

The Descendants of Jacob Who Went Down to Egypt

Genesis 46:8-34

Genesis 46:8-34 - "Now these were the names of the children of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: Reuben was Jacob's firstborn. ⁹ The sons of Reuben were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. ¹⁰ The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. ¹¹ The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. ¹² The sons of Judah were Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. ¹³ The sons of Issachar were Tola, Puvah, Job, and Shimron. ¹⁴ The sons of Zebulun were Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. ¹⁵ These were the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Padan Aram, with his daughter Dinah. All the persons, his sons and his daughters, were thirty-three. ¹⁶ The sons of Gad were Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. ¹⁷ The sons of Asher were Jimnah, Ishuah, Isui, Beriah, and Serah, their sister. And the sons of Beriah were Heber and Malchiel. ¹⁸ These were the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bore to Jacob: sixteen persons. ¹⁹ The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife, were Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁰ And to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. ²¹ The sons of Benjamin were Belah, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. ²² These were the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob: fourteen persons in all. ²³ The son of Dan was Hushim. ²⁴ The sons of Naphtali were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. ²⁵ These were the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, and she bore these to Jacob: seven persons in all. ²⁶ All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all. ²⁷ And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy. ²⁸ Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out before him the way to Goshen. And they came to the land of Goshen. ²⁹ So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. ³⁰ And Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you are still alive." ³¹ Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, 'My brothers and those of my father's house, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. ³² And the men are shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.' ³³ So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' ³⁴ that you shall say, 'Your servants' occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we and also our fathers,' that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians."

Background Notes

If you add up the totals of Jacob's descendants given in these verses, there are 33 plus 16, plus 14, plus 7 - that equals 70. Then why does verse 26 say there were 66 descendants? Well, remember that Judah's sons Ur and Onan (v12) died

in Canaan, so they didn't go to Egypt. And Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh were already in Egypt. So that's one way to get the number sixty-six. Now to get the number 70 in verse 27 ("all the persons of the house of Jacob" in Egypt), add Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh, and Dinah (v15), who were not counted in the totals, and Jacob himself. Thus we get the number "70."

In connection with the number "70," Deuteronomy 32:8 says, "*When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, he set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel.*" Notice that God set boundaries of the nations "**according to the number of the children of Israel.**" Genesis 10 says that the world of mankind was divided into 70 nations. It seems in God's mind there is a parallel between the 70 nations and the 70 "children of Israel" who began the nation of Israel in Egypt.

One more note in connection with the number "70." In Acts 7:14, Stephen referred to 75 relatives of Jacob who came to Egypt. Well, Stephen may have been following the Septuagint version of Genesis 46. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. It lists two sons of Manasseh, two sons of Ephraim, and one grandson. Or perhaps Stephen was including five other relatives who were not in Jacob's direct line, such as daughters-in-law.

Joseph said he would tell Pharaoh that his family had arrived from Canaan (v31). He knew that when Pharaoh heard the family's occupation was caring for livestock, or shepherding, that Pharaoh would settle them in Goshen, which was good grazing land for their flocks and herds.

At the end of the verse 34 we read, "*every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.*" Believe it or not, this verse helps us to date the time of Joseph, and in turn this helps us date the time of the Exodus at about 1446 BC. This date for the Exodus is important for developing a sound chronology for the events of the Old Testament.

This verse strongly indicates that Joseph came to power before the Hyksos became rulers in Egypt. The Hyksos were Semitic, not true Egyptian, and they were called the "Shepherd Kings." The Hyksos Pharaohs wouldn't have cared what the Egyptians thought about raising sheep. So the fact that shepherds were a sensitive issue to the Pharaoh of Joseph's time indicates that this Pharaoh was a true Egyptian, not a Hyksos king. Exodus 1:8 it says "*Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.*" Most likely this verse refers to the Hyksos coming into power in Egypt.

Doctrinal Points

1. The believer's blessings are all because of Christ.

We didn't have to study very far in Joseph's life before we saw that there are many parallels between Joseph and Jesus Christ. In fact, we believe that Joseph is a wonderful Old Testament picture of Christ. Joseph was the beloved son of his father, but was hated and betrayed by his own brothers. Joseph was falsely accused and imprisoned in Egypt, but God exalted him so that every knee had to bow to him when they came to Joseph for bread. All life and blessing came from

Joseph, and the saving of life during the famine was all because of Joseph. What a picture of Christ - betrayed by his people, but exalted by God, and the Source of all life and blessing!

In chapter 46 Jacob's family was given the land of Goshen, in the northeast Nile delta area of Egypt. Genesis 45 said that the land of Goshen was the best of the land, and there Joseph provided for his family.

All these blessings came to them because of Joseph. Do you see the picture of Jesus Christ? Whether for believing Israel in the future, or for believers now, all blessings that come to us are because of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:3 says, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."*

Whether it's physical blessings like good health, or the spiritual blessings of Ephesians 1, all the believer's blessings come because of Jesus Christ.

2. The believer's blessings are not always obvious.

About 200 years before Joseph's time God had promised Abraham that he would make of him a great nation, and that his descendants would be like the stars of the heavens and the sand of the seashore. God had confirmed this promise to Isaac and Jacob. But 200 years had passed, and where was the promised nation? Where were all the "innumerable" descendants?

There was an extended family group of 70 people in Egypt. They were not a nation. The land of Goshen was a good land, but the situation here was a far cry from the promise of an independent nation with innumerable people! Meanwhile, Jacob's brother Esau and his descendants were already established as the nation of Edom. But God was blessing and providing for Jacob and his family, although it was not obvious.

By placing Jacob's family in the land of Goshen, God removed them from the idolatry and the immorality of the Canaanites. Being ostracized by the Egyptians because they were shepherds would preserve them from intermarrying with the pagan Egyptians. Even though they would later undergo slavery, in around 400 years they would grow into a nation of approximately two million people!

Here in Genesis 46, this group of 50 nomadic shepherds in Egypt didn't look like they were being blessed. But they were! This nation and this people would outlast all other nations. And this nation and this people would give birth to the Messiah!

As it was then, so it is today: the believer's blessings are not always obvious. Maybe you don't feel very blessed! Well - are you a believer? Then you are blessed! It may not be obvious to you, but think it through: Your sins have been forgiven. You are on your way to heaven. You have the life of Christ living within you. You will live forever with our Lord Jesus in eternal joy. And much, much more! How much more blessed can you be?

So while you may not *feel* very blessed, or *look* very blessed, you **are** blessed! Remember, the believer's blessings are not always obvious.

Practical Applications

1. Remember to take care of your aging parents.

Joseph is an excellent example of this practical application, especially for younger believers. Notice what Joseph said when he revealed himself to his brothers back in Genesis 45:3 - "*I am Joseph; does my father still live?*" The very first thing Joseph wanted to know was how his father was doing. Then he sent wagons to transport his father to Egypt. And Joseph provided for his father in Jacob's old age.

Do you have aging parents? You are responsible before God to look out for their welfare. "Honor your father and mother" is one of the Ten Commandments, and obeying this commandment involves caring for our aging parents.

As prime minister of Egypt, Joseph was a busy man, but he took care of his aging father. He didn't pass off his responsibility to his brothers or to the rest of the family, even though they were also responsible. So an important practical application from Genesis 46 is: Remember to take care of your aging parents!

2. God can work wonders in your family.

Jacob was about 130 years old when he went to Egypt. Jacob had suffered a lot of disappointments in his family. His beloved wife Rachel had died in childbirth. His daughter, Dinah, had been raped. Ten of his sons were rebellious, cruel, and angry men; they had massacred the entire male population of the city of Shechem. He had serious problems with his son Reuben. His favorite son, Joseph, had been killed by a wild beast (or so Jacob thought).

But God had worked wonders in Jacob's family in his later years. Joseph was alive! The brothers had repented and changed! They now cared about each other, and they cared about their father. God had worked wonders in Jacob's family!

God can do this for your family. Are you praying for a wayward family member? Are you praying for healing of a serious family feud? Don't give up! Keep on praying. God doesn't always answer on our hoped-for time schedule, but He can work wonders in your family!