

**GENESIS 45:1-47:28**  
**GOD PROVIDENTIALLY PROVIDES A PLACE**  
**TO PRESERVE AND PROSPER HIS PEOPLE**

We're nearing the end of our study in Genesis and have been looking at the life of Joseph. We saw last time where a severe famine hit a widespread area of the civilized world. It says, "the famine was severe over all the earth" (Genesis 41:57). But yet, as you read on it says that "in all the land of Egypt there was bread." It goes on to tell us that everybody went down to Egypt to buy grain including Joseph's family. So, why was Egypt spared the devastating effect of this terrible famine? How do you explain this?

Answer: Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream, which warned about a famine. God then used Joseph as His instrument to spare Egypt and much of the world.

So, when Joseph's brothers show up in Egypt to buy grain, how did Joseph react when he saw them? Did he recognize them? It says, "Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them" (Genesis 42:7). Why did he do that? Why did he react like this? What was his purpose for doing this? To see if they had changed. He put them through a series of tests. How did Joseph's brothers react when they saw Joseph? Did they even recognize him? No, they did not. In fact, they were afraid of him.

So, Joseph put his brothers through a series of tests to see if they had changed at all over the last 20 years. And had they changed? After Judah's emotional statement to Joseph, he could see that yes, they had in fact changed. God had been working in Joseph's life. We could see that in the book of Genesis. But apparently, God had also been at work in the lives of Joseph's family. Which takes to our text for this morning in Genesis Chapter 45. We open up our lesson this morning where we left off last time. Joseph is revealing himself to his brothers...

READ Genesis 45:1-3

The initial reaction, after they all picked themselves up off the floor out of shock, is that they were “dismayed” at his presence. They were alarmed. They were afraid. But why? You would think that they would be glad to see their long-lost brother, right? Well, not exactly. They realize that this powerful man standing before them that they’ve been terrified of, is the same person that they had mistreated and sold to slave traders years before. So, what is he going to do to them? They’re scared. Joseph understands this. He can see it written all over their faces. He immediately addresses their concern...

READ Genesis 45:4-5

“You sold... God sent. God’s sovereignty overruled your actions.” Joseph continues...

READ Genesis 45:6-8

God’s purpose for doing all of this has been very clear to Joseph and now he explains it to his brothers. Notice Joseph’s careful choice of words: “God sent me before you to preserve for YOU a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for YOU many survivors.” He’s talking to his brothers. God’s purpose was to keep Joseph’s family alive. God did all this to preserve His covenant people. And Egypt and many other people groups around the earth, well, they also benefited from this.

We will see later in this lesson that God had another purpose. It wasn’t just to keep them alive, though it certainly was that, but it was God’s way of getting His people to relocate from Canaan to Egypt temporarily. The reason this move is necessary will become clearer on down the road. God has a plan and He’s in the process of working it out through His servant Joseph. So, Joseph is telling his brothers, “Relax. It wasn’t you. It was God!”

Joseph goes on to tell his brothers to return home and bring their father Jacob with them back to Egypt.

READ Genesis 45:10-11

“So, hurry up and bring our father Jacob back!”

Joseph finishes speaking and there is a tearful time of reunion with his brothers. They talk to Joseph for a while. There is a lot to catch up on.

News of this reaches Pharaoh in his palace. He is told, “Joseph’s brothers have come,” and Pharaoh is pleased. Pharaoh agrees to let Joseph’s family come and live in Egypt. He even provides wagons to assist Jacob’s family with their move. Then Pharaoh adds this comment in v 20...

READ Genesis 45:20

Pharaoh is speaking. He says, “Have no concern for your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.” This is more a reflection on how Pharaoh feels about Joseph than it is about how he feels about Joseph’s family. He is showing grace and kindness to them for Joseph’s sake.

The sons of Israel return home

READ Genesis 45:21-24.

The question was asked in class about how long this trip was, the distance from Egypt to their home in Canaan. I said 500 miles. I went home and I looked it up and the distance is actually 480 miles. So, I was close. It’s a long way home! It takes a while to get home and along the way there will be plenty of time for conversation.

While Joseph can see that his brothers have changed, he also knows human nature. He doesn’t want them to quarrel among themselves. They have done that a lot through the years. Now, what could they possibly argue about? A lot of things – the preferential treatment shown to Benjamin, apprehension about their future in Egypt, fear of Joseph (what he might do), what they’re going to tell Jacob, how they’re going to explain the fact that Joseph is still alive. Joseph’s desire above all else is that there be peace in his family. It has been a pretty dysfunctional family through the years. But a new era is about to begin.

READ Genesis 45:25-28

Jacob initially does not believe his sons. But he believes the report from Joseph and he sees the evidence, the wagons. At that point you can see Jacob's renewed enthusiasm. Everything appears to be set for the family's move to Egypt. However, something is on Jacob's mind. If you will remember, years before Abraham had gone down to Egypt during a famine and, as it turned out, that had NOT been God's will.

John Phillips in his commentary offers this insight: "Just because something looks like the right thing to do, just because all the circumstances point that way, just because one's own desires affirm the move, and just because everyone else urges it as the sensible thing to do, it does not necessarily follow that it is the will of God. The important thing to ask is, 'What does God have to say?' We had best inquire of him." And then Phillips says that this is exactly what Jacob is doing as Chapter 46 opens...

Jacob travels the 26 miles from his home at Hebron to Beersheba. This is out of the way, not exactly on the way to Egypt. Jacob goes to his designated place of worship. There Jacob intercedes on behalf of his family. We know this because Moses, the writer of Genesis, uses the name Israel. So, he is operating on behalf of his family.

READ Genesis 46:1-3

The LORD assures Jacob that the move to Egypt is perfectly aligned with His will. And then God tells Jacob WHY He wants his family to go to Egypt. God doesn't always tell us why, but here He does. God says, "For there [in Egypt] I will make you into a great nation." This goes back to the covenant God had made with Abraham.

We've talked about this before. What do you need to have a nation? Three things: Land, People and Laws. God's covenant people have the land – the Promised Land, the land they call Canaan. When they go down to Egypt they will become a great nation. That is where they are going to get the people. In God's time they will get their laws at Mount Sinai. This move to Egypt is all part of God's sovereign plan for His covenant people. That is what God is telling Jacob even if Jacob doesn't know all the details.

READ Genesis 46:4

God tells Jacob that HE WILL BE WITH HIM! God reveals to Jacob that eventually Jacob will die in Egypt, but when he does, his beloved son Joseph will be there by his side.

READ Genesis 46:5-7

Let's talk about now about how many people in Jacob's family end up down in Egypt. They are named in v 8-25. If you read through these verses, you will notice that it is only Jacob's sons and grandsons that are listed.

READ Genesis 46:26

Not counting Jacob himself, Joseph, Joseph's two sons, or Jacob's son's wives, the total number of people heading down to Egypt is 66. Descendants of Leah – 31 people. Descendants of Zilpah – 16 people. Descendants of Rachel – 12 people. Descendants of Bilhah – 7 people. That's how you arrive at the number 66.

READ Genesis 46:27

When you add Jacob, Joseph and Joseph's two sons that gives you a grand total of 70 people who were part of Jacob's family that "came into Egypt." Joseph came into Egypt first when he was carried into Egypt as a slave. His two sons then came into Egypt when they were born there. Jacob comes into Egypt in this giant caravan with the rest of his family.

Just a sidenote here. I don't think it is all that relevant to our story, but you might hear some people bring it up. Stephen, when he is delivering his famous sermon in Acts Chapter 7 states (in verse 14): "And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all." Some people will ask, "why the difference?" Genesis Chapter 46 (which we just read) says there were 70 and yet Stephen says there were 75. The best explanation I heard is that Stephen is quoting from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). The Septuagint puts the number that went to Egypt at 75. This is what it says in the Septuagint: "All those

who went to Egypt with Jacob – those who were his direct descendants, not counting his son’s wives – numbered 66 persons. With nine sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob’s family, which went to Egypt, were 75 in all.” So, this explains why Stephen’s number is different. Like I said, it is not a huge deal, but I just wanted you to be aware of this.

So, here’s the situation. You have 70-75 of God’s covenant people, whichever number you want to use, that go into Egypt in the year 1876 BC. How many of God’s people will come out of Egypt 430 years later, in 1446 BC, during the Exodus from Egypt led by Moses? A whole lot more than 75! Best estimates are well over a million people. So, what I want you to see is that it will be in Egypt where God’s covenant nation will accumulate the people required for a nation.

Jacob and his family are nearing Egypt...

READ Genesis 46:28-30

Think about this – For over 20 years Jacob thought that Joseph was dead and that he would never see him again on this earth. For 20 years Joseph wondered if his elderly father was still alive and if he would ever see him again. Well, by God’s grace they ARE reunited! We can only imagine their feelings in this moment as they weep tears of joy.

READ Genesis 46:31-34

Pharaoh had apparently expressed to Joseph an interest in meeting his family when they arrive. Joseph acts as a mediator between the powerful Pharaoh and his family, who are just a bunch of lowly Hebrew shepherds. Knowing the prejudice that exists in Egypt against shepherds, Joseph instructs his brothers when they go to meet Pharaoh, tell him what is politically correct in that society, that they are “keepers of livestock.” He is just trying to help them out being in a different culture.

READ Genesis 47:1-4

So even though the brothers are not politically correct (they don't say things exactly the way Joseph had suggested), they are honest with Pharaoh about their occupation. They ARE shepherds. They give Pharaoh an honest answer.

READ Genesis 47:5-6

Pharaoh responds with grace and he agrees to allow Joseph's very large family to live in the land of Goshen. Pharaoh even requests that they take care of his livestock. It is very interesting that the prejudice which existed in Egypt against shepherds actually works for the benefit of Jacob's family. The Israelites, as they will become known later, will live in a separate territory called Goshen from the rest of the Egyptians. Here they will increase in numbers and they will be able to develop a distinct national identity and vocation.

OK, so here we see the second reason for God moving them to Egypt. It wasn't just to preserve their lives during the seven years of famine. It goes far beyond that. It is to be able to preserve their national identity and to flourish as a separate people group. While they had been living in Canaan some of Jacob's sons had already begun to intermarry with the local Canaanite women. But that is not going to happen when they are in Egypt. This move works to preserve the purity of their race.

READ Genesis 47:7-10

So, it is interesting. Jacob blesses Pharaoh! Think about the significance of this. Pharaoh was a Gentile ruler, a man of great worldly power and influence. Both Jacob and Joseph became a blessing to Pharaoh and therefore fulfilled God's promise to Abraham of his people becoming a blessing to the nations (Gentiles). That is a partial fulfillment of what God promised Abraham. Of course, the complete fulfillment of that promise will come later through Israel's Messiah, Yeshua, Jesus comes.

In v 11-26 Joseph continues to perform his job distributing food to people who are coming to buy grain. The famine is still going on for five more years. Through Joseph's administrative leadership, the wisdom God

gave him, he purchases land and livestock on behalf of Pharaoh. God blesses Pharaoh and Egypt with great wealth.

Why does God bless Egypt? Why does He bless this godless society? Here is why – because Pharaoh had blessed Jacob's family with the best of Egypt (Genesis 47:6). Here we see a principle that is played out throughout the Old Testament. God blesses those who bless His people. In v 25 the Egyptian people declare to Joseph, "You have saved our lives!" Joseph becomes a national hero in Egypt.

READ Genesis 47:27-28. For the first time the covenant name of Israel is used for God's people. Life in Egypt for them during Joseph's lifetime turns out to be pretty good. They are prosperous. They're productive and their numbers greatly multiply. As God had told Jacob, he ends up living out the remaining 17 years of his life in Egypt.

So, what can we take away from these chapters?

- God can take the sins we've committed against people in the past and turn them around for good. Joseph told his brothers, "You sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life."
- Forgiveness paves the way for true peace and reconciliation. Case in point, Jacob's family. It was a dysfunctional mess. Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers and the brothers' subsequent forgiveness of their father and themselves led to an amazing transformation in that family.
- Even if you have wasted a good portion of your life NOT living the way God wants you to, the patriarch Jacob shows that it is never too late to start living for God. In the last 17 years of his life, we see Jacob more and more as Israel – giving thanks, trusting God, obeying Him, and blessing others. This is a far cry from his former life as one who was known as a deceiver and failed to trust God.



- Never assume something to be God's will based solely on the circumstances. Always pray and seek God's direction. Allow Him to direct your life, your decisions, your choices.
- The principle of Genesis 12:3 still applies. God told Abram, speaking of the covenant nation that would eventually come from him (Israel, the Jews): "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse..." This is the reason why God blessed Egypt – because their Pharaoh blessed Jacob's family with the best of the land. Even today our treatment of the Jewish people produces either God's blessing or His curse.
- God used the prejudice of the Egyptian people against shepherds, something that was not good, as a way of keeping His people holy and separate during their years in Egypt. By living in the land of Goshen they would be isolated from the Egyptians and their racial purity would be preserved.
- Where God guides, He provides. You can see this in your own life looking back. It is a principle we see played out all throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament.