

Genesis, Part 36

In our last session, we saw the brothers of Joseph return to Egypt to buy more grain. Joseph was so moved by seeing his younger brother and so overcome with his emotions that he had to retire from their presence and seek a private place to weep. He ordered food served and seated his brothers in order of their birth, something he, as an “Egyptian,” would not have known. This amazed the brothers, but it did not motivate them to ask questions. Joseph further gave hints that something was going on when he sent five times the food to his brother Benjamin that the others received. Again the text does not suggest their curiosity was aroused. Perhaps they were so happy to have been received with such exceeding courtesy that they didn’t think much of any of this beyond their initial wonderment.

We pick up the story with the brothers preparing to return to Canaan.

Joseph Tests His Brothers

Genesis 44:1 Then he commanded the steward of his house, “Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man’s money in the mouth of his sack, ² and put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain.” And he did as Joseph told him.

Joseph, already brilliantly successful in creating tensions during their two visits, now produced his master stroke. He would test their concern for Benjamin to get them to recognize their evil. Are they willing to let Benjamin go into slavery to save themselves? If they failed this test, if they had no compassion for this second son of Rachel, then they would have no part in the fulfillment of the promises. God could start over again and make Joseph into a great nation if the others proved unworthy.

Like the first time, Joseph had his steward secretly restore their money and put it in the grain bags of each brother, but in Benjamin’s bag, he had him add Joseph’s silver drinking cup.

Gen 44:3 As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away with their donkeys. ⁴ They had gone only a short distance from the city.

Now Joseph said to his steward, “Up, follow after the men, and when you overtake them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid evil for good? ⁵ Is it not from this that my lord drinks, and by this that he practices divination? You have done evil in doing this.’ ”

After his brothers had departed, with no idea they had Joseph’s drinking cup in Benjamin’s pack, Joseph sent his steward to go after them and charge them with the theft of the silver cup. Note that he says Joseph uses the cup for divining. Does he use it for that purpose or was this only a ruse? I say the latter, God bestows the gift of prophecy on whomever He chooses, and the execution of that gift does not depend on tea leaves, cards, or drinking cups. Before the Scriptures were in written form God communicated with whom He pleased through dreams and visions. Today, God communicates with His own by the recorded Word of God. The gift of prophecy does not exist today and has not existed since the completion of the Canon of Scripture with the penning of Revelation and its dissemination at the end of the first century. Joseph had a gift, but it was not in that cup.

Gen 44:6 When he overtook them, he spoke to them these words.
⁷ They said to him, “Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing! ⁸ Behold, the money that we found in the mouths of our sacks we brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord’s house? ⁹ Whichever of your servants is found with it shall die, and we also will be my lord’s servants.” ¹⁰ He said, “Let it be as you say: he who is found with it shall be my servant, and the rest of you shall be innocent.” ¹¹ Then each man quickly lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack. ¹² And he searched, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack. ¹³ Then they tore their clothes, and every man loaded his donkey, and they returned to the city.
¹⁴ When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph’s house, he was still there. They fell before him to the ground. ¹⁵ Joseph said to them, “What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that a man like me can indeed practice divination?” ¹⁶ And Judah said, “What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord’s servants, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found.”

¹⁷ But he said, “Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my servant. But as for you, go up in peace to your father.”

The brothers reminded the steward that they had returned the money they found in their sacks from the first trip, therefore they were not dishonest men. So confident in their honesty, they offered for the steward to search their bags, and if he found the cup in any of them, “Whichever of your servants is found with it shall die, and we also will be my lord’s servants” (v. 9). The steward agreed but changed the penalty, “Let it be as you say: he who is found with it shall be my servant, and the rest of you shall be innocent” (v. 10), thus putting the potential for blame on Benjamin alone, in whose bag he had hidden the cup. With that, he began searching the bags of each brother, saving Benjamin’s bag for last. Of course, they found the cup in his bag. Then every brother tore their clothes in anguish over what they assumed would happen to Benjamin and later to their father when they returned home without his favorite son.

They return to Joseph’s house, and he chastises them for their actions. He tells them he used divination to discover the theft. He did not but used that excuse to further awe them with his “mysterious” abilities. Joseph offers to let the others off and only keep Benjamin as his servant. That Hebrew word translated as “servant” refers to a slave here. Benjamin would be the “Egyptian’s” slave. The rest can go in peace.

Gen 44:18 Then Judah went up to him and said, “Oh, my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord’s ears, and let not your anger burn against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh himself. ¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, saying, ‘Have you a father, or a brother?’ ²⁰ And we said to my lord, ‘We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother’s children, and his father loves him.’ ²¹ Then you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.’ ²² We said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.’ ²³ Then you said to your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again.’

²⁴ “When we went back to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. ²⁵ And when our father said, ‘Go again, buy us a little food,’ ²⁶ we said, ‘We cannot go down. If our youngest brother goes with us, then we will go down. For we cannot see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’ ²⁷ Then your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons. ²⁸ One left me, and I said, “Surely he has been torn to pieces,” and I have never seen him since. ²⁹ If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in evil to Sheol.’ ³⁰ “Now therefore, as soon as I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy’s life, ³¹ as soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. ³² For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.’ ³³ Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers. ³⁴ For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father.”

Judah interceded for the boy; his lengthy plea to be imprisoned in place of Benjamin is among the finest and most moving of all petitions. Remember, it is from the tribe of Judah that the Savior will come. It demonstrated his concern for his father. Of their father, he said, “his life is bound up in the boy’s life” (v. 30). Judah tells Joseph that he had become a pledge for the safety of Benjamin, and if they returned without the boy, their father would die (v. 22).

Note in verses 27 and 28 Judah reveals what their father understood of Joseph’s “death”. “Surely he has been torn to pieces.” From this Joseph learns the brothers had lied to Jacob about the incident.

Rather than see Benjamin go into slavery they offer one of their own. Thus the brothers demonstrated that they had repented of their sin against their brother Joseph (“God has uncovered your servants’ guilt,” 44:16). Also they demonstrated concern for their father and their youngest brother Benjamin. From Joseph’s perspective, they passed the test.

Joseph Provides for His Brothers and Family

Genesis 45:1 Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, “Make everyone go out from me.” So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³ And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

Joseph couldn't stand the deception any longer, and so overcome with emotion he “could not control himself before all those who stood by him” (v. 1). He cried uncontrollably and sent his Egyptian servants away. He wept so loudly that his servants heard him. He then revealed himself to his brothers.

The day is coming when Jesus Christ will reveal Himself to His brethren, the Jews. When He came the first time, “His own did not receive him” (John 1:11). In fact, they delivered Him up to be crucified. But when He comes a second time, He will make Himself known to His people. Zechariah 13:6 says, “And if one asks him, ‘What are these wounds on your back?’ he will say, ‘The wounds I received in the house of my friends.’” The episode of Joseph revealing himself to his brothers gives us a little inkling of how wonderful that day of Christ's revelation will be.

The word translated as “dismayed” can also be translated as “terrified” or “anxious”. The brothers were stunned and could not respond. I am sure they could not get their heads around the claim that this “Egyptian,” this man who was second only to Pharaoh in Egypt, was their long-dead brother Joseph. How could that be possible? They must have been truly shocked, and their minds were going from utter disbelief to “maybe,” to “no, not possible,” to fear of being played, to “it could be”....

Gen 45:4 So Joseph said to his brothers, “Come near to me, please.” And they came near. And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

“Come near to me, please.” Joseph sought to reassure his brothers who I imagine were standing there with mouths wide open in dumbstruck awe.

That dumbstruck awe very likely turned to fear or retribution by the one they so terribly wronged, but Joseph sensing this attempted to ease their fear that there would be no revenge for what they did which would be the normal, human reaction. Why did he not?

Gen 45:5 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹ Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. ¹⁰ You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.’ ¹² And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. ¹³ You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.”

He tells them not to fear for what they did. It was God’s doing, “for God sent me before you to preserve life here.” He tells them the famine has five more years to run, and they should return immediately to retrieve their father Jacob, and bring him and the rest of the family down to Egypt to dwell under Joseph’s rule because God had prepared the way through all the circumstances.

The certainty that God’s will, not man’s, is the controlling reality in every event shined through as the basis for reconciliation. No doubt Joseph had consoled himself many times with this principle of faith. He who is spiritual can perceive the hand of God in every event and therefore can forgive those who wrong him.

Gen 45:14 Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

Realizing Joseph would not harm them, his brothers relaxed. They embraced and wept on each other's necks. With their anxiety relieved, they had a million questions and all must have begun jabbering away – "After that, his brothers talked with him" (v. 15). Their previous hatred and jealousy of Joseph were now gone.

Gen 45:16 When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, "Joseph's brothers have come," it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. ¹⁷ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your beasts and go back to the land of Canaan, ¹⁸ and take your father and your households, and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land.' ¹⁹ And you, Joseph, are commanded to say, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. ²⁰ Have no concern for your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.' "

²¹ The sons of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey.

²² To each and all of them he gave a change of clothes, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five changes of clothes.

²³ To his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provision for his father on the journey.

Jacob and his family would not have survived had they stayed in Canaan during the famine. Joseph wants to bring them down to live in Egypt where he can support them. They will eventually settle in Goshen which is part of the fertile Nile Delta. It is in Goshen that God will make this bunch into a great nation.

Pharaoh was pleased to hear that Joseph's brothers had come to Egypt and encouraged Joseph to give them whatever they needed and send them to retrieve his father with the wives and children and bring them all to Egypt. He said, "I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you shall

eat the fat of the land” (v. 18). Joseph gave gifts to his brothers but five times more to his brother Benjamin. Provisioned according to the orders of Pharaoh, the brothers were sent off.

Gen 45:24 Then he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, “Do not quarrel on the way.”

²⁵ So they went up out of Egypt and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. ²⁶ And they told him, “Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” And his heart became numb, for he did not believe them. ²⁷ But when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. ²⁸ And Israel said, “It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

Joseph sends them on their way with a warning, “Do not quarrel on the way” (v. 24). This was an admonition not to get into exchanging accusations over what they had done many years before. That was in the past – move on. And that is what God expects of us when we sin. We are to recognize what we have done, acknowledge it to God (1 John 1:9), and move on leaving the sin in the past where it belongs.

The brothers arrive back in Canaan and tell Jacob all that has happened, especially the joyful news that the son he loved so much and thought was dead is actually alive and the number 2 man in all of Egypt. As for Jacob’s reaction to the news, “And his heart became numb, for he did not believe them” (v. 26). That word translated as “numb” means to become feeble or even to faint. The old man nearly passed out at the news. So astounding was the news that Joseph was alive, Jacob didn’t believe them. But once the brothers had told him all of what had happened with the “words of Joseph” and saw all the wagons sent with the brothers, “the spirit of their father Jacob revived” (v. 27). That word translated as “revived” means to be made alive. I believe the sense being conveyed is the news made the old man who was nearly on his deathbed incredibly happy, and he became animated as if his life was restored.

This royal invitation to Jacob, the old patriarch near the end of hope, and to the 10 brothers burdened with guilt, was a turning point in their lives and a

fulfillment of God's prediction (15:13–16) that they would go into isolation in a foreign country and multiply without losing their identity.

Joseph Brings His Family to Egypt

Jacob may have thought he was going down to Egypt only for a visit. Surely, he recalled that Abraham and Isaac had been warned to stay out of Egypt, and Abraham had gotten into trouble down there. So now the question for Jacob, Pharaoh's invite notwithstanding, is should he go down to the land of Egypt? Though he wanted to, he needed a little assurance.

Genesis 46:1 So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. ² And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." ³ 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. ⁴ 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."

⁵ Then Jacob set out from Beersheba. The sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him. ⁶ They also took their livestock and their goods, which they had gained in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, ⁷ his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters. All his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.

Jacob goes to the Lord for permission. Jacob's first stop was Beersheba, where he sacrificed to the God of his father Isaac. Beersheba was where Isaac had lived and where Jacob left to escape Esau's anger (28:10).

God comforted Jacob with a vision in the night. He told him not to be afraid to move to Egypt. The Lord reiterated the promise that He would make his family a great nation there in Egypt, and He also stated that He would bring that nation back again. God had told Isaac not to go to Egypt (26:2), but now He told Jacob to go. This vision, which comforted the patriarch, would also encourage the nation of Israel when Moses exhorted them to leave the land of Egypt and return to Canaan to receive God's promises.

The life of Jacob can be divided into three geographical locations: The land of Haran, the land of Canaan, and the land of Egypt. Not only are these geographical areas, but they are also three spiritual levels for Jacob. When he left the land of Canaan and came to Haran, he was God's man living in the flesh. He came out of Haran running away from his father-in-law and afraid to meet his own brother Esau. Then in the land of Canaan, Jacob had his wrestling match, but he is God's man fighting on his own strength. Now, he is going to Egypt. He is not walking on his own strength, and he is not running away anymore. He is now walking in faith. He has become the man that God wanted him to be, and only God can make this kind of man.

Put another way, Jacob's life in Haran typifies the man of God living in the flesh. Jacob's life in Canaan typifies the man of God fighting in his own strength. Jacob's life in Egypt typifies the man God living by faith.

Gen 46:8 Now these are the names of the descendants of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, ⁹ and the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. ¹⁰ The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. ¹¹ The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. ¹² The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan); and the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. ¹³ The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Yob, and Shimron. ¹⁴ The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. ¹⁵ These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, together with his daughter Dinah; altogether his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three. ¹⁶ The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. ¹⁷ The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, with Serah their sister. And the sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel. ¹⁸ These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bore to Jacob—sixteen persons. ¹⁹ The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife: Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁰ And to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera the priest of On, bore to him. ²¹ And the sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. ²² These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob—fourteen persons in all.

²³ The son of Dan: Hushim. ²⁴ The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. ²⁵ These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, and these she bore to Jacob—seven persons in all.

²⁶ All the persons belonging to Jacob who came into Egypt, who were his own descendants, not including Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all. ²⁷ And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two. All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy.

Included in the account of the move to Egypt is a listing of Jacob's descendants. This genealogy is important because it leads to Christ. In verse 26 the number of descendants is said to be 66, whereas the number in verse 27 is 70. The first number represents those who traveled with Jacob to Egypt, and the second number includes the children and grandchildren already in Egypt.

Another number discrepancy is seen in Stephen's discourse in Acts 7:14 where Stephen stated that 75 persons were in Jacob's family, "... Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all." Note that it says "all his kindred". But the Hebrew text has "70" in both Genesis 46:27 and Exodus 1:5. In both places the Septuagint has 75. It is commonly said that Stephen, a Greek-speaking Jew, would have used the Septuagint and therefore was making only an "honest" mistake. This difficulty, however, can be resolved in other ways. One of the most widely accepted solutions is to recognize that the Hebrew text includes Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (a total of 70), but that the Septuagint omits Jacob and Joseph but includes Joseph's seven grandchildren (mentioned in 1 Chron. 7:14–15, 20–25). This is supported by the Hebrew in Genesis 46:8–26 which enumerates 66 names, omitting Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's two sons. Another solution is that the Septuagint's 75 includes the 66 plus the 9 wives of Jacob's 12 sons (Judah's and Simeon's wives had died, and Joseph's wife was in Egypt).

Jacob and Joseph Reunited

Gen 46:28 He had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to show the way before him in Goshen, and they came into the land of Goshen. ²⁹ Then Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father in

Goshen. He presented himself to him and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. ³⁰ Israel said to Joseph, “Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive.” ³¹ Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, “I will go up and tell Pharaoh and will say to him, ‘My brothers and my father’s household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. ³² And the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock, and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.’ ³³ When Pharaoh calls you and says, ‘What is your occupation?’ ³⁴ you shall say, ‘Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,’ in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.”

Finally, after 22 years, Joseph and Jacob were reunited. Joseph goes out to meet the caravan in Goshen. That meeting was one of mutual joy. They fell on each other in embrace and wept. The text says they wept “a good while”. The emotion here is very real. The last time Joseph saw his father was when Joseph was 17 (37:2). Jacob was gratified to see his son alive, for he was the one designated as the heir, the one whom God had chosen to rule over the family. So this was more than a family reunion; it was a confirmation that God’s promised blessing was intact.

Joseph encouraged them to stress before Pharaoh that they were cattle herders, not shepherders because the Egyptians detested the latter. Joseph, as usual, was eager not to upset Egyptian custom and preference.

Why were sheep so disliked in Egypt?

Cows and sheep graze differently. Sheep eat grass closer to the ground than cattle, even to the point of consuming the roots or pulling the grass out of the ground to die. Sheep were believed to severely damage the land for cattle grazing. This was also an issue in the American West in the so-called “sheep wars” in the last part of the 19th century.

Since Egypt is a picture of this present world system, it should not surprise us that shepherds were an abomination to the unsaved people. Our Lord is the Good Shepherd, and the world will have nothing to do with Him!

Jacob's Family Settles in Goshen

Genesis 47:1 So Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, "My father and my brothers, with their flocks and herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan. They are now in the land of Goshen."
² And from among his brothers he took five men and presented them to Pharaoh. ³ Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?" And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, as our fathers were." ⁴ They said to Pharaoh, "We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. And now, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen." ⁵ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. ⁶ The land of Egypt is before you. Settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land. Let them settle in the land of Goshen, and if you know any able men among them, put them in charge of my livestock."

Joseph went to Pharaoh and reported the arrival of his family. He selected five of his brothers to stand before Pharaoh. As anticipated, Pharaoh interrogated the brothers about their occupation, and they did not respond as coached by Joseph earlier and admitted they were shepherds, keepers of the flocks. This did not seem to bother Pharaoh. They then requested that they be allowed to settle in the pasture lands of Goshen. Pharaoh gave Jacob's family the best part of the land, namely, Goshen, and even gave some of the brothers oversight of the royal livestock (47:6). Once again, we are expected to recognize the unseen hand of God at work in this acceptance.

Goshen is not referred to in ancient Egyptian writings, but the name it bore in later times was the district of Rameses. This, plus the fact that it was fertile and near to Joseph at court, suggests that it was located near the eastern part of the Nile Delta.

Gen 47:7 Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. ⁸ And Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many are the days of the years of your life?" ⁹ And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of

their sojourning.”¹⁰ And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from the presence of Pharaoh.¹¹ Then Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.¹² And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with food, according to the number of their dependents.

Then Joseph introduced his father to Pharaoh. The elderly Jacob was carried into court and helped to stand before Pharaoh (this is the literal meaning of 47:7). Jacob was a pathetic figure, but Pharaoh showed great respect to him, asking about his great age. The patriarch acknowledged his troubled life of 130 years. To him, it had been a pilgrimage. He was in Egypt for 17 more years before he died, making him 147 years old then. He was on the verge of death when he went down to Egypt, but the joy of finding Joseph alive and of being with him in Egypt prolonged his life for another 17 years.

Jacob’s audience with Pharaoh was an opportunity to boast, but notice what a changed man this Jacob is. His statement, “Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning” (v. 11). Jacob the trickster doesn’t brag about the tricks he pulled on others. Instead, he admits his failures and admits he doesn’t measure up to his fathers. This doesn’t sound like the old Jacob, does it? He is not boasting that he has accomplished a great deal. When Jacob both entered and left, he blessed Pharaoh, and in doing so gave God the credit for his life.

Jacob was a man who was not unlike many of us. Way back in Genesis 32, Jacob met God and began running “the race” well. His eyes were focused on the Lord. His previously crooked pathway had been straightened out. But over time—probably much more gradually than we realize from reading his life in print—Jacob and his sons began to lose focus. Family squabbles, the loss of a son, and year after year of guilt and unforgiveness had knocked them so far off track that we would never have discerned that they were the people of God. But God, in his mercy, used the goads of reconciliation and repentance to prod them back onto their feet, to get them running, and to help them finish well. So much so that, in chapters 46–50, it almost seems as if we are reading about an entirely different family!

Jacob's sons, who, just a few chapters ago, had been fearful and indecisive (42:1), were now leading their families with strength and surety (46:5). Jacob, who (as we observed him in the last few chapters) had become a blubbering old man, was now able to stand with dignity and grace before the most powerful man in the world (47:9) and pray for him! This family, which seemed to have almost forgotten its role as the chosen people of God, was now recognizing and embracing that role once again. And Jacob, who had been worshiping at the altar of his favorite son for over two decades, was now back worshiping at the altar of the Lord (46:1)!

The entire family seems to have gained new strength for the race. And particularly, in these final chapters we get to see two members cross the tape, heads back and souls fully stretched out in faith in the Lord.