

WEEK
5
Oct. 12-18,
2026

Daily Bible readings

Genesis 45:25 - Exodus 5:21

Off to Egypt

Monday, Oct. 12

Genesis 45:25 – 47:12

Sometimes things work out.

In so many of the stories we've come across so far there has been conflict, and even the happy endings come with a shadow hanging over them.

Yes, change is difficult. Jacob being asked to leave the land God has promised to him and his descendants might even feel like he's giving up on God or not trusting God's promise.

Yet God speaks to Jacob and says, "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again."

It's frightening to change direction. Jacob doesn't know if this is just a detour, or if everything he has expected is now a vain hope. God's promise is that it is a detour that is necessary and will be a blessing by making God's people into a great nation there.

While we know there will be tough times to come in the future, the story of Jacob is headed for a happy conclusion: the son he thought was dead still lives, and the family finds safety and freedom from the famine in Egypt. For now, life is good.

In our haste to get on with the story, let's not forget that along the way there were many good times. Even the list of the sons of Israel's sons, while not exciting reading, reminds us that the years between Joseph's betrayal and the eventual journey to Egypt had a lot of good times: marriages, births and all the celebrations that come with family life.

And let's not forget that it's the suffering the people will endure as slaves in Egypt that will bond them into the great people God has promised they will be, and will pave the way for their understanding of what God's liberation truly is.

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If you think ahead to the New Testament you'll remember that this is not the only time a man named Joseph finds safety for his family in Egypt.

Monday meditation

Proverbs 5:7-14

Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say. Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house, lest you lose your honor to others and your dignity to one who is cruel, lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich the house of another.

At the end of your life you will groan,

Daily reflections by Rev. Mark Fleming

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when your flesh and body are spent. You will say, “How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction! I would not obey my teachers or turn my ear to my instructors. And I was soon in serious trouble in the assembly of God’s people.”

Prayer focus

We thank you, Lord, for the many good times of life, even when those good times seem to just be brief breaks in the turmoil surrounding them. Keep our focus on your blessings that we may not turn aside when temptation calls.

Joseph flourishes in famine

Tuesday, Oct. 13

Genesis 47:13 – 48:20

Some of the deviousness that characterized most of the early stories of Jacob and his family return with today’s reading.

Joseph clearly inherited the family talent for turning a profit at the expense of others, taking advantage of the famine to reduce most Egyptians to servitude (and making them grateful for it). In his case, though, he does it on behalf of his own master, the Pharaoh. He proves himself a shrewd and faithful manager of the work he has been entrusted with.

Even in these difficult times, Jacob’s family flourishes. “Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number.”

Sometimes people try to find guidance in the Bible for the best economic system or the best political system, but in passages like the one about Joseph’s leadership there seems to be little suggestion that the system is inherently good or inherently evil. Justice and integrity seem to be more important for seeing what is in someone’s character.

When Jacob nears the end of his life, Joseph asks him to bless his sons. In a repeat of what we saw with Jacob’s own beginnings, he says both will father great nations, but the younger will prevail over the older.

Even though failing eyesight is again part of the account, the switched blessing seems entirely deliberate this time. Jacob, it appears, is just as unconcerned with convention now as he has ever been.

Jacob also gets Joseph to promise that he will be returned to his own land for burial. He will be buried with his ancestors and with his first wife, Leah. His beloved Rachel was buried elsewhere as she died during a journey.

Tuesday meditation

Proverbs 5:15-20

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well.

Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers.

May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love.

Why, my son, be intoxicated with another man’s wife? Why embrace the bosom of a wayward woman?

Prayer focus

Let me be faithful—in love, in family relationships, in work and in my walk with you.

Blessed with wisdom

Wednesday, Oct. 14

Genesis 48:21 – 49:28

As Jacob (now Israel) prepares for his death, he gathers his sons around him and pronounces a blessing on each. While we might think of a “blessing” as being a statement of good wishes, this is something different.

Jacob, for all his failings, is blessed by God with keen insight. Sometimes he’s used this to enrich himself, but here we see the amount of insight he has into each of his sons. His predictions of their future fate come from a deep and honest understanding of who each one is, both the good parts and the bad parts.

He tells them, “Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come.”

Today’s reading from Proverbs says that God sees our ways and examines our paths.

Likewise, it seems that Jacob has seen the ways and paths of his children. In some of those cases he has seen evil.

Reuben, he says, has defiled his bed. Simeon and Levi have a fierce and cruel anger that has led them to kill.

Even Benjamin, who Jacob has particularly loved and protected, doesn’t escape his father’s perceptiveness. He, Jacob says, is a “ravenous wolf.”

Others, like Judah and Dan, are of noble character. Judah, who will be the ancestor of David and counted as the ancestor of Jesus, will have a royal line, but there’s a possible prophecy of the crucifixion in this blessing: “he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.”

Others seem to be good men, but not particularly strong.

Joseph receives special commendation for his steadfastness.

It’s easy to read through this passage as just poetic ramblings, but it shows the kind of honest insight that all of us would do well to develop. Jacob is neither naive nor cynical in viewing his sons. His honesty is unclouded by sentiment. He loves all of them deeply, but doesn’t allow his love to blind him to who they are.

Too often we believe that if we love someone we have to overlook their faults, or if we see someone’s faults we can no longer love them. Jacob shows us that this doesn’t have to be an either/or decision.

Real love requires both courage and honesty.

Wednesday meditation

Proverbs 5:21-23

For your ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all your paths.

The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them; the cords of their sins hold them fast. For lack of discipline they will die, led astray by their own great folly.

Prayer focus

Grant me clarity of vision, to see with honesty the people around me, and to love them regardless of what I find. Grant me the compassion to forgive, the courage to confront, and the wisdom to know which is the right path.

Good mourning

Thursday, Oct. 15

Genesis 49:29 – 50:26

We end Genesis on two stories of mourning, but also on a note of joy. After difficult and challenging lives, both Jacob and Joseph live to be old men and die surrounded by loving family. Death is always painful, but this is the kind of death most people would want.

It is a sign of the esteem that Joseph has earned that the death of his father results in official mourning among the Egyptians. Joseph came to that country as a slave, and may still have been a slave under the law, but is treated and trusted as great man among the people.

Like his father, Joseph wishes to be returned to his own land for burial, though that is still unfulfilled at the end of the book. He reassured his brothers that God would continue to be with them. “Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.’”

When we speak of the patriarchs we typically refer to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They received the promise from God that their descendants would be a great nation and a chosen people. With Isaac, that nation has begun to take shape, as his 12 sons are the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel.

It seems that Joseph and his contributions get overlooked sometimes, but if it had not been for him, the people of Israel’s family would have died out within his lifetime.

Joseph’s life has some important parallels with the life of Jesus himself: beloved son,

savior of his people, respected by both Jews and gentiles. Also like Jesus, he faced betrayal, was sold for pieces of silver, and became a great leader by being a faithful servant.

Thursday meditation

Proverbs 6:1-5

My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, you have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the words of your mouth.

So do this, my son, to free yourself, since you have fallen into your neighbor's hands: Go—to the point of exhaustion—and give your neighbor no rest! Allow no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids.

Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the snare of the fowler.

Prayer focus

We pray for the wisdom to avoid unnecessary entanglements. Let us live with honor and integrity so that your light can shine into the world's darkness.

A king who knew not Joseph

Friday, Oct. 16

Exodus 1:1 – 2:15

How much difference a couple of centuries can make.

Sources disagree on the time lapse between Joseph and Moses, but most of the ones I've found settle on 200 years, give or take. In other words, long enough that there's no one still living who had direct experience with Joseph, but still fairly recent history.

But as generations have passed, the gratitude and respect the Egyptians once felt for Joseph have faded into memory, and they see the growing Hebrew population as a threat. Suspicion of foreigners and people with different beliefs seems to infect humans of all eras.

Pharaoh would have undoubtedly heard the story of Joseph; it was part of his family's history and had helped build the fam-

ily's wealth and power. But as years had passed, any sense of gratitude or trust had faded. Verse 8 says, "Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt."

The early life of Moses is told briefly but with such vivid images that we feel like we've seen him grow into adulthood.

To reduce the perceived threat from the Hebrews, Pharaoh has ordered that male Hebrew children be thrown into the Nile. Presumably the order applies to males and not females because the men would be seen as more likely to take up arms against Pharaoh. But, whether intentional or not, it would have been particularly painful for faithful Jews, as it was the men who bore the mark of circumcision that was the sign of belonging to God.

Moses's mother tries to save his life by putting him into the river in a floating basket. It is in the river that he is discovered by Pharaoh's daughter and adopted as her own. His quick-thinking sister arranges for his own mother to nurse him.

And so Moses, one of the Jews that Pharaoh fears so much, grows up in the royal household. As we'll see later, Pharaoh was right to perceive a threat, though probably not in the same way he expected.

Moses grows up in privilege, but is aware of his ancestry.

After he grows up, he kills an Egyptian he sees beating a Hebrew slave. In spite of his own privilege, he cares for his own people and is angered. To the Hebrews, though, he is not really one of them, and two Hebrews who witnessed the murder threaten to expose him.

It was once moving to Egypt that saved his family. Now, he flees Egypt to protect his own life.

Friday meditation

Proverbs 6:6-8

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

Prayer focus

Lord, protect your people when we face threats too big for us to handle, and through that, let us learn to trust you in all things, great and small.

Unexpected meetings

Saturday, Oct. 17

Exodus 2:16 – 3:22

This starts with a familiar story: Boy, far from home, meets girl at well. Girl tells Dad, then girl marries boy.

At the risk of getting off track, I find it interesting how many of these life-changing encounters begin at wells, and only work out through women making introductions.

We don't have public wells today, but our equivalent would be the unglamorous public gathering places where we do the regular business of life: the grocery store, the gas station, the fast-food place. No one is going there because they especially want to, but because they need to. No one is going there expecting their life to be changed.

Later in today's reading we get to the familiar story of the burning bush. We usually think of that as being what an encounter with God looks like, with the voice from heaven and dramatic special effects. But it's worth remembering that Moses never would have seen the burning bush if he hadn't first had the everyday encounter at the well.

When he did get to the well, he saw that a group of women were trying to get water, but were being driven away by shepherds.

The same impulse that had led Moses to stand up to an Egyptian bully who was beating Hebrew slaves now led him to stand up for these women. This time, fortunately, it doesn't lead to bloodshed. Instead, it introduces him into what will become his new family.

Yet, Moses feels he is a stranger in a strange land. Raised in a palace, he is now tending sheep neither in the land of his ancestors or in his adopted homeland. In tending the sheep, he led the flock "to the

far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God."

So we see Moses as a man driven by a strong sense of justice, not content to stay in one place, unsure where he belongs in life.

When Moses sees the burning bush, he is intrigued and attracted to it. "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." Moses combines a sense of curiosity with his sense of justice. He has a drive to understand, and to act on that understanding.

When God sees the misery of his people in Egypt and calls Moses to be his emissary to them, Moses might not recognize how qualified he is, but God does.

Saturday meditation

Proverbs 6:9-11

How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.

Prayer focus

Grant me the wisdom to know that what I see as dissatisfaction with life may just be my calling.

God provides the mission and the means

Sunday, Oct. 18

Exodus 4:1 – 5:21

Like so many of the people God calls, Moses responds first with excuses why he isn't really the one God wants for this mission.

He says, "Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else." Isn't that the way we often respond when God shows us a need that need to be addressed? We think there is someone else better equipped to do it, who may be better at it. Most of all, though, we fear that we just aren't able or willing enough.

God's response is giving Moses evidence to provide, though the evidence seems to

be as much about reassuring Moses as it is about convincing Pharaoh.

God tells Moses that his brother Aaron will assist him. Aaron, unlike Moses, speaks well.

God could just as easily have equipped Moses with whatever abilities he needed, and persuaded him of his capabilities. The fact that God chose to bring Aaron into the mix suggests that teamwork may have value in itself. As we have seen before, God works through community.

We've seen before that Moses is the kind of man who, in spite of the hesitation he shows, will respond when he sees he is needed. He is who God has prepared him to be.

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In a seemingly unrelated side story, verses 24-26 of chapter 4 tell about the circumcision of Moses's son. It's not clear why this story is included, but it introduces a few things that may be significant:

- Moses, despite his concern for his people, did not circumcise his son at eight days of age. He had to learn to be obedient through experience.

- Zipporah, who was not Jewish by birth, had a hand in keeping God's commandment. Moses, the great lawgiver, had to depend on a gentile to keep the law close to home.

- It was only after this belated act of obedience that Moses was able to fulfill his mission.

We also can't overlook the fact that the whole mission came about because God was angered at oppression. God, throughout the Bible, takes the side of the poor and oppressed over the rich and powerful.

Notice that the Egyptians blamed the plight of the Hebrews on their own laziness, not on the cruelty of their masters. Blaming the powerless for their own plight isn't a new development.

And notice that when the Hebrews complained about not having the straw they needed to make bricks, the Egyptians told

them to get their own. That's a dramatic contrast with God's reaction earlier when Moses said he didn't have the means to fulfill his work and God provided a way.

Sunday meditation

Proverbs 6:12-15

A troublemaker and a villain, who goes about with a corrupt mouth, who winks maliciously with his eye, signals with his feet and motions with his fingers, who plots evil with deceit in his heart—he always stirs up conflict. Therefore disaster will overtake him in an instant; he will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy.

Prayer focus

God, show me the task you have for me, and provide both the courage and the means to take it on.

China Methodist Church
China, Texas



Forest Park Methodist Church
Beaumont, Texas