

Genesis Chapter 47.

Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said, "My father and my brothers, their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; and indeed they *are* in the land of Goshen." ² And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. ³ Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What *is* your occupation?" And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants *are* shepherds, both we *and* also our fathers." ⁴ And they said to Pharaoh, "We have come to dwell in the land, because your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine *is* severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen." ⁵ Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. ⁶ The land of Egypt *is* before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know *any* competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock." ⁷ Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. ⁸ Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How old *are* you?" ⁹ And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* one hundred and thirty 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 pilgrimage." ¹⁰ So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh. ¹¹ And Joseph situated 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 Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number in *their* families. ¹³ Now *there* was no bread in all the land; for the famine *was* very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. ¹⁴ And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁵ So when the money failed in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed." ¹⁶ Then Joseph said, "Give your livestock, and I will give you *bread* for your livestock, if the money is gone." ¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread *in exchange* for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread *in exchange* for all their livestock that year. ¹⁸ When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. ¹⁹ Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh; give *us* seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate." ²⁰ Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh's. ²¹ And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from *one* end of the borders of Egypt to the *other* end. ²² Only the land of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had rations *allotted to them* by Pharaoh, and they ate their rations which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their lands. ²³ Then Joseph said to the people, "Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, *here is* seed for you, and you shall sow the land. ²⁴ And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh. Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your food, for those of your households and as food for your little ones." ²⁵ So they

said, "You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants." ²⁶ And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt to this day, *that* Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except for the land of the priests only, *which* did not become Pharaoh's. ²⁷ So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly. ²⁸ And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years. ²⁹ When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, ³⁰ but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And he said, "I will do as you have said." ³¹ Then he said, "Swear to me." And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed.

Introduction

Last week we finished our teaching in Chapter 46 by learning about Joseph's wise understanding of Egyptian culture and politics.

He knew where he wanted his family to settle and he knew how to not only obtain the best of the land but how to be culturally sensitive.

We discovered that shrewdness is not alien to holiness.

Joseph knew exactly when to speak and when not to speak. (Proverbs 21: v. 23)

Joseph had instructed his father and brother to declare their occupations as Shepherds when asked by Pharaoh, King of Egypt.

We now enter chapter 47 and discover why Joseph gave his father and his brothers this advice.

1. Joseph introduces his family to the King and Jacob blesses Pharaoh. V. 1-12.

I have never had afternoon tea with Queen Elizabeth in Buckingham Palace, but during the earlier part of my life up to the age of 16 my Mother prepared me for the **possibility of that event.**

In England from the days of Queen Victoria, table manners and how to behave with wealthy people was very important.

This carried over into my Mother's era.

She was brought up in quite a wealthy home and was very strict when it came to behaving with the correct table manners and Victorian etiquette.

I was once told off by my Mother for walking hand in hand with one of my first girlfriends at the age of 14.

I wasn't told off for having a girlfriend. I was told off for walking on the wrong side of the pavement.

My Mother told me that I should always walk on the outside of the pavement in case the splash of a passing car got my girlfriend wet.

At the time the sun was out, but nevertheless she was very strict on doing the correct things.

The reason I am telling you this is that I was taught that there is a correct way to act and behave in the presence of a King or Queen.

I knew exactly what to do and say and my table manners would have impressed Queen Elizabeth, if she had only asked me to afternoon tea.

In the same way, Joseph knew exactly what to do in the presence of Pharaoh, King of Egypt.

He had been preparing for this interview for some time.

The first thing that Joseph told Pharaoh was that his family had arrived in Egypt, but they were waiting in the land of Goshen.

Goshen was an area on the eastern part of the river Nile delta.

It was far enough away from the main city where Pharaoh lived and you had to cross two rivers to get there.

Naturally it was a very good agricultural area.

Joseph only presented five of his brothers to Pharaoh, he probably introduced the **five best behaved brothers.**

Pharaoh first of all asked about the brothers' occupation.

They replied that they were Shepherds,

They also made it clear that being a Shepherd was the **family trade.**

Last week we learnt that **Shepherds were an abomination to Egyptians.**

Therefore, it would have been impossible to place the family anywhere near any Egyptian settlements.

The brothers were perhaps a little bit forward in suggesting that they might live in Goshen.

Nevertheless, Pharaoh spoke to Joseph and give permission for his father and brothers and their family to live in Goshen.

In addition to this wonderful provision of the land of Goshen, Pharaoh asked if there were any competent men among the brothers who could be appointed as chief herdsmen over Pharaoh's livestock.

Joseph had such a good reputation for wisdom and hard work that Pharaoh didn't want to miss out on an opportunity to have his cattle managed well.

After this very successful audience with the King, Joseph introduced his father to Pharaoh.

We are told that the first thing that Jacob did was to bless Pharaoh.

Jacob's words of blessing are not recorded here but the normal custom of this time would be **to wish the king a long life.**

Pharaoh then enquired about Jacob's age.

Through the study of Egyptian literature historians have concluded that old age and death normally happened when people **were about 110 years old.**

Pharaoh would have been surprised to discover that Jacob was 130 years old.

Jacob replied to Pharaoh with an honest answer about his life and family history.

In v. 10

We are told that Jacob blessed Pharaoh again and then left his presence.

We are not told what he said, but it was clearly something very positive.

Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh was definitely in line with what God had promised to Abraham in Genesis Chapter 12: v. 1-3

Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. ² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

There is no doubt that Pharaoh had abundantly blessed Joseph and God was now blessing Pharaoh and would honour the blessing said by Jacob.

Finally, in v. 11-12 we are told that Joseph provided food for his father, brothers and all of the family.

Application

There is one question that often arises today concerning Israel and the Jewish Nation.

The question is, "**Does God still bless people today if they support the nation of Israel and God's chosen people?**"

The other side of that question is, "**Does God still bless the world today, through the Jewish people?**"

On the second question I have absolutely no doubt that Israel is a blessing to the world in many ways.

The first important spiritual blessing is that **Jesus is a Jew.**

We can never take that identity away from Him.

He will always be a Jew.

The second important thing today is the way in which God is blessing Jewish people both in the land of Israel and in other places in the world where they live.

- a) **Israel has the world's most advanced and efficient disaster relief programme.** They have won prizes for the many times they have supplied emergency relief to various countries in the world where disasters have struck.
The Haiti earthquake has been the most widely known, but there are many more.

- b) **Israel is the most innovative country in the world as far as technology and new products are concerned.**

To give you some idea of this we have data concerning the patents of new products. When you invent a new product you can protect the design by registering it to prevent others copying your design.

Here are some figures to prove my point.

Between 1980 and the year 2000 here is the table of patents registered for new inventions.

U.S.A. – 77 patents recorded for world-wide coverage.

The Whole of the Middle East – 177 patents.

Israel – 7,652.

Israel has produced the **world's first drip irrigation system that is presently being used in 110 countries all over the world.**

This helps countries **to produce 50% more crops and also to use 40% less water.**

I could go on to mention hundreds of inventions but we haven't got time.

Now to answer the first question which is perhaps a little harder to answer.

Are people and nations still blessed today by God **if they support His chosen people and the nation of Israel?**

I can say on a personal note that the people I know who support Israel in a personal way, both in prayer and in practical ways, **testify to being a very blessed group of people.**

I never challenge personal testimonies, and must agree with their testimonies.

What I can say is that if you ever get the opportunity to go to Israel, you are supporting the land through tourism, and for that trip, I am sure that you will be enriched spiritually and blessed.

If you ever get the opportunity to support a Jewish person in any practical or spiritual way, I know that God will definitely repay you for your kindness.

So I guess from my point of view both theologically from the Bible and practically from my personal experience, God's promise still holds true today for those individuals who support Israel and the Jewish people.

As far as nations are concerned historically, The U.K. and the U.S.A. have been the biggest supporters of Israel in the past.

And in past history those two nations have truly been blessed by God.

However today the younger generation are not so supportive in these two countries.

This is mainly due to a shift on the part of Christians, and a decline in the Christian population of these two countries.

I haven't got the time to enter into this theological debate today, but I do know that the Bible teaches that in the last days of the end times, **the whole world will be against Israel, and then Jesus will return.**

God will judge the nations for their opposition towards Israel.

Matthew 24: v.7-9

⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.⁸ All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.⁹ "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

Zechariah Chapter 14: v. 12-18

¹² And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, And their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.¹³ It shall come to pass in that day *That* a great panic from the LORD will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, And raise his hand against his neighbor's hand;¹⁴ Judah also will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations Shall be

gathered together: Gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance. ¹⁵Such also shall be the plague On the horse *and* the mule, On the camel and the donkey, And on all the cattle that will be in those camps. So *shall* this plague *be*. ¹⁶And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷And it shall be *that* whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. ¹⁸If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they *shall have no rain*; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

There is no doubt about it that the Bible teaches that Israel and the Jewish nation are a part of God's blessing during the second coming of Jesus. Therefore any support for this nation will no doubt be a blessing to our God.

Historically Pharaoh was abundantly blessed for his support of Joseph and the start of the development of the Jewish Nation.

2. Joseph deals with the famine in Egypt - v. 13-26.

We have 13 verses that deal with Joseph's management of the famine in Egypt.

We are told in v. 13 that the famine of the land was **very severe and nobody had any bread.**

Up to this point people would come with money to buy grain from Joseph which he had gathered and put into large barns during the 7 years of plenty.

When the people's money ran out Joseph accepted their livestock instead of their money.

After this, another year went by and all the people returned to try and get some more grain, but they no longer had any more money or livestock.

Joseph then demanded their land as payment for grain.

This made all the people of Egypt totally dependent upon Pharaoh.

All of the people became servants of Pharaoh, except for the pagan priests who were supplied special rations by Pharaoh and didn't need to sell their land.

In v. 23-v. 24 it appears that the famine was coming to an end.

Joseph gave the people of Egypt seed to sow on their land which was now owned by Pharaoh's house.

They were like tenant farmers.

Joseph told the people that they had to give one fifth of the harvest to Pharaoh and then they could keep four fifths for their own households.

The people responded positively to all of Joseph's demands, agreeing to be servants of Pharaoh.

Finally, we are told in v. 26 that Joseph made it an official law in Egypt that one fifth of all the harvest of the land would go to Pharaoh.

Before we come to any personal application, you might be thinking that Joseph was **a little hard on the people of Egypt** and the surrounding nations.

The people were starving and they had little choice but to agree to all of Joseph's terms.

Why couldn't Joseph have been a little more compassionate upon the people?

Why did he arrange everything ultimately **for the blessing of Pharaoh?**

Well the first thing I need to say is that Joseph was in **a unique situation that was pre-planned by God.**

If you had to manage a situation to feed the world at that time how would you do it? It would be difficult.

So it wasn't easy for Joseph to deal with the 7 years of famine.

The second thing we need to appreciate is that Joseph was in Egypt dealing with the culture of Egypt of that day.

He was not following the rules and culture of the Hebrew people.

In the Bible we haven't got to the book of Leviticus and God's Laws.

Therefore, Joseph can't be judged for not obeying the Jewish Law.

What we need to understand is the compassion that Joseph had upon the Egyptians concerning their contribution to Pharaoh from the harvest of their land.

In the world at that time it was normal to have to give 40% of your harvest to the King.

Therefore, for Joseph to levy a tax of 20% it would have been considered quite low.

This is perhaps why Joseph made it Law at the time, in order to keep this position favourable to the people.

Some countries even taxed people 60% of their harvest.

Although Joseph was a good manager for Pharaoh, he wasn't un-compassionate.

The final thing I need to say here is that Joseph was **managing the situation in order to fulfil the promises of God made to his Grandfather Abraham.**

God said that He would bless the people who blessed his own chosen people.

God was honouring His promise, **and through Joseph Pharaoh was abundantly blessed.**

The other thing to think about is the blessing of God's people in Goshen.

The food, cattle and everything that was needed to establish the nation of God's people, **initially came from the government purse, through Pharaoh.**

This could only be done by Joseph's good management of the famine situation.

Application

The application for us is really a repeat of what I said last week about God honouring His promises in the Bible.

God will honour His promises in the Bible to us personally, but we need to be sure that we meet the conditions, and understand with sincere hearts, how those promises apply to us.

If you weren't here last week, you need to get a copy of last week's message which is available on the internet.

However, the most important promise to us personally relates to the promise of our own Salvation.

a) John 3: v. 16. – These are the words of Jesus, God's Son.

¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

b) 1 John 1: v. 5

⁵This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all.

c) 1 John chapter 2 v. 6. in the N.L.T

⁶Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

3. Joseph's vow to Jacob - v. 27-31.

In v. 27-31 we are taught about a promise that Joseph made to Jacob.

Jacob was getting near to his death and **he asked his son Joseph to promise that his bones would not be buried in Egypt.**

He requested that upon his death his bones would be carried out of Egypt and placed in the family burial cave.

We need to go back to Genesis Chapter 23 to discover where this was.

Genesis Chapter 23: v. 1-9 in the N.L.T.

When Sarah was 127 years old, ²she died at Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron) in the land of Canaan. There Abraham mourned and wept for her.

³Then, leaving her body, he said to the Hittite elders, ⁴"Here I am, a stranger and a foreigner among you. Please sell me a piece of land so I can give my wife a proper burial."

⁵The Hittites replied to Abraham, ⁶“Listen, my lord, you are an honored prince among us. Choose the finest of our tombs and bury her there. No one here will refuse to help you in this way.”

⁷Then Abraham bowed low before the Hittites ⁸and said, “Since you are willing to help me in this way, be so kind as to ask Ephron son of Zohar⁹ to let me buy his cave at Machpelah, down at the end of his field. I will pay the full price in the presence of witnesses, so I will have a permanent burial place for my family.”

Genesis Chapter 23: v. 17-20 in the N.L.T.

¹⁷So Abraham bought the plot of land belonging to Ephron at Machpelah, near Mamre. This included the field itself, the cave that was in it, and all the surrounding trees. ¹⁸It was transferred to Abraham as his permanent possession in the presence of the Hittite elders at the city gate. ¹⁹Then Abraham buried his wife, Sarah, there in Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre (also called Hebron). ²⁰So the field and the cave were transferred from the Hittites to Abraham for use as a permanent burial place.

So the cave at “**Machpelah**”, was the family burial site for Abraham and his families.

Today you can find this old cave situated in the Old City of Hebron, in the west bank, under Muslim control.

Even though Joseph agreed to do this for His father in v. 30, that was not enough for Jacob.

In v. 31 Jacob made his son swear an oath about this promise.

The first question that you might ask is, why did Jacob ask Joseph to promise a **second time under oath** that he would carry his bones back to Canaan?

The simple answer is that if you made an oath before God about anything, then this directly placed you under God’s wrath and punishment if you failed to obey your promise.

Jacob knew that **if Joseph made a vow the he would definitely honour his oath before God.**

The second question that comes to mind is, why was Jacob so concerned that his bones be brought back and placed in the family burial cave?

Jacob knew that when he died, he would go to heaven and be with his forefathers.

So why the insistence?

The reason for this demand was that the burying of his bones in Canaan, was a declaration of his faith, in the promise of the land, to Abraham and his seed forever.

Genesis Chapter 15: v. 1-21 in the N.L.T.

Some time later, the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.” ²But Abram replied, “O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. ³You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.” ⁴Then the LORD said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.” ⁵Then the LORD took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!” ⁶And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith. ⁷Then the LORD told him, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession.” ⁸But Abram replied, “O Sovereign LORD, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?” ⁹The LORD told him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰So Abram presented all these to him and killed them. Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not, however, cut the birds in half. ¹¹Some vultures swooped down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away. ¹²As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. ¹³Then the LORD said to Abram, “You can be

sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. ¹⁵(As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) ¹⁶After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction.” ¹⁷After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. ¹⁸So the LORD made a covenant with Abram that day and said, “I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River— ¹⁹the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

Jacob had “Faith” in the promises of God.

Application

So what application can we make from this little section in verses 27-31.?

One of the issues here is that the writer wants us to notice that the **making of a vow** towards God is a serious thing.

We need to honour that vow, or promise that we make before God.

In the ancient world putting your hand under somebody’s thigh and making a promise was very serious.

It was actually meant to point to a man’s private parts.

In the case of God’s chosen people, it was pointing to the sign of the covenant.

This was circumcision.

So this promise made by Joseph to Jacob was a commitment connected to the covenant.

So the application that we have here is about making a promise to God to do something for Him.

I would like to ask you a question.

Have you ever made a promise to do something for God?

Think about this for a moment. (wait for 30 seconds)

If you have made a promise to God specifically to do something for Him, and you haven’t done it, then you should think about putting that matter right, starting today.

However, if we were counselled correctly, when we first became a Christian, we probably **promised to serve Jesus as our new manager or director of our lives.**

Q. How are you doing in your service for Jesus?

Are you **continuing to follow Him and honouring Him in your life?**

If you are that is great, but if not, please consider a change of mind and remember that God holds us accountable for the promises that we make to Him.

God makes wonderful promises to us and He always keeps them.

Therefore, we should be serious about any promises we make to God.

Amen.