am certain I have plenty of my own strange ways of doing things.

Apparently, some time passes as the first verse of chapter 48 says, "Now it came about after these things...". Jacob has fallen ill and is now ready to finish his business in this life. Joseph is summoned and brings along his two sons. Jacob speaks of God's promises to him and his descendants and then basically adopts Manasseh and Ephraim as his own. If you have ever wondered why Joseph is not one of the tribes of Israel that inherits land, it is because instead he gets two portions through his two sons, whom Jacob considers equal to his own children. Remember the tribe of Levi will not inherit a specific section of the promised land in the future because they are the priests. Instead, they will be dispersed among all the tribes to provide spiritual guidance throughout the whole nation. With the loss of Levi and Joseph's tribes from the land inheritance and the gain of Manasseh and Ephraim's, we end up with twelve tribes again.

I think it's important to remember that Joseph was busy leading his own life and family so, just like us today, he probably did not visit his father all the time. Likewise, Jacob may have rarely seen his grandsons. Whether it was his failing eyesight, his unfamiliarity with them, or both, Jacob asks who Joseph has brought with him. Jacob seems delighted to bless them. He showers them with love and affection. His gratitude is evident when he says to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well". What a gracious and compassionate God we serve!

When the text says that Joseph took his sons from Jacob's knees, it can mean not only on, but near or in between his knees. In fact, the KJV translates it "out from between his knees". Near or in between makes more sense because Manasseh and Ephraim are most likely too old at this point to be sitting on Jacob's knees. We know from Gen. 48:5 that they were born before Jacob arrived in Egypt. We also know from Gen. 47:28 that this event occurred close to the end of Jacob's life, which was 17 years later. Therefore, Manasseh and Ephraim must have been between late teens to mid-20s when Jacob blesses them.

Another interesting point about this section is the connection of the "knees" with the concept of adoption. There seems to be at least some evidence that placing them on or near the knees was symbolic of adopting that child. Within scripture, we see this practice in Gen. 30:3-6 when Rachel gives her maid, Bilhah, to Jacob so she can bear children on Rachel's "knees". When Bilhah gives birth to Dan, Rachel says, "God has...given me a son". We see it again here in our text when Jacob calls Manasseh and Ephraim "mine" and



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has them near his “knees”. We will see it again in chapter 50 with Joseph and some of his grandsons. This adoption that takes place allows Manasseh and Ephraim to be equal in the inheritance with all of Jacob’s other sons.

The text tells us that Joseph was “displeased” that Jacob goes out of his way to put his right hand on Ephraim and his left on Manasseh even after Joseph situated them for the correct birth order. We are not told why Jacob defies the tradition here, but it seems to run in the family. He supplanted Esau as the first-born. His father, Isaac, supplanted Ishmael as the first-born. Reuben’s double portion as first-born is given to Joseph through his two sons. Isn’t it funny how we are a stickler for traditions? Joseph was blessed far beyond his brothers, yet he was nowhere near the first-born of his family. It is a good lesson for us to not to put God, or others, in a box based on what we expect.

The old testament is full of what we call types and antitypes. Types are the physical events, people, or words that take place first and represent the antitypes, which are the spiritual events, people, or words that come later and really matter. Types help us understand the antitypes. Israel’s time in Egypt (type) represents our time on this earth (antitype). The Egyptian bondage that is coming (type) represents our bondage to sin (antitype). The Israelites passage through the Red Sea (type) will represent baptism where we contact the blood of Christ that leads us out of bondage into freedom (antitype). The Israelites crossing of the Jordan into the land of Canaan (type) will represent our crossing out of this life into the promised land of heaven (antitype). I brought this up because we need to remember

what the important lessons are in these events. The Israelites are in Egypt and they will end up in bondage, but God is going to deliver them out of Egypt, out of bondage, and into the promised land because God is faithful in His promises. Guess what? The Israelites will be delivered from their bondage in Egypt and the faithful will enter the promised land. Guess what matters from that? We will be delivered from this life and from this body of sin and death and the faithful will enter heaven for eternity because God is faithful!

At the end of chapter 48, Jacob assures Joseph that God will be with him and take him back to Canaan. Jacob believes God and he urges his son to have faith as well. This is what we as God’s people should be all about as well. Believe God, have faith that He is faithful to fulfill all His promises, and encourage our children and all those around us to believe Him as well. Treat God’s word as if it has already happened. There is no doubt it will come to pass. Jesus will come again. He will take us up out of our temporary land and He will take us to our promised land.

Why do you think the text tells us in Gen. 47:27 that Israel was acquiring property in Egypt?

What is a strange tradition you have come across in Scripture or in your life?



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Why do think Jacob tells Joseph about Rachel's death in verse 7?

What do you think of the descriptions Jacob gives of God in Gen. 48:15? Research the terms used.

What do we learn about Genesis from Rom. 15:4?

What can you do today to encourage others to have faith in God's promises?

What Scriptures can you think of that would help us understand the types and antitypes from Israel being in Egypt until the time they enter the promised land?

God is so good to me. I am so grateful to read how good He has been to his servant Jacob throughout his life and throughout his hardships. However, I am most grateful that He continually proves His faithfulness. Jacob could face the end of his life with peace. Thanks to God, what have we to fear? What great things we can look

forward to! May you bless all those you encounter this week by spurring them on to greater faith.