

Faith Learns the Ways of God

Genesis 47.28-48.22

Aren't you glad God is patient? We are fickle, and often fail, but He is faithful! Jacob fought with God for much of his life, but God never gave up on him, and in his last days, God won his heart. He showed he had learned to trust God – a life lesson we all need to learn.

Faith takes hold of God's Promises (47.28-31)

Jacob makes Joseph promise to bury him in Canaan, reflecting his faith in God's promise to give that land to Israel.

Faith in God's Word gives confidence for the future (48.1-7)

Jacob recalls God's promise of numerous descendants, and passes on a double-blessing to Joseph in his two sons.

Faith recognizes that God's ways are not man's ways (48.8-22)

Jacob blesses Ephraim over firstborn Manasseh, recognizing God as the One who provided for, restored, and protected him throughout his life.



1. Jacob did not distinguish himself as a 'man of faith' for most of his life. To the contrary, he distinguished himself as a devious schemer, outwitting others to get his own way. A review of his life, however, reveals a series of incidents which God used to progressively transform his recalcitrant will, and foster a heart of faith. What 'scenes' in Jacob's life show his lack of trust in God? What events would have confronted his self-sufficiency? What episodes in the Joseph narrative finally 'break his heart,' then bring him to a mature faith in God?
2. Biblical numerology is misused, but it can reflect that events in Israel's formative age are not just haphazard incidents, but part of God's grand design. For example, note the number of years Jacob cared for Joseph in Canaan (Gen. 37.2), and the number of years Joseph cared for Jacob in Egypt (Gen. 47.28). The life spans of patriarchs provide further evidence. Consider:
 - Abraham – $175 = 5 \times 5 \times 7$
 - Isaac – $180 = 6 \times 6 \times 5$
 - Jacob – $147 = 7 \times 7 \times 3$
 The squared number increase by one in each generation and the coefficient decreases by two; the sum of the factors in each case equals 17. Coincidence? Maybe. But it's interesting...and if you look closely, you may detect other reflections of God's control.
3. Jacob's blessing of Ephraim over Manasseh, Joseph's firstborn, symbolizes his faith in God. From before birth (Gen. 25.22-26) he fought against *primogeniture* (firstborn rights), but now, on his death bed, he twice goes against what society considered a norm: He gives Joseph a double portion over his elder brothers, and blesses Ephraim, making him greater than Manasseh. What lesson about a 'mature faith' can we learn from this?
4. In the New Testament 'Hall of Fame of Faith' (Hebrews 11), Jacob receives a mention (v21). What two events in Genesis 47-48 does he cite? Why do you think he chose these events over any others in Jacob's life? Whatever our past lives may hold, ending life with a mature faith is a great thing!