

What lessons can be learned from our study?

I. Genesis 46: Moving to Egypt

- God directs Jacob to proceed into Egypt, reiterating the promise that a great nation will come from him. God also comforts Jacob, telling him Joseph will “close his eyes”.
- They load the wagons Pharaoh sent with family and goods. The number of Jacob’s family that makes the move is 66 people.
- Judah is sent ahead to Joseph and directs the group to Goshen.
- Joseph rides down to meet his father, a man he has not seen in 22 years.
- Joseph prepares the family for their meeting with Pharaoh. He tells them to identify themselves as shepherds and keepers of flocks. This plan is in place so that Pharaoh will give them the choice ground of Goshen to settle in.

II. Genesis 47: Settling the Family and Enslaving the People?

- As planned, Joseph and five of his brothers meet with Pharaoh and follow Joseph’s instructions when quizzed by the Egyptian king regarding their occupation. The ruler does indeed place them in the choice land of Goshen and even requests that any able men among them also care for his flocks. Obviously, Joseph’s wisdom and care has blessed Egypt and Pharaoh hopes Joseph’s kin will continue the practice.
- Joseph, once exiled by his family, now is the provider for them through the famine.
- Verses 14-26 contain a portion of the narrative about Joseph that does not seem quite in line with his nature. When the Egyptians run out of money to buy grain, he accepts all their livestock as payment, then their property. The people are relocated (at least some) to urban locations, presumably to be put to work. Some must remain as farmers, since Joseph gives the remnant seed and then taxes the crops at a rate of one-fifth the production. Joseph single-handedly obtains all the land in the name of the king and essentially enslaves the people to Pharaoh. All except the priests....politics is still in play and the power of the priesthood is apparent.
- Jacob (Israel) lived in the land of Egypt 17 years (reflects the first 17 years with Joseph). He makes Joseph promise to bury him with his “fathers” in Canaan.

III. Genesis 48: Blessing of Joseph’s Sons

- Jacob is ill and nearing death. He asks Joseph to bring Ephraim and Manasseh to him so Jacob can bless them.
- Jacob adopts the two boys as his own sons, calling them “no less than Reuben and Simeon”. Any future children of Joseph will not receive the same.
- Joseph presents his sons to Jacob (Jacob is said to have poor and failing eyesight). Jacob places his right hand on Ephraim, not Manasseh and Joseph attempts to switch them. Jacob insists he knows what he is doing and that Ephraim will receive the greater blessing. Both of Joseph’s sons will inherit land in Canaan, so in effect, Joseph receives a double portion of blessing above his brothers.
- Ephraim does indeed turn out to be an important tribe with famous descendants: Joshua (Numbers 13:8, 16), Samuel (I Samuel 1:1) and Jeroboam I (I Kings 11:26), the founder of the Northern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom is referred to as “Ephraim” in Hosea 5:3 and Isaiah 7:1-17.

IV. Genesis 49: Blessings and cursings

- Jacob speaks about each of his sons in Chapter 49, some in good terms and some in bad, blessing them “appropriately” (v. 28).
- Past behavior (Reuben, Simeon and Levi) is reason for some to not receive a positive outlook.
- Redeeming and repentant behavior is rewarded with prophecy of authority (Judah).
- Some receive a lengthy blessing and string of praises (Judah, Joseph and to some extent Issachar)

- Surprisingly, not a lot of positive statements are made about Benjamin. Perhaps, although he took the place of Joseph as Jacob's favorite, his behavior remained that of a spoiled child. Perhaps the final blessing is, in fact, a compliment?
- Jacob charges them all to bury him in the land of his fathers. He then dies at the ripe old age of 147. He, as he said to Pharaoh in 47:9, did not attain the years of his fathers (Abraham lived to be 175 and Isaac was 180 when he died).

V. Genesis 50: The last Patriarchs pass from the Earth

- Joseph has his father embalmed (contrary to later and current Jewish law), a ritual taking 40 days. Israel is mourned in Egypt 70 days.
- Joseph requests leave from Pharaoh to return to Canaan and bury his father. The king not only grants the request, but sends officials and court members to accompany the funeral procession. All of the sons of Jacob go as well, leaving behind only their children and livestock. The procession is comprised of chariots and horsemen, described in verse 9 as a "great company or gathering".
- The procession pauses at the threshing floor of Atad and the company laments Jacob seven more days. They mourn so deeply that the inhabitants of the land name the place "Abel-Mizraim" or "meadow of Egypt". It appears that only the sons of Jacob proceed on to the cave at Machpelah and bury Jacob.
- In verses 15-21, we see concern in Joseph's brothers that Joseph will take vengeance on them now that Jacob was dead. They send a message to Joseph that appears to be a lie about their father's wishes. In verse 17, they tell Joseph that Jacob wanted him to forgive the wrongs done by his brothers. How would Jacob have known about the brother's evil dealings with Joseph? Perhaps he found out while in Egypt, but this is unlikely based upon the closing blessings given to his sons, especially Judah.
- Joseph forgoes any vengeance, not desiring to take the place of God in metering out punishment. He instead, recognizes again the providence from God and the Lord's plan for him to be in Egypt to save his family. This salvation turns out to be bittersweet in the long run.
- Joseph lives to be 110, spending about 54 more years on this Earth after Jacob dies. The Lord allows him to see the birth of his great-great grandchildren (third generation from Ephraim) and great-grandchildren (Manasseh's side).
- His last request was that his bones be taken back to Canaan. This request is fulfilled centuries later. He is embalmed and placed in a coffin.