

Joseph, the Family Man

Genesis 46, 47 and 48

Jacob goes to Egypt (Genesis 46 and 47 v 1 - 10)

God had sent Joseph to Egypt and had prepared a place in Egypt where Jacob and his family could live. God was providing food for Jacob and his family during the famine. By these things God was guiding Jacob and showing him that he should go to Egypt. But Jacob still need reassurance, so he stopped off at Beersheba and offered sacrifices to God. Perhaps he used the same altar that Isaac his father had built (see Genesis 26). How did the vision (Gen 46 v 3 and 4) give Jacob the assurance he needed?

- Joseph planned to tell Pharaoh that his brothers and the men of his father's household were shepherds, for "all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians" (Gen 46 v 34). What was Joseph's real motive in doing this?
- The first question Pharaoh asked the brothers was "What is your occupation?" (Gen 47 v 3). Why do you think he asked this?
- The first question Pharaoh asked Jacob was "How old are you?" (Gen 47 v 8). Jacob's reply seems strangely negative and pessimistic. Why do you think Jacob answered Pharaoh in this way?

Joseph and the famine (Genesis 47 v 13 - 31)

- In his first letter, the apostle Peter gives the famous 'commandment': "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor." (1 Peter 2 v 17). How do these verses show Joseph as a prime example of how we should follow this injunction?
- Would you describe Joseph as 'shrewd'? Do you think he displayed courageous leadership?

Manasseh and Ephraim (Genesis 48)

The story turns full circle, with Jacob (who for a long time thought he had lost Joseph) being able, at the end of his life, to meet and bless his grandsons Manasseh and Ephraim...

- How did Jacob know that Ephraim would become more important than his older brother Manasseh?

Conclusion

These three chapters show that the impacts of Joseph's life of integrity and faithfulness went far beyond his own life; they affected the lives of many others – certainly the "seventy in all" (Gen 46 v 27) members of Jacob's family who went to settle in Egypt, and probably many more besides. It seems that the blessings for so many stemmed from the simple, day by day choices that Joseph made as his own life took shape. Remember – our choices have consequences...

Prayer – Lord, as we look once again at the life of Joseph, help us to learn to honour you in all that we do. Help us also to remember that people and families matter to you, and that we can trust you to take care of our family members and loved ones. Help us to care for others and to want the best for them. Amen.