

Lesson 9 – 27 June 2010

Jacob Migrates Into Egypt

Lesson Scope: [Genesis 45:25-47:31](#)

Lesson Focus

Joseph had made himself known to his brothers (Gen.45:4). He then sent them back to Canaan with an urgent message for Jacob. "Come down unto me, tarry not" (Gen.45:9). Pharaoh also commanded wagons to be sent back to transport their belongings. The brothers had now returned to Canaan and told Jacob the news. Jacob was not ready to believe them until he saw the wagons. This seems to have sufficiently convinced him that they were indeed telling the truth.

Jacob wasted no time in packing up and heading to Egypt. He was careful though, to take time for worship and to seek God's direction for this move. It seems there were at least two questions that were uppermost in Jacob's mind: was Joseph indeed alive? and should he go to live in Egypt? God graciously answered both.

The move to Egypt again reminded Jacob that he was indeed a stranger and pilgrim in this world. As shepherds, the sons of Israel were an abomination to the Egyptians. For yourself', as you prepare to teach, consider the ups and downs of Jacob's life. Why did he feel inferior to his forefathers (Gen.47:9)? Why did he describe his days as "few and evil"? This lesson, however, portrays Jacob as a deeply spiritual man.

We see here Jacob offering sacrifices and God answering him by speaking directly to him and at the end of this study we note Jacob confesses his life to be a pilgrimage. This confession reveals Jacob's faith and hope in a real and enduring city unseen by this world. In Hebrews 11, this confession of Abraham and Jacob is held forth as an example to New Testament believers. Let us this lesson be practical, applying it not only to ourselves but to the church we are a part of just as it is given in Hebrews 11. We must develop and maintain a deep conviction that we individually and the church must maintain the stranger-and-pilgrim lifestyle in order to remain faithful.

God's people are in the world but not of the world. To keep themselves from the evil of the world, then must live as strangers and pilgrims

Lesson Aim: To see how to live as strangers and pilgrims.

Theme Verse: [Hebrews 11:13](#).

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Lesson Text

Separation in Worship

[Genesis 46:1-6](#)

And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. ²And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. ³And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: ⁴I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. ⁵And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. ⁶And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:

[Genesis 46:29-31](#)

And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. ³⁰And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive. ³¹And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me;

Separation in Occupation

[Genesis 46:33-34](#)

And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? ³⁴That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

Genesis 47:3-6

And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers. ⁴They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen. ⁵And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: ⁶The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.

Separation in Association

Genesis 47:8-10

And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? ⁹And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. ¹⁰And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

Genesis 47:27

And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.

Questions for Study

Separation in Worship

1. Why did Israel offer sacrifices at this time?
2. Upon what assurance does the certainty of God's promises rest?
3. How do strangers and pilgrims find satisfaction as God leads them through difficult experiences?

Separation in Occupation

4. How was Israel's separation in the land of Goshen for their good?
5. How does our choice of an occupation affect our separation from the world?
6. Why does maintaining a stranger-and-pilgrim outlook require an active choice?

Separation in Association

7. How could Jacob bless Pharaoh?
8. What are some practical expressions of appreciation for a stranger-

and-pilgrim lifestyle?

Analyzing the Passage

The stranger and pilgrim concepts in this lesson fit well with the New Testament portrayal of the lives of the patriarchs in Hebrews 11.

Abraham too was called to go out of his father's house to a land Unknown to him (Gen.12:1; Hebrews 11:8). Abraham confessed himself to be a stranger and sojourner (Gen.23:4; Hebrews 11:13) as Jacob did in this account (Gen.47:9). The patriarchs' nomadic lifestyle of dwelling in tents (Hebrews 11:9) was a visible representation of their heavenly outlook (Hebrews 11:9-14).

As Genesis 34, 35, 38 show, the spiritual life of Jacob's family was deteriorating, possibly in part from Canaanite influence. "Every shepherd will be an abomination unto the Egyptians" (46:34). In the wisdom of God Israel moved to Goshen where this social barrier kept them separate from Canaanite and Egyptian culture, religion, and society.

Principles and Applications

Separation in Worship

1. Strangers and pilgrims have a regular and vibrant connection with God in worship (Gen.46:1-4). Worship helps us grasp God's sufficiency for our needs. In worship, we place our hand in God's hand and our feet on His immutable promises. Although life's changes may bring fear and uncertainty, worship enables our faith to rest in the leading of the Lord.

2. The principle of sacrifice is the center of true worship (Gen 46:1). All Old Testament sacrifices pointed forward to Christ's sacrifice, the sufficient perfect sacrifice for all time. For the worshiper sacrifices expressed reconciliation, sanctification, and consecration. The New Testament believer is called to offer himself a sacrifice, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is his reasonable service.

3. Strangers and pilgrims acknowledge God's ownership of material blessings living. (Gen 40:1). Sacrificial living proves that we believe in divine ownership. To waste what God has given us is poor stewardship. To require the best for ourselves when others have nothing is selfish. To gratify self is to smother our own faith and our children's.

We live in a consuming society, and we must frequently analyze our own practices. Our children do not need expensive nor excessive numbers of toys. Neither do we need excessive wardrobes. Spending money for the

many available gadgets is hardly good stewardship. Do we really need a global positioning device for our personal vehicle? If conservative Mennonites would spend less for conveniences and nonessentials, use what we have longer, build simpler houses, refrain from eating out, and maintain a simpler lifestyle in general, we could leave a better testimony to the world and give abundantly for the spreading of the Gospel and for aiding the poor of the world.

4. Strangers and pilgrims obey, God's direction (Gen 46:2-6). It is not possible for men to understand how God will accomplish His purposes. But we can understand that God blesses faith and obedience.

5. Strangers and pilgrims move forward, claiming God's promises (Gen 46:3-6). The significance of God's promises is in the God who makes them. Our God is true and omnipotent in His ability to fulfill His promises. He is also personally present with His people at all times. His presence gives rest and strength.

6. Strangers and pilgrims find fulfillment as God's will unfolds (Gen 46:29-31). Life is often filled with struggles and disappointments. Yet as saints see the fruit of their labors in the salvation of their souls and their children's, joy replaces weeping. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Separation in Occupation

7. Strangers and pilgrims are not ashamed of humble occupations (Gen 46:34). The world scorns the uneducated laborer. They cannot understand the successful farmer who would rather remain on a family farm than spawn successive businesses. Christians seek occupations that serve the basic needs of men—food, clothing, and shelter rather than luxuries.

8. Strangers and pilgrims live by separation principles (Gen 46:3; 47:4). Persecution kept our forefathers separated from the world. Today we must actively plan a course that promotes separation. The world invites US to mix our religion with their lifestyle. Vacationing, hunting, camping, parties, and church socials are widely accepted. This fun mentality, along with unequal yokes with the world and the influence of relatives with weak convictions, must be avoided. Business consultants encourage compromise. When Christians begin to accept the world, and separation breaks down, the loss is seldom regained.

Separation in Association

9. Strangers and pilgrims are required to identify with their godly heritage (Gen 47:9). We identify with a godly heritage by embracing its humility

and discipleship as our own. No number of books or sermons on Anabaptism are of merit if we scorn the heritage they represent. It is wrong to pretend an appreciation for one's martyr heritage while living in mockery of it. See Matthew 23:27-33. Can we claim the spiritual heritage of our persecuted forefathers if we mingle freely with the world?

10. Strangers and pilgrims bless the world while they sojourn in it (Gen 47:10). Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth...Ye are the light of the world." The church can bless the world only as she sojourns in it, apart from it. When God's people fail to live as strangers and pilgrims, they are no longer a blessing in the world.

11. Those who accept God's plan for the separation of His people from the world experience God's blessing (Gen. 47:27). Personal purity and family integrity are God's blessings to us. To maintain this we must avoid mixing men and women in the work place. Christian character and graces result from the blessing of God's Spirit upon us. But continuous association with the world in the workplace will result in professional mannerisms replacing Christian courtesy.

We reap the consequences of our choices. We can settle down on this earth and receive whatever "good" or evil the world may give us, or we can lay up treasure in heaven and receive the sure reward of the faithful.

Important Teachings

1. Strangers and pilgrims have a regular and vibrant connection with God in worship (Gen. 46:1-4).
2. The principle of sacrifice is the center of true worship (Gen. 46:1).
3. Strangers and pilgrims acknowledge God's ownership of material blessings (Gen. 46:1).
4. Stranger and pilgrims obey God's direction (Gen. 46:2-6).
5. Strangers and pilgrims move forward, claiming God's promises (46:3-6).
6. Strangers and pilgrims find fulfillment as God's will unfolds (46:29-31).
7. Strangers and pilgrims are not ashamed of humble occupations (46:34).
8. Strangers and pilgrims live by separation principles (46:3; 47:4).
9. Strangers and pilgrims are ready to identify with their godly heritage, (47:9).
10. Strangers and pilgrims bless the world while they sojourn in it (47:10).
11. Those who accept God's plan for the separation of His people from the world experience God's blessing- (47:27).
12. God desires to ultimately remove His people from the world (46:4).

Answers to Questions

1. Why did Israel offer sacrifices at this time?

Israel felt a need to call on God for help and direction before he went into Egypt. God's answer to Jacob implies that Jacob was experiencing fear and uncertainty about this move. By offering sacrifices, Jacob acknowledged God's ownership of all and himself as God's servant.

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2. Upon what assurance does the certainty of God's promises rest?

Our assurance of the certainty of God's promises is based on who God is and on His acts that prove His Word. Before God made this promise to Jacob, He said, "I am God" (46:3).

3. How do strangers and pilgrims find satisfaction as God leads them through difficult experiences?

They find joy and peace in obeying God's direction, even though they cannot understand God's ways or His purpose for allowing specific events. They are confident in God's fulfillment of His promises for their lives. They are confident of God's presence with them as they follow Him. As they follow God's leading and see the fruits of their labors under God's blessing, they feel a sense of fulfillment as God's will unfolds.

4. How was Israel's separation in the land of Goshen for their good?

The sons of Jacob likely had been somewhat influenced by the surrounding Canaanites. In Goshen, they could grow to a great nation unmixed with Egyptian or Canaanite culture, religion, and society. Their setting encouraged a simple lifestyle and wholesome occupation.

5. How does our choice of an occupation affect our separation from the world?

If we choose an occupation that serves the luxuries or elite society of the world, we will find ourselves desiring a high lifestyle and enjoying the company of socially important people. We will become dissatisfied with plain and humble Mennonite faith and practice. Business franchises may result in ungodly men dictating business decisions for us. Some occupations may require an elite image to attract or maintain customers. Attendance at numerous and/or extended business meetings presents a snare to separation. By continuous association with the world in the workplace, professional mannerisms replace Christian courtesy and graces.

6. Why does maintaining a stranger-and-pilgrim outlook require an active choice?

An active choice is required because the tolerant attitudes in America and

the majority of society as well as in many churches make it easy for us to feel a part of the surrounding culture.

Many items are considered non-moral or harmless, yet they condition us as a people to accept a less separated life. We must remember that most things we relate to are not neutral in their influence. It is imperative that we reject all that is casual, all that feeds the flesh, and all that would dull spiritual sensitivity.

7. How could Jacob bless Pharaoh?

By confessing himself as a pilgrim, Jacob identified with Abraham and Isaac in their faith in God's promises and in the eternal realities of the unseen. Jacob could bless Pharaoh because he was in touch with God and possessor of God's promises. The lesser (Pharaoh) was blessed of the greater (Jacob). See Hebrews 7:7.

8. What are some of the expressions of the stranger and-pilgrim lifestyle?

If we appreciate our heritage we will live simply, work humbly, and serve the church diligently. We will not mock those who live frugally or those who may be plainer in dress or overall lifestyle than we. We will not seek big business or showplace farms. We will not build unnecessarily big or fine houses. Our children do not each need a personal bedroom, desk, and computer. We will not need the latest vehicles or equipment. We will maintain a wholesome reserve in social interchange with the world and an unashamed identity with God's people. We will be ready to testify of our faith in God

Summarizing the Lesson

Life's pilgrimage is not walking with Jesus down a dusty, country road.

The pilgrim who seeks eternal life worships earnestly, prays fervently, and lives sacrificially. He receives direction from heaven and lays up his treasure there. His choice of humble dwelling on earth speaks to all of his expectation of a heavenly city.

Research Guide

1. See the author's preface in *Martyrs Mirror* for T. J. van Bragt's analysis of the effect of affluence on the stranger-and-pilgrim church
2. Review the life of Jacob, especially noting how God worked in his life to bring him to the spiritual stature we observe in this lesson.