

Moving Day – Genesis 45:16-47:12

For the first few months after Victoria and I got married, we were living in her parents' house, while we were waiting for the granny flat to be finished. Now to say the least - it was a very interesting time for us. As a couple, we were excited to settle into our married life together in our own space. But at the same time, we didn't want to get too settled, because we knew that in only a couple of months we would be moving out and any routines we established would change. There was a tension that we had to work through as we waited for our home to be ready.

In today's part of the Joseph story, we come to the conclusion of the family reunion between Joseph and his family. You might remember from the first half of Genesis 45, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers after keeping his identity a secret from them. There are tears of joy as the brothers embrace each other for the first time in over 20 years. Years of trauma express themselves in relief as Joseph hears that his father Jacob is still alive. There is reconciliation between Joseph and the brothers who sold him into slavery. If you are not familiar with Joseph's story, you can head over to the podcast section of the Merrylands Anglican website and listen to all the talks we have had this term on Joseph's story. But as Joseph's story continues, there is one more family reunion that needs to happen and this family reunion will create a bit of tension.

The Family Prepare to Move

Let's pick the story back up in...

Genesis 45:16-17 - *The news soon reached Pharaoh's palace: "Joseph's brothers have arrived!" Pharaoh and his officials were all delighted to hear this. Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'This is what you must do: Load your pack animals, and hurry back to the land of Canaan. Then get your father and all of your families, and return here to me. I will give you the very best land in Egypt, and you will eat from the best that the land produces.'"*

News of the arrival of Joseph's brothers quickly reached Pharaoh's palace. Upon hearing this Pharaoh and all of his officials were delighted, they were filled with joy. Pharaoh's reaction really highlights the good and trusting relationship that he and Joseph had. Where Pharaoh could have felt angry, or betrayed, he is filled with joy. Such is the impact that Joseph's leadership has made on Pharaoh, that Pharaoh is willing not just to pay the moving costs, but then to give Joseph's family their own land in Egypt. But not just any land - the very best land in Egypt! To give them a land where they would be protected, cared for and well fed. Where they could settle and be close to Joseph.

And so that is what Joseph does. He prepares his brothers to return to Canaan, to get Jacob and the rest of the family and move them to Egypt. Joseph provides his brothers with food and clothes for the trip, and an abundance of gifts, as he sends them on their way. As soon as the brothers arrive back in Canaan, they race to their Father, to tell him the news that Joseph is alive.

Genesis 45:26 *"Joseph is still alive!" they told him. "And he is governor of all the land of Egypt!" Jacob was stunned at the news—he couldn't believe it.²⁷ But when they repeated to Jacob everything Joseph had told them, and when he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, their father's spirits revived*

At first Jacob couldn't believe it. Which you can understand, since these same sons tricked him into thinking Joseph had been killed. Jacob has spent the last 20 years grieving for his favourite son, who he believed was dead, only to now be told that he is not only alive - but that he is ruling in Egypt. Why would he believe them? But as his sons told him more and more of the story of Joseph, and as Jacob looked and saw all the fine things

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that came from Egypt - his heart was filled with hope. 'Surely this isn't a trick' Jacob must have been thinking. Jacob is convinced and declares that it is time to pack up everything and move.

Genesis 45:28 *Then Jacob exclaimed, "It must be true! My son Joseph is alive! I must go and see him before I die."*

Residents of Goshen

In Genesis 46, we have the story of the 70 members of Jacob's family that move to Egypt. On the way though, Jacob appears to be getting anxious about the move. You might think that it is because he will be seeing his lost Son for the first time in 20 years, and Jacob could be feeling that - but Genesis 46 shows that there might be something more going on.

Genesis 46:1-4 *So Jacob set out for Egypt with all his possessions. And when he came to Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac. 2 During the night God spoke to him in a vision. "Jacob! Jacob!" he called. "Here I am," Jacob replied. 3 "I am God, the God of your father," the voice said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make your family into a great nation. 4 I will go with you down to Egypt, and I will bring you back again. You will die in Egypt, but Joseph will be with you to close your eyes."*

Jacob is concerned about how the move will affect the Covenant Promises of God. The promises that were made to his grandfather Abram in Genesis 12

Genesis 12:1-3 *The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

It is these promises that Jacob is worried about - particularly the promise of building them into a great nation. But God reaffirms this promise, by promising that he will fulfill it while they are in Egypt. Which if you know the story, that is exactly what God does. Jacob is comforted by this reassurance, and the next morning they continue on their way to Egypt.

Eventually, Jacob and his family reach the region of Goshen, where Joseph is waiting for them. As you would expect, Jacob and Joseph share a special moment - as they embrace each other for the first time in 20 years. Much like when he is reunited with his brothers, there are lots of joyful tears. But there is work to be done. Joseph has a plan - a plan to ensure that Pharaoh gives them the land of Goshen.

Genesis 46:31-34 *And Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's entire family, "I will go to Pharaoh and tell him, 'My brothers and my father's entire family have come to me from the land of Canaan. 32 These men are shepherds, and they raise livestock. They have brought with them their flocks and herds and everything they own.'" 33 Then he said, "When Pharaoh calls for you and asks you about your occupation, 34 you must tell him, 'We, your servants, have raised livestock all our lives, as our ancestors have always done.' When you tell him this, he will let you live here in the region of Goshen, for the Egyptians despise shepherds."*

Joseph advises his brothers to tell Pharaoh that they are shepherds, which seems a very strange thing to do - given that he knew that the Egyptians hated shepherds. But the reason Joseph tells them this, is because the region of Goshen was full of fertile and nutrient rich land, which was great for raising crops and livestock. By giving them this land, it would also allow them to continue with their traditions. It would allow them to be separate from the rest of Egypt. Joseph was caring for his family - and his brothers trusted him.

Genesis 47: 2-4 *Joseph took five of his brothers with him and presented them to Pharaoh. 3 And Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?" They replied, "We, your servants, are shepherds, just like*

our ancestors. 4 We have come to live here in Egypt for a while, for there is no pasture for our flocks in Canaan. The famine is very severe there. So please, we request permission to live in the region of Goshen.”

Again we see the good relationship that Joseph has with Pharaoh, Pharaoh is not only happy to give them the land of Goshen, but we read in Verse 6 that he also entrusts Joseph’s brothers to care for some of the flocks of Egypt. Pharaoh is willing to ignore hundreds of years of shepherd hating to allow Joseph's family to live in Goshen and continue their heritage. So, Jacob and his family settled and became residents of Goshen, and Egypt.

Genesis 47: 11-12 *So Joseph assigned the best land of Egypt—the region of Rameses—to his father and his brothers, and he settled them there, just as Pharaoh had commanded. 12 And Joseph provided food for his father and his brothers in amounts appropriate to the number of their dependents, including the smallest children.*

Covenant Tension

If Joseph’s story was to finish here - it would be a great way to end it, wouldn't it? No matter whose perspective you look at - life is great. For Joseph, he is reunited with his family, especially his Father. For Jacob, Joseph is alive, and his family will be safe and secure after his death. The brothers now have food and work - which is a big difference to where they were at the start of this part of the story (Genesis 42:1). Even Pharaoh, who now has a happy Joseph, more members of his workforce, and more people to call on as servants. It is a win-win for everyone. Jacob and his family can rest - and get comfortable - right?

The whole point of the story of the Patriarchs, and to an extent the rest of the Old Testament is to see how God is going to fulfill the promises that he made to Abram. The Promises of Fame, Land, Offspring (or turning them into a Nation) and Blessing, which we read earlier from Genesis 12. And at this point in the story, it kind of looks like God has fulfilled them doesn't it?

Fame - It's fair to say that Joseph, who was 2nd in Charge of Egypt, would have been pretty well known. **Land** - They have the best land in Egypt - and it is theirs. The land will bear fruit for them and allows them to tend their livestock. **Offspring** - God has grown them from just 1 person into a family of 70, and as we saw earlier, God is going to keep his promise by turning them into a great nation while they are in Egypt. **Blessing** - Joseph is blessing Pharaoh, Egypt, the known world and now his own family, as they all come to him for salvation, through food. But - if you really know the promises, then you know that there is tension here.

Genesis 12:6-7 *Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.”*

Can you see the issue? God doesn't promise them the Land of Goshen. Egypt is not the Promised Land. God has promised them the Land of Canaan. The land that they had just moved out of. The land that had been so damaged by the famine, that they couldn't live there. Why would they want to go back? It would be easy to think - 'Maybe God got it wrong, maybe he meant Egypt' or worse 'Actually I think I'd rather stay in Egypt, I'm well fed, I'm protected. Everything I could ever need is right here'. And if you know the story of the Israelites, you know that they stay in Egypt for 400 years. That is a long time to get comfortable!

But not only that, the rest of the Bible shows us that Joseph isn't the ultimate fulfillment of the promises. Whilst Joseph was famous, there would be one to come after him that would be known by all of history. And while Joseph did bless the world, he could only physically bless the world at that time. Once Joseph died, he could no longer be a blessing. There is a great danger for Jacob's family, the danger of thinking God has fulfilled

his promises in Joseph, or to get so comfortable that they totally forget God's promise that they were going to return to Canaan.

The story of Joseph points us to Jesus, who is the ultimate fulfillment of these promises. God does give the Israelites the land of Canaan, but in Jesus we are promised and given an eternal home, an eternal land. The whole world will know Jesus because God has put the whole world under him. And Jesus will bless the whole world - not just physically, but spiritually, as he brings salvation to those who trust in him.

A Warning for Us - Don't get comfortable in Goshen

Just as there was a danger for Jacob's family to get comfortable in Egypt and to forget God's promises, there is a great danger for us to do the same. You see, we too are temporary residents living in a place where we do not belong. We are living in the region of 'Goshen', while we wait for Jesus to return. We have the best of this land, even while we suffer through COVID-19. I find it very easy to get caught up complaining about all of the comforts that have been taken from me; physically seeing my friends and family, sitting in my favourite cafe having my Saturday morning coffee, even just going to spend time at the park with my son Darius. We long for when life will be back to 'normal'. But friends, this world is not our home. As nice as it will be when we can do all of these things again, our longing should be for when we will be in our eternal home. If you trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, you have been given a new home, an eternal home. You do not belong to this world. You are merely a temporary resident, who is passing through on your way home. So, what can we do to protect ourselves against getting comfortable in this world? I think there are 2 things we can do. The first is to set our eyes on the realities of heaven. The apostle Paul says this...

***Colossians 3:1-2** Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.*

Paul calls us to look to the things of heaven, and not the thing of earth. That is to set our minds and focus on Heaven. Not to get caught up and attached to the things of this world. And Paul explains how to do that in the rest of Colossians 3 - by putting to death the things of this world, the things that belong to our earthly nature, things like sexual immorality, greed, idolatry and anger. Instead of these things, we should clothe ourselves with the things of heaven; mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and love. Paul talks about letting the message of Christ, in all of its richness, fill our lives. Spending time praying and meditating on God's word help us to focus on eternity. The second thing we can do is to avoid storing up treasures here on earth. Jesus says this

***Matthew 6:19-21** "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.*

Simply put Jesus says don't store up for yourselves the things of this world. They will break, or be stolen, they will disappoint and eventually be destroyed. The temporary cannot be with the eternal. By becoming attached to and distracted by the temporary things of this world, we rob ourselves of the joy that awaits us in eternity. Let's set our minds on the realities of heaven and our eternal home.