

GENESIS 47:1-6 (GRACE IN THE LAND OF GOSHEN)

Introduction: Some time ago while talking with my brother, he said something I hadn't really thought of from our perspective. We who are a bit younger tend to take Israel for granted. They were there when we were born and like so many other countries, they pop in and out of the news from time to time, but there doesn't really seem anything special about them.

And so without the Bible, it's hard to see the miracle of Israel for what it really is. And the more years that pass, the less miraculous they must seem to people because the world ignores the Bible. Only when looking at history and comparing it with the Bible, does Israel of today really shine so brightly.

A very small piece of land and a minute number of people were all but forgotten for 2000 years. The land lay in ruins, the people were scattered around in pockets that kept getting shoved from place to place, and the ancient tongue was all-but gone.

And yet, suddenly things started to change. The word that established them also pointed to their return, and to their blossoming and fruitfulness. And it told us that the dead language would resurrect. Hebrew would again be on the lips of the people.

And as chance... no, as divine favor would have it, proof of their ancient oracles, the writings we would call the Old Testament, suddenly showed up in a dry, barren place called the Dead Sea one year before they were reestablished.

The ancient words of the past were waiting there for them as they arrived off of ships. God was calling them and they weren't listening. They still, for the most part, aren't listening. And so, like Israel in Joseph's time, God will send a famine.

It will be a tough time on earth, but a portion of them will be saved through it by grace. The mystery of redemption is still alive and well in the world. To those of us who read, study, and believe our Bibles, it's not a mystery at all.

God speaks and we accept. But like creation itself, most of the world, including much of Israel, tries to take God out of the picture.

They ignore the signs, they ignore the wonders, and they ignore the miracle. They take no notice of what was written so long ago to show them what would happen in the future... probably a not-too-distant future from right now.

And they fail to open their blind eyes and lift them to the God who established them and has so faithfully carried them. It is a problem with both Jew and Gentile and it will lead down a destructive path. But even there God's grace will shine forth, especially for this cherished group of people, Israel.

Text Verse: Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
Will bring her into the wilderness,
And speak comfort to her.

¹⁵ I will give her her vineyards from there,
And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope;
She shall sing there,
As in the days of her youth,
As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. Hosea 2:14, 15

In order to be brought into the wilderness and up from the land of Egypt, Israel must first go into the land of Egypt. This is where the story is today. Israel has arrived and they will be planted in the land of Goshen; the land of "drawing near."

There, for the next 215 years, they will draw ever-nearer to the day when they will be called out of that land. Considering that our nation is only 238 years old, to us 215 years sounds like a long time. But each year of Egypt was a year where they could grow and flourish.

Eventually, like today, they would have a sufficient number to dwell in and assume control of the promised land. Nothing is arbitrary with God and all things, even seemingly long delays in His plans, fit perfectly. As we read the

Bible, we can learn that the long delays in our own life actually serve a great purpose.

When we get to the end of them, we can clearly see in hindsight that the delay was exactly what was needed for the circumstances. So don't fret over them, revel in them. In the process, He is taking care of you and providing for you.

We see this in today's story about Israel's arrival in Egypt. It is a story of God's gracious care for His chosen people and so let's turn to this superior word again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Five Brothers Before Pharaoh (Verses 1-3)

¹ 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.”

Joseph was finally reunited with his father and his brothers when he went down to meet them in Goshen. They stayed behind and Joseph then went back to Pharaoh with his happy report. They had completely removed themselves from Canaan as is seen in the words, "their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come."

The move isn't a temporary one, but rather one that is expected to continue on for at least the duration of the famine, but which will actually last for 215 years. It is now the year 2299AM and they won't actually depart until the Exodus in the year 2514/5AM.

Interestingly, it is now also 215 years since Abraham was given his original covenant promises from God in Genesis 12. At that time, there was also a famine so he left Canaan and entered Egypt. And this was exactly 430 years after the Flood. That visit to Egypt resulted in plagues on Pharaoh's house.

Exactly 430 years after that, the chosen line of Israel, who are now again in Egypt, will be enslaved by the Egyptians under Pharaoh's rule and it will

again result in plagues and their being forced out of the land. In both instances, their departure from Egypt results in carrying out the great wealth of Egypt along with them.

As it says in Ecclesiastes and as we will learn is O so true, both in the Bible and in history –

"That which has been is what will be,
That which is done is what will be done,
And there is nothing new under the sun." Ecclesiastes 3:15

The account now with Israel arriving in Egypt is at exactly the halfway point between these two things. The patterns of the Bible are rich, complex, and astonishing. How wonderful it is when we think about how God has woven everything together in this great drama we're participating in.

During both times in Egypt - that of Abraham and that of Israel, it seemed that things had turned out for the worse for them, but the Lord had a handle on all of it each step of the way. So there they are in Goshen.

This name means "drawing near" or "approaching." Two things which are drawing near in the future are being pictured. The first is the second half of the seven years of tribulation seen in the book of Revelation. The second is the literal return of Christ.

The name Goshen is being used to show that the end times are truly drawing near. Israel is back in the land and they are being readied for their meeting with the Lord, just as Joseph and his family have now been reconciled here in Genesis.

After these Genesis stories, this place Goshen in Egypt will only be mentioned one more time. That is at the time of the Exodus when the plagues come upon Pharaoh, plagues which are actually parallel to and prefigure the great plagues of destruction in the tribulation period recorded in Revelation.

*Details in the Bible repeat time and again we know
And in the stories there is magnificent harmony
This gives us comfort that everything will happen as God says so
And that we can trust every single word of Bible prophecy*

²And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh.

This verse, right here, was used by one very well known pastor to say that only some Christians will be raptured. The pastor who said this is one of the best speakers and yet he ranks among the very worst theologians.

The notion of a saved believer not being taken out at the rapture violates the premise that we are saved by faith and then given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our promised redemption. Don't buy into such nonsense. It is bondage designed to scare believers into a state of submission to whatever the pastor dictates.

His analyses are often wrong and they are filled with bad doctrine, misleading statements, and incorrect assumptions. He is one of the great figures in Christian TV today who I wholly recommend people to NOT listen to, though I will leave his name unsaid here.

He is also one of Israel's worst enemies, not because he doesn't support them; he does. But he supports them to the point that they believe they are saved as Jews because they are Jews regardless of whether they make a personal commitment to Christ or not.

No wonder he completely botched his analysis of this passage. He came at it under the supposition that it is picturing those in the church, not Israel. But the entire panorama of these stories of Joseph's life picture Israel's coming reconciliation with Jesus.

In this verse, there is a most unusual phrasing of the Hebrew. It says *umiqseh ekhav laqah khamishah anashim* - "from the 'end' or 'extremity' of his brothers he took five men."

There is a lot of debate about what this means and six prevalent possibilities have been given over the past two thousand years -

1) He randomly took five of his brothers. 2) He took five of the meanest-looking, because if he took the best looking, Pharaoh would keep them for his own service, thus separating the family. 3) He took five of the healthiest and best-looking in hopes of impressing Pharaoh and thus making him look good in Pharaoh's eyes 4) He took five of the youngest of them. 5) He took five of the oldest. 6) He took five from both extremes, some of the oldest and some of the youngest.

Using the same word and the same number of men later in Judges 18:2, it says this -

"So the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, men of valor from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and search it.
Judges 18:2

In Judges, it calls them "men of valor" and so it was the best of group who were selected. But whichever five of Joseph's brothers it is, they aren't identified for a reason. This is because *who* they are isn't important. All of this speculation is irrelevant. It is the number five that is being focused on, not who the five are.

In the Bible the numbers one through three speak of the first three mysteries, that of the Godhead - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Four speaks of the mystery of God's manifestation through creation. And then five speaks the next revealed mystery, redemption.

It is the people called out from mankind, redeemed and saved. And therefore *five* is therefore the number of grace. In picture then, these five are those spoken of in Zechariah 13. During the tribulation period, most of Israel will die, but a remnant will be saved by grace. Here is what it says -

And it shall come to pass in all the land,"
Says the LORD,
"That two-thirds in it shall be cut off *and* die,
But *one*-third shall be left in it:
I will bring the *one*-third through the fire,
Will refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them.
I will say, 'This *is* My people';
And each one will say, 'The LORD *is* my God.'" Zechariah 13:8, 9

The reason for the unusual wording of the verse where it says "from the 'end' or 'extremity' of his brothers he took five men" is because it is from the end, or extremity of those left at the end of the tribulation who are being pictured.

They are those who are left alive by grace and who will be brought into the presence of the Lord, represented by Pharaoh. The unusual Hebrew of the verse was used to show us a prophetic picture of the future.

³ Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What *is* your occupation?"

This is exactly what Joseph said they would be asked before he took them to Pharaoh. As they are Joseph's brothers, he would want to know what their trade was so that he might find a position for them in Egypt as an honor to Joseph.

Joseph knew Pharaoh well enough to know that this was coming. And he also knew that it would be important to keep the family together. In order to do that, he gave them advanced instructions on what to say...

^{3(con't)} And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants *are* shepherds, both we *and* also our fathers."

And exactly what Joseph instructed them to say, they said in reply to Pharaoh. They are keepers of the flocks and it has been that way

throughout their generations. They said this because shepherds are considered an abomination to the Egyptians and so he would keep them all isolated from the people and together as a clan.

God ensured these things would come about in order to keep the people as a collective unit until it was time to bring them out of Egypt. Although the time is 215 years, it is no different than what God will do during the tribulation period.

He will keep the people safe and redeem them by great judgments on the world, just as He will bring great judgments on Egypt at the Exodus. All these patterns keep repeating themselves to show us that God is in control of the entire span of history.

*That which has been is what will be
That which is done is what will be done
God repeats the many details of history
And there is nothing new under the sun*

*He does this for our benefit, that we can trust He is in control
In the repetitions there is a chance for us to believe
That if He can do this in the world then He can do it for our soul
In Him there is no worry and our every burden He does relieve*

II. We Have Come to Dwell (Verse 4)

⁴And 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.

There is the hand of God all over this verse. It is amazing how much is connected elsewhere to what the brothers now tell Pharaoh. First they tell him that they "have come to dwell in the land." This was prophesied by the Lord to Abraham about 200 years earlier. In Genesis 15, it says this -

¹² Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror *and* great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Genesis 15:12-14

Whether they realized it or not, their lives were being directed by a higher Force which had brought them down to Egypt by a series of events which had been ongoing since the world was created. And along the way, God had provided hints as to the plan.

The reason why they came to Egypt is explained next. It was because, as they said, "your servants have no pasture for their flocks." Despite being the chosen people, they have subordinated themselves to Pharaoh by using the term, "your servants."

And this goes directly back to the dreams of Joseph from 22 years earlier. His dreams, which he relayed to them, showed that they would bow to him, implying that they would be subordinated to him. Because he is the second to Pharaoh, they have again subordinated themselves to Joseph in their words to Pharaoh.

Every detail, once again, has worked toward the next step of God's plan. Not a gust of wind nor a drop of rain has failed to be used to bring about His intentions.

And finally in their words, they explain why there are no pastures for their flocks. They say to Pharaoh, "for the famine *is* severe in the land of Canaan." In saying this, they confirm to Pharaoh exactly what Joseph prophesied concerning Pharaoh's dreams about nine years earlier. There in Genesis 41 it said -

"Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; ³⁰ but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land.

³¹ So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine

following, for it *will be* very severe.³² And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." Genesis 41:29-32

They have used the exact same term for the harshness of the famine that Joseph used then. It is the word *kaved*, "heavy." Even the words within the text show us the overarching hand of God on every detail of the story.

And thus, if we apply these things to our own walk with God, we can see that every detail of what happens around us is used by Him to meet His intended end. As a great example of this, I'll tell you about a portion of today's sermon and how it came about.

I had a friend staying with me for a couple weeks. He came in to have some coffee in the morning which kept me from my usual routine. I wasn't miffed, but I knew I couldn't practice my sermon as I do each day and so I started typing this one. Because he was there, I got diverted a couple times and couldn't focus properly.

But because of that, I ended up looking for something in the wrong place and it took me to exactly what I needed concerning Abraham from 86 sermons ago. It was something I'd completely forgotten and yet it was exactly what I needed for understanding today's passage and fitting it into a correct perspective.

There is nothing that He is unaware of and if He can do this for a sermon heard by a handful of folks in Sarasota and some out on You Tube, then how much more attentive do you think He is concerning the really important issues in your own life.

This is a great God who has every detail in perfect control. Just look at the hundreds of years of planning to bring these sons of Israel into Pharaoh's presence to say in one sentence exactly what the Bible has already hinted at again and again.

And as an exceedingly great parallel, it was exactly the same word used to bring about the move by Abraham to Egypt 215 years earlier. The brothers

said, "for the famine *is* severe in the land." In Genesis 12:10, this is what it said about the time of Abraham -

Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine *was* severe in the land. Genesis 12:10

Both times, the same phrase is used, *ki kaved ha'raav b'erets* - "for the famine was severe in the land."

⁴ (con't) **Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen."**

Because of the great and heavy famine which has taken away pasture for flocks in the higher lands of Canaan, they have come to Egypt where their lands still have some pastures left. And so, with this as their only option and their only way to continue as shepherds, they now ask for the right to dwell in Goshen.

Surely the name, Goshen, or "drawing near" would be from this day on a continual reminder that God's day of returning them to their own land was drawing near. The promise had been made and it would be fulfilled in due time.

*Time and again we see God's divine hand
Upon our lives and everything that happens around us
Even the rain or the lack of it upon the land
Is used to bring us to calling out for Jesus*

*Nothing is really out of control in our lives
Everything is directed by our Lord, the great God
Let us not be troubled as against us the world strives
He is surely in complete control of the path that we trod*

III. Dwell in the Best of the Land; Dwell in Goshen (Verses 5 & 6)

⁵ Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, "Your father and your brothers have come to you.

This seems like an unnecessary verse because of its obvious nature. But it isn't superfluous. Instead, it isn't repeating the obvious, such as "Your father and brothers have arrived." Rather it is an acknowledgement of Joseph's position and authority.

"It is to you they have come, how could I turn you down concerning their request." The picture is obvious. When Israel is reconciled to Jesus, God will not withhold any good thing from them. The 84th Psalm perfectly reflects the sentiment here -

"For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;
No good *thing* will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly." Psalm 84:11

⁶The land of Egypt *is* before you.

Egypt in Hebrew is *mitsraim* which means "double distress." In this place of double distress, Pharaoh offers to Joseph anything suitable to the task of caring for his family and his people. Someday, the world will truly be in double distress, without God and at war with each other.

But there will be a group of God's people who have come to Jesus, just as they have come to Joseph. And God will grant them a place where they can be protected, nourished, and continued through the time of distress. When God sees that they have come to Jesus, they will again be His people and He will so tend for them.

⁶(con't) **Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land;**

While the world suffers through the famine, completely dependent on the grain of Pharaoh for survival, the Israelites will be in the best of the land. It will be close enough to the Nile to allow water to filter into the land and provide grass.

While the Egyptians will stagnate, lose their property and their possessions, the Bible tells us that the Israelites will not only keep their possessions, but

they will grow and multiply exceedingly. Every detail is preplanned by God from the beginning to the end.

And again, in future because of their location, they will be close enough to the Nile so that a baby will be placed into a basket and floated down the river to the area near the house of another Pharaoh. There he will be drawn out and he will become Israel's human redeemer and lawgiver, Moses.

Nothing is left to chance, everything is preplanned, and your own destiny is as set in God's mind as was that of Joseph, Moses, and all of Israel. It is more than amazing to contemplate.

⁶(con't) **let them dwell in the land of Goshen.**

The royal decree is given. It is as much an exemption from taxes as one could get. And it is divinely directed welfare for the people of Israel. Soon, the continuing of the famine will leave the Egyptians with nothing left, but in Goshen there will be food and prosperity.

Let them dwell in the land of Goshen, the land of drawing near. Every day that passes will draw Israel that much nearer to their deliverance and a return to the promised land. And for those who are in Christ, each day also draws us one day closer to our own deliverance. As pilgrims, we are living in the land of Goshen.

And so we should live our lives in that manner. As the book of Hebrews says in an amazing parallel to what Goshen pictures -

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." Hebrews 10:23-25

***6(fin) And if you know *any* competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock."**

These final words for the day show that despite their isolated location, Pharaoh would still like to honor Joseph by offering any of his brothers work based on their ability. The NKJV translates them as "competent men," but it's a word *khayil*, which is widely translated.

For fun, I checked several other versions and here are their translations: special ability, special skills, able men, capable men, men of activity, especially skilled, qualified, men of valor, men of ability, industrious men.

The word *khayil* indicates strength and comes from the word *khul*, "to twist." The idea is that of added strength in a twisted rope. It is to such notable and resilient people as this that he offers care of his own personal flocks. And these certainly would also be in the land of Goshen where the pastures were the best.

The picture here should be obvious. Though the Gentile church has already been raptured, there is what the book of Revelation calls "the great white multitude." They are Gentiles who have come to Christ since the start of the tribulation. It is these people whom the sealed 144000 of Israel will evangelize.

In fact, in Exodus 12:38, we read these words, "A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock." It won't be only Jews, but Gentiles as well who will be carried through the tribulation and into the millennial kingdom.

And it is to these shepherds, authorized by God, that Peter writes these words -

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." 1 Peter 5:2-4

These competent herdsmen certainly did their job well in the past. When Israel entered Egypt, there were 70 recorded names. When they leave, they will be numbered at 603,550 fighting aged men, along with women, children, and so on. The flocks will flourish, the people will multiply and God will be set for a great deliverance of His chosen people.

And the chosen shepherds of the tribulation period will do an equally noteworthy job. Revelation 7:9 says, that those saved during the tribulation will be "a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands."

Yes, God is in the business of doing things on a grand scale. He can start with one and end with more than the sand on the seashore. Never underestimate the glorious work of God!

*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you
Serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly
And God will amaze with the results that ensue
So shepherd not for dishonest gain, but eagerly*

*Nor act as lords over those entrusted to you
But being examples to the flock each and every day
And when the Chief Shepherd appears, this thing He will do
He will grant you the crown of glory that does not fade away*

We here today serve an awesome God; *the* awesome God. He has entrusted us with life, time, and place. Your life isn't your own, but it was given to you to glorify Him. The time you were born was selected as the most advantageous for the person you are. No other time in history would have worked out as well for you.

And the place you are is the place you belong. From your birth to your parents, in the place you came to be - all the way until your dying day, God selected the place where your feet would step in anticipation of you using that placement to bring honor and glory to Him.

Take every advantage of every moment. Time slips by so fast that it will be gone before you know it. And remember this as you go. The cross of Jesus Christ handled our sin problem; the resurrection of Jesus Christ proved that our sin problem was handled.

Closing Verse: For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:27, 28

Next Week: Philippians 3:4-11 (To Know Jesus Christ and the Power of His Resurrection) (Resurrection Day Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Grace in the Land of Goshen

Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said
“My father and my brothers, as well
Their flocks and their herds and all that they possess
And maybe even a stray gazelle

Have come from the land of Canaan
And indeed they are in the land of Goshen

And he took five men from among his brothers
And presented them to Pharaoh
Just these five without the others

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, it is our vocation
And they said to Pharaoh during the talks
“We have come to dwell in the land

Because your servants have no pasture for their flocks
For the severe famine in Canaan is also at hand
Now therefore, please let your servants dwell
In the land of Goshen
To us that would be so swell

Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, what he already knew
“Your father and your brothers have come to you

The land of Egypt is before you
Have your father and brothers dwell
In the best of the land they have come to
Let them in the land of Goshen excel
And if you know any competent men among them
Then over my livestock make them chief herdsmen

Joseph ensured that Israel would survive
During the years of famine that still lay head
In those years they would be kept alive
And to live without fear or dread

God also has ensured that in the future Israel
Will be kept safe through the Great Tribulation
This is the wondrous grace of which the Bible does tell
Abundantly poured out on the undeserving nation

In the same way, God gave to us such abundant grace
When He sent to Calvary's cross His beloved Son Jesus
In this act we are restored to His favorable face
And in it eternal life has been granted to us

Thank You, O God, for Your marvelous love
Thank You for the gift of Your own precious Son
Because of Him someday we'll be in the heaven's above
When this earthly life is finally done

Hallelujah and Amen...

