

Genesis 46

Genesis 46:1-34 NKJV

So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" And he said, "Here I am." So He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes." Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him. His sons and his sons' sons, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt. Now these were the names of the children of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: Reuben was Jacob's firstborn. The sons of Reuben were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 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. The sons of Issachar were Tola, Puvah, Job, and Shimron. The sons of Zebulun were Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. 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. The sons of Gad were Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. The sons of Asher were Jimnah, Ishuah, Isui, Beriah, and Serah, their sister. And the sons of Beriah were Heber and Malchiel. These were the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bore to Jacob: sixteen persons. The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife, were Joseph and Benjamin. 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. The sons of Benjamin were Belah, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. These were the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob: fourteen persons in all. The son of Dan was Hushim. The sons of Naphtali were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. These were the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, and she bore these to Jacob: seven persons in all. 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. 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. 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. 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. And Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you are still alive." 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. 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.' So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' 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."

### **Daily Deep Dive:**

Verse 1 – By taking everything he owns, it's clear that Jacob is leaving and intending to stay in Egypt. Along the way, he stops at the place where both Abraham (Gen 21:33) and Isaac (Gen 26:25) have both previously worshiped God and Jacob does the same.

Verse 3 – It says that "Joseph will put his hand on your eyes."

According to commentaries, God is telling Jacob that both Joseph is truly alive and that Joseph will be by the side of Jacob when he dies and Joseph will close his eye lids at his death. John Gill's commentary states "and so close them when he was dead; this, as Aben Ezra says, was a custom of the living to the dead, and it used to be done by the nearest relations and friends". While we don't see in scripture do this, we do see that Joseph is literally weeping over Jacob's body at the moment of his death (Gen 50 – Thursday's reading).

Verse 7 – 27: The UCG Reading program states "Genesis 46 catalogs the names of all the members of the family of Israel that immigrated to Egypt. Once there, counting Joseph and his family, the total came to 70 persons. We know from the book of Exodus that this small group of people will grow to 600,000 men at the time of their deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 12:37), which probably indicates a total population of

two to three million people. Joseph settles his father's family in the land of Goshen—the part of Egypt closest to Canaan and a land well-watered with rich soil and well furnished with pastures for their herds—where the family and its descendants will live until the time of the Exodus.”

[END]

Verse 28 – Why was someone sent before the whole group? Jamieson-Faucet-Brown commentary states: “This precautionary measure was obviously proper for apprising the king of the entrance of so large a company within his territories; moreover, it was necessary in order to receive instruction from Joseph as to the *locale* of their future settlement.”

Why was Judah the one selected? Here's what John Gill's commentary states: “Who was the more honorable of his sons, and in greater esteem with Jacob than his elder brethren were, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, who by their conduct had greatly displeased him: moreover, he was a man of a polite address, and had endeared himself to Joseph by his speech to him, in which he discovered so much affection both to his father, and his brother Benjamin, and was upon all accounts the fittest person to be sent to Joseph:”

Verse 29 – Finally, after all this time, Joseph & his father Jacob have their reunion! What a moment this must have been! Jacob hadn't seen him since he was 17 years old. How much had Joseph changed even in appearance over that time? God had refined Joseph so much, he would have been such a different person now.

They embraced and cried for a long time.

Verse 30 – After mourning for Joseph for more than two decades, after now having the immense joy of seeing him now alive and well. Jacob is now in a place of satisfaction.

Verses 31-34: I found the following two commentaries interesting on these verses. First, the Adam Clarke's commentary states “The land of

Goshen, called also the land of Rameses, lay east of the Nile, by which it was never overflowed, and was bounded by the mountains of the Thebaid on the south, by the Nile and Mediterranean on the west and north, and by the Red Sea and desert of Arabia on the east. It was the Heliopolitan *nome* or district, and its capital was called On. Its proper name was Geshen, the country of grass or pasturage, or of the shepherds, in opposition to the rest of the land which was sown after having been overflowed by the Nile." - Bruce. As this land was both fruitful and pleasant, Joseph wished to fix his family in that part of Egypt; hence he advises them to tell Pharaoh that their trade had been in cattle from their youth: and because every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians, hence he concluded that there would be less difficulty to get them quiet settlement in Goshen, as they would then be separated from the Egyptians, and consequently have the free use of all their religious customs." [END]

The John Gill commentary states "That was their occupation and employment, by which they got their livelihood. Joseph was not ashamed of the business his father and brethren followed, even though mean; and besides, such men were an abomination to the Egyptians: this he thought proper to tell Pharaoh, lest he should think of putting them into some offices of the court or army, which would expose them to the envy of the Egyptians, and might endanger the corruption of their religion and manners, as well as be the means of separating them one from another, which he was careful to guard against" [END]

Here again we see comments about "every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians".

There are various answers as to why this may be. Here are some thoughts on that topic:

Adam Clarke's commentary: "Three reasons may be assigned for this:

1. Shepherds and feeders of cattle were usually a sort of lawless, free-booting bandits, frequently making inroads on villages, etc., carrying off cattle, and whatever spoils they could find. This might probably have been the case formerly, for it is well known it has often been the case since. On this account such persons must have been universally detested.
2. They must have abhorred shepherds if Manetho's account of the *hycsos* or king-shepherds can be credited. Hordes of marauders under this name, from Arabia, Syria, and Ethiopia, (whose chief occupation, like the Bedouin Arabs of the present day, was to keep flocks), made a powerful irruption into Egypt, which they subdued and ruled with great tyranny for 259 years. Now, though they had been expelled from that land some considerable time before this, yet their name, and all persons of a similar occupation, were execrated by the Egyptians, on account of the depredations and long-continued ravages they had committed in the country.
3. The last and probably the best reason why the Egyptians abhorred such shepherds as the Israelites were, was, they sacrificed those very animals, the ox particularly, and the Sheep, which the Egyptians held sacred. Hence the Roman historian Tacitus, speaking of the Jews, says: "*Caeso Ariete velut in contumelia Ammonis; Bos quoque immolatur, quem Aegyptii Apim colunt.*" "They sacrifice the ram in order to insult Jupiter Ammon, and they sacrifice the ox, which the Egyptians worship under the name of Apis."

While Adam Clarke appears leans toward the third explanation, John Gill's commentary believes that's not the case: "not because shepherds ate of the milk and flesh of the creatures they fed, which the Egyptians abstained from; for the Egyptians in those times did eat the flesh of slain beasts, see [Gen 43:16](#); nor because they fed, and slew, and ate those creatures, which the Egyptians worshipped as gods, as Jarchi; for it does

not appear that the Egyptians were so early worshippers of such creatures; nor is this phrase, "every shepherd", to be understood of any other than foreign shepherds; for one of the three sorts of the people of Egypt, as distinct from, and under the king, priests, and soldiers, according to Diodorus Siculus (d), were shepherds, and were not despised on that account; for, as the same writer says, all the Egyptians were reckoned equally noble and honorable (e); and such it is plain there were in Egypt, in the times of Joseph, see Gen 47:6; and goat herds were had in esteem and honor by those about Mendes, though swine herds were not (f): wherefore this must be understood of foreign shepherds, the Egyptians having been greatly distressed by such, who either came out of Ethiopia, and lived by plunder and robbery (g), or out of Phoenicia or Arabia; for, according to Manetho (h), it was said that they were Arabians or Phoenicians who entered into Egypt, burnt their cities, &c. and set up kings of their own, called their Hycsi, or pastor kings: and therefore Joseph might the rather fear his brethren and father's family would be the more contemptible in that they came from Canaan, which was near to Arabia and Phoenicia; but Dr. Lightfoot (i) is of opinion, that the Egyptians, being plagued for Abraham's and Sarah's sake, made a law, that for the future none should converse with Hebrews, nor with foreign shepherds, so familiarly as to eat or drink with them.

(d) Bibliothec. l. 1. p. 67. (e) Ibid. p. 83. (f) Herodot. Euterpe, sive, l. 2. p. 46, 47. (g) Gaulmin. Not. in Dfore Hayamim, p. 267. (h) Apud Joseph. contr. Apion. l. 1. sect. 14. (i) Works: vol. 1. p. 694." [END]

Let's end by lifting an excerpt from the book "***The Divine Legation of Moses***". In a book by 18th century English theologian, William Warburton, he writes the following observation on this chapter: "The promise God made to Abraham, to give his posterity

the land of Canaan, could not be performed till that family was grown strong enough to take and keep possession of it. In the meantime, therefore, they were necessitated to reside among idolaters, and to reside unmixed; but whoever examines their history will see that the Israelites had ever a violent propensity to join themselves to Gentile nations, and practice their manners. God therefore, in his infinite wisdom, brought them into Egypt, and kept them there during this period, the only place where they could remain for so long a time safe and unconfounded with the natives, the ancient Egyptians being by numerous institutions forbidden all fellowship with strangers, and bearing besides a particular aversion to the profession of the Israelites, who were shepherds. Thus the natural dispositions of the Israelites, which in Egypt occasioned their superstitions, and in consequence the necessity of a burdensome ritual, would in any other country have absorbed them into Gentilism, and confounded them with idolaters.” [END]

While this is speculation of course, it may reflect a partial reason why God chose to work in this way.