

God Appears To Jacob


 JOSEPH


Then he said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes" (Genesis 46:3–4).



DEVOTIONAL

Though stunned at first that his son Joseph was still alive after thinking him dead for many years, Jacob soon believed his sons' report and became intent on seeing his favorite child again before his death (Genesis 45:25–28). Yet the evidence that God ordained Joseph's rule over Egypt and, therefore, that his call for Israel to live in the land of the Nile must be heeded, was not enough to convince Jacob to leave Canaan. He needed a word from the Lord to make him move, and we read of this divine message as we return to Genesis.

That Jacob would seek direct confirmation for his move to Egypt is not surprising given his family history. After all, Canaan was to be the inheritance of Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12:1–9), and trouble usually followed the patriarchs and their kin when they moved outside the borders of the Promised Land (vv. 10–20; 19:1–22, 30–38; 29:1–30). To leave Canaan might be a signal of unbelief, and this is why Jacob stops at Beersheba to seek Yahweh's face. Beersheba was Isaac's home (26:23–25), and Jacob's sacrifice there to "the God of his father Isaac" (46:1), is proof that he aligns himself with the promises of land and offspring Yahweh made to his fathers, demonstrating that he has faith and has not forgotten the Lord's solemn word.

God appears to Jacob and reassures him that it is His will for his family to move temporarily to Egypt. Notably, the Lord calls Jacob's name twice, and Jacob replies "Here am I" (Genesis 46:2). This is exactly what happens when God calls and confirms His promises to Abraham, Moses, and Samuel (22:11–19; Ex. 3; 1 Samuel 3:10–14) in meetings pivotal to the advance of salvation history. Without question, then, the move to Egypt is vital to the Lord's plan. There, Jacob's family will grow into a great nation that God will later redeem for His glory (Genesis 46:3). Our Father graciously assures Jacob of His presence, and so the patriarch knows all will take place as God has said (v. 4).

Jacob is also told that he will one day be brought up again from Egypt. Ultimately, this looks forward to the resurrection when Jacob, in body and spirit, will be restored to life to rule over Canaan and, indeed, over the new heavens and earth (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 5:5).

CORAM DEO (In the Presence of God)

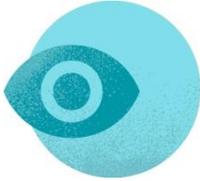
Matthew Henry wrote: "Whatever low or dark valley we are called into at any time, we may be confident, if God goes down with us into it, that He will surely bring us up again. If He goes with us down to death, He will surely bring us up again to glory." Jacob likely did not expect the Lord to call him to Egypt, and we too may find God calling us to do hard things for Him. But like Jacob, we can be confident that He is with us even when we must go where we do not want to go.¹

¹ <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/god-appears-jacob/>



OPEN IT

1. Describe a time when you had to move, whether to a new home, job, or church. What about the move excited you? What about the move brought you anxiety? In the end, were you glad you made the move?



READ IT

Genesis 46–47



EXPLORE IT

2. Who tells Jacob that it is okay to relocate his family and possessions to Egypt (46:1–6)?
3. What was Jacob's (Israel's) response when he saw Joseph (46:28–30)?
4. How did the Egyptians view the occupation of shepherding (46:31–34)?
5. Where does Pharaoh say that Joseph's family can live (47:1–6)?
6. What did Jacob do when he met Pharaoh (47:7-12)?
7. What three things did Joseph require of the Egyptians in return for food during the famine (47:13–22)?



APPLY IT

Loading up the U-Haul

Genesis 46–47 contain at least four crucial, dramatic scenes that capture the action and take us the next few steps in the unfolding of this incredible story of God's providence. The primary character in this portion of the drama is Jacob rather than Joseph, but it's important that we follow Jacob at this point because he is about to move to Egypt and be reunited with Joseph. These events also trace God's hand at work in Joseph's life.²

² Begg, Alistair. *The Hand of God: Finding His Care in All Circumstances* (p. 171). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

8. At the end of chapter 45 we observe the amazing moment when a parent learns that the child he believed to be dead is alive. Describe what those moments might have been like in Jacob's home.

Egypt was quite different from Canaan. Both were thoroughly pagan, but Egypt was sophisticated, noted for its prosperity and technology. It was the most civilized and developed nation on earth at that time. Jacob and his sons had spent their lives in the country, taking care of livestock. What kind of effect would Egypt have on his family, who had been so easily lured by the evil ways of Canaan? Then there was the trouble his grandfather had gotten into in Egypt and God's warning to his father not to go there. After all, God's promises had never mentioned Egypt, but only Canaan. Was Jacob making a fatal mistake to take his family to Egypt?

So Jacob did a great thing: He stopped in Beersheba "and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac" (46:1). He put a brake on his emotions, which were moving him toward Joseph, and he sought the Lord. I believe that Jacob was primarily looking for guidance, but he did it through this act of consecration and worship. It's important to understand that we can never know the will of God unless we are growing to know God Himself and we have yielded ourselves totally to Him. That's what Paul says in Romans 12:1-2, that by presenting our bodies to God as a living and holy sacrifice we will prove what the will of God is.³

9. It is totally understandable for Jacob to be emotionally charged because of the good news about Joseph. What can happen when we allow our emotions to lead us rather than God's Word and good wisdom?

Jacob desperately wanted to see Joseph, whom for 22 years, he had thought was dead. But Jacob knew that his grandfather, Abraham, had gotten into trouble in Egypt. God had forbidden his father, Isaac, to go there during another famine (26:2). Jacob knew that God's promise involved Canaan, not Egypt. So he stopped in Beersheba to seek the Lord and did not move on to Egypt until the Lord gave him a green light.⁴

10. What does the fact that verse 3 says Jacob was "afraid" tell us about his character and spirituality as an old man? What things keep us from being "afraid" to go outside the will and plan of God?
11. God gives his blessing for Jacob to proceed by revealing his blessing in a dream. How do we know that God is blessing our big decisions without a dream?
12. Jacob takes time from his journey to see his long-lost son to pause and worship God. Why must our relationship with God be of greater priority than even family relationships?

³ Sermon by Steve Cole entitled "Should I Move, Should I Stay" found @<http://media.sermonaudio.com/mediapdf/99225162257410.pdf>

⁴ *ibid*

13. What keeps us from making God our #1 priority, even over the priority of our families?

Do we have everyone?

Let's be honest: most of you want to skip over any long list of names in the Bible, and vv. 8–27, the long list of Jacob's family, hold little interest for you. But allow me to suggest at least three reasons why this list of names is important and relevant:

They are the firstfruits of God's covenant promise to Abraham

This family list highlights the first flowering of God's promise to Abraham. (Like the early snow peas in my garden, in early June!) We are finally seeing the unfolding of God's promise to make Abraham's children into a great nation. And from a barren and elderly Abram and Sara, God has caused their descendants to blossom into 70 people. And so this large company, migrating to Egypt, reminds us that God is keeping His promises to Abraham's family, despite the all the dysfunction in Jacob's family. Our God is a faithful God, working out His purposes, over decades!

The number (70) is a representative number that includes all others.

In Genesis 10, we have the record of the names of those who are the descendants of Noah's three sons, each of whom will become nations, to repopulate the earth, after the flood, and there are 70 names given. So all humanity, including each of us, is represented in those 70 names.

Here in Genesis 46, we have the number of Jacob's family who will live in Egypt, and again, it is 70. These 70 represent all of Israel.

Then in Numbers 11:16, we read of the elders of Israel who were their leaders, and the number is 70. All the people of Israel were represented in those 70 elders.

And finally, in Luke 10:1ff., we have Jesus appointing and sending out a number of men, and once again, that number is 70. They represent all the followers of Jesus, whom He sends out into the world, as His ambassadors.

Note that in each case, the number 70 represents all the people. Therefore, we are also represented in this group of people entering Egypt. We have continuity and representation with them, as God's people. In God's big plan of redemptive history, we are included in these 70!

This is your (spiritual) family tree!

Think of the Israelites listening to this Scripture being read by Moses, some 400 years later. How do you think each would feel as they heard their tribe name, their family name, being read out loud? "That's us! That's me!" They felt a bond, an identification, because they were the direct descendants of these people in Genesis 46. It was their name, and therefore it gave them a sense of identity.⁵

14. The promise of God to Abraham had seemingly gotten off to a slow start. Abraham had 1 son, Isaac; Isaac had two sons; but Jacob had had 12 sons and now had a family of 70 people. The promise was coming true. What promises do you see God fulfilling in your life? How does this impact your walk with God?

15. The genealogy tells us that all people are important and known intimately by God. How does this truth impact the way we treat others and interact with them?

⁵Sermon by Louis Pronnicki found @ <http://mapleglenchurch.org/2015/06/sermon-june-14-2015-genesis-465-4712-whats-your-name-where-do-you-live-whats-your-story/>

The New Neighborhood

It's clear from this passage that Joseph goes to great lengths to enable his family to settle in the land of Goshen, away from the rest of the Egyptians. Why?

There is one main reason: he wanted to keep his family isolated and insulated from the pagan culture and the idolatrous religion of Egypt. Joseph foresaw the spiritual dangers to the nation of Israel if they were integrated into Egyptian life. That is why Joseph ordered his brothers to say that their only occupation was that of a shepherd. Joseph saw the Egyptian disdain for shepherds as a blessing, in that it would keep the two cultures from merging. And so through Joseph, God would move His people to this isolated corner of Egypt, where they could multiply without fear of intermarrying and of losing their identity...

So what does this mean for us? Obviously, God is *not* calling us to remain geographically separate from unbelievers. We are *not* called to sell our homes and form a Christian commune out in the wilderness somewhere! See 1 Corinthians 5:9–11. But God IS calling us to be separate and distinct in our attitude, our behavior, and in our hearts and minds. Indeed, to be “sanctified” is to be “set apart.”

Let me be clear: God is NOT calling us to isolate ourselves into Christian communes; rather, He calls us to love Him and others, but NOT to love “the world.” God calls us to distinct Biblical values and priorities, in areas such as who we marry, how we raise our children, our finances, gender roles, the sanctity of life, economics, the environment, and more.⁶

16. The Bible tells us to “be in the world but not of the world.” How are we as believers to live this way without falling in love with the world?

17. What types of things cause Christians to be “isolationists”? How can the church equip Christians to move out of our Christian huddles to engage the world?

Joseph presents his aged father to Pharaoh. Jacob blesses Pharaoh. Then we see Pharaoh prospering under Joseph's administration of the famine relief. I believe that this section is here to show us an initial fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, as God's blessing is mediated to the nations through the seed of Abraham. In type, Israel became the savior of the Gentiles through Joseph.

Jacob may have blessed Pharaoh twice, once upon entering and again as he exited. Or, verse 7 may be a summary of what follows, so that Jacob blessed Pharaoh just prior to leaving. The exact words are not recorded, but probably it was a prayer that God would prosper Pharaoh and be gracious to him. It is significant that this old shepherd, whose occupation was despised by the Egyptians, could walk in before their leader, with all his pomp and splendor, and not be intimidated. Instead Jacob knew that he had something to offer Pharaoh, namely, a blessing from the living God.

Each of us has that same blessing to offer every person we meet. It may be a wealthy and famous person, like Pharaoh. Perhaps it's your boss or someone who is sophisticated and cultured compared to you. It doesn't matter. We can offer that person the good news of Jesus Christ. We've got what that person needs and we shouldn't be intimidated by all the outward stuff that doesn't matter to God.⁷

⁶ ibid

⁷ Sermon by Steve Cole entitled “The Prosperity that Counts” found @ <http://media.sermonaudio.com/mediapdf/99225162257420.pdf>

18. Jacob did what might be unthinkable today. He blessed and spoke kindly and reverently to a pagan king who saw the world very differently than Jacob would have. What can we learn about his example? How can we show love and respect to leaders even when they may be very different from us?

19. While we don't know exactly what was said during this interaction between Pharaoh and Jacob, the word "blessing" connotes words of affection and care. What unbeliever in your life needs a word of blessing from you? How might such words draw them closer to God?

The Famine Rages On

In the early years of the famine, money poured into the treasury of Egypt, because it was the only place to buy food. Now there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house (Genesis 47:15–26). In the later years of the famine, Joseph arranged ways for the people to purchase food with whatever they had to give... In the process, the power and wealth of Pharaoh was multiplied greatly. In times of national crisis, the power of central government often increases... Joseph wasn't unfair. He fed the people when they would have starved, and in return asked for one-fifth (20%) annually from the produce of the land.⁸

20. Joseph served his pagan king well and increased Pharaoh's power and rule. Why does God place Christians under the authority of unbelieving bosses and leaders? In what ways can we serve those in authority over us well while remaining faithful to God in the process?

⁸ Commentary on Genesis by David Guzik found @ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/genesis-47.html#0>