



The People

Genesis 47:23 “Joseph said to the people, “Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh.”

This is not an easy topic. If you have read your Bible then most likely you know that the Hebrews complained a ton. Was that complaining directed towards Moses or God? It goes way further than that. These people complained to virtually all the Biblical characters in the Old Testament. Yet, Paul mentions them having great faith. Did the people of the Hebrews have great faith? For me it is a yes and no answer. Yes, they tried hard to follow God and Moses. Yes, they had some respect for the Judges and Prophets. However, it is also no. These people grumbled, sinned, and worshiped idols plus so much more.

Let's take a quick look into the Hebrew history. Genesis 47 is really a pivotal point in the Bible. To this point the Hebrews of Abraham have been wanderers. Remember that they are not the Israelites yet. These people are the Hebrews: a people with no land. They had no nation, identity, or king. In Genesis 47, (I quoted above) that these people gave up everything to live safely under Egyptian rule. In a way, Egypt offered them salvation. To be fair, these Hebrews needed help. The good land was occupied by other nations like Egypt. However, what is absent in Genesis 47 is anyone asking God for help.

All of these events happen before Moses. There were no Ten Commandments. There were no tithings. Yet, they were willing to pay 1/5 of their work to Egypt. They were willing to be in slavery to Pharaoh. Genesis 47:25 *“You have saved our lives,” they said. “May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh.”* Remember that this period of slavery lasted 400 years. Those who wandered into Egypt were not the ones who wandered out with Moses. Deep within the Hebrew psyche remained a small devotion to God. We could call it an imprint of who they really are. Call it faith if you want. These people called on God when things went from bad to worse. Yet, they loved to grumble.

The Bible said that they will give one fifth to Pharaoh. That’s interesting since God only wanted one tenth. Yet, many of these people wanted to be slaves of Egypt. In reality they did not want to be slaves to God. We all know that when it comes to spiritual stuff and sin there is no grey area. Sin will always want more. Eventually your ungodly life will go off the rails. Yes, these people went the wrong way many times. But, a remnant of them always returned to God. Faith must have existed somewhere inside these Hebrews.

This story is the perfect analogy of “die to self.” Jesus says in Matthew 16:25 *“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”* For a nomad people to be a nation they must give up all they had and all they know. To create a desire to be Israelites. It probably made sense to surrender to Egypt. They have no resources to survive. It probably made some sort of sense to want to return to Egypt when things went poorly in the wilderness. However, God needed to sift a people group. To find those who had great faith like Joshua and Caleb. Those like Rahab.

The making of a nation 101. To grow in faith, they had to endure the wilderness. To endure God. To endure ruling themselves. To endure the world. They had been isolated in slavery for so

long. These former nomads probably did not want to wander. What drove them to want more? Was it faith? It caught me off guard when I realized Paul praised the grumblers. How could he say they had faith? Yet, the Bible says to train a child in the way they should go. It could be described as giving children some sort of foundation. Maybe faith in God was passed down for over 400 years of slavery in Egypt.

Romans 3:23 *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Yet, clearly faith in God was passed down. I did not believe in God 25 years ago. Yet, one night I cried out to the Lord. Why? Did my backsliding parents pass down a small faith in God? The grumbling people of the Bible were a hot mess. Yet, when push came to shove, they returned to the Lord. Sin does not mean you don't believe or have faith. It just means your going the wrong way. The wrong way people found a right way. I think Paul was going the wrong way and Jesus confronted him on the Damascus Road. These people found enough faith to pass it on to their children. Children like Paul centuries later.