

Introduction

When Pharaoh asked Joseph's brother's their occupation, they said to him, "Your servants are *shepherds*..."

These men were literally shepherds. The Bible also uses the simple occupation of the shepherd to illustrate more significant spiritual truths.

For example, Jesus is said to be *your* Shepherd:

John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own.
1 Peter 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd...of your souls.

The occupation of the shepherd is an illustration that can help you appreciate the care Jesus has for you as *your* Shepherd!

The occupation of the shepherd can *also* illustrate Christian service. Church leaders, for example, are compared to shepherds:

1 Peter 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly...

Our text in Genesis Forty six and Forty seven uses the occupation of the shepherd in both of these ways, illustrating God's care for you *and* illustrating your service for Him. In 46:1-30 you see God caring for Jacob and his family the way a Shepherd cares for His flock. Then, from 46:31 through 47:12, you see Jacob and his family living in Egypt as shepherds serving the Lord. From this you learn two things:

#1 In Your Walk You Are To
Look To Jesus As Your Shepherd

#2 In Your Work You Are To
Live For Jesus As A Shepherd

#1 In Your Walk You Are To
Look To Jesus As Your Shepherd
(46:1-30)

Genesis 46:1 So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

Jacob looked to God as he journeyed towards Egypt. As his sons shepherded *their* flocks, he was looking to God to Shepherd *His* flock - all sixty six persons of the family of Israel.

From Jacob's experience of looking to God as his Shepherd you can learn what *you* can expect when you look to Jesus as *your* Shepherd.

{ He will speak to you...
Genesis 46:2 Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" And he said, "Here I am."

God brought His Word to Jacob in the form of a night vision. He spoke to him.

The shepherd speaks to his sheep and they know his voice. Listen to this quote from *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*:

"The sheep know the shepherd...and his voice. It is one of the most interesting spectacles to see a number of flocks of thirsty sheep brought by their several shepherds to be watered at a fountain. Each flock, in obedience to the call of its own shepherd, lies down, awaiting its turn. The shepherd of one flock calls his sheep in squads, draws water for them, pours it into the troughs, and, when the squad has done, orders it away by sounds which the sheep perfectly understand, and calls up another squad. When the whole of one flock is watered, its shepherd signals to it, and the sheep rise, and move leisurely away, while another flock comes in a similar manner to the troughs, and so on, until all the flocks are watered. The sheep never make any mistake as to who whistles to them or calls them."¹

Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me (John 10:27). When you read John 10 you see that He was speaking of you and I.

When you look to Jesus as your Shepherd, He will speak to you, and you can recognize His voice.

{ When you look to Jesus as your Shepherd, He will still your fears...
Genesis 46:3 So He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there.

Both his father, Isaac, and his grandfather, Abraham, had almost shipwrecked their faith in the severe trials they faced when they each disobediently went to Egypt during times of famine in Canaan. Jacob was understandably afraid. God stilled his fears.

Sheep do not fear when the shepherd is near. How can you fear when you look to Jesus as your Shepherd?

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{ When you look to Jesus as your Shepherd, you can be certain of your future inheritance...

Genesis 46:4 "I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again*; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes."

God had promised Israel the land he was now leaving for good in the life! Yet he was assured he would return. After his death - after Joseph "closed his eyes" on his deathbed - you read in Chapter Fifty of his burial in Canaan.

Shepherds insure that their sheep have a future by defending them against their enemies. A good shepherd risks his life for the sheep.

Jesus called Himself "the Good Shepherd" Who "gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). *You* have a future inheritance because of Jesus:

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1 Peter 1:4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

1 Peter 1:5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

{ When you look to Jesus as your Shepherd, He will multiply your seed...

Genesis 46:5 Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

Genesis 46:6 So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him.

God had multiplied Jacob in every way. These two verses speak of how God had multiplied his stuff; verses seven through twenty seven speak of how God had multiplied his seed.

In Jacob's case God *literally* multiplied his seed, giving him children and grandchildren and great grandchildren. In your case Jesus will multiply your *spiritual* seed you sow into your life and into the lives of others.

For example, you read in Galatians,

Galatians 6:6 Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Galatians 6:8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Generous sowing to the Spirit is said to benefit both you and those who receive your generosity. While the primary context is financial giving, you are said to sow good works as well

{ When you look to Jesus as your Shepherd, He will fulfill the desires of your heart...

Genesis 46:28 Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out before him *the way* to Goshen. And they came to the land of Goshen.

Genesis 46:29 So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.

Genesis 46:30 And Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you *are* still alive."

Jacob's hearts desire was to be with and to bless Joseph. God would fulfill this for him. Jacob would be with him in Egypt, bless him in Egypt, and then Joseph would shut his eyes on Jacob's deathbed.

Jesus will fulfill the desires of *your* heart - the real ones, the ones He puts there.

, In your walk you are to look to Jesus as your Shepherd. Hear His voice; heed His voice; hope in His voice.

#2 In Your Work You Are To
Live For Jesus As A Shepherd
(46:31-47:12)

Jacob and his sons would work as shepherds for Joseph. You are to work like a shepherd for Jesus. You may not be a shepherd in the technical sense, but you can and should be like one in your service to Jesus. You should have the work ethic of a shepherd in spiritual matters. Several spiritual principles of the shepherd work ethic can be determined as we look at the remaining verses together.

{ When you live for Jesus as a shepherd, there is much time spent in preparation...

Genesis 46:31 Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, 'My brothers and those of my father's house, who *were* in the land of Canaan, have come to me.

Genesis 46:32 'And the men *are* shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.'

Note the past tense, "their occupation *has been* to feed livestock..." In verse thirty four you read, "Your servants' occupation *has been* with

livestock from our youth even till now, both we *and* also our fathers..."
Before they ever encountered Egypt, they had been training as shepherds for generations.

How much "has been" *has* there been in your life? Jesus has good works for you to walk in that He has ordained for you. He also works to prepare you in your walk - not just to work.

Moses trained as a shepherd for forty years before he was prepared to minister. David was a shepherd long before he was a king. Times of preparation are essential.

{ When you live for Jesus as a shepherd, you are separated from the world...

Genesis 46:33 "So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?'

Genesis 46:34 "that you shall say, 'Your servants' occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we *and* also our fathers,' that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd *is* an abomination to the Egyptians."

The Egyptians had a caste system in their society. Shepherds and herdsmen were the lowest caste, or level. They were not allowed to enter temples or to marry other Egyptians from another caste. They were in Egypt, but separated from its religion and relationships.

So, too, are you to be in your "Egypt" separated from its religion and relationships. Spiritually and, to a certain extent, socially, you are to live separated lives.

{ When you live for Jesus as a shepherd, you submit to His calling for your life...

Genesis 47:1 Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said, "My father and my brothers, their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; and indeed they *are* in the land of Goshen."

Genesis 47:2 And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh.

Joseph took only five from the larger family to present to Pharaoh. Why only five? Which five? We are not told. His family simply submitted to his wisdom and authority and did as he wished.

In the same way we are to submit to Jesus' wisdom and authority as He puts us in the positions He chooses, and as God the Holy Spirit gifts us as He wills.

{ When you live for Jesus as a shepherd, you are not to be ashamed...

Genesis 47:3 Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What *is* your occupation?" And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants *are* shepherds, both we *and* also our fathers."

Genesis 47:4 And they said to Pharaoh, "We have come to dwell in the land, because your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine *is* severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen."

Joseph told them to tell Pharaoh that they were shepherds. Then he told them that being a shepherd was a shameful occupation in Egypt. When questioned by Pharaoh they were not ashamed, even though he considered them an abomination.

The Cross of Jesus Christ was shameful. The Bible says, however, that Jesus "...for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2)." You and I are encouraged to not be ashamed of what Jesus has done for us - even though His work on the cross is held in contempt, ridicule, and scorn. Romans 1:16 reads, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

{ When you live for Jesus as a shepherd, you are diligent in your secular work...

Genesis 47:5 Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, "Your father and your brothers have come to you.

Genesis 47:6 "The land of Egypt *is* before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know *any* competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock."

Because they were diligent shepherds to their own flocks, Pharaoh entrusted them his flocks.

Among the Egyptians *you* work with you are to "...obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:22-24).

{ When you live for Jesus as a shepherd, your suffering won't interfere with your serving...

Genesis 47:7 Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

Genesis 47:8 Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How old *are* you?"

Genesis 47:9 And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

Genesis 47:10 So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

Jacob's years, from his perspective, had been "few and evil." Nevertheless he took the opportunity to bless Pharaoh, rather than seek to be blessed by him.

Whether the days of your life are "many and good" or "few and evil" is in the hands of the Lord...Whether they are "many and evil" or "few and good" are up to Him as well.

What is left up to *you* is whether you will emphasize your own suffering, or empathize with the suffering of others and go on serving the Lord.

{ When you live for Jesus as a shepherd, you give the world's best to others and content yourself with bread...

Genesis 47:11 And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

Genesis 47:12 Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number in *their* families.

Jacob and his sons were given the best land for their sheep and sufficient bread for themselves.

Shepherds content themselves with little. By nature of the occupation, they wander from field to field - working, weeding, cultivating but never owning the land. They carry little in order to care more for their flock.

The resources of this world are at your disposal. A good shepherd uses resources for the good of the sheep, not for himself. Learn to be content with less and give more to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

We haven't said much about Joseph. As always, Joseph is a beautiful type of Jesus.

^ Joseph appeared before Pharaoh on behalf of his brethren and was not ashamed to call them his brothers.

%o Jesus ascended into heaven before God on our behalf and He is not ashamed to call us His brethren.

^ Joseph bridged the gap between Pharaoh and his brothers. As Joseph, born and brought up in the family of Jacob, he understood the nature of his brothers. As Zaphnath-Paaneah, seated at the right hand of Pharaoh, he understood the throne. He was a perfect mediator for his brothers, to present them at the most powerful throne in the world.

‰ You can see the very obvious comparisons with Jesus, Who is both God and man, our mediator - bridging the gap between God and man and presenting us before the Father's throne in heaven.