

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 46 & 47

GENESIS 46:1-7 - ISRAEL (JACOB) SEEKS THE LORD

THOUGH WE PROBABLY LOOK AT THE FAMILY'S MOVE TO EGYPT AS A NO-BRAINER, THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN A BIG STEP FOR JACOB AS THE PATRIARCH AND GRANDSON OF ABRAHAM. WE HAVEN'T SPECIFICALLY READ ABOUT THIS IN A FEW CHAPTERS, BUT THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT LOOMS LARGE ON ISRAEL'S HEART. HE HAS BEEN CALLED TO SOJOURN IN CANAAN AND WAITS FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM.

BY WAY OF REFRESHER, THESE PROMISES ARE SUMMARIZED IN YAHWEH BEING THEIR GOD, BLESSING THEM, GIVING THEM A LAND, AND A LARGE FAMILY (DESCENDANTS). PART OF THIS PROMISE WAS THAT ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS WERE TO RESIDE IN THE "PROMISED" LAND WHILE THEY WAITED ON THE LORD TO PERMANENTLY AND ETERNALLY GIVE IT TO THEM.

SO WHILE THE OFFER SOUNDS LOVELY, AND HE SURELY LONGS TO SEE JOSEPH'S FACE, ISRAEL IS GOING TO FIRST CHECK IN WITH THE LORD. SO ISRAEL TRAVELS TO BEERSHEBA, A SIGNIFICANT PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF ABRAHAM. (SEE ABRAHAM'S TIME THERE IN GENESIS 21 AND ISAAC'S VISIT IN GENESIS 26).

ALSO, THE FAMILY HAS A HISTORY WITH EGYPT THAT IS SOMEWHAT CHECKERED. ABRAHAM HAD GONE THERE DURING A FAMINE AND ALMOST LOST HIS WIFE SARAH TO PHARAOH (GENESIS 12:10-20). AND IN ISAAC'S LIFETIME, THE LORD HAD SPECIFICALLY FORBIDDEN HIM TO GO TO EGYPT DURING A FAMINE (GENESIS 26:1-5).

SO ISRAEL WISELY SEEKS THE LORD'S DIRECTION AND THE LORD VISITS HIM IN A DREAM.

GENESIS 46:2-4 (NLT) - "JACOB! JACOB!" HE CALLED. "HERE I AM," JACOB REPLIED. 3 "I AM GOD, THE GOD OF YOUR FATHER," THE VOICE SAID. "DO NOT BE AFRAID TO GO DOWN TO EGYPT, FOR THERE I WILL MAKE YOUR FAMILY INTO A GREAT NATION. 4 I WILL GO WITH YOU DOWN TO EGYPT, AND I WILL BRING YOU BACK AGAIN. YOU WILL DIE IN EGYPT, BUT JOSEPH WILL BE WITH YOU TO CLOSE YOUR EYES."

SO ISRAEL/JACOB RECEIVES THE LORD'S BLESSING ON THIS MOVE AND ISRAEL BEGINS HIS JOURNEY TOWARDS THE PLACE THAT WILL BE HIS LAST HOME. THE ENTIRE ABRAHAMIC FAMILY AND ALL OF THEIR BELONGINGS ARE MOVING TO EGYPT, WITH GOD'S BLESSING.

GENESIS 46:8-27 - THE RECORD OF THE FAMILY THAT LIVED IN EGYPT

ABRAHAM AND SARAH HAD NO CHILDREN TILL THEY WERE 90 & 100 AND NOW THERE ARE 70 DIRECT DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM THAT ARE TRAVELING TO EGYPT. GOD HAS BLESSED THIS FAMILY AND BEGUN TO GROW THEIR LINE. IT IS FROM THIS GROUP THAT GOD WILL BLESS AND MULTIPLY THE PEOPLE FROM A FAMILY TO A TRIBE TO A NATION.

GENESIS 46:28-34 - JOSEPH IS REUNITED WITH HIS FATHER

JUDAH GOES AHEAD OF THE PACK TO CONNECT WITH JOSEPH ON WHERE THEY WILL LIVE. UPON THIS, JOSEPH HIMSELF RIDES TO MEET JACOB, HIS BELOVED FATHER WHO HE HAS NOT SEEN IN PROBABLY 25 YEARS. THEIR REUNION IS SWEET AND EMOTIONAL. THERE IS A CLOSURE AND PEACE THAT FILLS THEIR HEARTS AND ISRAEL CONFESSES THAT HE CAN NOW DIE, THIS TIME NOT BECAUSE OF GRIEF, BUT BECAUSE OF JOY.

JOSEPH WANTS HIS FAMILY TO RESIDE IN GOSHEN, A PART OF THE LAND OF EGYPT WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN FAVORABLE TO LIVESTOCK. HE INSTRUCTS HIS FAMILY TO TELL PHARAOH THAT THEY ARE SHEPHERDS, WHICH WILL HELP THEM CLINCH THIS AREA FOR THEIR HOME AND BE CONFIRMATION THAT THE FAMILY IS PEACEABLE TOWARDS EGYPT. IT'S ONE THING TO HAVE VISITORS FROM OTHER NATIONS COMING TO BUY GRAIN, IT'S ANOTHER TO HAVE THEM MOVE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. THE TEXT TELLS US THAT EGYPTIANS LOOKED AT SHEPHERDS AS AN ABOMINATION (46:34). THERE ISN'T MUCH INFORMATION AS TO WHY THIS IS RELEVANT, BUT PERHAPS GOSHEN WAS FAR ENOUGH AWAY TO KEEP THE HATED SHEPHERDS AT A DISTANCE.

"JOSEPH IS APPARENTLY TRYING TO STRESS TO PHARAOH THAT HIS FAMILY IS SELF-SUFFICIENT, THAT THEY WILL NOT BE A DRAIN ON THE ECONOMY OF EGYPT. BUT THEY WILL NEED LAND FOR THEIR ANIMALS AND SO *GOSHEN*, LOCATED ON THE EDGE OF EGYPT, WOULD BE A SUITABLE PLACE FOR THEM TO LIVE. THE SETTLED EGYPTIANS WERE UNEASY WITH NOMADIC PEOPLE, BUT IF JACOB AND HIS FAMILY SETTLED IN GOSHEN THEY WOULD REPRESENT NO THREAT." (NET BIBLE NOTE, GENESIS 46:34)

GENESIS 47:1-6 - BROTHERS BEFORE PHARAOH

THIS WAS PROBABLY A BIG DEAL TO HAVE AN AUDIENCE BEFORE THE PHARAOH. 5 OF THE BROTHERS JOIN JOSEPH AND RECEIVE A WARM RECEPTION BY THE KING. PHARAOH IS INDEBTED TO JOSEPH AND UNLIKE HIS CUPBEARER, HAS NOT FORGOTTEN THAT! HE EVEN ASKS THAT IF THERE ARE CAPABLE SHEPHERDS IN THE FAMILY, THAT HE WOULD LOVE FOR THEM TO CARE FOR HIS OWN ROYAL LIVESTOCK TOO!

GENESIS 47:7-12 - JACOB BEFORE PHARAOH

PHARAOH ALSO WELCOMES JOSEPH'S FATHER TO THE LAND AND INQUIRES ABOUT THE QUALITY OF THIS LIFE. IN A BITTERSWEET REPLY, JACOB TELLS HOW HE HAS LIVED LONG, BUT HAD MUCH TROUBLE. HE IS 130 YEARS OLD (ABRAHAM LIVED TO BE 175 AND ISAAC 180). JACOB BLESSES PHARAOH AND THEN LEAVES TO SETTLE IN THE GIVEN LAND. THIS COULD BE QUICKLY DISMISSED AS A COMMON FAREWELL GREETING, BUT COMING FROM THE GRANDSON OF ABRAHAM, TO "BLESS" PHARAOH WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE SIGNIFICANT. GOD'S FAVOR (BLESSING) TOWARDS THE FAMILY OF ISRAEL HAS FLOWN THROUGH EGYPT AND ISRAEL'S BLESSING OF PHARAOH WOULD HAVE BEEN NOTABLE - GOD PROMISED TO "BLESS THOSE WHO BLESS YOU" AND THROUGH ISRAEL, GOD IS BLESSING THE NATION.

GENESIS 47:13-17 - THE FAMINE CONTINUES (GRAIN FOR LIVESTOCK)

WE ARE NOW GETTING A SUMMARY OF THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED AFTER ISRAEL HAD SETTLED IN GOSHEN. REMEMBER JOSEPH HAD FILLED STOREHOUSES DURING THE 7 YEARS OF ABUNDANCE. WE SAW HOW IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF THE SEVERE FAMINE, EGYPTIANS AND OUTSIDERS ALIKE CAME TO JOSEPH TO BUY GRAIN. NOW THE FAMINE HAS CONTINUED AND THE PEOPLE BUYING THE GRAIN (INCLUDING EGYPTIANS THEMSELVES) HAVE NO MORE MONEY. INSTEAD OF MONEY JOSEPH ACCEPTS LIVESTOCK IN EXCHANGE FOR GRAIN. THE PEOPLE NEED TO EAT, SO THEY GIVE THEIR LIVESTOCK AS PAYMENT. THROUGH THIS, JOSEPH IS ACCUMULATING GOODS FOR THE HOUSE OF PHARAOH.

REMEMBER, THIS ISN'T A DEMOCRACY OR REPUBLIC - IT'S A THEOCRACY WITH THE GOD OF PHARAOH RULING. HE'S HASN'T BEEN ELECTED TO CARE FOR HIS CITIZENS, HE'S A "SON OF THE GODS" (EVENTUALLY A GOD HIMSELF) WHO DOES WHATEVER HE PLEASES. SO IF HIS OWN "CITIZENS" WANT FOOD OR GRAIN, EVEN GRAIN THAT MAY HAVE BEEN HARVESTED FROM THEIR OWN FIELDS, THEY WILL BUY IT FROM HIM.

GENESIS 47:18-26 - THE FAMINE CONTINUES (GRAIN FOR LAND)

ANOTHER YEAR PASSES AND THE PEOPLE PAY FOR THEIR GRAIN WITH THEIR LAND AND THEIR OWN BODIES (SERVITUDE). THROUGH THIS PROCESS, JOSEPH BUYS "ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT FOR PHARAOH" (GENESIS 47:20). JOSEPH GIVES THEM GRAIN AND ALSO SEED TO PLANT NEW CROPS - BUT THE LAND THEY WILL PLANT IN NOW BELONGS TO PHARAOH. AS A RESULT, ONE-FIFTH OF WHATEVER IS GROWN WILL BE GIVEN TO PHARAOH, THE REST WILL BE KEPT BY THE PEOPLE. IN A WAY, THAT'S NOT A BAD EXCHANGE FOR THE PEOPLE, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED IN THE SITUATION. BUT IT WILL ALSO MEAN AN ONGOING SOURCE FOR WEALTH FOR THE NATION.

WE PROBABLY DON'T REALIZE THIS, BUT THE EGYPT WE OFTEN THINK ABOUT IN SCRIPTURE - THE POWERFUL AND WEALTHY NATION THAT RULED THE WORLD FOR A TIME - IS NOT THE EGYPT THAT JOSEPH WAS SOLD INTO AS A SLAVE YEARS AGO. HOWEVER, IT WILL BECOME THIS WORLD POWER *BECAUSE OF JOSEPH!* THE RESOURCES THEY ARE COLLECTING, THE LANDS THEY ARE AMASSING AND THE BUILDING PROJECTS THAT WILL BE UNDERTAKEN WILL HAPPEN DURING AND CERTAINLY BECAUSE OF JOSEPH'S RULE.

SO ALL OF THE MONEY THAT IS COLLECTED, ALL OF THE LIVESTOCK THAT IS ACCUMULATED AND ALL OF THE LAND THAT IS ABSORBED INTO EGYPT IS BECAUSE OF JOSEPH - AND ULTIMATELY WILL LEAVE WITH THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, ALBEIT HUNDREDS OF YEARS FROM NOW, WHEN MOSES LEADS THE NATION BACK TO THE LAND OF CANAAN (SEE EXODUS). ISN'T IT AMAZING TO SEE HOW GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS?!

GENESIS 47:27-31 - JACOB'S FINAL DAYS & FINAL WORDS BEGIN

JACOB WILL LIVE IN EGYPT FOR ANOTHER 17 YEARS (HE WILL DIE AT 147). DURING THIS TIME, GOD IS BLESSING HIS PEOPLE AND GIVING THEM PEACE AND REST IN GOSHEN. AS HIS DAYS ARE DRAWING TO AN END, HE ASKS THAT HIS SON JOSEPH BE SURE TO BURY HIM IN THE PLACE THAT HIS FATHERS ARE BURIED. (THE "PLACE YOUR HAND UNDER MY THIGH" ACT WAS A SYMBOLIC ACT OF COVENANT MAKING.) JOSEPH SWEARS THAT THIS WILL BE DONE.

EVEN AS HIS LIFE COMES TO A CLOSE, JACOB'S MIND IS ON THE COVENANT AND PROMISE. HE KNOWS THAT THE WORD GOD HAS SPOKEN TO THIS FAMILY DOES NOT FIND ITS FULFILLMENT IN EGYPT. THERE IS MORE TO THE STORY THAT STILL IS TO COME (RESURRECTION ANYONE?!).

AND THEN AS JOSEPH SWEARS, THE AGED JACOB CLIMBS OUT OF HIS BED AND BOWS. SURELY THIS BOWING WAS IN REVERENCE TO THE LORD AND HIS FAITHFULNESS - BUT, IN THESE FINAL DAYS OF JACOB'S LIFE, HE ALSO IS BOWING IN JOSEPH'S PRESENCE - A FULFILLMENT OF JOSEPH'S OWN DREAMS AS A YOUNG BOY (GENESIS 37:9-11).

IF YOU REMEMBER, JOSEPH DIDN'T JUST DREAM THAT HIS BROTHERS WOULD BOW (AS THEY DID WHEN THEY FIRST APPROACHED HIM FOR GRAIN), BUT THAT HIS FATHER/MOTHER WOULD TOO (REPRESENTED BY THE SUN AND MOON JOINING THE STARS IN WORSHIP). AND NOW IT IS DONE.

EVERY WORD OF GOD IS TESTED AND FAITHFUL - TO THE SMALLEST DETAIL AND WORD. YOU MAY HAVE EVEN FORGOTTEN THAT THIS WAS PART OF THE DREAM JOSEPH HAD - AFTER ALL THAT HAS TRANSPIRED WITH JOSEPH'S BROTHERS BOWING, REUNIONS HAPPENING AND GOD'S BLESSING BEING POURED OUT ON THE FAMILY, EVEN THIS SMALL DETAIL THAT GOD SPOKE COMES TO PASS TOO!

THIS IS ALL A GREAT REMINDER OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND THE FULLNESS OF WHICH HIS PLANS ENCOMPASS. WE WOULD LIKELY BE HAPPY WITH ALL THAT WE'VE READ SO FAR THAT HAS COME TOGETHER FOR JOSEPH PERSONALLY AND THE FAMILY OF ABRAHAM GENERALLY - BUT EVEN THIS FINAL REQUEST OF ISRAEL TO BE BURIED IN THE LAND OF CANAAN REMINDS US THAT GOD'S PLAN FOR HIS PEOPLE ISN'T JUST ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS LIFE AND IN THIS AGE. THERE IS MORE TO THE STORY THAT WE MUST HOLD ON TO AND REMEMBER, EVEN WHEN THE PART OF THE STORY WE ARE READING DOESN'T MENTION ALL THE DETAILS.

LIKE I SAID, WE HAVEN'T READ MUCH ABOUT THE BLESSING OR COVENANT OF ABRAHAM IN A WHILE - BUT IT'S JUST AS TRUE AND ENDURING. WE MAY BE CONTENT WITH THE HEROS OF OUR STORY SEEMS TO BE SET UP TO "LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER..." BUT THEIR HAPPY ENDING HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH GOSHEN. AND AT LEAST JOSEPH AND JACOB REMEMBER THAT AND IN TURN, ARE REMINDING EACH OTHER.

OUR LIVES CAN NEVER BE CONTENT WITH THE WAY THINGS WORK OUT THIS SIDE OF THE RESURRECTION. AND YET THAT CAN BE A TEMPTATION FOR US, ESPECIALLY IN PROSPEROUS COUNTRIES LIKE THE UNITED STATES. WE CAN SET OUR HOPE IN HOW THINGS TURN OUT FOR US IN THE END - RETIREMENT, FAMILY SIZE, MORTGAGE PAID OFF, VACATIONS, HEALTH, GETTING THE PROVERBIAL "GOLD WATCH" WHEN WE LEAVE THE COMPANY...ETC. BUT THAT WOULD BE KIND OF SILLY WHEN THE 80 OR 180 YEARS WE HAVE ON THIS EARTH ARE NOT REALLY ABOUT HOW THINGS END HERE BUT HOW THEY END WHEN THE NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH BEGIN?

SO WE ENJOY THIS LIFE AND REHEARSE ALL THAT WE HAVE TO BE THANKFUL FOR DAY BY DAY. BUT DON'T SETTLE FOR HAVING A HAPPY ENDING HERE. KEEP YOUR EYES ON WHAT IS TO COME AND WHAT GOD HAS PROMISED. CHECK IN WITH THE LORD FROM TIME TO TIME TO ASSESS, LIKE JACOB DID IF YOU SHOULD GO THIS WAY OR THAT. ASK HIM TO HELP YOU LIVE FOR WHAT REALLY MATTERS. REMEMBER WHAT THE LORD SAID TO FAITHFUL JACOB WHEN HE ASK FOR THE SAME:

"I AM GOD, THE GOD OF YOUR FATHER," THE VOICE SAID. "DO NOT BE AFRAID TO GO DOWN TO EGYPT, FOR THERE I WILL MAKE YOUR FAMILY INTO A GREAT NATION. 4 I WILL GO WITH YOU DOWN TO EGYPT, AND I WILL BRING YOU BACK AGAIN. YOU WILL DIE IN EGYPT, BUT JOSEPH WILL BE WITH YOU TO CLOSE YOUR EYES." (GENESIS 46:3-4, NLT)

SO WE LIVE IN "EGYPT" FOR A SEASON. MAYBE OUR LIVES HERE WILL BE GREAT AND ABUNDANT, MAYBE IT WILL BE DIFFICULT AND FAMINE-LIKE. BUT THE KEY TRUTH TO REMEMBER IN THIS LIFE OF SOJOURNING HERE IS "I WILL BRING YOU BACK AGAIN..." NOT TO THIS PROMISED LAND, TEMPORARY CANAAN, BUT TO HIS PROMISED LAND, HIS EVERLASTING KINGDOM.