

Patriarchs Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson Ten: Israel Moves to Egypt and Prospers – Genesis 46-50

Genesis 46:1-47:12: Skim Genesis 46-50 for general familiarity.

- 1) In Genesis 46:3, God told Jacob, “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt.” Jacob certainly would have been eager to see Joseph. Can you think of reasons from earlier lessons why he might have feared going? In Genesis 12:10-20, an earlier time of famine, Jacob’s grandfather Abram also went down to Egypt but Pharaoh ultimately sent him away. In his father Isaac’s day, there was yet another famine. The Lord specifically warned Isaac *not* to go to Egypt, but to stay in Canaan (26:2). The Patriarchs understood that unless God showed them otherwise, they were not to leave Canaan (24:1-8; 46:3). Additionally, when God made His covenant with Abram in Genesis 15, he told Abram that his descendants would become slaves in a foreign country and that they would be mistreated for four hundred years. This unfulfilled prophecy surely gave Jacob a good reason to be cautious and prayerful about moving his family out of Canaan.
- 2) According to Genesis 47:5-6, how did Pharaoh show gratitude to Joseph for his service? Pharaoh showed gratitude by giving Joseph’s family the best land in the country and by appointing some of his brothers as officials.
- 3) Genesis 47:7 and 10 tell us that Jacob blessed Pharaoh. List some ways you can bless others this week.
Personal sharing

Genesis 47:13-31

- 4) Explain how Joseph saved the lives of the Egyptians (see Genesis 47:13-26). Having saved extra grain during seven years of abundance, Joseph then sold it to the Egyptians during seven years of famine. First, he sold it to them for money. When their money was gone, Joseph bought their livestock in exchange for the grain. Once they had sold all their livestock, Joseph bought the land and the people themselves, making them slaves of Pharaoh. Eventually, Joseph gave the people seed to plant crops. From these, they were permitted to keep four-fifths to feed themselves but were required to give the remaining fifth back to Pharaoh.
- 5) What promise did Israel ask Joseph to make (Genesis 47:28-31)? Why might this have been important to Jacob (see Genesis 12:7; 13:14-17; 24:5-7)? Jacob made Joseph promise to bring his bones out of Egypt and bury him with his forefathers in Canaan. He did this because of his faith that Canaan was the land the Lord was going to eventually give his descendants. Even in his death, Jacob showed his desire to be aligned with God and His promises.
- 6) Most translations of Genesis 47:31 indicate that after Israel [Jacob] finished instructing his son Joseph, he “worshipped.” Based on what you’ve learned in *Patriarchs*, what reasons did Israel have for worshipping the Lord? Israel worshipped the covenant God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and he was probably overwhelmed by God’s goodness. He was nearing the end of his life and had just received Joseph’s assurance that he would be buried in the land God had promised his forefathers. Thus Jacob worshipped the God who had revealed Himself and become his *own* God (28:13-15, 20-22; 32:30). Although the pilgrimage of his life had been difficult (47:9), he was surely also grateful that God had molded him into a man of faith. Furthermore, God had already increased his family to seventy members (46:27), a beginning of the fulfillment of His promise to make the Patriarchs into a great nation, had reunited his family, and had used Joseph to make his family a blessing to many nations. Israel was in awe of God as the giver and keeper of His promises. He was absolutely confident that God would complete what He had begun.
- 7) The essence of worship is awe. What inspires awe (worship) of God in you? Personal sharing

Genesis 48

- 8) Genesis 47:29 and 48:1-2 indicate that Israel was at the end of his life. What name did he use for the Lord in 48:3? Look at other passages where this name for God was used: Genesis 17:1-8, 28:3-4, 35:11-12, 48:3-4 (also 43:14, at which time Israel may have used this name as a reminder of the way it had been used on other occasions). In what *shared context* was the name used on each occasion? **Jacob called the Lord “God Almighty” (“El-Shaddai”).** In each passage, the name is used in connection with the Lord’s covenant promises to the Patriarchs (land, blessing, descendants). Because God is Almighty, He is able to do what He says He will do. He keeps His covenant promises. In 43:14, Jacob used this name for God as his sons were about to leave for Egypt. He feared he would never see them again and conquered his fear by recalling God’s covenant promises to his family.
- 9) How does Genesis 48:5-7 explain the fact that there is no “tribe of Joseph” named among the tribes of Israel? **Jacob adopted Joseph’s two sons as his own.** In this sense, Joseph received the “double portion” that the firstborn son normally inherited. Instead of having a tribe named for Joseph, his two sons were each named as tribes. Essentially, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were both tribes of Joseph.
- 10) Explain how the countercultural way in which Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh (48:12-20) mirrored his own experience (Genesis 25:23) and that of his father Isaac (Genesis 21:2-12). What does the New Testament tell us about the people God chooses (see Romans 9:10-12 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-31)? **Jacob blessed Joseph’s younger son Ephraim over the older son Manasseh.** It was not normal in the culture for a younger son to receive a greater blessing than the oldest son. However, the same reversal had occurred with Jacob and his elder brother Esau *and* with Jacob’s father Isaac and his elder brother Ishmael. In all three cases, the younger son was blessed over the older. This tells us that God works according to His own purpose and choosing, often in very unexpected, even countercultural, ways. According to 1 Corinthians 1, He does this in order that these less likely candidates (and all those who witness God’s mighty work through them) will be forced to concede that the glory for whatever has been accomplished belongs to God alone.

Genesis 49-50

- 11) Using any Bible knowledge you have, try to explain Jacob’s prophetic words to his sons.
- Reuben (49:3-4) **Reuben slept with his father’s concubine Bilhah (Genesis 35:22), and therefore, he was not blessed (which also meant he did not receive the double-portion of the inheritance the firstborn normally would have received).**
 - Simeon and Levi (49:5-7) **Simeon and Levi were cursed for using their swords as weapons of violence to kill the Shechemites in their anger in order to avenge their sister Dinah’s rape (Genesis 34:25-26, 30-31).**
 - Judah (49:8-12) **Judah’s blessing recalls the meaning of his name, “praise” (compare Genesis 29:35 and 49:8).** His blessing is a regal one, specifically indicating that the Messiah (the Lion of Judah, the Ruler from whom the scepter would not depart, to whom it belongs, and to whom the nations owe obedience) would descend through him. The references to milk and wine portray the riches of Judah’s possession in Canaan. Many Christian interpreters see specific references in the vine, the donkey, the wine, and the blood to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Some believe the riches connoted in Judah’s blessing describe the opulence of the future, millennial reign of Christ.
 - Joseph (49:22-26) **Joseph was indeed fruitful; Ephraim was a large tribe within Israel.** The archers’ attack on him probably refers to his own brothers’ mistreatment of him in his early years. As the blessing suggests, Joseph remained steady, because the Almighty Shepherd helped and blessed him. That he was a “prince among his brothers” was literally the case, due to his position in Egypt, but it also was a true description of his character.
- 12) Genesis 50:7-14 tells of the fabulous processional (including Egyptian dignitaries) that buried Jacob. Consider the kind of man Jacob was in his early years and this description of honor at the end of his life. What *specific* choices are you making right now to ensure you continue to grow to become the person God wants you to be, even into old age? **Personal sharing**

Genesis 50

- 13)** Reread the touching conversation between Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 50:15-22, after their father's death. Can you testify to a past or current situation where you were mistreated, but God used it for good (please don't identify the person who mistreated you by name)? **Personal sharing**
- 14)** According to Genesis 50:24-25 and Hebrews 11:22, what event did Joseph anticipate, by faith, at the end of his life? **By faith, Joseph believed that God would take his family and his brothers' families out of Egypt one day (this occurred in the Biblical event known as the Exodus). God told Abraham that He would do so (Genesis 15:13-16) and promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would inherit Canaan (Genesis 12:7; 26:4; 28:13).**
- 15)** What lessons from Joseph's life can you apply to your own life today? **Personal sharing**