

## Genesis 47-48: By Faith Jacob Blessed

### 12-16-18 PM

The last portions of Genesis are about the reunification of Jacob and Joseph, the death of Jacob, and the death of Joseph. In Genesis 46 we read that Jacob entered Egypt with 66 descendants. It details the blessings that fell on the Israelites through Joseph; they settled in the land of Goshen (the Nile delta). It also discusses one more meeting between God and Jacob. While the story spends much time on Joseph, in a sense, it is really about Jacob faithfully discharging the will of God.

The End of Jacob's life is found in Genesis 47:28 through 49:2. Most of the text discusses the blessing of the sons of Jacob. We can note that Joseph received the double allotment of the firstborn (we already discussed that it passed over the first born because of Rueben's infidelity, and it passed Simeon and Levi over their violence). The seed promise and the firstborn allotment are broken up; Judah receives the seed promise, and Joseph's two sons receive an equal allotment from Jacob. We note too that there was another "switch" on which sons received promises. In summary, *He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him* – Genesis 49:28.

But it is interesting to note that in the New Testament book of Hebrews, when it comes to describing the faith of the patriarchs, it is this moment that is identified as the moment of faith for Jacob. *By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff* (Hebrews 11:21). Why was THIS the work of faith shown for his life? Not all of the other experiences he had, such as wrestling God, wandering in Canaan, or his constant desire for the blessing of God. It was raising up on his bed post/staff and blessing his children at death that the Hebrew writers says was the act of faith to consider.

Perhaps we should consider that faith in this moment; Jacob believed in all God had promised. But his faith was in contrast with the circumstances. He was dying in Egypt; Egypt looked like a promised land (and Canaan was a land of drought). It is clear that despite appearances, he believed that Canaan was the promised land from God.

Maybe there is more to this. Perhaps it was not just the idea of the land of Canaan that was the center of this faith, but perhaps a greater hope than this. The Hebrew writer already suggested that this was true of Jacob's grandfather Abraham; Abraham was not looking for a city made with hands, but was looking for an eternal home. Jacob hoped for even more than Canaan; he hoped for a heavenly home. *And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect* (Hebrews 11:39-40).

As we conclude Genesis we are being divinely nudged to the idea that these men walked by faith for eternal rewards. Even though it was never stated as such, they believed in a God who would restore to them life after death. Jesus told us of their reward in Matthew 8:11 *"I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven"*. Even though they had not received the Gospel as we do, they too will be saved by the same Gospel.