

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“The Best Is Yet To Come”

Genesis 46:1-34

2003

Introduction

Jacob was a man who was eager to die. For the last 22 years of his life, he was simply marking time – grieving over the loss of his son Joseph and waiting for his painful trials to be buried in the grave.

In fact, when Jacob met for the first time Pharaoh in Gen 47:9, he introduced himself in the following way: “The years of my sojourning are one hundred and thirty; few and unpleasant have been the years of my life, nor have they attained the years that my fathers lived during the days of their sojourning” (Genesis 47:9).

Little did he know that the Best Was Yet To Come!

I Jacob’s Vision

A. Israel set out for Egypt [Verse 1]

When Jacob set out for Egypt, he was 130 years old. If he were alive today, he would have been retired and living on Social Security for over 65 years.

This is not generally the time of life when people begin making radical changes in their lives. But Jacob, at the age of 130, was about to launch into the one of the most remarkable ventures of faith of his life. But in order to participate in God’s incredible plan:

1. He had to leave everything familiar and the security of his earthly comforts.
2. He had to believe that he still had a mission from God.
When most Christians would have long-since turned the ministry over to the next generation, Jacob was being called to take giant steps of faith.
3. He had to be willing to obey God’s Word no matter the cost
Luke 9:23-25 “Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.”

Such a radical move prompted him to seek the Lord’s guidance. And so ...

1. He offered **sacrifices** to God at Beersheba
Why at Beersheba?

Because Beersheba was the southern-most boundary line of Israel. In essence, it was the point of no return. And before Jacob advanced into the desert wasteland that separated Canaan and Egypt, he determined

to inquire of the Lord to be absolutely certain he was in God's perfect will.

Humanly speaking, relocating to Egypt seemed to at odds with God's promise to give His people the land of Canaan..

215 years earlier, Jacob's grandfather, Abraham faced a similar dilemma. During a time of severe famine, he went down to Egypt without inquiring of the Lord and brought great harm to his family as a result of failing to seek God's counsel (Genesis 12:10ff).

And later, Jacob's own father, Isaac, considered going down to Egypt during another famine. But when he inquired of the Lord, God instructed him not to go down to Egypt, but to trust in Him to provide for their needs (Genesis 26:2-3). And He did!

Understandably, Jacob was concerned about stepping outside of God's will. So, rather than guessing, or leaning on his own understanding, he inquired of the Lord.

Application:

Sooner or later, we all find ourselves at significant intersections in life when we must make critical life-decisions that will have far-reaching consequences on own lives and the lives of others.

How do you make decisions at such points?

Many people simply make the best decision they can based on the information they have. But the Bible warns us against this strategy:

Prov 3:5-6 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."

James 1:5; 4:2 "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him ... you do not have, because you do not ask God."

So the moral of this story is, "**Learn to ask before you act!**"

B. God spoke to Israel in a vision [Verse 2-4]

The Bible indicates that God reveals His will to believers through a variety of means including: His written His Word (2 Tim 3:16-17), prompting by the Holy Spirit, godly counsel, circumstances, and dreams and visions (Joel 2:28).

But every other means of revelation must be measured against the revealed will of God recorded in His Word. Anything that contradicts Scripture must be rejected.

1. He called Jacob by **name** -- “Jacob! Jacob!”
 - a. Moses was also called in Ex 3:4 when he stood in awe before the burning bush when the Lord said: "Moses! Moses!"
 - b. Samuel had a similar experience in 1 Sam 3:10; "Samuel! Samuel!"
 - c. And of course, Paul was addressed by the Lord on the Road to Damascus in Acts 9:4 when the Lord called out, “Saul! Saul!”

Illustration:

If you can't figure out why someone would call out a person's name repeatedly, then you must not have children. ☺

2. He identified Himself

This is virtually the same introduction the Lord gave when He spoke to Jacob during his vision of the stairway to heaven.

Gen 28:13 “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac.”

3. He **comforted** Jacob

“Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt”

Why would Jacob have been afraid?

1. He was having an encounter with the God of the universe.

For this reason alone, Jacob had every reason to be afraid. In fact, whenever God revealed Himself to man in a supernatural way, His first words were invariably, “Do not fear!”

2. He was concerned about making a mistake that would affect his life, the lives of those in his family, the future of the nation of Israel and the fulfillment of the covenant promises of God.

3. He knew, based on God's prophecies to Abraham in Gen 15:13, that this move to Egypt would eventually result in his people being enslaved for 400 years.

Application:

Two mistakes we can make when it comes to having a fear of the Lord:

1. Failing to have any fear at all

Ps 34:9 “Fear the LORD, you his saints ...”

Definition: “A wholesome dread of displeasing Him.”

2. Having so much fear that we are apprehensive about the future.

Isa 41:10 “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

4. He affirmed His promises to Jacob

God declared what His good purpose was in bringing Jacob's family to Egypt:

a. I will make you into a great **nation**

This promise is a reaffirmation of God's covenant:

1. To Abraham:

Gen 12:2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you."

Gen 13:16; 22:17 "I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted ... "I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore."

2. To Isaac

Gen 26:4 "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed."

3. To Jacob

Gen 28:14-15 "Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring."

b. I will go down to Egypt with you

Gen 26:24 "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you."

Application: You're never alone when you're walking with God!

Isa 41:10 "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

c. I will bring you **back** to Canaan again

It was necessary for the nation of Israel to return to the land of promise in fulfillment of God's covenant promises:

Gen 28:15 "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

d. Joseph's own hand will close your eyes

Jacob would enjoy 17 more years of life. And instead of dying without his son to comfort him, God promised Jacob that his son, Joseph, would be there to close his eyes at the moment of his death.

Application:

Jacob faced a critical, life-changing decision. But instead of forging ahead (like he had done in the past) He stopped and sought God's guidance. Then he listened for God's answer. When he heard the answer . . . he moved forward obediently and with confidence. That's the sequence. It's not complicated. We must **ask**, **listen** and **obey**. And if we do that, God will lead us, protect us, and give us the strength to face the future.

II Jacob's Obedience

A. He left Beersheba and went to Egypt [Verse 6-7]

Application:

Obedience is the sign of genuine love for God

John 14:21 "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

1. He took his family and offspring
2. He took his livestock
3. He took his possessions acquired in Canaan

Gen 45:19-20 "You are also directed to tell them, 'Do this: Take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives, and get your father and come. Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.'"

Application:

God promises us the riches of His eternal kingdom, but we are often tempted to drag our earthly "junk" into eternity.

Matt 6:19-21 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

B. The genealogy of Jacob's children

What is the purpose of a genealogy?

1. To identify the various family leaders of the people of Israel.
2. To determine the future distribution of land in Canaan.
3. To divide the various tasks and responsibilities that would be assigned as it relates to the worship of God.
4. To reveal and bring to fulfillment the promised Messiah of God.

1. The offspring of Leah [Verse 8-15]

33 persons, not counting Er & Onan who died

2. The offspring of Zilpah [Verse 16-18]

16 persons

3. The offspring of Rachel [Verse 19-22]
14 persons, including Joseph's sons born in Egypt
4. The offspring of Bilhah [Verse 23-25]
7 persons
 - a. 66 people in all excluding Jacob, Joseph and his sons [Verse 26]
 - b. 70 including Jacob, Joseph and his sons [Verse 27]
The total number of males of this clan was 70: 66, plus Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.
Deut 10:21-22 "Your forefathers who went down into Egypt were seventy in all ..."

Then why does Stephen in Acts 7:14, quoting from Septuagint version of Gen 46 (Greek translation of the Hebrew OT), indicate that there were 75 people rather than 70?

Because the Septuagint included the 5 grandchildren born to Joseph in Egypt (1 Chron. 7:14, 20).

Application: The power of exponential multiplication

From the time God called Abraham;

1. It took at least 25 years to add one son, Isaac.
2. It took Isaac 60 years to add another son of Israel, Jacob.
3. It took 50 or 60 years for Jacob to have 12 sons and 1 daughter.
4. But in 430 years, Israel will leave Egypt with 603,550 men not including women and children (Num 1:45-46).

So, it took this family 215 years to grow from one to 70. But only another 430 years to explode to a population of over 2 million people. This is the power of exponential multiplication.

Discipleship: Matthew 28:19-20 (God's "Plan A")

The problem: It is painfully slow at the beginning!

Jerry White who is currently the president of Navigators and a one time instructor in the field of astronautics at the United States Air Force Academy, ran an experiment on a his computer to illustrate the power of multiplication:

A price of thin India paper (the thickness of Bible paper)

If it were folded 50 times: How thick would it be?

17 million miles high!! (The moon is only 239,000 miles away)

III Jacob's Reunion

- A. He sent Judah ahead to Joseph [Verse 28]

1. In order to get directions to Goshen

Application: Jesus went ahead in order to prepare a place for us
 John 10:4 “When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.”

- B. Joseph went to meet his father, Israel [Verse 29]

1. He threw his arms around Jacob
2. He **wept** for a long time

- C. Israel indicated that he was ready to die [Verse 30]

Jacob, satisfied at the sight of his son, was now ready to die in peace. But life was far from over for Jacob. God still had 17 years of blessing in store for him.

Application:

Maybe you have concluded that life just isn't worth living. That there is nothing left but monotony, drudgery and then death.

Ps 27:13-14 “I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.”

- D. Joseph's instructions: [Verse 31-34]

1. He would speak to Pharaoh in their behalf

Application: The intercession of Jesus in behalf of the saints

Rom 8:34 “Christ Jesus, who died -- more than that, who was raised to life-is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”

2. They should identify themselves as **shepherds**

- a. They would be able to settle in Goshen

Gen 45:10 “You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me -- you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have.”

Application:

John 17:24 “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am ...”

- b. They would be **detestable** to the Egyptians

Why did Joseph place such emphasis on having his family live in Goshen?

1. Goshen had some of the best pastureland in all of Egypt.
2. Goshen was located near to Joseph place of residence (Gen 45:10).
3. Goshen would keep the Hebrews isolated and insulated from the culture and religion of Egypt since the Egyptians considered sheep unclean and Hebrews detestable (Gen 43:32).

One of the greatest dangers to the covenant promises of God was intermarriage between the Hebrews and the Egyptians.

Why was this a danger? Because intermarriage would inevitably lead to spiritual compromise and the worship of the false gods of the Egyptians.

Insight: Hidden in this text is the wisdom of God!

If God had allowed the Israelites to remain in Canaan, they would have inevitably intermarried with the Canaanites and become ethically, morally and spiritually corrupt. So God places them in one of the most racist societies on earth at that time, thereby protecting them from spiritual adultery and allowing them the time and opportunity to multiply into the millions.

Application:

Rom 12:1-2 “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Conclusion

1. It is God’s will that you come to the end of yourself and seek Him
He had spent the first 130 years attempting to attain the blessings of God through working the angles of his life. But in the twilight of his life, he finally discovered the truth – true spiritual blessings are found when a man ceases to strive and simply rests by faith in God alone.
2. If you want to get back on track, **Ask, Listen and Obey!**
3. Remember, “The Best Is Yet To Come!”
Jacob was convinced his life was “over!” But in truth, the last 17 years of his life were the best of his entire life.

Jer 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Prov 4:18 “The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.”

The Fork

There was a woman who had been diagnosed with cancer and had been given 3 months to live. Her doctor told her to start making preparations to die. So she contacted her pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes. She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what she wanted to be wearing. The woman also told her pastor that she wanted to be buried with her favorite bible.

Everything was in order and the pastor was preparing to leave when the woman suddenly remembered something very important to her. "There's one more thing," she said

excitedly. "What's that?" came the pastor's reply. "This is very important," the woman continued. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand." The pastor stood looking at the woman not knowing quite what to say. "That shocks you doesn't it?" The woman asked. "Well to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request," said the pastor.

The woman explained, "In all my years of attending church socials and functions where food was involved (and let's be honest, food is an important part of any church event; spiritual or otherwise); my favorite part was when whoever was clearing away the dishes of the main course would lean over and say "you can keep your fork." It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming. When they told me to keep my fork, I knew that something great was about to be given to me. It wasn't Jell-O, or pudding. It was cake or pie. Something with substance. So, I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder "what's with the fork?" Then I want you to tell them; "Something better is coming, so keep your fork too."