

JOSEPH SETTLES THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT **(Genesis 46:31—47:12)**

God had promised the land of Canaan to His chosen people, and He would ultimately keep His promise about the Promised Land. However, by His design the Israelites would live as foreigners in Egypt for four hundred years (Genesis 15:13-14). One reason for this extended absence from Canaan had to do with God's grace in allowing the inhabitants of Canaan, the Amorites, to turn from their sin rather than attain a level of sin that demanded God's judgment (Genesis 15:16). Another reason was that God chose to prosper His people, both in number and wealth, within the land of Egypt (Genesis 46:3). Egypt would be able to sustain the growing number of Israelites. For these reasons, and probably others, God led His people to Egypt. Joseph was the instrument in God's hand to settle the Israelites in the best region of Egypt, the Land of Goshen. By settling the Israelites in Egypt, Joseph was both preserving the lives of his family and advancing the grand covenant of God. God directs the times and places in which we live to fulfill His purpose in our lives.

**Prudence—as God's people, we should
welcome the advice of wise counselors (46:31-34).**

Even though Joseph held great authority in Egypt, Pharaoh was still supreme. Joseph counseled his brothers so that they could speak wisely to Pharaoh and secure Goshen as their home.

Joseph described his plan to speak to Pharaoh on behalf of his family (46:31-32).

Joseph anticipated that his family could settle peacefully in Goshen (Genesis 45:10), and Pharaoh had already expressed his endorsement of this plan (Genesis 45:17-18). However, it was still necessary for Joseph's brothers to formally receive this gift from Pharaoh. Joseph explained that he would inform Pharaoh that his brothers and families had arrived from Canaan. He would tell Pharaoh that they were shepherds and herdsmen who had brought their flocks and herds with them, implying that they desired to stay in Egypt and would need land to sustain their animals. In this way Joseph would pave the way for his brothers to have an audience with Pharaoh.

Joseph explained how his family was to respond to Pharaoh in order to be permitted to settle in Goshen (46:33-34).

Furthermore, Joseph explained to his brothers that Pharaoh would enquire about their occupation. They were to answer that they, like their ancestors, tended livestock. Even though shepherds were detestable to the Egyptians, who thrived on a crop-based economy, Pharaoh would allow them to live in Goshen on the outer edges of the Nile Delta. Joseph gave wise counsel, and his brothers prudently followed his advice.

**Propriety— as God’s people, we should
treat those in authority with the utmost respect (47:1-6).**

Joseph’s brothers were about to stand before Pharaoh, the most powerful man in the world in that day. They would need to follow proper protocol and conduct themselves with propriety. Through Joseph’s counsel these brothers showed proper respect and won Pharaoh’s favor.

Joseph told Pharaoh that his family had arrived from Canaan and had settled in Goshen (47:1).

Joseph went to Pharaoh and explained that his family had recently arrived from Canaan with all their flocks, herds, and possessions. They had stopped in the region of Goshen and were, presumably, awaiting permission to settle there permanently. Joseph had prepared the way for his brothers to present themselves before Pharaoh.

Pharaoh questioned Joseph’s brothers about their occupation and they responded as Joseph had recommended (47:2-4).

Joseph chose five of his brothers to present their family’s situation to Pharaoh—it was probably unnecessary and might have even been distracting to parade all eleven brothers before the king. Seemingly on cue, Pharaoh asked Joseph’s brothers about their occupation. They responded as Joseph had counseled, referring to themselves as Pharaoh’s servants and telling Pharaoh that they were shepherds just like their ancestors. They explained that the famine had forced them to leave Canaan and they requested permission to live in Goshen.

Pharaoh permitted Joseph to settle his family in Goshen and invited some of Joseph’s family to tend his own cattle (47:5-6).

Pharaoh addressed Joseph, acknowledging that Joseph’s family had indeed come to Egypt for relief from the famine. He assured Joseph that the whole land of Egypt was theirs to enjoy. Pharaoh encouraged Joseph to settle his family in the best part of Egypt, specifically the region of Goshen. In addition, Pharaoh invited Joseph’s family to supply him with skillful herdsmen for his own cattle. Clearly Pharaoh’s blessing rested on Joseph’s family. Clearly God’s blessing rested on the Israelites.

**Blessing— as God’s people, we can share the
grace of God with people in all walks of life (47:7-10).**

Even as Pharaoh had blessed the Israelites by giving them the Land of Goshen, so Joseph’s father would bless Pharaoh by expressing God’s grace.

Joseph presented his father Jacob to Pharaoh and Jacob blessed Pharaoh (47:7).

Next, Joseph brought his father Jacob into Pharaoh's presence. Upon their meeting, Jacob "blessed" Pharaoh, probably pronouncing a blessing on him based on the goodness of God that Jacob had experienced in his recent reunion with his son.

Pharaoh asked Jacob about his age, and Jacob responded that his pilgrimage had been short and difficult in comparison to his ancestors (47:8-9).

Jacob had achieved a ripe old age, and it would have been natural for Pharaoh to ask this patriarch how old he was. Jacob responded by describing his life as a "pilgrimage," one that had lasted 130 years. Even at this age Jacob had not yet come near the ages of his grandfather Abraham or his father Isaac. Abraham lived to the age of 175 (Genesis 25:7), and Isaac lived to 180 (Genesis 35:28). In addition, Jacob described his life as "difficult." After all, he was born in Canaan, sojourned for twenty years in Mesopotamia, returned at the risk of his life to Canaan, watched his family engage in a number of sinful practices, lost his favored son for over twenty years, and now had been uprooted once again to finish out his life in Egypt. Jacob had brought much of this misery on himself by failing to trust God and His promises. Life had been difficult. But God hadn't abandoned Jacob. In fact, God continued to bless him.

Jacob again blessed Pharaoh and then returned to his family (47:10).

Jacob concluded his encounter with Pharaoh by once again pronouncing a blessing on this powerful monarch. We can't help but think that this blessing included a word about the true and living God who had blessed Jacob and his family.

**Deliverance— as God's people, we must
gratefully recognize God's saving work in our lives (47:11-12).**

Through a series of circumstances, guided by the miracle working power of God, Joseph went from being a slave to a prisoner to the vizier of Egypt. In his privileged position he was able to save his family from devastation and death. God was at work in Joseph's life to rescue his family and preserve God's grand covenant.

Joseph settled his family in the best part of the land of Egypt (47:11).

According to Genesis 47:11, Joseph was responsible for settling the Israelites—his father, his brothers, and their families—in the land of Egypt. By God's miraculous orchestration of events, Joseph received the authority and opportunity to relocate his family from Canaan to the best region of Egypt, the Land of Goshen. In this verse the text uses the term "Ramses" to describe the location in which the Israelites settled. This term was apparently a later name for Goshen, probably current when Moses wrote the Pentateuch (or possibly added by an even later scribe). Joseph had identified Goshen as the dwelling place for his family and Pharaoh had endorsed this place. However, it was

God who ultimately provided Goshen for His people. God orchestrates the circumstances of our lives to put us in the right place at the right time. Acts 17:26 reinforces the idea that God determines the times and places in which we live.

Joseph provided his father and family with food, sustaining them through the years of famine (47:12).

In addition to a place to live, Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and his family with food—enough to sustain the whole family including the littlest child. The Israelites would survive, and even thrive, in the midst of famine (and eventually slavery). God had provided for His people through His servant Joseph. He had delivered them from otherwise certain disaster. God delivers us from the disaster that our sins deserve by providing for our salvation through Jesus Christ. He deserves our faith, our worship, and our great gratitude because He's a God of salvation. He's the God who directs the times and places in which we live in order to fulfill His purpose in our lives.