

WITH MY STAFF I PASSED OVER THIS JORDAN

Gen 32:10 *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.*

The staff is the symbol of the shepherd. Jacob was a shepherd. We do not read that Abraham had a staff nor did Isaac. This does not mean that they were not great men of God, but there was something about the life and ministry of Jacob which first became associated with the staff of the shepherd. Jacob was the first true shepherd in this family of the fathers of faith. “That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians” (Genesis 46:34). The Hebrew word *mignê* translated “cattle” refers to animal stock such as cows, sheep, goats etc. We first come across Jacob taking care of his uncle Laban’s sheep in Haran. Jacob was cheated by his uncle who kept changing his wages and abused him. It was in such circumstances that Jacob discovered the power of his covenant and faith in God manifested through the staff.

Gen 30:38 *And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink.*

Gen 30:39 *And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted.*

The English words “rods” and “staff” both come from the same Hebrew word *maqqēl*. Jacob accepted the ministry of shepherding the people of God. Through sheer love of God and the promises of Abraham, he became Israel, and the first shepherd of Israel. The 12 tribes came through him, and he never ran away from his duty to shepherd Israel unlike his brother Esau who was a man of the fields – a man of no responsibility. The staff of Jacob is about accepting some responsibility for the work of God. It is first about understanding the value of the promises of God and then accepting a staff of responsibility. What is your staff of Jacob? “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (I Cor 12:28). Take care of your staff! Because Jacob never shirked his duty to the sheep, he received tremendous authority and power so much so that the sheep of Laban became the

sheep of Jacob through birth – he was basically inheriting the sheep of Laban. Jesus will give us new souls that will be born in the church we shepherd faithfully for the Lord.

***Heb 11:21** By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

The time came for Jacob's death. He was One hundred and forty-seven years old. Even when he was dying, he had power. He leaned on his old staff which had been his faithful companion in all his troubles. His death was not like the death of other people: he blessed the sons of Joseph and gave them inheritance in the land of Canaan even though he had not yet possessed the land. Here was a true conqueror even when he was dying, he had the power to distribute land. He worshipped God leaning on his staff. The work you and I do for the Lord will give us strength to worship the Lord Jesus. The death of the Christian is not like the death of other people. Saul of Tarsus was greatly impacted by the grace of Jesus that was upon the dying Stephen. Jacob gave a double portion of the Land of Canaan to Joseph through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh. "Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow" (Genesis 48:22). Jacob also reminded Joseph that both his sons belonged not to Joseph, but to Jacob

***Gen 48:5** And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.*

Note that Jacob declared Ephraim, Manasseh, Reuben and Simeon to be equally his – there was no difference between them although Ephraim and Manasseh were part of Egyptian royalty. Their mother was a member of the Egyptian aristocracy. Ephraim and Manasseh were dressed very differently than the shepherd sons of Jacob in the land of Goshen. Remember that shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians. But in the eyes of Jacob there is no difference between his sons: they are all part of the nation of Israel. Baptism in Jesus name removes the difference in the church between Egyptian aristocracy and Israeli shepherds. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:27-29).

Exodus 12:11 And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover.

Four hundred and thirty years later after the death of Jacob, each and every household among the children of Israel in Goshen had a staff. They certainly must have remembered their great ancestor Jacob who blessed them with land in Canaan and worshipped on his staff. They too believed they would now cross the Jordan with their staffs inherited from the ministry of Jacob. Jacob left the land of Haran and crossed the Jordan with his staff to face Esau. Jacob became two bands but they were now 2 million people. One can only multiply with the staff of Jacob. We know that Moses also came with a very powerful staff but do not forget that all of Israel had a staff. It was God who commanded them have their staffs in their hands and be ready to leave Goshen. One of these days we will leave this Goshen, this Egypt of the world. Are you ready Brother? Are you ready Sister? Gird up your loins and take your staff in your hand – it is time to cross this Jordan.

2Tim 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:
2Tim 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

The staff represents Jesus – we lean upon him in our old age, our dying days. We will not die miserable and complaining, but like father Jacob, we will do mighty things in Jesus name.