

The Book of Genesis

Chapter 46

46:1 So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.
(NIV)

Beersheba

Both Abraham (21:33) and Isaac (26:23-24) had worshipped God in Beersheba. It was there that God promised Isaac to bless and multiply his descendants.

46:2-3 And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, "Jacob! Jacob!" "Here I am," he replied. "I am God, the God of your father," He said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. (NIV)

Entering Egypt

Jacob may have had misgivings about going into Egypt since God had commanded his father Isaac not to go there during the famine a century earlier (26:1-2). However, it would be difficult for Israel to grow into a distinct and separate nation in Canaan due to the pressure to intermarry with the Canaanites, as the example of Dinah and Shechem (34:9) proved. Since the Egyptians would not even eat with the Israelites (43:32), a state of segregation would naturally exist in Egypt, making possible the growth of a distinct and separate people.

46:4 I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again [refers to "you" as "a great nation," not to Jacob as an individual]. **And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes** [God tells Jacob that he will die in Egypt]. (NIV)

This promise to bring him back to the land is similar to the one God made to Jacob in the dream of the ladder which occurred at Bethel on his way to Haran (28:15).

Four Generation Count Begins

This was also the point at which God began counting the four generations that would live outside the land of promise before being brought back (15:16).

46:5-7 Then Jacob left Beersheba, and Israel's sons took their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the carts that Pharaoh had sent to transport him. They also took with them their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in Canaan, and Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt. He took with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters—all his offspring.

Female Descendants

The only daughter of Jacob ever indicated by name was Dinah. It is very likely that the wives of Jacob's sons for the most part were half-sisters. However, the term "daughters" could include the wives of his sons, even if they were not related by blood. Likewise, the only granddaughter mentioned by name was Asher's daughter, Serah. According to Jewish tradition another granddaughter was born as Jacob's family was entering Egypt—the daughter of Levi who eventually became the mother of Moses—Jochebed.

46:8-10 *These are the names of the sons of Israel (Jacob and his descendants) who went to Egypt: Reuben the firstborn of Jacob. The sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi. The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. (NIV)*

The list includes all who went into Egypt directly related to Jacob, therefore Joseph and his two sons are among the names, as well as Jacob himself.

Canaanite Intermarriage

Since attention is directed to one son of Simeon being part Canaanite, it would seem that none of the other descendants of Jacob were [with the exception of Shelah, son of Judah (38:2-5)]. That means the wives of the sons of Jacob were either half-sisters, Ishmaelites, or Midianites. Joseph, of course, was married to an Egyptian.

46:11-15 *The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez and Zerah (but Er and Onan had died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez: Hezron and Hamul. The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puah, Jashub and Shimron. The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon and Jahleel. These were the sons Leah bore to Jacob in Paddan Aram, besides his daughter Dinah. These sons and daughters of his were thirty-three in all. (NIV)*

Leah's Descendants

Total descendants by Leah = 33.

46:16-18 [NIV] *The sons of Gad: Zephon, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi and Areli. The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi and Beriah. Their sister was Serah. The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malkiel. These were the children born to Jacob by Zilpah, whom Laban had given to his daughter Leah—sixteen in all.*

Order

The wives of Jacob were normally listed before their maids, but here the list goes from greatest number to the least.

Zilpah's Descendants

Total descendants by Zilpah = 16.

46:19-20 *The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. In Egypt, Manasseh and Ephraim were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. (NIV)*

Scriptural Addition

The LXX adds to this verse: "These were the sons of Manasseh whom his Syrian concubine bore unto him: Machir; and Machir begat Galaad. The sons of Ephraim, Manasseh's brother, were Sutalaam and Taam; and the sons of Sutalaam, Edem." This addition is derived from NUM 26:29-36 and 1CR 7:14-20, adding five to the total.

46:21-22 *The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard. These were the sons of Rachel who were born to Jacob—fourteen in all. (NIV)*

Rachel's Descendants

Total descendants by Rachel = 14.

46:23-25 The son of Dan: Hushim. The sons of Naphtali: Jahziel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem. These were the sons born to Jacob by Bilhah, whom Laban had given to his daughter Rachel—seven in all.
(NIV)

Bilhah's Descendants

Total descendants by Bilhah = 7.

46:26 All those who went to Egypt with Jacob—those who were his direct descendants, not counting his sons' wives—numbered sixty-six persons.

Not Counting His Sons' Wives

This phrase strongly supports that most of Jacob's sons married direct descendants of Jacob, that is, daughters other than Dinah.

Sixty-Six People

This total excludes Jacob and clearly identifies the group as those that went with him at that time to Egypt, and is derived as follows:

<i>Jacob's children (11 sons + Dinah)</i>	12
<i>Reuben's sons</i>	4
<i>Simeon's sons</i>	6
<i>Levi's sons</i>	3
<i>Judah's children (3 sons + 2 grandsons)</i>	5
<i>Issachar's sons</i>	4
<i>Zebulun's sons</i>	3
<i>Gad's sons</i>	7
<i>Asher's children (4 sons + 1 daughter + 2 grandsons)</i>	7
<i>Dan's son</i>	1
<i>Naphtali's sons</i>	4
<i>Benjamin's sons</i>	10
Total	66

Son's Wives

The sons' wives are omitted in this total. Of the eleven sons who were with Jacob, it appears that only nine had wives at that time. Judah's wife had died (38:12) and apparently so had Simeon's, since his youngest son was part Canaanite (vs 10). When the nine wives are added to the 66 direct descendants of

Jacob, the total is 75: the very number that Stephen mentioned in ACT 7:14: "*Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people.*"

46:27 With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family, which went to Egypt, were seventy in all. (NIV)

Additions

To the total of 66 in vs 26, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh are added to make 70. These are the 70 referred to in EXO 1:5 and DEU 10:22: "*Your fathers went down to Egypt with seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude.*"

46:28 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.

Goshen

Goshen was located in the northeast corner of Egypt, bound by the Nile to the west, the Mediterranean Sea on the north, the Sinai desert and Red Sea on the east, and the Thebaid Mountains on the south. The proper name of the area was "*Geshen*," meaning the "country of grass or pasture." The rest of inhabitable Egypt was the "land of cultivation" where the Nile overflowed.

46:29-34... Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time. Israel said to Joseph, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive [1682 B.C. – Jacob would live 17 more years, dying in 1665 B.C.]." Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were living in the land of Canaan, have come to me. The men are shepherds; they tend livestock, and they have brought along their flocks and herds and everything they own.' When Pharaoh calls you in and asks, 'What is your occupation?' you should answer, 'Your servants have tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did.' (NIV)

Uniform Answer

Joseph found it necessary to tell his father and brothers how to answer the Pharaoh's question about their occupation, this uniform answer would keep the Pharaoh from dividing the family. If they had mentioned that they were also involved in trading, like Abraham and Isaac, the Pharaoh would have placed parts of the family in cities, the others in Goshen.

46:...34 Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen, for all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians." (NIV)

"All Shepherds are Detestable..."

The major reason the Egyptians detested shepherds was that they sacrificed the very animals the Egyptians considered sacred. Speaking of the Jews, the Roman historian *Tacitus* recorded: "*They sacrifice the ram in order to insult Jupiter Ammon, and they sacrifice the ox, which the Egyptians worship under the name Apis.*"