

Genesis 46

God had promised Abraham that his seed would be strangers in a foreign land and would be enslaved for four hundred years (15:13). In this chapter, we see Abraham's family emigrating into that foreign land to avoid death by starvation in an intense famine which will last another five years. If we presume that Jacob and / or Joseph had the earlier chapters of Genesis with them in some form, then they would know this experience is not going to be pleasant, ultimately, but that God would judge that nation (15:14) and bring His people back to the land of Promise (15:15-16).

TRANSLATION - 46:1-6:

1 Then Israel set out and all who [were] his and he came to Beer Sheba and he sacrificed sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac. **2** And God said to Israel in visions of the night and He said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."

3 And He said, "I [am] the God, the God of your father. Do not fear to go down to Egypt, because a great people I will put you there. **4** I, myself, will go down with you to Egypt and I, myself, will bring you up even to go up and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes."

5 So Jacob arose from Beer Sheba and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father and the little ones and their wives in the wagons which Pharaoh sent to carry him. **6** And they took their livestock and their property which they owned in the land of Canaan and they came to Egypt, Jacob and all his seed with him.

WORDS:

"To set out" (verse 1) is used 146 times; it means to break camp, to "pull out or pull up (tent pegs), to set out, to depart, to journey." "To sacrifice" and "sacrifices" are related words. "People" (verse 3) is used very often, 567 times, and refers to a specific group, like a nation. "To bring up, to go up" (verse 4) reflect the Hebrew emphatic expression with the infinitive absolute, the adverb "even" and the imperfect of the same verb, but in the *hiphil* conjugation, which is causative.

"Property" (verses 6, 32, 34) and "to own" (verse 6) are related words. The noun is found often in the patriarchal stories, used 76 times in the whole OT.

GRAMMAR:

The command "Do not fear" is found 156 times in the Old Testament.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

Jacob had been living in Hebron (37:14). "Beer Sheba" was the home of Jacob's father, Isaac (26:33) and has not been seen since 28:10. It was here that God appeared to Isaac and told him that He was the God of his father, Abraham. It is about 26 miles (40 km) from Hebron to Beer Sheba, at the southern border of the Promised Land.

COMMENTS:

Jacob had thought his life would end in tragedy (37:35). In fact, since that point, almost all the recorded words of Jacob had been about death but the turning point came in 45:28.

Now, Israel takes all he owns and leaves Hebron and stops in Beer Sheba, on his way to Egypt.

In Beer Sheba, Israel offers sacrifices to God. The text does not reveal to us why Jacob offered sacrifices. As we have indicated before, there seems to be no connection between these sacrifices and the removal of sin. Rather, Jacob is likely offering worship of thanksgiving, that Joseph is still alive and that he is able to see Joseph one more time before he dies. This is the last appearance of God to any patriarch and the last appearance to Jacob. The next time He will make Himself known, after a few hundred years, will be at the burning bush in front of Moses (Exodus 3).

First, God identifies Himself as the God of Israel's father, Isaac. This provides continuity between generations. He is, indeed, the "God of eternity" (21:33). Secondly, He encourages Israel not to be afraid to go into Egypt. Why? Because it is there that God will make his seed a "great nation." Now we know that the sons of Israel (as a dozen clans) will become the "sons of Israel" (as a nation) in Egypt. Why should Israel not be afraid to go into Egypt? Secondly, because God promises to be with him, to go down into Egypt with him. Thirdly, he doesn't have to be afraid because God promises that He will bring Israel "up again," a promise expressed by the Hebrew emphatic construction (cf. 15:13-14). Israel will not leave Egypt alive (49:33; 50:12-14) but he will be buried in the land of Promise. Fourthly, Israel does not need to be afraid in going to Egypt because Joseph, his beloved son, will "put his hands on his eyes." This is an idiom expressing the loving care one provides another who had died, that is, closing his eyes after his spirit leaves the body.

With these promises in his ears and heart, Jacob leaves Beer Sheba, being carried by his sons, in the wagons provided by Pharaoh. Verses 5-7 summarize the idea that all of Jacob's family leaves Canaan for Egypt, including their livestock and other property. Moses will give us a detailed list in verses 8 and following.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - There are eight appearances of God to Jacob: 28:13; 31:3, 11; 32:1; 32:30; 35:1, 9; 46:2. Joseph will "lay his hands" on his dad's eyes: 49:33; 50:1.

Contemporaries of Moses - This word for "sacrifice" will be used in the Law for peace offerings, vows, and thanksgiving (Lev. 3:1; 17:5).

TRANSLATION - 46:7-27:

7 His sons and the sons of his sons with him, daughters and the daughters of his sons and all his seed came with him to Egypt. **8** These [are] the names of the sons of Israel coming to Egypt:

- (1.) Jacob and his sons,
- (2.) the first born of Jacob, Reuben,
- 9** (3.) And the sons of Reuben: Hanoch
- (4.) And Pallu
- (5.) And Hezron
- (6.) And Carmi
- 10** (7.) And the sons of Simeon:
- (8.) Jemuel
- (9.) And Jamin
- (10.) And Ohad
- (11.) And Jachin
- (12.) And Zohar
- (13.) And Shaul, the son of a Canaanite;
- 11** (14.) And the sons of Levi:
- (15.) Gershon,
- (16.) Kohath,
- (17.) And Merari
- 12** (18.) And the sons of Judah:
- (19.) Er and Onan and Shelah
- (20.) And Perez
- (21.) And Zerah
- And they died, Er and Onanan, in the land of of Canaan and they were, sons of Perez:
- (22.) Hezron
- (23.) And Hamul
- 13** (24.) And the sons of Issachar:

(25.) Tola
(26.) And Puvvah
(27.) And Iob
(28.) And Shimron;

14 (29.) And the sons of Zebulon:

(30.) Sered
(31.) And Elon
(32.) And Jahleel

15 These [are] sons of Leah whom she bore to Jacob in Padan Aram

(33.) and Dinah, his daughter, all the souls of his sons and his daughters, thirty-three.

16 (34.) And the sons of Gad:

(35.) Ziphion
(36.) And Haggi
(37.) Shuni
(38.) Ezbon
(39.) Eri
(40.) And Arodi
(41.) And Areli

17 (42.) And the sons of Assher:

(43.) Imnah
(44.) And Ishvah
(45.) And Ishvi
(46.) And Beriah
(47.) And Serah, their sister;
(48.) And the sons of Beriah: Heber
(49.) And Malchiel

18 These [are] sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah, his daughter and she bore these to Jacob, sixteen souls.

19 (50.) The sons of Rachel, the wife of Jacob: Joseph

(51.) And Benjamin;

20 And there was born to Joseph in the land of Egypt whom she bore to him, Asenath, daughter of Poti-phera, priest of On:

(52.) Manasseh
(53.) and Ephraim;

21 And the sons of Benjamin:

(54.) Bela
(55.) And Becher
(56.) And Ashbel
(57.) Gera
(58.) And Naaman,
(59.) Ehi
(60.) And Rosh,
(61.) Muppim
(62.) And Huppim,
(63.) And Ard

22 These [are] sons of Rachel whom she bore to Jacob, all the souls, fourteen.

23 (64.) And the sons of Dan:

(65.) Hushim.

24 (66.) And the sons of Naphtali:

(67.) Jahzeel
(68.) And Guni
(69.) And Jezer
(70.) And Shillem.

25 These [are] sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel, his daughter, and she gave birth to these to Jacob, all the souls, seven.

26 Every soul coming to Jacob to Egypt, those going out his descendants except the wives of the sons of Jacob, all the souls [were] sixty-six.

27 Now the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt, two souls, all the souls for the house of Jacob, those coming to Egypt, seventy.

WORDS:

The word “soul” was first found in 1:20. It is used 43 times in Genesis. In this chapter, it is used eight times (46:15, 18, 22, 25, 26, 27). Here, it is used collectively. The word “descendants” (verse 26) is a noun related to the verb “to go down” but means “thigh, upper thigh,” and carries the idea of those “going out” from someone, that is, descendants.

COMMENTS:

Only direct descendants of Jacob are listed (vs 26); daughters-in-law are not. We also observe that Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim are already in Egypt. Also, the fact that Benjamin could have ten sons shows that he is much older than the term “young lad” used earlier of him would indicate. However, texts in Numbers and 1 Chronicles suggest some of these listed are grandsons rather than sons. “Sons,” we have seen, can carry a loose definition. Additionally, some may have actually been born once they arrived in Egypt but are numbered as part of the generation (70) that came into Egypt. Some see a parallel between this list of 70 and the list of 70 nations in Genesis 10, as if Jacob now represents the “new nation” that will serve God. That is not a connection that Moses, or any other biblical writer, makes.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - As we noted in the chapter dealing with their births, Kohath will be the ancestor of Moses (Exo. 6:16, 20). Rachel died earlier, at 35:16-21. Er and Onan were killed by God in 38:7-10. Perez and Zerah’s births are recorded at 38:27-30. We learn from Num. 26:38-40 and 1 Chronicles 8:1-5 that some of those descended from Benjamin were grandsons rather than sons.

Contemporaries of Moses - Moses will write that Jacob’s family numbered 70 when they “arrived” in Egypt (Exo. 1:5; Deut. 10:22). The “70” number will include Joseph and his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, as well as Jacob but Joseph and his family were already in Egypt when Jacob moved down. The law of Moses will forbid the marriage of Israel to Canaanite men and women (cf. 46:10; Deut. 7:3). Perhaps, when Simeon did what he did in Genesis 34, after the rape of Dinah, he married one of the widows of Shechem.

Later Hebrew writers - Compare the genealogy list from 1 Chronicles 2-8.

NT writers - Jesus will be in the lineage of Judah by Perez (Luke 3:33). In Acts 7:14-15, Stephen comments that there were 75 who came into Egypt. Stephen is using the LXX as his text and the Greek translation adds a son of Manasseh, two sons of Ephraim, and a grandson of each of his sons, to bring the number to 75.

TRANSLATION - 46:28-34:

28 And Judah he sent before his face to Joseph to lead his face to Goshen and they came to the land of Goshen. **29** And Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel, his father, at Goshen. And he saw him and fell on his neck and he wept still on neck.

30 And Israel said to Joseph, “Let me die now, after I have seen your face, because you still [are in] life.”

31 And Joseph said to his brothers and to the house of his father, “Let me go up and let me announce to Pharaoh and let me say to him, ‘My brothers and the house of my father who [were] in the land of Canaan came to me. **32** And the men [are] shepherds of flock because men of property they are and their flocks and their cattle and all which [are] to them have

come.’ **33** And it will be that Pharaoh will call to you and he will say, ‘What [is] your work?’ **34** And you will say, ‘Men of property your servants are, from our youth and until now, even we ourselves also our fathers,’ for the sake that you will dwell in the land of Goshen because an abomination to Egyptians [are] all shepherds of flocks.”

WORDS:

The verb “to lead” (verse 28) is the verb on which the Hebrew noun “Torah” (“Law”) is based. It means to “instruct, teach, or lead.” It is used 47 times, only here in Genesis. “Torah” is used 223 times. The verb “to prepare” (verse 29) is the verb “to tie, bind, or imprison,” used 73 times. Relative to a chariot, the verb suggests Joseph “binding” the animal to the chariot in preparation for transportation. For the word “abomination” (verse 32) see at 43:32. This is only its second, but last, use in Genesis.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

The displeasure with which Egyptians held shepherds is described in their literature.

COMMENTS:

Judah (vs 28) is still taking the lead, perhaps because he’s the one who finally pacified Joseph and alleviated his fears relative to the brothers. Thus Judah leads the family to the pasturelands of Goshen. Joseph then harnessed his horses to a chariot and he rode out to Goshen to see his father, whom he had not seen in 22 years! As soon as they saw each other, they embraced and wept a long time.

Finally, Israel expressed his satisfaction with life and his preparation for death. All he needed to do was to see Joseph alive. Joseph ignores the anticipation of death and informs his family that he will inform Pharaoh that they have arrived. There is also the unpleasant problem that Hebrews were shepherds while Egyptians found the occupation an “abomination.” Joseph tells his brothers to be truthful with Pharaoh and they can and will pasture their flocks in Goshen. They are shepherds and have no interest in taking over the land nor being a burden to the Egyptians.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - Pharaoh will put Joseph’s brothers, or some of them, in charge of his own flocks at 47:6. Jacob had seventeen years with Joseph before he was sold into slavery (37:2). He will have seventeen more years with Joseph in Egypt (47:28).

Contemporaries of Moses - The contrast between Joseph’s love for Egypt and his servile attitude toward Pharaoh is stark when seen against the Pharaoh of the Exodus (Exo. 1:8-14).