

Genesis 46-50 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Outline of Genesis -

- I. Introduction • Chs. 1-11
- II. The Patriarchs [Abraham & His Descendants] • Chs. 12-50
 - A. Abraham – Chs. 12-25
 - B. Isaac – Chs. 26-28
 - C. Jacob – Chs. 28-36
 - D. Joseph – Chs. 37-50

1. Joseph Is Sold Into Slavery (Ch. 37)
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2. Sidelight: Peril In Canaan (Chapter 38)**3. Joseph The Slave (Chapters 39 & 40)****4. Joseph The Prime Minister (Chapters 41-45)****5. Joseph & Jacob Reunited (Chapter 46-50)**

Genesis 46

a. 46:1-7 • From Hebron to Egypt

¹So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

Jacob's sons had returned to where the family had settled in Hebron with the news that Joseph was alive and had risen to the lofty position of Prime Minister of Egypt.

Joseph knew there were going to be 5 more years of severe famine over all the region of the Middle East and there was no way Jacob's extensive flocks and household would be able to weather the crisis.

Joseph's skillful administration of Egypt during the previous 7 years of prosperity had ensured there were sufficient stores of food and supplies in Egypt and he told his brothers to return to Jacob and persuade him that a migration south was necessary.

They did, and Jacob was more than happy to make the trip, knowing he'd be reunited with his favorite son whom he had long past given up hoping he would ever see again.

On the way South toward Egypt, Jacob stopped at Beersheba, the ancient camping place of his father and grandfather.

It was there that Abraham had planted tamarisk trees many years before. [Gen. 21]

Beersheba was on the northern edge of the desert and was a barren place.

But Abraham had planted a grove of *shade trees* in anticipation of God fulfilling His promise to give his descendants the *entire land* of Israel.

Now, as Jacob, called by his *new* name, *Israel*, passed through Beersheba, those trees had grown tall and thick and made for wonderful shade.

They stood as a testimony to Israel's grandfather's faith – and to God's faithfulness.

And in that moment, Israel wondered if going to Egypt was really the right thing – after all, going to Egypt had always been a sign of a *lack of faith* for his ancestors!

It was during a famine in Abraham's time that he'd gone to Egypt and gotten into trouble. [Gen. 12]

God had appeared to Isaac, Israel's father and told him *NOT* to go to Egypt. [Gen. 26:2]

And yet, Israel had heard the story of God's *appearing* to Abraham when He first verified His covenant with him, and *foretold* how Abraham's descendants would leave the land for a time, and then come back as a mighty nation.

Genesis 15:13-16 • ¹³Then [God] 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. ¹⁴And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.”

Israel had no way of knowing if this trip South was the fulfillment of what God had said to his grandfather.

All he could do was take the steps the Spirit of God was leading him to right at that moment, and in light of all that had

happened recently, it seemed as though the Lord was directing him to go to Egypt.

When they arrived in Beersheba, this ancient site of the faithfulness of God and what it means to live by faith, he paused to make sacrifice to God.

And it was then that God confirmed the move . . .

²Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, “Jacob, Jacob!” And he said, “Here I am.” ³So He said, “I *am* God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. ⁴I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again*; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.”

God made 4 statements of purpose to Israel here:

- 1) “I *am* God, the God of your father.” – All that is happening is My doing!
- 2) “Do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there.” – God will use this trip to Egypt for His sovereign purposes.
- 3) “I will go down with you to Egypt” – God was not like the territorial deities of the rest of the ancient world, who only exercised authority over a region or over some aspect of nature. While His purposes for Israel centered on the land of Canaan, He was not contained within the geographical borders of some region. His presence would continue with them as they went to Egypt.
- 4) “And I will also surely bring you up *again*.” – When the time was right, then God would work to effect their departure and bring them back to the land of promise.

When God says that Joseph will put his hand on Jacob’s eyes – it means that Jacob will not *survive* his son – Joseph will be there to close Jacob’s lifeless eyes.

⁵Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. ⁶So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to

Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him. ⁷His sons and his sons' sons, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

b. 46:8-27 • The Sons of Jacob and Their Clans

⁸Now these were the names of the children of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: Reuben was Jacob's firstborn.

Now we get a listing of the sons of Jacob and their sons.

The reason this list is given at this point is because these men are the 12 tribes of Israel, along with the main clans in each of the 12 tribes.

It is these people who become the focus of the story in the rest of the OT.

In vs. 9-15 we get the descendants of Jacob from his wife Leah = 33

In vs. 16-18 – Jacob's concubine Zilpah = 16

In vs. 19-22 – Jacob's wife Rachel = 14

In vs. 23-25 – Jacob's concubine Bilhah = 7

So, when you add up the entire household of Jacob that went to Egypt it was 70 people.

²⁶All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all. ²⁷And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy.

Over the next 400 years, this 70 will turn into a nation of some 2 to 3 million!

c. 46:28-47:12 • Jacob Settles In Goshen

²⁸Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out before him *the way* to Goshen. And they came to the land of Goshen.

Joseph had already told his brothers where they were to settle when they returned and now that they are entering Egypt, Israel sent Judah on ahead to make contact with Joseph and find out exactly where they were to locate.

[Show Map of Goshen]

29 So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.

You can just imagine what a reunion that was!

30 And Israel said to Joseph, “Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you *are* still alive.” **31** Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, “I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, ‘My brothers and those of my father’s house, who *were* in the land of Canaan, have come to me. **32** And the men *are* shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.’ **33** So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, ‘What is your occupation?’ **34** that you shall say, ‘Your servants’ occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we *and* also our fathers,’ that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd *is* an abomination to the Egyptians.”

If shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians, why would Joseph press this point with Pharaoh? We would think they’d want to keep this a *secret*.

Actually, what Joseph was doing was making sure Israel would not be absorbed into the Egyptian culture like so many other ethnic groups had been absorbed by them.

The Egyptian culture was so powerful, so prosperous and influential, many smaller ethnic groups had been gobbled up by them – much like American culture has gobbled up dozens of smaller cultures and ethnic groups over the years.

America has long been known as the melting pot – where people from all over the world could come and immerse themselves in a new culture.

Today, America is populated by people whose ancestors came from Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, South America, from every corner of the globe – and yet they retain none of the cultural uniqueness or identity of their original homelands.

This was the danger Israel's family faced – that they might be gobbled up by the monolithic Egyptian culture.

But there was something in place in the Egyptian mindset Joseph knew he could tap into to help his family maintain their God-ordained *uniqueness*, and this was a knee-jerk aversion on the part of the Egyptians toward shepherds.

Engravings from this period reveal that shepherds were the very *lowest caste* or *level* of Egyptian society.

Probably because shepherds were nomadic by nature, while the Egyptians valued permanence and stability above all things, as expressed in their impressive monuments!

The Egyptians had themselves *begun* as a nomadic people, but had built an impressive civilization, and wanted to forget and distance themselves from their humble origins.

Thus, they loath shepherds and avoided them at all costs.

On the northeastern boundaries of their kingdom lay a region called Goshen which was only scarcely populated but was prime grazing land for flocks.

Joseph knew it would be perfect for his family's needs and would keep them isolated from Egyptian influences.

Genesis 47

¹Then 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.” ²And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. ³Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, “What *is* your occupation?” And they said to Pharaoh, “Your servants *are* shepherds, both we *and* also our fathers.” 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. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen.”

Joseph informed Pharaoh of the arrival of his family and then brought 5 of his brother before the Egyptian king.

He coached them to say that they had not come to *stay* in the land, but only to *sojourn* there for a time.

Notice v. 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.”

The word “dwell”, used twice here – refers to a temporary dwelling, not a permanent one; it would be better translated as “*sojourn*.”

The reason why Joseph was careful to coach his brothers to say this to Pharaoh was because when it came time for the family to *return* to Canaan, he wanted Pharaoh to remember that the family had come by his leave and invitation and that they had liberty to leave when they chose.

Their later detention by the Egyptians was a violation and wrong; they ought to have had the freedom to depart as they chose.

Their enslavement by the Egyptians was *illegal*.

⁵Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, “Your father and your brothers have come to you. ⁶The 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.” ⁷Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. ⁸Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How old *are* you?” ⁹And 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.” ¹⁰So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

When Joseph brought in his father before Pharaoh, it was clear he was an ancient man, and Pharaoh showed him the respect that was due his years.

Pharaoh's deference shown to Jacob was also a clear indication of just how much respect the King of Egypt had for Joseph!

This was Joseph's father – and in the thinking of that day, if you honored someone, their father deserved even *more* honor!

There's a chance that the Pharaoh who now sat on the throne is not the same as the Pharaoh for whom Joseph had interpreted the dreams.

This could be his son – so a younger man who would hold Joseph in a kind of awe, and who would really let Joseph run the kingdom.

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.

So, Jacob's family got all settled in in Goshen.

d. 47:13-26 • Joseph's Administration During The Famine

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.

During the famine, people had to go to the government administered storehouses Joseph had set up in the cities of Egypt to get food.

But the food wasn't free – they had to pay for it!

With no harvests, they had no income, and it wasn't long until everyone's savings had been depleted in the purchase of food.

All of the money had been transferred to Pharaoh's coffers.

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.” ¹⁷So 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.

Since there was no money left, the people sold their next most liquid asset in order to get food – their livestock.

Now of course, all of the herds weren’t transferred *literally* to Pharaoh – just the title to them; the people continued to take care of them, but now as hired labor.

¹⁸When 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. ¹⁹Why 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.” ²⁰Then 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. ²¹And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from *one* end of the borders of Egypt to the *other* end. ²²Only 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.

Once their livestock was gone, the only thing left was their land and property, which they turned the title of over to Pharaoh.

It was during this time when the entire Egyptian system became almost a serfdom, with the power of Pharaoh becoming absolute over the affairs of the Kingdom.

The only group Pharaoh did not usurp control over was the religious sphere.

The priest never had to buy food because Pharaoh had promised to

give them an allotment of food.

Religion reigned supreme in Egypt with a usually steady alliance between the temple and the throne.

The priests said that the Pharaoh was the living embodiment of the highest god in the Egyptian pantheon and his words were the words of god.

Conversely Pharaoh allowed the priests to exercise tremendous control over large portions of Egyptian society.

23Then 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.”

Joseph now made the temporary 20% tax that had marked the 7 prosperous years, a perpetual law.

25So 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.

A 20% tax may seem like a lot, until you compare it with the taxes we pay today, which all told are about 35%.

e. 47:27-31 • Joseph’s Pledge to Bury Jacob in Hebron

27So 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.” ³¹Then he said, “Swear to me.” And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed.

As Jacob knows his days are winding down, he makes Joseph take a solemn oath not to bury him in Egypt.

Jacob has come to the place of yearning for the fulfillment of God’s promise and secures a vow from his son that he will return him to the land of promise.

When at the end of v. 31 it says that *Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed* it means he became *bed-ridden*.

Genesis 48

f. 48:1-22 • Jacob Blesses Joseph’s Sons

¹Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, “Indeed your father *is* sick”; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. ²And Jacob was told, “Look, your son Joseph is coming to you”; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed.

³Then Jacob said to Joseph: “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz [aka Bethel] in the land of Canaan and blessed me, ⁴and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.’

⁵And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, *are* mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. ⁶Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. ⁷But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when *there was* but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).”

This conversation is a private one between Jacob and his favored son

from his favored wife.

And what Jacob is doing is maximizing the blessing he'd always intended to give to Joseph; he does it this way . . .

Jacob thought he'd lost Joseph all those years before.

Now, he's regained him, but even more than he could have hoped for – he has grandsons from Joseph!

Jacob can think of no greater blessing for Joseph than to adopt his sons as his own, elevating them to the rank of *his own sons*, and thus giving them equal status with the other tribes of Israel!

In fact, Jacob says that Ephraim and Manasseh will take the place of the first and second born – Reuben & Simeon!

Thus, the double portion of the birthright and inheritance Jacob intended for Joseph will in fact be given to him – one portion to Manasseh and one portion to Ephraim.

8 Then Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, "Who are these?"

This is now the formal introduction of Joseph's sons to their grandfather.

It begins with Jacob asking who they are so that Joseph can introduce them by name.

9 Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me in this *place*." And he said, "Please bring them to me, and I will bless them." 10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so *that* he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. 11 And Israel said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!" 12 So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. 13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought *them* near him.

The right hand was the hand of favor, so Joseph brought the boys to his father so that Jacob would set his right hand on the first-born's, Manasseh's, head.

14 Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid *it* on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. **15** And he blessed Joseph, and said: "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has fed me all my life long to this day, **16** The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Jacob elevates the sons of Joseph to the position and rank of being his own sons.

17 Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. **18** And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this *one is* the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." **19** But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

As Jacob has aged, he's become more and more in tune with the things of God and can see ahead prophetically into the future. Just as he as the younger had been the favored son of God, so Joseph's younger son would take the lead among his descendants.

20 So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will bless, saying, 'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!'" And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. **22** Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

By making Joseph into two tribes through his sons, he is giving him twice as much as any of his brothers.

Genesis 49

g. 49:1-33 • Jacob's Final Words

1 And Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days:

2 “Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob, And listen to Israel your father.

Jacob knew that God was stirring him to impart these words to his sons.

He knew the great destiny that lay before them as the fathers of the tribes that would form the nexus of God's great promises stretching all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

So he gathers them round his bed and beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest, lays out their destiny.

He begins by identifying himself both as Jacob and as Israel – the carnal conniver and the one ruled by faith in God.

Jacob has lived in both roles and sees both men still alive in him. As he looks at his sons, he can see both Jacob and Israel in them too.

So while some of what he says to them speaks of the blessings of faith, some also speaks of the curses of carnality.

Their future will be determined by whether they are more like *Jacob* or like *Israel*.

3 “Reuben, you are my firstborn, My might and the beginning of my strength, The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.

4 Unstable as water, you shall not excel, Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled *it*— He went up to my couch.

As the firstborn, Reuben had the premier claim to the inheritance, but he forfeited his claim when he gave in to his lust and had sex with Bilhah, his father's concubine. [Gen. 35:22]

Jacob could see a troubling *instability* in Reuben that exempted him from being one who could carry leadership in the family.

He lacked consistency and the stability that's necessary in good leadership.

As we look at the history of the tribe of Reuben we see that it never *does* excel.

It provides not a single prophet, judge, or king for the nation of Israel.

5 “Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place.

6 Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.

7 Cursed be their anger, for *it is* fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob And scatter them in Israel.

The next two brothers, Simeon and Levi, are linked because all throughout their lives they paled around together.

These are the two who concocted and carried out the plan to wipe out all the men of Shechem.

They were *hot heads*, the both of them and were just plain cruel.

Their fate was to end up divided and spread out as tribes, not really having their own allotment of land when they came into the land 400 years later under Joshua.

Actually-the tribe of Levi ended up *redeeming itself* by siding with the Lord during the whole rebellion with the golden calf – and for this, they were rewarded and made the tribe of *priests*.

This is why they ended up being spread throughout all Israel, as a blessing in their role as being mediators between the people and God.

Simeon, on the other hand, ended up being allotted the southernmost region of Israel, a barren wilderness constantly harassed by fierce raiders.

The tribe of Simeon was never able to take the land allotted to them and ended up just sort of blending into and merging with the rest of the tribes.

[Show map of tribal boundaries]

8 “Judah, you are *he* whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand *shall be* on the neck of your enemies; Your

father's children shall bow down before you.

9 Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?

10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

11 Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes.

12 His eyes are darker than wine, And his teeth whiter than milk.

Jacob pours out a rich blessing on Judah, the 4th son and the one who, next to Joseph, had proven himself most capable of carrying on in the spiritual footsteps of his forefathers.

Yeah – there had been that unfortunate little episode with his daughter in law Tamar, but he'd learned his lessons and repented as his later words to Jacob and Joseph revealed.

Jacob makes it clear that it's through Judah that the rulers of the nation will come.

The tribe of Judah will provide them their greatest military leaders and ultimately, the Messiah shall arise from Judah.

v. 10 = “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.”

The scepter is a clear emblem of the power wielded by a king.

The scepter spoke of the power to grant or take life.

When a supplicant came before the throne, if the king extended his scepter, it meant acceptance.

If the king pulled the scepter away, the supplicant was hauled off and executed.

So the scepter came to symbolize the absolute power of government to take life.

Jewish scholars all knew and taught that what Jacob said in v. 10 was a clear prophecy that the Messiah, referred to here by the title *Shiloh*, which means “*He whose right it is*” would come from the tribe of Judah.

From David, who was of the tribe of Judah, until the time of the Herods, a prince of Judah was head over Israel.

Jacob foretold that the *scepter* would not depart from Judah *until* the Messiah came.

Even under their foreign masters during the period from the Persians and Greeks and then the Romans, Israel had a limited right to self-rule, including the power to exercise capital punishment, which in the Jewish mind was the essence of the power of the scepter.

But in 7 A.D. that changed. Herod and the Romans, in a bid to crack down on the growing unrest in the Jewish Sanhedrin revoked their right to exercise capital punishment.

The rabbis and religious scholars saw this as a disaster of cosmic proportions!

Not because of the political ramifications, but because in their minds, God's Word had been broken!

It had been foretold that the scepter would not depart from Judah until the Messiah came, and with the removal of the right of the rulers of Israel to exercise capital punishment, the scepter had departed and Messiah had not come – or so they thought!

What they didn't realize was that the Messiah had come!

And now we see why the gospels carry that interesting little story of the 12 year old Jesus who went with His parents to Jerusalem for the Passover and ended up reasoning with the rabbis in the temple courts.

This was more than a chance encounter! Their Shiloh had come and was presenting Himself to them – though they did not have eyes to see Him for who He was because he didn't appear in the package they were expecting.

Jacob went on to speak of the abundance the tribe of Judah would enjoy because of the richness of the region they would inherit in the land of Israel.

13 “Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; He *shall become* a haven for ships, And his border shall adjoin Sidon.

Jacob doesn't stick with the birth order; instead, he sticks with the sons as they come from their mothers. Zebulun and Issachar were also the sons of Leah, as were the first 4.

The region Zebulun occupied as a tribe lay between the Mediterranean on the west and the Sea of Galilee on the east.

14 “Issachar is a strong donkey, Lying down between two burdens;

15 He saw that rest was good, And that the land was pleasant; He bowed his shoulder to bear a *burden*, And became a band of slaves.

Issachar and the people who came from him were strong, but docile and tended toward laziness.

They made great soldiers when motivated and lead, as in the days of King David.

But when such dynamic leadership was lacking, they tended to become complacent and because they occupied rich land, they became the target of enemies who constantly raided them and carried them off as slaves.

<p>16 “Dan shall judge his people As one of the tribes of Israel.</p>
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17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, A viper by the path, That bites the horse’s heels So that its rider shall fall backward.

The name “Dan” means “judge” and this tribe did supply one of the most prominent of the Judges – Samson! [Judges 13:2]

But the tribe of Dan ended up being a source of real evil for the nation of Israel.

This is the tribe that introduced idolatry into Israel. [Judges 18] Jeroboam set up one of his idolatrous golden calves in the city of Dan. [1 Kings 12]

And Dan ended up becoming a center of idol-worship. [Amos 8]

V. 17 has proven to be an interpretive puzzle because what Jacob is referring to is cryptic.

Probably the best way to understand it is to draw interpret the word “serpent” in the way it’s been used in Genesis, which is as a representative of the devil.

Taking it this way, some think this may be a prophecy that the antichrist will arise from the tribe of Dan.

Daniel 11:37 & Jeremiah 8:16 lend some support for this, and the tribe of Dan is omitted from the listing of tribes of Israel

in Rev. 7.

If this is accurate and what is intended here, then Dan is simply being cast as a tribe that continually hinders the forward pursuit of the people of God.

Jacob now gives voice to his yearning for the Lord . . .

18 I have waited for your salvation, O LORD!

v. 18 may be *another* indication that the words ascribed to Dan do indeed look to the last days, as v. 1 says they would.

Jacob has had a vision and foreboding of the coming of the antichrist, and this moves him to cry out for the coming of the real Christ!

The Hebrew word “salvation” here in v. 18 is *yeshuwah* - which we find translated as “Jesus” in our Bibles.

As Jacob cries out for salvation, he calls for Jesus!

19 “Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him, But he shall triumph at last.

The name “Gad” means “troop” and the Gadites helped form the backbone of Israel’s armies.

But they were another tribe which was subject to frequent attacks by Israel’s enemies.

20 “Bread from Asher shall be rich, And he shall yield royal dainties.

The tribe of Asher settled the region of the northernmost of Israel and was a rich agricultural land.

In fact, this is the region that supplied both David and Solomon the lion’s share of the materials they needed to build the glories of Jerusalem.

21 “Naphtali is a deer let loose; He uses beautiful words.

Deer haunt woods and forests, and this perfectly describes the region of Naphtali around the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

This was also the region for the majority of Jesus’ ministry and where most of His addresses were made – and so the reference to beautiful words.

22 “Joseph is a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a well; His branches run over the wall.

23 The archers have bitterly grieved him, Shot at him and hated him.

24 But his bow remained in strength, And the arms of his hands were made strong By the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (From there *is* the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),

25 By the God of your father who will help you, And by the Almighty who will bless you *With* blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.

26 The blessings of your father Have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.

The blessing of Joseph has already been given in chapter 48 when it was bestowed on his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

These two tribes ended up being among the most populous and together acquired the most land.

Here Jacob briefly reviews the history of Joseph.

Even when he was the object of the hatred and evil schemes of others, he maintained his faith in God, and God sustained him, prospering all he did.

Joseph is the main son *to whom* and *through whom* the promises of God to Abraham will now flow.

The course has been Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and now Joseph.

The tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim were mightily blessed with material prosperity as they settled in those regions which provided great pasturage and fields.

27 “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he shall devour the prey, And at night he shall divide the spoil.”

The thing that stands out about the tribe of Benjamin is that they were vicious warriors, men of great skill with weapons of war, and seemed bent toward violence.

28 All these *are* the twelve tribes of Israel, and this *is* what their father spoke to them. And he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing.

It has to be admitted that much of what Jacob said to each of these 12 sons is a tad arcane and difficult to interpret.

In all likelihood, that's because it *IS* prophetic and won't become clear until the unfolding of the last days.

29 Then he charged them and said to them: "I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite, ³⁰in the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. ³¹There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah. ³²The field and the cave that *is* there *were* purchased from the sons of Heth." ³³And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

It was as an act of faith that Jacob said he wanted to be buried in Canaan.

He wanted to stand with his father and grandfather in their union with God and His promise to give them the land.

He could think of no greater way to give testimony to his faith in the Lord than to ask them to bury him along with his ancestors in the place of promise.

Genesis 50

h. 50:1-14 • Jacob's Sons Bury Him in Hebron

1 Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him, and kissed him. **2** And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. **3** Forty days were required for him, for such are the days required for those who are embalmed; and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

Following the burial procedures for Egyptians, Joseph was *embalmed*. This was a process that took 40 days.

The period of official mourning over him was 70 days.

Since a deceased Pharaoh was only allotted 72 days, this meant

Jacob was accounted as a great man.

4Now when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the hearing of Pharaoh, saying, **5**‘My father made me swear, saying, “Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.” Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father, and I will come back.’”

6And Pharaoh said, “Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear.”

Since Joseph was serving Pharaoh in the capacity of a servant, he had to get permission to set out on this journey to Canaan – he’d be gone for some time.

7So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, **8**as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father’s house. Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds they left in the land of Goshen. **9**And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great gathering. **10**Then they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which *is* beyond the Jordan, and they mourned there with a great and very solemn lamentation. He observed seven days of mourning for his father. **11**And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, “This *is* a deep mourning of the Egyptians.” Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim, [Mourning of Egypt] which *is* beyond the Jordan.

As a high official of the Egyptians, Joseph commanded a lot of respect and when he secured permission to bury his father in Canaan, many of the officials of the kingdom saw it as a *state event* and turned out to accompany the funeral procession back to Canaan.

So many officials would need protection, so a large military guard

went with them.

But the presence of a military guard would also make the shorter route along the Gaza coast impossible since this was occupied by the Philistines who were hostile toward the Egyptians.

The procession had to take the longer route up the east side of the Dead Sea and the Jordan.

Crossing the Jordan would be a challenge with so large a group so they paused for a week to prepare – and during this time, as Joseph knew this was the last leg of the trip and he would soon be putting his father into the tomb at Hebron, he gave himself to another period of intense mourning that was joined by the entire camp.

12So his sons did for him just as he had commanded them. **13**For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as property for a burial place.

14And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father.

It may have been only the sons of Jacob that actually crossed the Jordan to bury their father.

Then they returned to the camp at Atad, and the entire procession returned to Egypt.

i. 50:15-21 • Joseph Reassures His Brothers

15When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him."

16So they sent *messengers* to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, **17**'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.'" Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. **18**Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."

Joseph wept because of the lack of trust this shows on his brothers' part toward him.

All the previous years and the good he'd done to them hadn't been enough to make them see him for the kind of man he was.

No – they were seeing him through the lens of the kind of men *they were*; and if the shoe was on the other foot, they'd be making Joseph pay!

But Joseph wasn't like them; never had been and never would be.

His forgiveness of them was sincere and complete.

The fear of the brothers was fueled by their sense of *guilt* at what they'd done so many years before!

They'd not fully embraced the power of the forgiveness Joseph had bestowed on them.

And the *reason* they hadn't grasped the forgiveness and so known the freedom from guilt forgiveness brings, was because they would *not have been forgiving* if they were in his position!

It was so hard for them to get their hearts and minds around the idea that Joseph had discharged their debt because they weren't this way with the offenses they'd endured.

So they concoct this little story about Jacob's request of leniency.

They knew they had no ground in asking for mercy, so they instead put their requests into the mouth of their dead father, knowing Joseph would be bound to it.

But it was a fiction because if Jacob had intended such a thing, he would have said it *himself* to Joseph.

Jacob knew he didn't need to make such a request because he knew his son's character and that he had indeed forgiven his brothers.

There's an important lesson in all this – our *general posture* toward the issue of forgiveness will set the pace for the level of guilt we endure.

As Jesus taught, if we fully understand and receive the forgiveness God offers us, it brings us to the place where we readily forgive others.

If we aren't forgiving of others, but instead store up hurts and offenses, it's a sign we've not fully understood how completely God forgiveness us.

Therefore, we'll be plagued with guilt, and this guilt will act like a

spiritual poison that will infect every level of our lives and relationships.

We see this in Joseph's brothers – and it turns them into men who mock their dead father's honored memory by putting these lying words in his mouth.

Joseph knows what they're saying is made up – and is heart-broken over their distorted view of reality.

19 Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God?

Meaning, even if he was disposed to be unforgiving, exacting revenge was out of his hands – vengeance belongs to God.

This is another important lesson about forgiveness – even if and when a person IS *unforgiving*, this is no excuse for them to treat the one who hurt them wrongly or in any way less than with love!

Two wrongs do not make a right!

So even when we've been sinned against and hurt, we are still required to act toward them in righteousness.

Only God can judge and then exact punishment – that task is not committed to us!

**20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive. 21 Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.”
And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.**

Once again we see Joseph's spiritual maturity come shining through.

His brothers have done nothing but sorely tried him all his life – it's been some 40 years now!

And yet he is still acting with grace and mercy toward them because it's what he's come to see God has shown him.

j. 50:22-26 • Joseph's Death

22 So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. 23 Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph's knees.

Joseph lived to a ripe old age of 110 and had the opportunity to play

with his grandchildren and even *great* grandchildren.

24And Joseph said to his brethren, “I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” **25**Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” **26**So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Joseph was accorded the same kind of honor as one of their own officials in Egypt.

He was embalmed according to their traditions, and then placed in a coffin, then interred in one of the monumental tombs that were common for Egyptian dignitaries at that time.

But before he died, Joseph did what his father had done with him; he secured a promise from his relatives that when they left to return to the Lord of Promise, they would take his remains with them and bury them along with his father at the cave of Machpelah.

When the Children of Israel left in the Exodus, Exodus 13:19 tells us that Moses carried Joseph’s bones with them.