

**Study:** The Joseph Story  
**Text:** Genesis 46:28–47:12 Joseph Provides for the Family

I. Joseph, Savior of Family (46:28–47:12)  
A. Joseph Before Jacob (46:28–34)  

1. Judah Prepares the Way (46:28)  
   a. Which son does Jacob send ahead into Egypt?  
   b. This is yet another example of how Judah has displaced which son as the natural leader among the brothers?  
   c. Which region does Jacob send Judah to in order to prepare the way? Why here? (See 45:10.)

2. Joseph Appears to Jacob (46:29–30)  
   a. What sort of vehicle does Joseph prepare in order to meet Jacob? What impression might his arrival in one of these make on the old man? (See 41:43.)  
   b. What physical response to seeing Jacob does Joseph exhibit in v. 29?  
      (1) This is not the first time we see Joseph responding in this fashion to someone. Who else is the recipient of such affection from Joseph (hint, see 45:14).  
      (2) In fact, this is not the first time Jacob experiences this sort of affection from someone. Who else does this to Jacob in his earlier years? (See 33:4.) On what occasion?  
   c. The reunion with Joseph seems to be the pinnacle of life for old Jacob.

1 The outline of the passage we are following basically follows the outline provided in K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 82.
3. Joseph Instructs His Brothers (46:31–34)

a. Where does Joseph offer to go on behalf of his brothers and father (v. 31)?

(1) Inside the quotation of v. 31, what is the first verb that Joseph uses to describe what he will do?

(2) Many times throughout the Joseph narrative since Genesis 37, an antonym (word with opposite meaning) is used with respect to Joseph: ‘to go down’ (and ‘to be brought down’). Each step down is a step toward greater forms of bondage. But in v. 31, Joseph now ‘goes up’. How does this speak to the utter change in Joseph’s fortunes at the hand of God?

b. Acc. to v. 31, what does Joseph report to Pharaoh? Why do you think he does this—is this something that Pharaoh would not be expecting? (Hint: review 45:16–20.)

2 Mathews writes that “Joseph explains to his brothers the plan for approaching Pharaoh. First, he will inform Pharaoh that his instructions have been fulfilled (45:16–20), meaning that Joseph’s father and brothers have arrived (v. 31)” (843).

3 Mathews again suggests, “At that time he will make clear that the family practices animal husbandry, implying that expansive grazing areas are required (v. 32). . . . That they have brought ‘everything they own’ also necessitated more territory” (843).

c. What will Joseph inform Pharaoh that the brothers’ occupation is (v. 32)? How much of their animals will Pharaoh learn that they have brought? Why do you think Joseph wants Pharaoh to know this?
d. For how long does Joseph want the brothers to indicate they have been shepherds? For how many generations? Why do you think it might be important for the brothers to mention these two things? 

e. Finally, in v. 34 Joseph gives the brothers a reason for conducting their interview with Pharaoh. What does Joseph hope to accomplish? Why would the Egyptians segregate the Hebrews from themselves?

B. Joseph’s Brothers Before Pharaoh (47:1–6)

1. Joseph Presents His Brothers (47:1–2)

   a. In v. 1 we see the fulfillment of what Joseph promises he’ll say to Pharaoh. Is Goshen specifically a place that Joseph and Pharaoh have discussed for Jacob’s family?

   b. How many brothers does Joseph choose, what what does he do with them (v. 2)?

2. The Brothers Request Settlement (47:3–4)

   a. How do the brothers respond to Pharaoh’s question about their occupation (v. 3)?

   b. What two reasons are given for explaining their sojourn in Pharaoh’s territory (v. 4)?

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4 Mathews suggest the following reason for this specific info: “This would avoid any concern of Pharaoh’s that the family has ambitions beyond settlement in Goshen. Theirs is not a household of kings, despite Joseph’s high office. But Joseph’s eye is ultimately on the future of Israel’s descendants who would one day return to their father’s land. Joseph explicitly mentions to his brothers the reason for his instructions: it will mean a settlement in Goshen, detached from mainstream Egyptian life, which culturally avoided mixing with animal keepers” (843).
c. Do you notice that twice in vv. 3–4 the brothers avoid using the 1st person pronoun *we* in preference for another self-designation? How do they refer to themselves? What does this type of self-reference communicate to Pharaoh?

d. At the beginning of v. 4, what verb is used by the brothers to explain the purpose that “we have come”?

(1) Is the idea of *sojourn* a permanent residence, or a temporary one?

(2) This verb is used in another context in Genesis that relates to this one. Review the following passages:

Gen 12:10 (What is similar about this passage and the present one?)

Gen 15:13 (How is the present passage related to the one in 15:13?)

3. Pharaoh Instructs Joseph (47:5–6)

a. What does Pharoah tell Joseph in v. 5?

(1) On the surface this verse is cast as if it were an informative statement. Is Pharoah informing Joseph of something he doesn’t already know?

(2) If not, then why do you think Pharaoh would say this?5

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5 Mathews explains it thus: “Because the brothers have already met with Pharaoh (vv. 1–4), it is unreasonable for him to inform Joseph of the family’s arrival. But Pharaoh is stipulating the basis for the kindness he extends to the brothers: ‘[Since] your father and your brothers have come to you …’ (v. 5). The king’s generosity toward Jacob’s family is due to Joseph’s kinship (cf. ‘your … you,’ vv. 5–6)” (845).
b. Which part of Egypt does Pharaoh put at the disposal of Joseph’s family? What expressions are used to describe this allotment (v. 6)?

(1) How does this contrast with Jacob’s families situation in Canaan just a short while ago?

(2) Is this amazing turn of events to be explained by Pharaoh? Or by God? How does a text like Prov 21:1 apply here?

c. Pharaoh’s provision for the brothers is not limited to land, acc. to v. 6. What else does he offer them? How does a text like Prov 22:29 apply here?

C. Jacob Before Pharaoh (47:7–12)

1. Joseph Presents His Father (47:7a)

a. Whom does Joseph bring in to Pharaoh after the brothers?

b. Where does the text say Jacob is vis-à-vis Pharaoh?

c. We have seen elsewhere in our study the expression “to stand before.” What does it typically signify? Which party is the greater, and which the lesser?

2. Jacob Blesses Pharaoh (47:7b–10)

a. In light of Jacob “standing before Pharaoh” it is remarkable what Jacob himself does next. What does Jacob do to Pharaoh in v. 7b and again in v. 10?

(1) In Hebrew/ancient near eastern culture, when blessings are pronounced on someone, who is the greater and who is the lesser? How does Heb 7:7 apply?
(2) It is noteworthy that this is the only time that a patriarch in Genesis directly blesses a foreign leader (usually foreign leader experience blessing as a residual overflow of God’s blessing on the patriarch). What does this tell us about Yahweh’s relationship to Jacob, even in Egypt?

b. What does Pharaoh ask Jacob after the blessing?

(1) How many years old is Jacob?

(2) What two adjectives does Jacob use to describe the quality of his life?

(3) How does Jacob think his life compares to that of the other patriarchs?

(4) Application: Think about how Jacob answers this question. Does he minimize the difficulties of life? Does having the Lord as your God mean that you have to pretend that everything in life is pleasant? Does this give you license to complain? How can you be both honest and hopeful as you think about life’s trials?

3. Joseph Establishes Jacob (47:11–12)

a. In v. 11 we are given 3 descriptions of the place that Joseph settles his family. What are they?

b. In addition to land, what else does Joseph provide for them in v. 12?