

Norwood's Notes: Brief Summaries of Bible Stories

These "notes" are intended to provide a general overview of the basic stories of the Bible in the hope of building greater biblical knowledge and encouraging Bible reading and study. For more information, visit www.UjimaChurch.org

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4. Highlights from Genesis 45 – Exodus 4, "Joseph to the Call of Moses"

Joseph, the former slave and prisoner who had risen to become the governor of Egypt, second in command under Pharaoh, sent his brothers to bring their father, Jacob, and their family back to Egypt so that they would survive the famine (Gen 45). God reassures Jacob, who was also now known as "Israel," that going into Egypt is part of His divine plan. Jacob and his household went into Egypt, about 70 persons in all. Jacob was joyfully reunited with Joseph, the son he thought was dead, but who was now arriving in a chariot as the ruler of the land (Gen 46).

Jacob was 130 years old when Joseph brought him before the Pharaoh of Egypt. Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and the king gave him the best of the land in which to dwell and provisions for his family (Gen 47). When Jacob was 147 years old and was about to die, he made Joseph promise to bury him in the land God had promised them, where Isaac and Rebekah, Abraham and Sarah, and his own wife Leah were all buried. Jacob blessed Joseph's two sons as though they were his own (Gen 48). After blessing his own 12 sons, Jacob died (Gen 49). The Egyptians mourned for Jacob for 70 days. The king's high officials accompanied Joseph and his brothers as they buried Jacob according to his request, mourning for another seven days (Gen 50). With Jacob dead, Joseph's brothers then became afraid that he would take vengeance upon them for selling him into slavery so many years before. But, Joseph comforted his brothers and calmed their fears, telling them that what they had meant for evil, God meant for good.

Joseph lived to be 110 years old. Like his father, he requested to be buried with his ancestors, in the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Joseph prophesying that one day, God would take the family of Israel out of Egypt and back to that land. When he died, they embalmed Joseph and placed him in a coffin in Egypt, awaiting the day they would return to the "Promised Land."

Hundreds of years passed and the people of Israel, also called "Hebrews," grew in number while abiding in Egypt. A new Pharaoh became ruler of Egypt, but he knew nothing of the history of Joseph and saw the Hebrews as a threat (Ex 1). He put them to hard labor, but the people still grew in number. So he ordered Shiphrah and Puah, the Hebrew midwives, to kill all the Hebrew baby boys at the moment of

birth. The midwives, fearing God more than Pharaoh, misled the king and reported that by the time they arrived, the naturally vigorous Hebrew women would have already given birth. For their protection of the baby boys, God rewarded the midwives with families of their own. However, Pharaoh would not be dissuaded, and ordered that all newborn Hebrew boys be immediately drowned in the river Nile.

From the family line of Jacob's third son, Levi, was a married couple who had a newborn baby boy. The baby's mother was determined to save his life, hiding him as long as she could. When she could no longer keep him hidden, she waterproofed a basket and placed the child in it, leaving it among the reeds by the river bank, while the baby's older sister watched over him at a distance (Gen 2). Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe beside the river. She noticed the basket, ordered it to be brought to her, and found the crying baby inside. As she recognized that the child was one of the Hebrew boys, the baby's sister came forward and offered to bring a nursemaid for the child. As God worked his plan, the child's own mother was given the baby to nurse and Pharaoh's daughter paid her for providing the baby's care. When he was older, the child was brought back to Pharaoh's daughter, who took him as her own son, and gave him the name, "Moses."

Raised as the adopted son of a princess of Egypt, Moses grew into manhood never forgetting his people or their plight. One day he killed an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew. When his deed became known, Moses fled from Pharaoh's rage and the death sentence placed upon him, taking refuge in the land of Midian. There, he met Reuel, also called "Jethro," the priest of Midian, after having defended Reuel's daughters who had been harassed by unscrupulous shepherds as the women tried to water their father's flocks. Reuel welcomed Moses, who later married his daughter, Zipporah.

One day, many years later, Moses was watching over his father-in-law's flocks and saw a strange sight. It appeared as though a bush was on fire, but was not being consumed by the flames. As he went to get a closer look, God called him by name and told him to remove his sandals because he stood on holy ground. As Moses obeyed, he was then filled with fear as the Lord identified himself as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," whose people were going to receive the land promised to their ancestors (Gen 3). God told Moses that he was going to bear his message of deliverance to the Hebrews and tell the Pharaoh of Egypt to let them go free. Moses asked God, "who shall I say sent me?" and God replied, "**I AM WHO I AM**," tell them that "**I AM**" has sent you. God told Moses that Pharaoh would resist letting the Hebrews free, but that in the end, they would not only go free, but would leave with the wealth of Egypt. God quieted Moses' feelings of inadequacy and reluctance to be the bearer of His message by demonstrating that powerful signs would accompany him and that his brother, Aaron, would serve as his spokesman (Gen 4). So Moses, his wife, and two sons went to Egypt.