

# Genesis 47-50

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(Continued from last issue)

b. Joseph took the initiative to have Jacob and his family settle in the land of Goshen.

1) He instructed his brethren to ask for this land.

a. It would best fulfill their needs materially and spiritually.

b. Even though Joseph was ruler, his father and brethren were guests in Egypt. He recognized the authority of government especially in Pharaoh as ruler.

c. We need to be reminded of this in our day, when this authority is being cast aside by beat-nik demonstrators.

2. The Meeting

a. The 5 brethren made request for the land of Goshen.

1) It may well be that Joseph selected this committee. Perhaps the 5 chosen were best fitted for the task of meeting royal dignity.

2) They emphasize before Pharaoh that they are in Egypt temporarily, they sojourn. A sojourner is one who stays for a time and then passes on.

3) Pharaoh instructs Joseph to give them the land of Goshen to dwell in.

4) Pharaoh even tells Joseph to make any of his brethren who have ability to be supervisors of the royal cattle. Pharaoh saw the ability of Joseph and was eager to make use of his brethren also.

Question: would that have been right of Joseph and his brethren to do, seeing Egypt as a nation was wicked? Remember Joseph was sold into Egypt and it appears had no choice in his becoming ruler.

b. Jacob before Pharaoh.

1) The participants: Jacob and Pharaoh.

a) Contrast, Pharaoh was leader of a mighty heathen nation, Jacob was father of Israel, God's chosen heritage.

b) Similarities, both had common interest in Joseph, Pharaoh as his trusted ruler, Jacob as his dear son. Both were moved by Joseph's spiritual character, Jacob loved his above his brethren (spiritual rapport), Pharaoh was influenced by the testimony Joseph made concerning his God, God used this to convert Pharaoh and bring his into willing service of Israel.

2) The discourse.

a) Pharaoh was moved by Jacob's age. Jacob must have appeared very old. Pharaoh asked him his age.

b) Jacob responded in a 2-fold answer. *Few*, by comparison with Abraham who lived to be 175 years and Isaac 180 years, Jacob felt at 130 years of age he was ready to die. He had yet 17 more years to live. He appraised his years as being few. Don't we always do that? *Evil*, including many hardships, but especially so sins and weaknesses. Jacob had many experiences of slipping into the valley of human frailty. Do you

think this is the only summary we can make of our lives also? Is this pessimistic?

3) The blessing.

a) Twice given, at greeting and at farewell.

b) To bless means to declare one an object of favor.

c) Since man can never bless, this must have been a prayer that God would favor Pharaoh and strengthen his in faith.

d) How do we do that today? Can we bless our wicked neighbor? Consider Matthew 5:44.

C. Joseph as Lord of the Land

1. The adverse circumstances

a. The 7 years of plenty were past. During those years 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the produce was placed in storage. Now the 7 years of famine have begun and the shortage was being felt.

b. The drought and famine covered Egypt and Canaan “ in all the land.. of Egypt.. of Canaan.” Vs. 13.

c. So terrible was the blow that the people were unable to provide for themselves, they began to flock to Egypt.

2. Joseph acquires all the possessions of the Egyptians

a. The principle that guided Joseph was that the people should pay for that which they receive. There were no free hand-outs.

1) This was fiscally sound and morally correct. That which is free is cheap. That which is bought is valued and not wasted.

2) Questions: Is it the business of government to distribute freely to the poor? Is our anti-poverty program Christian? What is the church doing today to help the poor? Where are the poor and needy? See Matt. 26:11.

b. The Egyptian government soon owned everything.

1) The people's property: their money, their cattle (title of ownership turned over to the government), their homes and property, and thus all material things.

2) The people themselves: they offered themselves as servants. They were taken from their unproductive farms and brought into the towns to work, perhaps building cities and the like. At the same time extreme care could be exercised to make sure no food was wasted.

3) The Priests are exempted from this confiscation.

a. They were heathen priests of the gods of the Egyptians.

b. Evidently Pharaoh did not force his personal religion upon the masses and thus according to their tradition exempted the priests from civil duty.

3. Joseph was not a tyrant

a. He did not make the people slaves of the state. He wisely dealt with them in a manner best suited to the circumstances. List some proofs of this by contrasting Joseph with a modern dictator.

b. When the famine was finished, he ordered the people to return to their lands, gave them seed to plant, and helped them start anew.

c. He taxed them only 1/4<sup>th</sup> on the harvest, the people would have to give the government 20% of their income. This was reasonable and would not burden them.

- d. Questions: Can the government rightfully claim all the material possessions of the citizens? Is over-taxation wrong? What constitutes too much tax? Is Private Enterprise or Communism right or wrong as an economic system? Is either one of them Christian?
4. Through Joseph's rule, Israel dwelt in safety (vss. 11, 12, 27, 28)
- a. Jacob's family received special favor. They did not have to pay for their provision, neither was their material property confiscated. They prospered.
- b. Beautiful proof, all things work together for good for them that love God, Rom. 8:28.
- 1) All things serve God's people, nature, rulers, and wicked nations.
  - 2) They serve the salvation of God's people. Here in the midst of poverty and famine, God's people had sufficient and even prospered! They grew and multiplied exceedingly.
  - 3) God's ways are far above our ways. He ordained Joseph to be sold a slave, He brought famine. He guided the sons of Jacob to Israel; He brought Jacob and his family there, all to make the nation He promised.
  - 4) Give examples to show how this is true today also.

D. Jacob's Death (Genesis 47:29-50:14)

1. Provisions concerning his burial

a. Death was imminent.

- 1) Jacob was old, nearly 147 years.
- 2) His body bore evidence of age, his bones and muscles were weak (leaned upon his staff), his eyes were dim (48:10), and in general the description of old age given in Eccl. 12:1-7 applied to Jacob.
- 3) Jacob knew he was about to die.
  - a) Not that God gave him some special revelation; the signs of death were round about him. It was only a short time and he became sick unto death. This often happens with the aged today.
  - b) He desired to make things ready for his death: to give instruction concerning the burial of his body, to bring the 2 sons of Joseph within the covenant family, to bless his own sons.

b. "Bury me not in Egypt... I will lie with my fathers."

1. This was not superstition; it wasn't as if Jacob couldn't go to heaven unless his body rested in Canaan.
2. He desired his burial to be a testimony to his sons: not Egypt but Canaan was their home.

(To be continued, D.V.)

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