Week 11: *Genesis 46*

Hook

Main Point: God fulfills His promises to His people.

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The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation insures deposits in the amount of $250,000 per depositor per insured bank. The FDIC was established in 1933, a direct response to the stock market crash of 1929; by March of 1933, more than 9,000 banks had failed and closed. With the establishment of FDIC, Americans gained a sense of security and a renewed confidence in the banking system. The program was deemed a success following a closure of only nine banks nationally in 1934.¹

Q: Do you know someone who lived during the Great Depression? How did that time of uncertainty affect that person?

Q: Are you the type of person who worries if you don't have a guarantee? Why or why not?

Q: What guarantees has God put in place? How do these affect your perspective and behavior?
Week 11: *Genesis 46*

**Book**

**Main Point:** God fulfills His promises to His people.

**Text Summary:** Jacob takes his family (70 people) and all that he has to Egypt. Judah goes ahead of him to meet Joseph, so Joseph could show them the way to Goshen. When Jacob gets to Beersheba, he offers sacrifices to God, and God speaks to him, telling him not to be afraid to go to Egypt. God promises to make him into a great nation there, repeating one of the promises He had made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3). God promises Jacob will see Joseph before he dies. The family makes it to Goshen, where Joseph rides to meet them. Joseph explains that they will live in Goshen because shepherds are an abomination to the Egyptians.

*Genesis 46:1-4 [Read]*

**Talking Point 1:** God promises to always be with His people.

**Q: What does God promise Jacob in this passage and why is it significant?**

In the story of Joseph, Genesis flips back and forth between calling Joseph’s father “Jacob” and calling him “Israel” – sometimes even in the same passage. Here, it even occurs in the same verse (v. 2). In chapter 32, Jacob wrestled with God, and God said to him, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel” (32:28). And God told him the same thing again in chapter 35 when Jacob has his family destroyed their false idols and built an altar to God (35:1–10).

The name Jacob means “heel-grabber” — figuratively “supplanter” or “overreach” because Jacob came out of the womb second, holding the heel of his twin brother, Esau. Later, he supplanted Esau from his place in the family when he bought his birthright and stole his blessing (25:33; 27:35). When Jacob stole Esau’s blessing, Esau said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob?” (27:36).

The name *Israel* means “one who wrestles with God” because Jacob had “striven with God and with men and had prevailed” (32:28). Israel was the name used for the whole nation of Jacob’s descendants who settled in the Promised Land, also called Israel. So it is appropriate that here, when God is promising to make Jacob into a great nation, God specifically uses the name Israel instead of just Jacob.

God spoke to Jacob in a dream, but spoke to him directly, not through symbols or metaphors that needed to be interpreted such as those in the dreams of Joseph or the cupbearer and baker, or Pharaoh (v. 1). God promised to make Jacob into a great nation while his family was in
Egypt, thus fulfilling one of the promises He had made to Abraham. And He told Jacob that he shouldn’t be afraid to go down to Egypt because God will be with him (vv. 3–4). This is the continuous promise of God to His people in the Old Testament, and in the New: “I will be with you.” “Do not be afraid, for I will be with you.” He says it to Moses (Ex. 3:12), to Joshua (Joshua 1:9), to Jeremiah (Jer. 1:8), to Isaiah (Isa. 41:10; 43:5) ... and the list goes on and on. We do not need to fear because God is with us. Whatever comes our way.

This is God’s biggest promise to His people, and the foundation of all other promises—that He will be with them. He had already made this same promise to Jacob earlier, long before He changed his name to Israel, when he was running away from Esau to Laban. In his dream of the ladder that went from heaven to earth (Gen. 28:10–17) ... again, in a dream. God made the same promises to Jacob that He had made to Abraham:

- God promised Jacob the land (28:13).
- God promised Jacob innumerable descendants – a great nation (28:14).
- And that all of the families of the earth will be blessed through his family (28:14).

And God sealed that promise with the same words He does here: “I am with you and will keep you wherever you go” (46:15). At that point, Jacob was afraid to go away from his homeland to Laban, but God said, I will be with you. Now, more than 40 years later, Jacob was afraid to go from his homeland to Egypt; God repeats, I will be with you.

God had also appeared to Jacob’s father, Isaac, at the exact same place, Beersheba (26:23), with the same promises:

- I will bless you (26:24).
- I will multiply your offspring (26:24).

And He sealed the promises with the same words: “Fear not, for I am with you” (26:24). God’s presence brings peace (John 14:26–27). God’s presence brings strength and courage (Joshua 1:9). God’s presence brings power (Acts 1:8) and wisdom (Isa. 11:2) and love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). We do not need to fear because God is with us. Wherever we go. As David wrote, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me” (Ps. 23:4). No matter what comes our way, we have peace; we have hope; we have love. Because God is with us.

Q: What things cause you to fear? Why?

Q: How can God’s presence bring us peace and comfort when we are afraid?

Q: Read 1 John 4:18. How does perfect love cast out fear?
Q: In those situations, when you feel fear, how can you instead choose to trust in God? What practical steps do you have to take to choose trust over fear?

**Genesis 46:1-27 [READ]**

**Talking Point 2:** God keeps His promises to His people.

Q: How does this passage show God’s keeping His promise to Abraham from long ago?

Q: Why do you think Genesis takes the time here to list out all of these names? What is the author of Genesis trying to say?

It would be easy to glaze over as we read, but genealogies are always important. And this one is put here for a reason. Genesis repeats over and over throughout this chapter that Jacob is bringing all of his family and everything he has to Egypt, all of God’s chosen people. Every child of the promises. It explicitly states everything:

- Their little ones, their wives, their livestock, their goods (vv. 5–6)
- All his offspring ... his sons ... his son’s sons ... his daughters ... his son’s daughters ... all his offspring (v. 7)
- All the persons belonging to Jacob ... his own descendants ... all the persons of the house of Jacob (v. 26–27)

The text explicitly tells us how many people there were of the house of Jacob—70 (v. 27). It confirms that number again in Ex. 1:5 and Deut. 10:22. The 70 descendants listed help to show us just how small this family is that will one day become a “great nation” (v. 3). The introduction to Exodus will tell us that this group started out small—only 70 people. But that they “were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong” (Ex. 1:5–7). They grew so strong that this later pharaoh who did not know Joseph was threatened by them (vv. 9–10), so he enslaved them. “But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad” (v. 12). Even when the pharaoh tried to have the midwives kill the Hebrew sons when they were born, “The people multiplied and grew very strong” (Ex. 1:20). When the Israelites finally fled Egypt, they had 600,000 warriors, not counting women and children or non-able-bodied men (Ex. 12:37). In 430 years, the nation of Israel had grown from 70 people to about two-and-a-half-million people or more.iv

Lastly, one more reason to write out all of the names of the descendants in the genealogy in Genesis 46 is similar to the reason that Matthew includes Gentiles and sinners in the genealogy of Christ (Matt.1). When we see the names Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah, we are reminded of their sins. When we see the name Leah, we are reminded of how she was not loved by her husband. Rachel, how she was barren most of her life and then died in childbirth. Bilhah and
Zilpah, how they were slave girls who were given to their masters’ husband to bear children. The names of the other brothers remind us of the great sin they committed against Joseph and their father. The name of Joseph’s wife, and the text specifically adding, “daughter of Potiphera, priest of On” reminds us that two of the tribes of Israel will be led by men with half-Egyptian blood.

Just like the genealogy of Jesus, the generations of Israel are filled with sinners and Gentiles and slaves—these people are far from glossy magazine covers. Yet God chose them; God loved them; and God made promises to them. That promise that God had made to Abraham so long ago—to make him a great nation, with more descendants than there were stars in the sky or grains of sand—was about to become true (v. 3). God had even included in the original promise to Abraham the explanation that his offspring would have to go to “a land that is not theirs” and be slaves for 400 years (Gen. 15:13). Our God is a promise-keeping God (2 Pet. 3:9).

Almost 500 years later, toward the end of the book of Joshua, when God’s people have finally conquered the Promised Land, Joshua says that God gave to Israel all the land He had sworn to the fathers, and rest on every side as he had sworn to their fathers. “Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass” (Josh. 21:45). His promises may come about in His way and in His timing, but His promises never fail.

**Q: What promises has God made to us (all believers) in Scripture?**

**Q: Describe a time when you experienced God’s keeping a promise to you.**

**Q: How can believing in God’s promises give you peace? Hope? Trust in Him?**

**Q: How do we know that we can we trust God’s promises?**

**Genesis 46:28-34 [Read]**

Talking Point 3: God always provides for His people.

**Q: Why would Jacob say “Now let me die”? After all of this, does he really want to die just when he has finally been reunited with his favorite son?**

**Q: Why would Joseph want to keep his family in a separate land from the Egyptians?**

Judah maintains his leadership position among the brothers and goes ahead of the family to Joseph, to have Joseph show him the way to Goshen (v. 28). Then Joseph finally gets to meet his father (v. 29).

Joseph has a similar tearful reunion with his father as he did with Benjamin. Though with his father, the text added that he wept “a good while” (v. 29). Though he is relatively close to
death, Jacob’s statement, “now let me die” doesn’t mean he wants to die, but that now he could die a happy man, knowing Joseph is alive. This, compared to how he has felt for the last 20 years, mourning Joseph’s death, must have been an incredible change for him. The rest of the story will have a strong focus on this relationship between Jacob and Joseph.

Now Joseph shares his plan with the brothers. By presenting themselves to Pharaoh as shepherds with their own flocks, they would be able to basically live independently within their own territory in Egypt. Though Pharaoh had offered to them to come to him and he would give them the best of everything in the land (Gen. 45:18), Joseph shrewdly suggests they tell him they are shepherds and have been for generations, and that they have their own flocks (v. 34). This way, they could remain independent, not relying on Pharaoh for anything.

Goshen was very far north, as close to Canaan as you could get in Egypt. The territory was desirable for grazing animals, but it wasn’t one of the major areas around the Nile that Pharaoh was concerned about controlling. By claiming their status as shepherds, they effectively sequestered themselves in Goshen, since Egyptians thought shepherds were an abomination. They had already learned that Egyptians wouldn’t eat with foreigners, but now the Egyptians would really leave them alone.
By staying there and tending their own flocks, they showed Pharaoh they were a peaceable, humble group who were not interested in rising above their station as shepherds. This pharaoh loved Joseph now, but Joseph was not fool enough to think that this would last forever. He remembered the cupbearer and the baker who were thrown into prison when they displeased the king. And this pharaoh could always die or be overthrown. If they tied themselves too much to the favor of the pharaoh, they may regret it later. So, Joseph showed great wisdom and foresight in all of his decision making, not just the ones where God supernaturally revealed things to him through dreams.vii

Through all of these steps along the way, God provided for His people. By getting Joseph into his position in Egypt, God not only saved them from the famine. He gave them an abundance of food and money and donkeys and “good things of Egypt” (45:23). He gave them a land of their own, even though it was within Egypt’s territory. He gave them relative independence and peace and quiet. Our God is a promise keeper and a provider. He always provides for His children (Matt. 7:11). God’s people would learn this even more tangibly after the Exodus from Egypt, in the wilderness, when manna and quail supernaturally rained from the sky to feed them, and He gave them water out of a rock (Ex. 16–17). But it was quite obvious here, too. God would always provide for His people. No matter what He had to do to make it happen. “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Ps. 84:11).

Q: Share any personal stories you have of God’s providing for you in your time of need. It doesn’t have to be materially providing, it can be spiritual, emotional, mental, relational...

Q: How is God providing for you right now? Maybe in ways you haven’t even noticed?

Q: God provided for Israel through Joseph and through Pharaoh. How can God provide for someone else through you? In what specific ways can you be the vessel for God’s provision?
Week 11: *Genesis 46*

**Took**

**Main Point: God fulfills His promises to His people.**

When was the last time you were aboard a long flight? How did you pass the time? Once you worked your way through magazines, movies and games, you might have found yourself utilizing a flight tracker (either provided by the airlines or an app that you download). These trackers often display a map, tracking your flight’s progress. It reminded you that, although you might not have felt that you’re moving quickly or you looked out the window and were disoriented, you were, in fact, moving. The promise the airline made to you that you will indeed reach your destination was coming to fruition. These flight trackers provide clues that the promise stands and progress is being made.

If you are in a disorienting or stressful season of life, you may feel you are far from the promises of God. Instead of panicking or bombarding yourself with distractions, cling close to the promises provided in God’s Word. Return to the truth and be reminded that, despite how you might feel, God’s promises still stand; He isn’t going anywhere; and if we surrender ourselves to Him, we will indeed see growth.

**CHALLENGES:**

**THINK: How is God Keeping His Promises to Me?** Think about the promises you find in Scripture and ask yourself how you see God fulfilling each one of them in your life. If you aren’t sure what any of those promises are, do a quick study of the Bible using your concordance or other resources. Or use a book such as *All the Promises of the Bible*, by Herbert Lockyer. Sometimes we don’t see God’s promise-keeping because we don’t really look for it. Sometimes we don’t believe in God’s promises because we don’t even know what they are! Think this week about what ways God has been keeping His promises in your life.

**PRAY: Thanksgiving** – Thank God for those promises He has been keeping in your life. Thank Him for the way He is always with you (Deut. 31:6). Thank Him for promising to always provide for you (Matt. 6:25–33). Thank Him for promising to give you peace (John 16:33), to give you spiritual wisdom (Eph. 1:17), to shower you with every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3). Thank Him for all He is doing and has done in your life.

**ACT: Be a vessel of God’s provision** – What is a tangible way you can be a vessel for God’s provision this week? How can God use you, as He used Joseph, to provide for someone else? It can be a material provision such as donating money to charity or helping a friend in need. It can
be emotional provision such as being there for a friend who is hurting. There are thousands of ways you can let God use you to provide for someone else. Ask God to open your eyes to see where there is a need this week.

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i https://www.investopedia.com/articles/economics/09/fdic-history.asp