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The Power of a Calling (C): Legacy

You are not here merely to make a living. You are here to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, and with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world. You impoverish yourself if you forget this errand.

—Woodrow Wilson

Several generations of Joseph's family lived in Egypt long after its recovery from the great famine. As a result of Pharaoh Amenemhat III and Joseph's leadership, many lives were saved. In addition, some of Joseph's brothers and their families, once exposed to new opportunities, forged surprising new directions. As older generations died and new leaders ascended to power, things changed. Jacob's (Israel) children confronted new challenges that provide additional insights into living a calling.

Legacy

Joseph and Pharaoh Amenemhat III's collaborative leadership resulted in improved cross-cultural relations between Egyptians and Hebrews that lasted for several generations. Egyptians, once masters, bowed to and esteemed the Hebrew leader of their country, Joseph. Moreover, previously despised Hebrew shepherds were esteemed because of their strategically important contributions as managers of the government's agricultural resources during a crisis. As the society became more equitable, Hebrews and Egyptians were leaders and slaves, depending upon their particular abilities.

The Egyptian community recognized Joseph's significant administrative, economic, and agricultural contributions by memorializing him with a larger-than-life sized statue.¹ Its monumental scale reminded Hebrews and Egyptians of Joseph's extraordinary service, work ethic and the fulfillment of his calling. Near the end of his life, Joseph predicted that the family would leave Egypt, though he didn't say how. His final request was that, when they did, they take his body with them. He died, at 110 years of age and was buried in Egypt.

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Part C of this case presents fictional and historic details that have been combined to advance educational purposes only. Career paths for Jacob's sons in the "Descendants" section are based on predictions made by Jacob in scripture. Together, with Part B, the C case connects the career and character trajectories of each brother and their descendants, based upon historical information.

Thereafter, Hebrews and Egyptians lived in relative harmony for about 215 years. However, those amicable cross-cultural relationships depended upon personalities (i.e., Joseph and Pharaoh Amenemhat III), informal arrangements, and memories, rather than institutionalized laws and practices. As the political winds shifted, new Pharaohs ascended to power who didn't know Joseph personally, although they were acutely aware of the family's reputation.

The "Immigrant Problem"

As Hebrews adjusted to the ways of Egypt, while retaining their religious and cultural identity, they enhanced the local economy and everyone flourished. They excelled in their vocations, their wealth increased, their offspring multiplied, and their work and work ethic influenced generations. Eventually, a new Pharaoh emerged who thought quite differently about these "immigrant" citizens and their "leadership."

When Pharaoh Palmonothèse ascended to power during the 13th dynasty, instead of valuing the differences and unique contributions of Israelites as previous Pharaohs did, he felt threatened by Israel's descendants—their increasing number, strength, and success. Even Joseph's monument was defaced,² in an attempt to erase his memory. Pharaoh Palmonothèse

[s]aid to his people, 'Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are. We must make a plan to keep them from growing even more. If we don't, and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country.' So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves. They appointed brutal slave drivers over them, hoping to wear them down with crushing labor. They forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses as supply centers for the king.

But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelites multiplied and spread, and the more alarmed the Egyptians became. So the Egyptians worked the people of Israel without mercy. They made their lives bitter, forcing them to mix mortar and make bricks and do all the work in the fields. They were ruthless in all their demands.³

This brutal brand of slavery was remarkably different from anything that preceded it, including the indentured servitude and government works program that Egyptians suggested to Joseph to manage the economic crisis. With Pharaoh's curse, Hebrews' status went from valued neighbors to reviled slaves. Strife between the two ethnic groups escalated, resulting in an untenable work climate and disastrous cross-cultural relations.

Paranoid, the Pharaoh enacted policies to kill all Hebrew baby boys (but spared baby girls). Oppression, bondage, and infanticide became the "new normal."⁴ Conversely, the Egyptian community was stricken with various devastating plagues until Israel's children were finally freed from slavery and left town. Surprisingly, it was one of Levi's descendants, Moses, who led the way.

The Descendants: Sons of Israel

Generations before, when Pharaoh asked Joseph's brothers about their occupation, they said "Your servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers."⁵ For some that remained true. For others and their namesake tribes, the future held very different answers—answers that both confirmed and contradicted Jacob's earlier predictions.

The future of Israel's descendants depended, in part, on the lessons that they learned from Joseph, their father, and from being open to and seizing opportunities in their new environment (Egypt and beyond). Their future also depended upon lessons that they "unlearned." Some tribes continued in the family's well-trodden career as shepherds, while many others became warriors. Still others ventured into completely unfamiliar occupational territory. Some tribes developed character strengths, while others devolved or remained stuck. Some adhered to their religious beliefs, others abandoned them. The following highlights are illustrative of each tribe's trajectory.⁶

The "Good"

Joseph's Tribe

Joseph, the faithful and fruitful son, had fruitful offspring as well. Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, flourished as Jacob predicted and both tribes became warriors. Manasseh's tribe was the largest of the two, and he enjoyed the privileges of being the first born, even though Jacob denied him that blessing. From Ephraim, the younger son, came Joshua, the great warrior, tactician, and political leader, who used remarkably unconventional tactics to defeat foes. However, both strayed from their father's faith, and the house of Joseph eventually devolved into two bloodthirsty factions.⁷

Benjamin's Tribe

Benjamin, Jacob's youngest child and the smallest tribe of all, was often allied with the tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah. The pampered "son of Jacob's right hand," also became a warrior, archer, and slinger. In addition, Saul, the first Hebrew King, came from Benjamin's line. Yet the tribe turned on Saul because of his sense of entitlement and jealous paranoia; they went on to support the more worthy King David, of Judah's lineage. The apostle Paul, known for his fierce temper and inspiring words, was also a Benjaminite.

The "Bad"

Reuben's Tribe

Content in their career as shepherds, Reuben's descendants endlessly struggled unsuccessfully to assert themselves as rightful leaders of the family and to transcend his father's negative opinion. Reubenites even conspired to overthrow other leaders in the family, namely Moses. In family matters, this tribe was sometimes the corrosive acid, and other times, the glue, both dividing and uniting the family.

Tribes of Simeon and Levi

Although Jacob viewed these brothers identically—as instruments of cruelty that humiliated him by terrorizing an entire town, they were in fact quite different.

Simeon's tribe continued as mighty warriors, assisting their brothers in major battles against their enemies. However, Zimri, a Simeonite, instigated a salacious sex scandal⁸ in front of the entire family and was killed for it. So although Simeon was the third largest of all tribes, they dwindled in number and eventually became extinct—scattered as Jacob predicted. Levi's tribe took a much different path.

As it turns out, Joseph wasn't the only Hebrew inhabitant of Egypt's royal palace. Moses, the great-grandson of Levi, was adopted by Egyptian princess, Merris, whose father Pharaoh Palmonothèse began tormenting Hebrews at work and killing their children. Merris raised Moses in the palace, and hired his biological mother to nurse him.⁹ Merris later married Kheneprês, who became the next Pharaoh and Moses' jealous step-father.¹⁰

For years, Moses wrestled with his dual identities. Initially, Moses struggled to reconcile his bi-cultural identities as a despised, undercover Hebrew, who lived as a privileged Egyptian prince. He also struggled with flip sides of his character and feelings of inadequacy.

While traveling to visit his Israelite family, Moses became outraged when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. In his fury, Moses murdered the Egyptian man, tried to conceal it and then fled the country when he learned that Pharaoh Kheneprês, his step-father, was going to kill him. Moses entered into a period of intense reflection and soul-searching, and found a supportive community.¹¹ Then he had a spiritual awakening! He stopped struggling with people, circumstances, and God, and began to pursue his calling.¹²

At first, Moses was tentative and doubted his speaking and leadership abilities. Still, he transcended his past, his fears, and ascended in his calling. Moses, and Levi's other descendants, became the family priests, keepers of the faith, spiritual leaders, public speakers, and rule makers—guiding them away from impurity and idolatry. By faith, Moses successfully led the Hebrews out of Egyptian bondage, taking their skills and a considerable amount of the nation's wealth with them.¹³ Before Moses died, he blessed all of his brothers' offspring—except Simeon's, thus continuing their father's curse against him.

The Invisible

Jacob predicted that Zebulun, Dan, Asher, Naphtali would transition out of shepherding into new careers.

Zebulun's Tribe

In addition to following in the new family vocation of warriors, Zebulun's children also became writers. Further, they owned fisheries and engaged in maritime activities, as their father predicted.

Naphtali's Tribe

Like many of his brothers, Naphtali's offspring joined the new family business, becoming energetic and victorious warriors. In addition, his joyous announcement that "Joseph is alive!"¹⁴ marked the beginning of a career as communicators who used "beautiful words,"¹⁵ as his father predicted. Naphtali's tribe pursued the literary arts as poets, songwriters and eloquent speakers. They even lived in a place called the "land of good tidings."

Dan's Tribe

In contrast, Dan's offspring eschewed violence and war. They became wise judges, as Jacob foreshadowed.¹⁶

Asher's Tribe

Asher and his offspring were employed by the royal household as bakers, which confirmed Jacob's pronouncement: "Bread from Asher shall be rich, and he shall yield royal dainties."¹⁷ They recoiled from battle and intermingled with other groups, allowing their faith to be diluted. In addition, their self-interest was detrimental to the family.

Gad's Tribe

Gad's tribe remained shepherds and prospered greatly from agricultural work. They were allied with Reuben in battle and even took the lead. Gad's descendants were fierce and faith-filled warriors who, although defeated, triumphed in the end, as Jacob said: "Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him, But he shall triumph at last."¹⁸

Issachar's Tribe

Jacob, as he lay dying, was concerned about Issachar's work ethic. Issachar's tribe had the ability to become warriors and leaders but lacked the temperament, drive and aspirations. Instead, they settled for minimum effort and maximum comfort. As a result, their pleasant land was invaded and they continued to work it as servants. But they didn't mind because working the land didn't require much effort. Freedom was the price they paid for ease, confirming his father's premonition: "He saw that rest was good, And that the land was pleasant; He bowed his shoulder to bear a burden, And became a band of slaves."¹⁹

And Dinah—who knows?

The Outlier

Judah's Tribe

Judah's children were greater in number, acquired more territory, and amassed more wealth than all the others tribes. Some remained shepherds. Some were strategic and vigorous in battle, acting as spies, slaying beasts and armies, and claiming territory. Eventually, a line of nobility emerged from Judah, as Jacob predicted.

King David, the youngest and least likely of his brothers, became renowned for being a fearless warrior, passionate poet, and a prolific author whose faith was legendary. David had several wives and was ensnared in a sex scandal with another man's wife, whom he arranged to have killed in battle. Because David was a man of war, he was prevented from attaining the pinnacle of his career—building the temple. Instead, that honor went to his second oldest surviving son Solomon. (The firstborn child, from his affair, died.)

Solomon lived the life of luxury, having grown up the child of royalty. Since he was just a youth when he ascended to the throne, Solomon prayed for and received extraordinary wisdom. Because God delighted in his humble request, Solomon also received riches and honor.

King Solomon, which means peaceful, did not rely upon his vast army to keep the peace. Instead, he wisely forged treaties with neighboring countries and an alliance with Egypt by marrying Pharaoh's daughter. Leaders around the world sought Solomon's legendary wisdom. Solomon was also known for his pragmatic and transformational leadership, international trade, and masterfully creative and complex architectural and engineering projects. Solomon, along with hired contractors, built the temple that his father could not, as well as a palace for himself. Solomon is also known for his enduring and inspiring poetic writings about love (Song of Solomon), work, ethics, human nature and common sense.²⁰

Although Solomon's journey began with a fervent faith, it was diluted by distractions. As Solomon enjoyed the spoils of success and an influx of all kinds of women, he assimilated to their ways.

Now the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the Lord had commanded. So the Lord said to Solomon, 'Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.' Then the Lord raised up an adversary to Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of the royal line in Edom.²¹

Solomon's reign began to unravel. The heavy taxes that he imposed became a source of political tension and unrest in the region. Under his son's reign, the kingdom split. Solomon's ultimate legacy was his material, rather than moral and spiritual contributions to Israel.

These great yet imperfect kings, David and Solomon, were entangled in sex scandals, just as Judah had been generations before them. Nevertheless, they were the ancestors of Jesus Christ.

* * * * *

Joseph, his brothers and their descendants were called not merely to make a living but to cultivate a finer spirit, fulfill a greater vision and make a contribution that would enrich their community and the world. Along the way, some forgot or ignored that calling and were impoverished because of it. Others remembered and flourished.

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Endnotes

Direct quotes from religious texts are indicated in endnotes. Additional quotes in the case are paraphrased for the sake of readability.

¹ Rohl, D.M. *Pharaohs and Kings: A Biblical Quest*. New York: Crown, 1995

² Rohl, D.M. *Pharaohs and Kings: A Biblical Quest*. New York: Crown, 1995

³ Exodus 1:9–14 *NLT*

⁴ Book of Exodus

⁵ Genesis 47:3

⁶ It is impossible to summarize the entire history of each tribe in this context. Select illustrative highlights are presented here for educational purposes and discussion.

⁷ Isaiah 9:20–21

⁸ Numbers 25:8–14 (from Fausset's *Bible Dictionary*, Electronic Database Copyright © 1998, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

⁹ Book of Exodus

¹⁰ Rohl, 1995

¹¹ Exodus 2:15

¹² Numbers 12:3

¹³ Exodus 12:36

¹⁴ Fausset's *Bible Dictionary*, Electronic Database Copyright © 1998, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

¹⁵ Genesis 49:21

¹⁶ Genesis 49:16

¹⁷ Genesis 49:20

¹⁸ Genesis 49:19

¹⁹ Genesis 49:15

²⁰ Proverbs and Ecclesiastes

²¹ 1 Kings 11:9–14 *NASU*



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