

Genesis 46:1-34 - Background notes

Came to Beersheba

So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

- Isaac built an altar here
- From this, we can infer that Jacob probably was in Hebron and traveled a day's journey to Beersheba.
 - In addition to the sacrifices, they likely watered their camels and flocks at the well of the oath that Abraham dug.
- He is faithful here, so he is called Israel.
 - From now on, Jacob and Israel are interchangeable, perhaps reminding us that we have a dual nature of Jacob and Israel in each of us.
 - A Jewish commentary states, "The fusion of past and present is complete"
- Luther called this in Latin, "Simul justus et peccator." Simultaneously justified and sinner. Not that you are sometimes a sinner but other times not. At your best, you are still a sinner. At your worst, you are still justified/saved. It's that way with Jacob and Israel

[2] And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." [3] Then He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. [4] "I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also assuredly bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes."

- Apparently, Jacob was afraid - bad things happened the last time Jacob left the boundaries of the promised land.
 - The LORD told Isaac also not to be afraid.
 - *Genesis 26:23-25 And he went up from there to Beersheba. [24] And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants, For the sake of My servant Abraham." [25] So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.*
- Isaac, his father, NEVER left the boundaries; in one instance, he was about to, but God prevented him.
- Here, Jacob is not fleeing because of fear or some fleshly pursuit - God has ordained this journey.
- It must have been comforting for Jacob to know he would see Joseph again.
- Note the "go down" and "bring up" references we mentioned last time.
- Even today, typically in military scenarios, it is considered an honor to close the eyes of the dead.
- After appearing to three successive Fathers, this will be the last appearance of the LORD until Moses several generations later

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[5] Then Jacob left Beersheba, and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob and their little ones and their wives in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. [6] They also took their livestock and their possessions, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and came to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him: [7] his sons and his grandsons with him, his daughters and his granddaughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

- This was an involved relocation.
- This is again a picture of Messiah sending for us and gathering us in, like Rebekkah the bride going forth to meet her groom.
 - When that day comes, we're going in style!
- Potentially, they had never seen a chariot before - Walton notes that Egyptian chariots had two spokes (forming an X or a cross) and were decorated with leather and artwork.
- The Canaanite neighbors were probably peeking through the curtains, wondering what was happening!
- PSA: Be skeptical of so-called chariot wheels at the bottom of the Red Sea said to be from the Exodus.
 - It started out as a satire and became an internet hoax



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Sons of Leah

[8] Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn. [9] And the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. [10] And the sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. [11] And the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. [12] And the sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). And the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. [13] And the sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvvah, Iob, and Shimron. [14] And the sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. [15] These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, with his daughter Dinah; all his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three.

- Judah gets a more elaborate recording.
- Iob is not the same Job.
- Dinah gets special mention
- Only 32 names are listed
 - We're going to find that Levi's wife was pregnant and gave birth in Egypt.
 - *Numbers 26:59 And the name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and she bore to Amram Aaron and Moses, and their sister Miriam.*
 - Read carefully - Jochebed was born shortly after arrival in Egypt. She grows to adulthood and, at some point, gets married to Aram and bears at least three children: Aaron, Moses, and Miriam.
 - They could not have spent 400 years in Egypt - that is a misconception. Likely not even 100. The 400 years of servitude probably began when Isaac was mistreated by Ishmael. People have made that math work out.

Sons of Zilpah

[16] And the sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. [17] And the sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah. And the sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel. [18] These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah; and she bore to Jacob these sixteen persons.

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Sons of Rachel

[19] The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. [20] Now to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, bore to him. [21] And the sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. [22] These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob; there were fourteen persons in all.

Sons of Bilhah

[23] And the sons of Dan: Hushim. [24] And the sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. [25] These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel, and she bore these to Jacob; there were seven persons in all.

- Note the grammar of verse 23. Sons is plural but there is only one name listed.
- Hushim may have meant something like “those guys.”
- It's a hint that Dan is trouble and gets the back of the hand from the Holy Spirit.
- Dan along with Ephraim, will eventually be the tribe that celebrates their idolatry.

Total entering Egypt was 66

[26] All the people belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, were sixty-six persons in all, [27] and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two; all the people of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy.

- Note the previous comment about the math
- If we take 66 at face value (and there's no reason not to), Joseph, Simeon, Manasseh, and Ephraim are in Egypt, for a total of 70
 - The math and textual discrepancies lead to the number 72 appearing in some translations.
- Some make a point that there are 66 books in the Protestant Bible
- Psalms could be subdivided into five separate books, for four additional books (in addition to the book we already call Psalms) for a total of 70.

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Judah leads the way to Goshen

[28] Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph, to guide him to Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.

- A nod to Judah as the familial leader over the chronological firstborn sons, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi.
- Genesis 49 will explain why.

Joseph and Jacob reunite

[29] And Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared to him, Joseph threw himself on his neck and wept on his neck a long time. [30] Then Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive."

- We have to appreciate how powerful this moment must have been
- The Hebrew word appeared, "yayeria" is often used in reference to God appearing; here it is a not so subtle hint that this reunion was divinely orchestrated.
 - "And he appeared to him" is a complete clause; The Hebrew is ambiguous (perhaps intentionally) about who appeared to whom.
- Lancaster sees a parallel with the faithful Simeon waiting to see the Messiah:
 - *Luke 2:29-32 "Now, Lord, You are letting Your bond-servant depart in peace, According to Your word; [30] For my eyes have seen Your salvation, [31] Which You have prepared in the presence of all the peoples: [32] A light for revelation for the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."*
 - From this we get the latin Nunc Dimitis - depart in peace.

Don't say you are shepherds

[31] But Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me; [32] and the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock; and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.' [33] "When Pharaoh calls for you and says, 'What is your occupation?' [34] you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock since our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' so that you may live in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians."

- This is a bit of a mystery. In three verses (47:3), they are going to tell Pharaoh they are shepherds.
- Goshen, while great land for herding, was isolated from the major population centers to the south and west.
- Moses confirms the discrimination

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- *Exodus 8:25-26 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God within the land.” [26] But Moses said, “It is not permissible for us to do so, because we will sacrifice to the LORD our God that which is an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice that which is an abomination to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us?*
- This is likely the same bias that persists against shepherds in many cultures.