

Genesis Chapter 46-47 – John Karmelich

1. My opening question of this lesson is, “What happens after “happily ever after”?”
  - a) When you read a children’s story, it usually ends with “happily ever after”.
  - b) Children don’t stop to think that the characters in the story still have to get up the next day, go to work, pay the mortgage, take out the garbage, even after they live happily ever after”. ☺ This is an issue we’re going to deal with over these two chapters.
  - c) The truth is that life goes on. There is no finish line in this life other than death itself.
    - i) I take the view that as a Christian, one never “retires”. You may retire from a job, but one should always be willing to serve no matter what the age.
    - ii) On a side topic, the bible does not spend a lot of time talking about what we do in the next life. There are a few chapters here and there dealing with eternity, but the vast bulk of the bible focuses on what God expects of us here and now. It is as if God is saying to us, “Let me worry about what will happen in heaven. Here are some instructions for you while you’re alive on earth”.
    - iii) With that said, there is no “finish line on earth” for the Christian life. We get saved, we mature, we deal with life, and we keep going and keep growing.
  - d) This leads to the next section of Genesis:
    - i) In this section of the story, Joseph gets to see his long lost brothers again. The whole family gets to moves to Egypt during the famine. Everyone is taken care of. Genesis should now say, “and they all lived happily ever after”. But it doesn’t.
    - ii) That’s my point. Even when all is taken care of, life still goes on.
    - iii) It is as if God is saying to us, “Congratulations, you past the test. You walked by faith and you are now where I want you. Take a five minute break, ☺ because now I want you to move on to the next step.”
      - a) With God, there is always a “next step” in our lives on earth.
    - iv) Genesis can be read as a series of events that have cause-and-effect upon the next series of events that you read later in Genesis.
      - a) That is the way life works for us as well.
      - b) What we do has a cause-and-effect for whatever happens next in our life. If we seek God’s will through prayer, study, etc., the cause-and-effect works out for God’s glory in the long run, although we may not always see it on a day-by-day basis. Even when we mess up, like Jacob, God is still there encouraging us to move on to the next step.
      - c) If we ignore God, the cause-and-effect also works to our detriment.
2. The main idea to see of this section of Genesis is not just the happy reunion of the Jacob’s family.
  - a) It is to see that once God has accomplished that one goal, there is another one “around the corner”. It is as if God is saying to us at that point, “Well done. Here is what is next.”
  - b) You can read this story as it applies to our daily Christian life. You can read this and think, “OK, God has some plan for me. My job is to keep moving and walk by faith that God is working it out. Even if I figure out what is God’s plan for the next day, week or year, there is still more to the picture than I can comprehend. Even when that goal is accomplished, there is another task waiting.
  - c) A related idea is in Matthew 25, Verses 14-30. Jesus discusses rewards for believers.
    - i) One guy is given two talents (a type of money) and he doubles it.
    - ii) Another guy is given five talents and he doubles it.
    - iii) The interesting thing to read is they both get the exact same reward.
    - iv) Jesus point is our rewards in heaven is not based on accomplishing grand-scale achievements, but on being faithful of the “talents” given to you.

- v) An interesting part to that “talent” story is another guy who wastes the one “talent” he has is sent to hell. (That is about a person who hears the Gospel message and ignores it.) Jesus then says to take away his one talent and give it to the guy who has ten. Jesus point is even if you’ve earned ten talents for God, he wants us to shoot for more.
    - a) It is as if he is saying, “Congratulations, you have doubled the talents I have trusted you with. Now here is one more, lets see what you can do with it.” Jesus point is He always wants us to grow and move on to the next step. That is what we’ll read about here in Genesis.
  - vi) Speaking of Genesis, I better get started. ☺
3. Chapter 46, Verse 1: So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.
- a) So here is Jacob, taking off to Egypt with everything he owns. This includes all of his descendants.
  - b) He stops at a “border-town”, which is Beersheba and offers sacrifices. Ok, why?
    - i) You would think of Jacob is excited to see his long lost son, he would be running there as fast as possible with no distractions nor deviations.
    - ii) You would think that if Jacob was grateful to God for having Joseph alive, why didn’t he offer sacrifices in his hometown, as opposed to here in Beersheba?
    - iii) Part of the answer is to understand Jacob’s history, and the history of Beersheba as it relates to Jacob’s father and grandfather.
      - a) In Beersheba, Abraham had a “border dispute” with the Egyptians over a well he dug. Abraham named the place Beersheba, meaning “place of an oath” because he made an oath there with these men. (Genesis 21:31).
      - b) In Beersheba, God appeared to Isaac after his own problems in Egypt. Isaac built an altar in that spot after God had spoken to him (Genesis 26).
      - c) Many years ago, when Jacob left Beersheba, is when he had the vision of the ladder ascending to heaven with angels going down and up on that ladder. (Genesis 28).
  - iv) OK, so Beersheba is a historical monument to Jacob. ☺ Why stop and do another sacrifice here? Why not stop, look around and keep going?
    - a) Another part of the answer is to look at Verse 3:
      - (1) In Verse 3, God told him “not to be afraid to go to Egypt”.
    - b) Beersheba is the “last stop” before entering Egypt.
    - c) I think what we are seeing here is Jacob making sure God is part of the plan to go to Egypt.
    - d) I’ve mentioned that God gave Abraham a prophecy that his decedents would be in Egypt for four hundred years and be afflicted there (Genesis 15:13). I suspect that prediction was past on to Isaac and then to Jacob.
    - e) Maybe Jacob understood “this is it” and was afraid to get going.
    - f) Here is the important part (pay attention! ☺):
      - (1) Jacob stopped to ask for God’s guidance. (Ok, offer a sacrifice.)
      - (2) It seemed like the obvious for Jacob to go to Egypt, after all his long lost son was the leader and he invited them there for safety.
      - (3) This is the “spiritually mature” Jacob. Even if everything appears to be God’s plan, it never hurts to ask God himself. That is what Jacob is doing here. He stops to make a sacrifice. He is once again reminding himself of his 100% commitment to God.
      - (4) He stops to pray in a sense that it is “God’s will” to move forward.

4. Verse 2: And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, "Jacob! Jacob!" "Here I am," he replied.
- a) One thing I've stressed over and over again in these lessons is to pay attention of when Jacob is called by his nickname "Israel" and when is called "Jacob".
    - i) The word "Israel" means, "struggle with God". It has positive overtones as if it is saying he is struggling to do what is God's will despite his fears.
      - a) In Verse 1, when Jacob stopped to offer a sacrifice before going into Egypt, he is called "Israel". It implies that action was a good thing to do.
    - ii) The word "Jacob" implies "conniver". It has a negative overtone in that it means he is trying to survive using his own wits as opposed to trusting God.
  - b) Here in one sentence, we have both names in view:
    - i) It is "Israel" that God spoke to in this night vision.
    - ii) Yet God calls him "Jacob Jacob".
    - iii) To understand this, you have to remember the last time God spoke to Jacob.
      - a) This was the night he "wrestled" with God. The wrestling match ended when the "wrestler" asked Jacob his name. When Jacob said "Jacob", he was admitting his "old-Jacob-nature" of trying to do things his way as opposed to God's name. (Genesis 32:25-27). That wrestling match was Jacob "turning over" his old nature to God.
      - b) Now here we are many years and many chapters later.
      - c) God's first words to Jacob are "Jacob Jacob".
        - (1) I'm sure Jacob did an immediate flashback to the wrestling match.
      - d) What's the point? We see in this verse the "old Jacob" pondering what to do with his fear of going into Egypt and at the same time, seeing the name "Israel" pop up as it is God's will for them to go.
  - c) OK John, that's neat. What does it have to do with me? How does that help me discern God's will for my life? Does God want me to stop at the border towns of my life, offer up some sheep and wait for an answer? ☺
    - i) Well, the sheep part isn't necessary, but prayer is a good idea.
    - ii) The most important part of discerning God's will for your life is to be grounded strongly in God's word. God says to us, "Look, I gave you a bible full of commands to obey, instructions to follow and stories to look for patterns to follow. You've got a brain, read and follow!" ☺ In other words, if we go through life doing our best to follow the bible's commands, we are doing God's will.
      - a) The other step is to regularly pray for God's will to be done in our life. The prayer part is to keep us "God-focused" as opposed to "me-focused".
      - b) It is the big decisions in life that often provoke fear, as it does for Jacob in this situation. In such cases, it is ok to ask for a sign, but remember God is under no obligation to give you some sort of sign, even if it is His will for you to keep moving. Remember God wants you to trust him, even if a visible "sign" is not present.
      - c) My favorite prayer during times of tough decisions is "Lord, bless it or block it". Then I move forward. I usually find out pretty quickly if God is part of that decision or not just by the evidence around me.
      - d) The secret of the Christian life is to sometimes just "keep moving". God promises us He will guide us, but only if we keep moving. God will not drag you out of bed to do his will. He wants us to move forward in order to do His will.
  - d) Meanwhile back in Beersheba, Verse 3: ☺

5. Verse 3: "I am God, the God of your father," he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. <sup>4</sup> I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes."
- a) Let me paraphrase God here: "Jacob, don't be afraid to go to Egypt. I know they are a bunch of idol worshipping pagans. I know that is a great temptation to your family. Remember that 400-year prophecy I told your grandfather? Well this is it. Yes, your family is going to suffer, but the good news is I will bring them out in a great way. As a "bonus", you will be with your long lost son again."
  - b) In Verse 4 it says, "Joseph's own hand will close your eyes." This is a reference to Jacob's death. It means that Joseph will physically close his eyes upon his death.
  - c) OK, time to step back and ask why: Why was it necessary for the nation of Israel to be "born in Egypt"? Why couldn't the "nation" be born in the Promised Land? After all the Promised Land was promised to Abraham. God could have easily had his descendants form a nation there on the spot and conquer the people around them.
    - i) First of all, Egyptians had a "caste" system where people are born in "ranks" based on their status or occupation. To an Egyptian, a shepherder is the lowest of lows, and for the most part are isolated like lepers. That system would isolate the Israelites to grow over the next 400 years.
    - ii) More importantly, this is a word-picture of us being "born again".
      - a) Since Adam and Eve, we are born with a sin-nature. It is the negative sin nature that we inherited. In order to leave our old sinful nature behind, we have to choose to walk away from doing our will to choose God's will.
    - iii) Egypt is a word-picture of "world", in the sense it represents "everything available to us but God". Whatever "little god" you choose to worship, is available to you in this world. God wants us to come to Him out of our own free will. In order to make that choice valid, the world has to be enticing enough so that choosing God is a legitimate choice. Choosing to follow God is the best choice, but the world has enough appeal that the majority of people choose to follow other things other than God himself.
    - iv) God set up the word-picture of "Israel being born in Egypt" to show that when we are born again, we are born "out of the world" into a new life following Jesus. Therefore, the whole 400-year experience is a necessary word-picture for us. We are in the world long enough to know that it is enticing, but that the best choice is to follow God and to willfully walk out of "Egypt" to follow God.
6. Verse 5: Then Jacob left Beersheba, and Israel's sons took their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the carts that Pharaoh had sent to transport him. <sup>6</sup> They also took with them their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in Canaan, and Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt. <sup>7</sup> He took with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters--all his offspring.
- a) I'm sure Jacob's family traveling to Egypt must have been a sight to see.
    - i) In the last chapter, Joseph gave his brothers a change of clothing and "Egyptian top quality" carts for transportation.
    - ii) Remember the world was going through a famine. I picture this caravan of well-dressed people driving past starving people. They were entering Egypt "in style".
    - iii) During the next 400 years, when the Jewish people became slaves in Egypt, the main motivation to keep them going was "Our family came here "in style", and we're going to leave "in style"". God promised us this would not go on forever.
      - a) That is something to remember during the difficult times of our life. It will not go on forever. Our home is in heaven. God choose us to spend eternity with him. One day, we will also leave this world "in style" to be with the Lord forever!

- b) The key word of these verses is the word “everything” .
- i) The emphasis is that everything Jacob owned went to Egypt.
  - ii) The old name “Jacob” is used as I suspect he was still dealing with fears of the unknown. He didn’t know what would happen to him.
  - iii) The great part is that Jacob fully trusted God. He didn’t leave anything behind in his home “just in case” .
  - iv) What God wants from is total commitment. God is saying, “I want you to 100% trust me. Take all you have and follow me.”
7. Verse 8: These are the names of the sons of Israel (Jacob and his descendants) who went to Egypt: Reuben the firstborn of Jacob. <sup>9</sup> The sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi. <sup>10</sup> The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. <sup>11</sup> The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. <sup>12</sup> The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez and Zerah (but Er and Onan had died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez: Hezron and Hamul. <sup>13</sup> The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puah, Jashub and Shimron. <sup>14</sup> The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon and Jahleel. <sup>15</sup> These were the sons Leah bore to Jacob in Paddan Aram, besides his daughter Dinah. These sons and daughters of his were thirty-three in all. <sup>16</sup> The sons of Gad: Zephon, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi and Areli. <sup>17</sup> The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi and Beriah. Their sister was Serah. The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malkiel. <sup>18</sup> These were the children born to Jacob by Zilpah, whom Laban had given to his daughter Leah--sixteen in all. <sup>19</sup> The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. <sup>20</sup> In Egypt, Manasseh and Ephraim were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. <sup>21</sup> The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard. <sup>22</sup> These were the sons of Rachel who were born to Jacob--fourteen in all. <sup>23</sup> The son of Dan: Hushim. <sup>24</sup> The sons of Naphtali: Jahziel, Guni, Jezer and Shilleem. <sup>25</sup> These were the sons born to Jacob by Bilhah, whom Laban had given to his daughter Rachel--seven in all. <sup>26</sup> All those who went to Egypt with Jacob--those who were his direct descendants, not counting his sons' wives--numbered sixty-six persons. <sup>27</sup> With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family, which went to Egypt, were seventy in all.
- a) From Verse 8 all the way to Verse 25 is a list of all of Jacob’s sons. The last two verses emphasize the fact there were 70 male descendants going to Egypt.
  - b) I can give you a lot of trivia details about this list. The problem is a week from today, you’re going to forget all of these details and none of them will have a major affect upon your daily walk with God. ☺ The important thing God wants you to know is that there are 70 men going to Egypt.
  - c) The names are listed in “marriage order” of the wives.
    - i) Remember Jacob married Rachel first. Rachel’s children are listed first.
    - ii) As a wedding gift, Rachael was given a servant girl who also bore Jacob children and they are listed second.
    - iii) Seven years later Jacob married Leah, and they are listed next. The fourth list is of her servant girl of Leah.
    - iv) Why that order? It is to say, “Here is the women in my life in the order I knew them, and here are the results” .
  - d) So onto the big question: Why list all the individuals? Why the emphasis on “70 men”?
    - i) Yes you can say, “God loves everyone” and cares about all going to Egypt. I don’t believe that is the point.
    - ii) I believe the “big picture” is to compare this to Genesis Chapter 10.
      - a) In Chapter 10, the bible lists 70 nations that formed the early world.
      - b) Here in Chapter 46 we have 70 descendants forming the “new nation” that follows God. That can’t be a coincidence!

- c) The number 70 in the bible is associated with the perfection of mankind in numbers. The number 7 is associated with perfection (God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day.) The number 10 is associated with man and “human perfection. For example, we are made with ten fingers and ten toes. Therefore 10 times 7 is associated with the “perfection of man”. It is about man growing to his “perfect number”. There were 70 nations to form the world. There were 70 people there to form the new nation that would follow God.
  - d) This is a pattern to show that out of the “world”, God again formed a new nation. Out of the 70 nations, God choose 70 people to form a new nation to follow him.
  - iii) There is a New Testament reference to this event in Acts Chapter 7 by Stephen. He mentions 75 people. This is because the common (Greek) translation of Stephen’s time emphasizes 75 people. By the time the “70” showed up, Joseph also had grandchildren in Egypt who are not listed among the 70.
    - a) By either account, the list is accurate.
  - e) One last point: Why waste all the ink to list everyone? If the important part is that “70” men go, why not just state that there were 70 men?
    - i) Part of the answer is that God wanted the Israelites organized by tribes. Genealogical records are going to be important because all the Israelites will be organized based on which of the 12 tribes they are from.
    - ii) There are also some subtle clues and word-pictures we get in this list that are prophetic of events to come.
      - a) For example, Judah has the most details, including some sons who died in Egypt. Judah is the only son where a grandson is listed. Judah is the one through whom the Messiah comes and thus the emphasis upon him.
      - b) Also, Dan only has one son. In fact, most commentators believe that is not the actually son’s name, but it is a pronoun that means son. It is like listing everybody’s name, except when it comes to Dan, it says, “he had sons too”.
        - (1) All through the bible, Dan gets a “slap in the face” every now and then as idolatry first came into the land through the tribe of Dan.
        - (2) In chapter 49, Jacob places a blessing on each son. We’ll discuss more about Dan’s problems in that chapter.
    - iii) My point is not to get you to memorize all the details of this genealogy.
      - a) If you are interested in further details of this section of scripture, there are some wonderful details that are fun to learn.
      - b) The main points is that God wants to emphasize the “70” and at the same time have enough of a genealogical record so that everyone can keep track of who were there ancestors.
8. Verse 28a: Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen.
- a) After giving you that huge chunk of Scripture, I thought it might be good to slow down here so we don’t get indigestion. ☺ Let’s discuss the first sentence of Verse 28.
  - b) It emphasizes that Jacob sent “Judah ahead of him”.
    - i) As opposed to 70 people wandering around Egypt trying to find Joseph, Jacob sends Judah out to go find him and have Joseph meet them.
    - ii) Judah is not the oldest, but he did emerge as the leader in the last few chapters.
    - iii) The word-picture ties to Judah as part of the Messianic line. Here is Judah leading the way for the Israelites! It is prophetic of Jesus leading the way to salvation.

9. Verse 28b: When they arrived in the region of Goshen, <sup>29</sup> Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time.
- a) OK, here is the big reunion scene. Stop and let this one sink in for a moment:
    - i) Jacob had not seen his son for roughly 20 years.
    - ii) As soon as Joseph learned the location of Jacob and the clan he got in the chariot and got there as fast as he could.
  - b) The great word-picture is to see this from Jacob's perspective:
    - i) He gave up "all he had" to go to Egypt, not knowing the results.
    - ii) Joseph is now "resurrected" and Jacob gets to spend the rest of his life with him!
    - iii) That is the way God likes to work in our life. God is waiting for us to "give it all up" to spend the rest of our lives with him. God then "gets on his chariot as fast as he can to meet us and throw his arm around us".
      - a) If you remember the story of the prodigal son from Luke 15, the father was so excited when the lost son came home, he ran down the road to go kiss him. (Luke 15:20). It's the same idea.
    - iv) For the Christian, it is not just the moment of salvation, but also a continual process of "letting go of what we have" to God the Father.
    - v) The first time of, "I give my life to Jesus" is essential and that is part of this word-picture. What is also important is our continual maturity as believers. We occasionally must examine ourselves and see if there is anything else "we need to present at God's feet" for him to take over from us.
10. Verse 30: Israel said to Joseph, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive."
- a) My opening question of this lesson is "What happens after "happily ever after?"
    - i) Here is Jacob (Israel) saying to his son, "I'm ready to die now."
    - ii) We're going to read near the end of the next chapter that Jacob lives for 17 more years. On one hand, Jacob may have just been colorful in expressing his joy over seeing Joseph again. On the other hand, he may be literal in thinking he has nothing left to live for.
    - iii) My point is that this is not "happily ever after". God has 17 more years left for Jacob to not only live, but to live for God. Yes you can stop and relish the joy of the moment. God wants us to do that. My point is there is also a time to move on and realize that were not done until God says were done, period!
11. Verse 31: Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were living in the land of Canaan, have come to me. <sup>32</sup> The men are shepherds; they tend livestock, and they have brought along their flocks and herds and everything they own.' <sup>33</sup> When Pharaoh calls you in and asks, 'What is your occupation?' <sup>34</sup> you should answer, 'Your servants have tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did.' Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen, for all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians."
- a) The next step is to get the family settled in Egypt.
  - b) Joseph devises this plan. To summarize, Joseph picks 5 of the 70 people (five of the brothers) and presents them to Pharaoh. He tells the brothers that when Pharaoh asks, "What do you do for a living?" they are to respond with "shepherders". Joseph figures that Pharaoh will isolate the family, as shepherders are detestable to Egyptians.
  - c) By isolating the Israelites, they will grow and form a nation. By isolating them, they will not be assimilated into the Egyptian culture.

- d) There is a word-picture being created here. Let's start with some Gospel quotes:
- i) Jesus said, "If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you." (John 15:19, NIV)
  - ii) "I (Jesus) have given them (believers) your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world." (John 17:14, NIV)
  - iii) There is a classical Christian tag line that says, "Be in, but not of this world". The "world" refers to nonbelievers in God. It is the idea that we are to be God's witnesses to the world (non believers), and thus the phrase "in this world". At the same time we have to remember our home is in heaven and not earth. In that sense we are to be "not of this world". Thus the cliché: "In, but not of".
  - iv) Which leads back to Jacob's family.
    - a) They'll be detested by the Egyptians. Jesus says we'll be hated for his sake.
    - b) They'll be isolated by the Egyptians. Compare that to "not of this world".
    - c) They are shepherders. Jesus calls himself the "Good Shepherd" as we are like sheep being lead by him. In the way, God calls us to lead others to Christ. In that sense, we are also to be like shepherds to others.
12. Chapter 47, Verse 1: Joseph went and told Pharaoh, "My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen." <sup>2</sup> He chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh.
- a) In the end of Chapter 46, we read of Joseph's plan before Pharaoh. Here is the event itself.
  - b) Why "five"? Why just have five brothers stand before Pharaoh?
    - i) Yes there is the practical aspect of sending a representative group. I believe there is more to it than that.
    - ii) The number five throughout the bible is associated with "God's grace".
      - a) It would take a long time to explain this, but the pattern is there.
      - b) Remember Pharaoh could have been rough on the family. He is in charge. Pharaoh could have just allocated them some grain allotment like everyone else. There was nothing the brothers did to deserve the blessing of the "best of the land" of Egypt. It is a model of God's grace.
  - c) Notice that the brothers did not reveal God's plan to Pharaoh.
    - i) They did not say, "Well, our God told us that our descendants would one day inherit Israel. In the meantime we have to live in Egypt for about 430 years or so, where future Pharaoh's will make us slaves and we'll eventually come out after destroying your country. ☺ They forgot to mention that part.
      - a) We don't know how much Jacob knew of God's "big plan" at the moment.
      - b) Even if you do get the "big picture", there are still the day-to-day aspects we have to deal with. For the moment, five of the brothers are standing in front of the most powerful man on earth at that moment, waiting for his decision as to how they will live their lives.
      - c) This section is a reminder that God is working in the hearts of nonbelievers as well as believers for his glory.
        - (1) "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases." (Proverbs 21:1, NIV)
    - ii) What's the application for you and me?
      - a) The next time we have a big meeting in front of the boss (or whoever) pray for God's results to be done. If God can control an unbelieving king's heart for God's glory, he can do wonders for your boss (or whoever) as well!

13. Verse 3: Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?" "Your servants are shepherds," they replied to Pharaoh, "just as our fathers were." <sup>4</sup> They also said to him, "We have come to live here awhile, because the famine is severe in Canaan and your servants' flocks have no pasture. So now, please let your servants settle in Goshen."
- a) Say this for Joseph, he understood Pharaoh. He knew Pharaoh would ask about their occupation and he responded.
    - i) When you read through all of Joseph's account, you never read once of Joseph praying to God. You never read once of God speaking to Joseph. Yet, every instruction that pops out of his mouth appears to be God-ordained.
    - ii) Many Christians have this false idea that in order for something to be "God's will", we have to hear a deep booming voice speaking in King-James-English. ☺
    - iii) I take the view that if we pray often for God's will to be done and we spend a lot of time in God's word, (plus time with other Christians for accountability), we are doing God's will. I believe that's the way Joseph worked. He prayed daily and then went about his business. God then worked through Joseph because Joseph had committed his life to being God's witness.
14. Verse 5: Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you, <sup>6</sup> and the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land. Let them live in Goshen. And if you know of any among them with special ability, put them in charge of my own livestock."
- a) Here we have the actual decision of Pharaoh to the Israelites.
  - b) Not only does Pharaoh give them some prime real estate (Verse 11), but also he says, "put them in charge of my livestock". To paraphrase Pharaoh, "I don't really care for sheep herders. They are the bottom-rung of the Egyptian totem pole ☺, but I respect Joseph and he did save us from famine. Now live in Egypt and take care of my sheep too."
  - c) I personally wonder if we are going to meet this Pharaoh in heaven one day.
    - i) God judges all people fairly based on what information they do know about God.
    - ii) Here is this pagan worshipping king who "trusted" in the God of the Hebrews enough to place and keep Joseph in charge, give them some prime Egyptian real estate and entrust them with his livestock. Remember a famine was going on!
      - a) Because he was putting his trust the "God of the Hebrews", it makes you think that this guy's in heaven.
  - d) The main point again is to see that the Israelites put their trust in God, and God was working behind the scenes to have a pagan King bless the Israelites through this event.
15. Verse 7: Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed Pharaoh, <sup>8</sup> Pharaoh asked him, "How old are you?" <sup>9</sup> And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers." <sup>10</sup> Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from his presence.
- a) Remember that Joseph was a close advisor to Pharaoh. This scene is Joseph saying, "Hey, I want you to meet my long lost dad. Say hello for a moment."
  - b) Jacob said he was 130 years old. Getting back to the early Genesis lessons, you read that Jacob's answers lived hundreds of years. It gradually declined. Scientifically, I believe this is the long-term affect of the flood. Prior to the flood, there was a water/ice canopy over the earth that prevented ultraviolet rays from coming in, and thus long life. After the flood, we read of decreasing life spans. Jacob lived a shorter life than Isaac and Abraham. All three of them lived shorter life spans than some of their ancestors.
  - c) Jacob said, "The years of my pilgrimage are a 130." What did Jacob mean by pilgrimage?
    - i) It meant that Jacob did not consider Egypt his home.
    - ii) It meant that Jacob did not consider The Promised Land his home.
    - iii) He is a "pilgrim" to this world.

- iv) Remember a few pages back when I stated we are to be “in this world, but not of this world”? Jacob is saying the same thing. Jacob understands that his home is in heaven. We are “pilgrims” to this world to be witnesses for God. If the word “pilgrim” is confusing, think of “tourist” or a foreign-visitor. The idea is that you don’t think of this world as your home.
  - d) Jacob then says, “My years have been few and difficult...”
    - i) Notice Jacob is called “Jacob” here and not “Israel”. This is Jacob admitted that most of his life he struggled with God in the sense he connived to do his own will at the expense of ignoring God’s laws.
    - ii) God gives us the free will to ignore His laws. The law, among other things is designed for our benefit to live a life pleasing to God. To avoid those laws causes the guilt and pain that would cause Jacob to say, “My years...few and difficult”.
  - e) Jacob then goes on to say how his lifespan is shorter than his ancestors.
    - i) I think Pharaoh understood that Jacob was old, but not how old.
    - ii) Jacob is saying, “If you think 130 is impressive, meet my dad and grandpa!” ☺
    - iii) I also think that Jacob feels inferior to Abraham and Isaac and sees them as greater men of faith than himself. The same way most people admire their parents and grandparents and see them as superior to themselves.
  - f) Both Verse 7 and Verse 10 mention the fact that Jacob blessed Pharaoh.
    - i) Personally I don’t see this as a request by Pharaoh. I think Jacob just did this on his own out of gratitude for Pharaoh’s generosity in food and provisions. Pharaoh accepted the blessing the same way we say, “your welcome”.
    - ii) The specific’s of Jacob’s blessing is not stated. What is stated in the rest of the chapter is how much Pharaoh gets blessed by Joseph’s handling of the famine.
    - iii) God once told Abraham “I will bless those that bless you and curse those that curse you” (Genesis 12:3). That not only applies to Abraham, but to the Jewish nation. I also believe it still applies today to the Jewish nation as that is an unconditional promise on God’s part!
      - a) Here is this Pharaoh blessing the children of Abraham with food and provisions. God turns around and blesses Egypt with tremendous wealth as we’re about to read.
16. Verse 11: So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh directed. <sup>12</sup> Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and his father’s entire household with food, according to the number of their children.
- a) Here is the actual action by Pharaoh to give the Israelites some prime real estate. Remember there is a famine, so there is no grazing land.
  - b) I love to read this from the Pharaoh’s perspective. Here was a severe famine. Yet he gave a “best portion” of the land for the Israelites to live and work. He allowed Jacob to bless him. (The more I think about, the more I’m convinced Pharaoh is “saved” for this action. We’ll find out one day in heaven.)
17. Verse 13: There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine. <sup>14</sup> Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace. <sup>15</sup> When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? Our money is used up." <sup>16</sup> "Then bring your livestock," said Joseph. "I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone." <sup>17</sup> So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock.

- a) From Verse 13 to the end of the chapter is an interesting story of how the Egyptians and the residents of Canaan (what-is-today-Israel) gave up all they had to Joseph.
  - b) Remember that Joseph charged a 20% tax during the 7 “good years” to store up the grain.
  - c) Now that were in the 7 “bad years”, Joseph is charging everyone to buy grain.
    - i) First Joseph requires cash payments. When their money is all used up, Joseph required all of their animals be sold to them.
  - d) All of these verses are designed to make a single, important point. Let me state the rest of the related text, and then I’ll tie it all together.
18. Verse 18: When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, "We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. <sup>19</sup> Why should we perish before your eyes--we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate."
- a) The people were still starving. To summarize, the people first used their money to buy grain. When they were hungry again, they came back with their livestock. (I always wondered why they didn’t eat the livestock? I suspect the livestock isn’t worth much if there was no grass around to feed them.) Finally they gave their real estate to Pharaoh in exchange for more food.
  - b) OK, the big “why” question? Why did Joseph do it this way? Why didn’t Joseph out of “Christian love” just give away food so people wouldn’t starve? Why charge them all of their possessions, especially to the Egyptians who paid for it during the good years?
    - i) There are a number of word-pictures here. The first is God “blesses those who bless Israel”. Pharaoh blessed the Israelites and the Israelites turned around and made Pharaoh dynasty the richest country on earth. That dynasty lasted for many centuries as the most powerful empire on earth.
    - ii) When the Exodus is to happen over 400 years later, God wanted to show he is more powerful than the most powerful man on earth at the time (Pharaoh) and thus allowed the Egyptian dynasty to grow in power.
  - c) I believe the more important word picture has to do with having God in charge of our lives. Joseph was setting up power “God’s way”. Let me explain:
    - i) When we turn our lives over to God, it does not end there. Getting back to my opening theme, we don’t turn our lives over to God and live “happily ever after”.
      - ii) God is constantly saying to us, “I want you to trust me.” That means even more than you trusted me “yesterday”.
        - a) First, I want you to trust me with your income”.
        - b) After that, He’ll say, “I want you to trust me with your possessions”. Later He might say, “I see you trust me with those possessions, but there is still that one item over there you haven’t “turned over” to me”.
        - c) Which leads back to Joseph’s actions: First, he had everyone give Pharaoh their money. Then Pharaoh got their livestock, then their real estate.
      - iii) Let me give you a practical example: God may say to you, “Hey, your tithing your income to me and reading your bible. Good for you. But as for your job, you are still trying to do it “your way” and not “my way””. (Think of the similarity of your job to “raising livestock”). Finally, God may say, “You’re trusting me with your money and your occupation, but you are not living where I want you to live. That is turning your “real estate” over to God. A similar idea is trusting in the equity of your home as opposed to trusting in God for your provision.

- iv) My whole point is that there is a word-picture comparison between Joseph requiring "everything" of the people and God requiring "everything" of us.
  - v) When you read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew Chapter 5-7, Jesus lays out a whole bunch of requirements for us as Christians. The secret to reading that passage is not to see it as a long separate list of "do's and don'ts" but one big request to turn every aspect of our lives over to God.
  - vi) The secret of living the Christian life is to turn every aspect over to God and then let God work through you to live the life He wants you to live.
19. Verse 20: So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh's,<sup>21</sup> and Joseph reduced the people to servitude, from one end of Egypt to the other.<sup>22</sup> However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land.
- a) Here we read that all the land now belonged to Pharaoh. All Egyptians now worked for a living for Pharaoh. We'll read in Verse 24 more details of this plan.
  - b) The strange part is the Egyptian priests were exempt from this plan. Why would Joseph exempt them? Let me give you a couple of thoughts on this:
    - i) During the time of the Exodus, God wanted to show that his power was greater than the demonic power used by the Egyptian priests. Therefore, Joseph may have been somewhat privy to this information.
    - ii) I think this is mainly about the topic of "spiritual warfare". Remember back in Genesis Chapter 3, God "declared war" on Satan after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. God's plan was for people to freely choose to give their lives for God. Satan wanted to "be like God" (See Isaiah 14:14) and therefore fought against God's plans. God allows Satan to have some power. In order for free will to be valid, God has to allow some appealing alternatives. Thus Satan offers "the world" to us if we agree to not turn our lives over to God.
    - iii) Given all that, I believe Joseph allows the Egyptian priests some power and freedom the same way God allows Satan some power and freedom in order to offer an alternative to choosing to follow God.
  - c) I should mention that some commentators see a parallel between Joseph and what Jesus might do in the "millennium".
    - i) Revelation Chapter 20 speaks of a 1,000 year period where the Messiah will rule and reign over the earth from Jerusalem. Jesus will rule over those who survive through the tribulation.
    - ii) Some suspect that Jesus might rule in the same way Joseph rules. First Jesus is going to require that He controls "everybody's stuff" the same way Joseph does.
    - iii) During those 1,000 years, Satan is bound up, but not killed. After the 1,000 years Satan is "set free for a short time." (See Rev. 20:2-3). Some ponder if that is a parallel idea to the thought of the Egyptian priests being exempt Joseph's time.
20. Verse 23: Joseph said to the people, "Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you so you can plant the ground."<sup>24</sup> But when the crop comes in, give a fifth of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children."
- a) Joseph charged everybody 20%. All the people had to work the land and got to keep 80% of what they made. Personally, if the United States Government let me keep 80% of what I made, I would be a much happier man! ☺
  - b) This verse also argues that there is some roll for government. I believe God intends there to be some need for government, but at the same time it should not be dominant.
  - c) One could use this verse to argue against a government based on socialism. At the same time "20%" implies some need for a central government.

21. Verse 25: "You have saved our lives," they said. "May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh." <sup>26</sup> So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt--still in force today--that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh's.
- a) Notice the people were happy to pay the 20%. (Again, I would be happy too! ☺)
  - b) Notice the phrase "still in force today". I suspect Moses added that phrase at the time of the Exodus. That style of "everything belongs to Egypt, but we get to keep 80% of what we earned" lasted for centuries.
  - c) There is one more mention of how the land of the priests was exempt, but I've already beaten that point to death. ☺
22. Verse 27: Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number.
- a) What we are seeing here is "God's plan working out." The seeds of Exodus are planted.
23. Verse 28: Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven. <sup>29</sup> When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt, <sup>30</sup> but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried." "I will do as you say," he said. <sup>31</sup> "Swear to me," he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.
- a) This paragraph is not the end of Jacob's life. Verse 29 is an epilogue comment. Jacob still has a big speech to give in Chapter 49.
  - b) The important point of this paragraph is that Jacob did not want to be buried in Egypt.
    - i) The book of Hebrews says, "By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones (Hebrews 11:22 NIV)
    - ii) Notice the Hebrews reference is about Joseph and not Jacob, but the point is similar. Both Jacob and Joseph wanted to be buried in Israel.
    - iii) Why is that? If God can resurrect us, can't he resurrect us from any location? Why is it so important to be buried in Israel? If that is so important, why didn't all the Israelites who died in Egypt for the next 400 years get carried to Israel?
      - a) First of all, a lot of religious Jews think this is important. There is a Jewish tradition that when we die, we first have to work our way to Israel, and then get resurrected. A lot of religious Jews request to have their dead bodies moved to Israel for burial.
    - iv) The answer is that this is a symbolic gesture. I believe both Jacob and Joseph understood about the coming Exodus. They wanted future generations to understand the bondage will not be forever. Thus, they requested to be buried in Egypt as a symbol for future generations.
  - c) Which leads me back to my "what happens after 'happily ever after' point:
    - i) The bondage to slavery does not last forever. The "world" is not our home. The suffering is only for a fixed period of time. The symbol of Jacob and Joseph is that Egypt and "the world" is not their final home. Their final home is a "Promised Land" for all believers.
24. Let's pray: Father, help us to remember that we are in this world, but not of this world. We too have a future home in a better place. Help us to do your will as we are your witnesses to the world around us. Also, help us to remember that all we have belongs to you. We give a percentage of our "stuff" to you as a reminder to ourselves that it all belongs to you. Guide us as we grow in our faith toward you. We ask this in Jesus name, amen.