

GENESIS 46:1 - 7

LEAVING HOME IN PREPARATION FOR COMING BACK

Are you familiar with the word, counter-intuitive? It essentially means "going against what you know." Something just doesn't make sense based on what you know already. We have all come across something like this. If you are a mechanic it has happened many times I'm sure. Something has gone wrong with what you are working on and based on what you know, you can't figure out why it is doing or not doing what it should be doing. These things come up from time to time.

This reminds me of the time that Robin and some other ladies were going to North Mississippi for some kind of conference. They were

all car-pooling and the driver of the car typed in the destination on her GPS. Once the GPS told them which way to go they followed the directions religiously. They left out pretty early that morning. Around 9:00 or so I got a call from Robin asking how to get to Tupelo from Alabama. Of course I was trying to figure out why they were even in Alabama when all they had to do was hit HWY 45 and head straight north. You can imagine what a conversation that was. The GPS for some reason had taken them into Alabama and onto highway 17 north. She called me when they got to highway 78, thank goodness. The point is that it was counter-intuitive to go through Alabama when they were headed to North Mississippi especially since they were already in Mississippi. To her credit Robin was the one that realized something was wrong.

At any rate, there are times in our lives, our spiritual lives when something comes up that is counter-intuitive. It just doesn't make sense based on what we have been taught previously. Immediately

red flags go up and that is a good thing. **We need to pay close attention when something doesn't seem right. It is at that point that we need to make sure we are paying attention to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit so we don't make a mistake.**

That is where we find Israel/ Jacob today. He is in the position of making a major move; one that in many ways is counter-intuitive. So let's go to chapter 46 and see how Israel deals with this situation.

Gen 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.*

Gen 46:2 *Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" And he said, "Here I am."*

Gen 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.*

Gen 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."*

Gen 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.*

Gen 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.*

Gen 46:7 *His sons and his sons' sons, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.*

I think you can see how a father would have wanted to see his long lost son after all those years, but we aren't talking about just any reunion here. If that were the case then Joseph would have taken some vacation time and just flown in on Pharaoh's jet to spend some time with his family.

What we are talking about is moving everything from the family to the entire business. We are talking about leaving your land, land promised to you by God, and moving to a foreign country, a heathen nation where you are on the bottom rung of the ladder. I can see the trepidation in Israel. He wants to see his son, but it means leaving everything. **After all, wasn't he promised the land of Canaan? Why would God have him leave everything?**

We see in verse 3 that Israel/ Jacob was scared to go and he had a right to be scared. Remember what happened to his grandfather? In Genesis 12 Abraham had gone to Egypt because of a famine. He

was afraid of what might happen to his wife so he told a big lie and when it was found out Pharaoh sent him packing back home. It was a big mess, but the moral of the story was that **he was in trouble for trusting in Egypt instead of trusting God. Now, in the middle of a famine, he was looking at leaving everything, including the land he was promised, to go to Egypt. It sounded too familiar. To compound things, Isaac had also contemplated going to Egypt in a time of famine but God had told him not to do so.**

In an oral culture where you listened to your elders, Israel was going against all that he knew.

However, also weighing on his mind was most likely the recollection of a promise God had given to his grandfather before he was known as Abraham.

Gen 15:13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.

Gen 15:14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

So how did he handle this dilemma? I believe he is like any other man. Remember, there is nothing new under the sun and all things are common among men. I'm sure he dwelled on it and mulled over it for a time, as he was slowly moving south. We see that he headed toward Egypt and then stopped at the southernmost point in the Promised Land, Beersheba. Here he would stop, sacrifice to God and pray. Abraham and Isaac had both lived there for a while. Abraham had planted a Tamarisk tree commemorating where he had called on the name of the Lord. Isaac had received a promise from God there and had built an altar in that place. **It was**

probably here that Israel stopped and sacrificed looking for some confirmation on this huge move.

So what did God have to say?

Gen 46:2 Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" And he said, "Here I am."

Gen 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."

Gen 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 spoke to Israel in a dream. I believe He still does this at times today.

Act 2:16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

Act 2:17 'AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE LAST DAYS, SAYS GOD, THAT I WILL POUR OUT OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH; YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS.

Act 2:18 AND ON MY MENSERVANTS AND ON MY MAIDSERVANTS I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT IN THOSE DAYS; AND THEY SHALL PROPHECY.

Act 2:19 I WILL SHOW WONDERS IN HEAVEN ABOVE AND SIGNS IN THE EARTH BENEATH: BLOOD AND FIRE AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.

*Act 2:20 THE SUN SHALL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS,
AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE COMING
OF THE GREAT AND AWESOME DAY OF THE LORD.*

*Act 2:21 AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS THAT WHOEVER
CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE
SAVED.'*

See, it says that the old men will dream dreams. We just don't remember them most of the time. The point is that I believe God still speaks to us this way but it isn't an everyday occurrence. Caleb and I helped a lady out one day with a ride. I have known her for 20 years and the church has helped her out from time to time. We gave her a ride. While in the truck she was telling about all the visions she had gotten from God. It was just one after the other. Everything to her was an omen. As a result she is in a constant state of interpreting omens and signs. This is not how it works. **We do see people in the Bible having important dreams and**

visions, but they weren't an everyday occurrence and they had to do with major elements of God's plan.

As I stated earlier I do believe **God still speaks to us in dreams,** but primarily we have **His Word and the conviction of the Holy Spirit who gives us peace with decisions based on what we know about the Word.**

There are some things that are obvious. For instance we are not to steal or murder. **What we have here with Israel though is what appears to be an exception to the rule that has been passed down from father to son for three generations; that is don't go to Egypt during a famine, trust in God.** It sounds like a good rule of thumb. **Metaphorically Egypt represents the world** and we are not to rely on the world for our sustenance or knowledge.

So what is happening here? **Did God change His mind?** No, we have to look at the context of the situation. **Abraham and Isaac were going to Egypt for the wrong reasons. They were going because of a lack of faith and because they hadn't consulted God. Now God is telling Israel to go to Egypt.** In fact this is nothing new. He is simply enacting a promise He had made earlier in Genesis 15. **It is just that now the timing is right. It does no good to invoke a scripture when we take it out of context.**

Israel was doing the right thing by considering the teaching of his Father and Grandfather. They had both learned from their experiences and directly from God. However, he didn't stop there. **He didn't just lean on tradition. He took the time to pray and seek God's face.**

(Externalism)

It was there that he found his answer. **God confirmed not what Joseph told them to do, but He confirmed what He had promised earlier to Abraham;** namely that there would come a day when He would take His people to another land in order to build them into a nation so that they would later be able to return and take possession of what He had promised.

God's plans often seem to take us away from the objectives He has placed before us in order to prepare us, only to bring us back again so that we can accomplish the original goal.

The moral of this story is that we should respond to warning signs when we appear to be going the wrong way. Sometimes we may be going the wrong way, other times it may be the Lord steering us to a place of preparation for our mission. **The only way to know for sure is to seek His face and His will.**

This is the communication He craves and it is should be a goal of ours also. We can't go wrong doing this.

Seek God's face, not just His hand!