

Genesis Chapter 46

Genesis 46:1 "And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac."

“Offered sacrifices”:

The route to Egypt for Jacob went via Beer-sheba, a notable site about 25 miles southwest of Hebron and favorite place of worship for both Abraham and Isaac.

Jacob stopped at “Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.”

Both Abraham (21:33), and Isaac (26:25), had erected altars here, and this may have been his motive for offering sacrifices.

Abraham had lied about his wife in Egypt (12:10-20), with serious consequences; and Isaac had been forbidden even to go there (26:2), which must have caused Jacob some anxiety.

But God assured Jacob that he need “fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation” (15:13; Psalm 105:17, 23).

Verses 2-4

“God spake ... in the visions”:

Jacob’s anxiety about his departure to Egypt was put to rest by the LORD’s approval and confirmation of his descendants returning as a nation.

God had previously appeared/spoken to Jacob (in 28:10-17; 32:24-30; 35:1, 9-13).

Genesis 46:2 "And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here [am] I."

"And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night":

He appeared to Jacob as he lay upon his bed in the night season, and with an articulate voice spoke to him as follows.

"And said, Jacob, Jacob":

Not "Israel", the more honorable name he had given him, but Jacob, putting him in mind of his former low estate.

And doubling this name, either out of love and affection to him, as Jarchi intimates; or rather in order to awake him.

Or at least to stir up his attention to what he was about to say to him.

"And he said, here am I":

Signifying his readiness to hearken to him in what he should say to him, and to obey him in whatsoever he should command him.

Genesis 46:3 "And he said, I [am] God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:"

"And he said, I am God, the God of thy father":

His father Isaac, who was now dead, and who is the rather mentioned, because in him Abraham's seed was to be called, and in his line the promise both of the land of Canaan, and of the Messiah ran, and from him Jacob received the blessing.

And this might be a confirmation of it to him, in that Jehovah calls himself his God.

He first declares himself to be his God, and so able to perform whatever he should promise him, and his father's God, who would show him favor, as he had to him.

"Fear not to go down into Egypt":

Jacob might have had many fears arise in his mind about this journey, as most interpreters generally observe.

As lest it should not be agreeable to the will of God, since his father Isaac was forbidden to go into Egypt, when in like circumstances with him (Genesis 26:1).

As well as he, might fear it would be too great a journey for him in his old age, some evil would befall him, or he die by the way and not see his son.

Or lest going with his family there, and continuing for some time, they might be tempted with the pleasantness and fruitfulness of the land, and settle there, and forget and neglect the Promised Land of Canaan.

And especially lest they should be drawn into the idolatry of the Egyptians, and forsake the worship of the true God.

And very probably he might call to mind the prophecy delivered to Abraham, of his seed being strangers and servants, and afflicted in a land not theirs for the space of four hundred years (Genesis 15:13).

And Jacob might fear this step he was now taking would bring on, as indeed it did, the completion of this prediction, by which his offspring would be oppressed and diminished.

The Targum of Jonathan makes this to be Jacob's principal fear; "fear not to go down into Egypt, because of the business of the servitude decreed with Abraham; as also he might fear his going there might seem to be a giving up his title to, and expectation of the Promised Land.

To remove which fears the following is said:

"For I will there make of thee a great nation":

As he did; for though in process of time his seed were greatly afflicted here, yet the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied.

And their increase in Egypt was vastly greater than it had been in a like space of time before; for in the space of two hundred fifteen years before their descent into Egypt, they were to become no more than seventy persons.

Whereas in the like number of years in Egypt, they became 600,000, besides children (see Genesis 46:27 Exodus 12:37).

Beer-sheba had been a place where Abraham and Isaac had built altars and sacrificed to God before Jacob.

This was a likely place for Jacob to go and pray before going into Egypt.

Jacob had not really been visited by God for more than twenty five years.

Jacob undoubtedly knew of the prophecy given to Abraham telling of 400 years of servitude in Egypt by the Israelites.

Surely Israel (Jacob), was praying and asking God's advice on going to this land that had been off limits to his people before.

Yet, Joseph was in Egypt, and Israel, more than he cared for his own life, wanted to see Joseph.

Probably, in the night vision, when God spoke to Israel and called him Jacob, God was reminding him of who he used to be, and still would be, Except for the grace of God.

God assured Jacob that it was alright to go to Egypt.

He promised to make a great nation of him again here.

Genesis 46:4 "I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up [again]: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes."

"I will go down with thee into Egypt":

Which was enough to silence all his fears; for if the presence of God went with him to protect and defend him, to bless and prosper him, and to direct, support, and comfort, he had nothing to fear from any quarter.

"And I will also surely bring thee up again":

This refers to the bringing up of his posterity from thence in due time, for which Jacob might be most concerned, and so the Targum of Jonathan: "and I will bring up thy children from there."

The LORD promised to be with Jacob and,

"also surely bring thee up again.":

This refers to the nation of Israel and not Jacob.

"Put his hand upon thine eyes":

A promise of dying peacefully in the presence of his beloved son (49:33).

Here, we see that the God of Israel is not limited to Canaan, but is God everywhere.

It appears that God promises that Joseph would close Jacob's eyes at death, and bury him in Canaan with his relatives.

Genesis 46:5 "And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him."

"And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba":

In high spirits, and proceeded on in his journey, being encouraged and enthusiastic by the promises of God now made unto him.

"And the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him":

It may be wondered at that Joseph did not send his chariot to fetch his father; it could not be for want of due respect and honor to him, but it may be such a carriage was not fit for so long a journey, and especially to travel in, in some parts of the road through which they went.

No mention being made of Jacob's wives, it may be presumed they were all now dead.

It is certain Rachel was (see Gen. 35:19).

And it is more than probable that Leah died before this time, since Jacob says he buried her himself in Machpelah in Canaan, (Gen. 49:31).

And it is very likely also that his two concubine wives Bilhah and Zilpah were also dead, since no notice is taken of them.

Genesis 46:6 "And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:"

"And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan":

Some interpreters add, by way of explanation, and in Mesopotamia; much of Jacob's substance being yet there, though the greatest part was got in Canaan, and so that is put for the whole.

Jarchi supposes that Jacob gave all that he got in Padan-aram to Esau for his part in the cave of Machpelah, and therefore mention is only made of his substance in Canaan.

But there is no need of any such additions or suppositions, since the text only speaks of the substance of Jacob's sons, and what they had was only gotten in Canaan, into which they came very young.

All which they brought with them as being their property, and not obliged to leave it behind to strangers; though they were bid not to regard their stuff, yet they were not willing to live upon others, but upon their own, and as much as they could independent of others.

That they might not be rebuked later, that they came into Egypt poor and destitute of everything.

"And came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him":

Safe and well (ca. 1877 B.C.).

They remained 430 years (Exodus 12:40), until the Exodus (in 1445 B.C.).

Genesis 46:7 "His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt."

"His sons, and his sons' sons with him":

His eleven sons, and their sons, his grandchildren.

"And his daughters":

His own daughter Dinah, and his daughters in law, the wives of his sons.

For these came with him into Egypt, as appears from (Genesis 46:5); though the plural may be put for the singular (as in Genesis 46:23).

"And his sons' daughters":

And mention is made of Sarah the daughter of Asher (Gen. 46:17).

Jarchi adds, Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, but it is certain she was born in Egypt (Num. 26:59).

"And all his seed brought he with him into Egypt":

Left none behind him in Canaan, son or daughter.

No mention is made of servants, though no doubt many came along with him.

The design of the historian is to give an account of Jacob's children, who they were, and their number, when they came into Egypt, that the increase of them might be observed.

We see here, that not only did they carry everything Jacob had into Egypt, but all of his sons, and all of their families, and all of their possessions as well.

This all happened when Jacob was about one hundred and thirty years old.

Verses 8-27

The genealogical register, separately listing and totaling the sons per wife and handmaid, is enveloped by notification that it records the sons/persons of Jacob who went to Egypt (see verses 8, 27).

Ancient Near Eastern genealogies could include historical notes as is true here, namely the death of Er and Onan (verse 12), and that Laban gave the handmaids to his daughters (verses 18, 25).

Genesis 46:8 "And these [are] the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn."

"And these are the names of the children of Israel which came into Egypt":

Not meaning precisely Jacob's seed and offspring, but the body of the people of Israel, as they were when they went into Egypt, including Jacob himself.

This was the first time that author Moses referred to the family as a whole in this way, although "in Israel", had been used by the sons of Jacob before (34:7).

"Jacob and his sons":

For he went with them to Egypt, and was the head and principal of them.

"Reuben, Jacob's firstborn":

See Gen. 29:32.

Genesis 46:9 "And the sons of Reuben; Hanoch, and Phallu, and Hezron, and Carmi."

"And the sons of Reuben, Hanoch, and Phallu, and Hezron, and Carmi": From whom came the families named after them, of which they were the heads (Num. 26:5).

Genesis 46:10 "And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman."

"And the sons of Simeon":

Who was the second son of Jacob.

"Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar":

The first of these is called Nemuel (Num. 26:12).

The third, Ohad, is omitted in the places referred to, he dying without children, as may be supposed, and so was not the head of any family.

The fourth, Jachin, is called Jarib (see 1 Chron. 4:24); and the fifth is called Zerah, in the above place, by a transposition of letters.

"And Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman":

Whom Simeon married, very probably after the death of his first wife, by whom he had the above five sons or she was his concubine.

Many Jewish writers say, this was Dinah, married to a Canaanite, but this is impossible: according to the Targum of Jonathan, this Shaul was Zimri, who did the work of the Canaanites at Shittim (Num. 25:14), which is not at all likely, the distance of time will not admit of it.

Genesis 46:11 "And the sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari."

"And the sons of Levi, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari":

From these sprung the priests and Levites (see Num. 3:1).

Genesis 46:12 "And the sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zarah: but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul."

"And the sons of Judah, Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zarah":

Five of them.

"But Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan":

And so did not go with Jacob into Egypt.

And which is observed that they might not be reckoned among them, though it was proper to take notice of them in the genealogy.

"And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul":

Some think that these could not be born in Canaan, but in Egypt; and that they are mentioned among those that went down to Egypt, because they went there in the loins of their father.

And to supply the places of Er and Onan, who died before, and have the honor to be here named, because they might be the first of Jacob's great grandchildren born there; though others suppose that Pharez was at this.

The difficulty is not easily solved.

The Targum of Jonathan expressly says, "Shelah and Zarah did not beget children in Canaan, but there were two sons of Pharez who went down into Egypt, Hezron and Hamul.

Genesis 46:13 "And the sons of Issachar; Tola, and Phuvah, and Job, and Shimron."

"And the sons of Issachar, Tola, and Phuvah; and Job, and Shimron":

The first of these was the father of a numerous race in the days of David, their number was 22,600 (see 1 Chron. 7:2).

The second is called Puah, and the third Jashub, and the fourth Shimrom (1 Chron. 7:1); and were all the heads of families, as appears from the places referred to.

Genesis 46:14 "And the sons of Zebulun; Sered, and Elon, and Jahleel."

"And the sons of Zebulun, Sered, and Elon, and Jahleel":

Whose names are the same (in Numbers 26:26).

Genesis 46:15 "These [be] the sons of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob in Padan-aram, with his daughter Dinah: all the souls of his sons and his daughters [were] thirty and three."

"These are the sons of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob in Padan-aram":

Which must be restrained to the six sons only, who were properly Leah's, and not to their sons' sons, for they were not born in Padan-aram, but in Canaan.

"With his daughter Dinah":

Who also was by Leah.

"All the souls of his sons and daughters were thirty and three":

That is, together with himself, or otherwise it will be difficult to give the exact number.

If all before mentioned are to be reckoned there will be thirty four, wherefore some are for excluding Dinah.

But she is not only expressly mentioned, but is the only one intended by his daughters here, the plural being put for the singular.

And there is as much reason for retaining her here, as Sarah the daughter of Asher hereafter.

Some think Er and Onan are to be excluded, as indeed they are, because they died in the land of Canaan, and then there will be but thirty two.

Therefore, some are for adding Jochebed the daughter of Levi, but she is neither mentioned in the genealogy, nor did she go with Jacob into Egypt, but was born in Egypt long after.

It seems best therefore to take Jacob himself into the account, as several Jewish writers do, and who is expressly named and set at the head of this account (Genesis 46:8), which will make thirty three.

Here, we see the children and grandchildren of Leah, Jacob's first wife, thirty three in all.

Genesis 46:16 "And the sons of Gad; Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Areli."

"And the sons of Gad": A son of Jacob by Zilpah, Leah's maid.

For the historian, before he proceeds to give an account of his sons by Rachel, finishes the account of all his sons by Leah and her maid.

"Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, and Eri, and Arodi, and Areli":

In all seven; the same number is given, and in the same order (Numbers 26:15).

Genesis 46:17 "And the sons of Asher; Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isui, and Beriah, and Serah their sister: and the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel."

"And the sons of Asher":

Another son of Jacob by Leah's maid Zilpah, whose sons were.

Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isui, and Beriah, and Serah their sister":

Who is called Sarah (Num. 26:46).

And by the Septuagint here.

She seems to have been a person of some note, being so particularly remarked in both places.

"And the sons of Beriah, Heber and Malchiel":

This Beriah seems to be the youngest son of Asher, and yet had two sons.

Who, as the Targum of Jonathan adds, went down into Egypt; he must have married and had sons when very young; which was not impossible (see Gen. 46:12).

Genesis 46:18 "These [are] the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter, and these she bare unto Jacob, [even] sixteen souls."

"These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter":

To be her maid, when she was married to Jacob, by whom he had Gad and Asher.

"And these she bare unto Jacob, even sixteen souls":

Not that Zilpah bare sixteen children to Jacob, for she bore but two; but the children and grandchildren of these two with them made sixteen.

Zilpah, the handmaiden of Leah, accounted for sixteen who went to Egypt.

Genesis 46:19 "The sons of Rachel Jacob's wife; Joseph, and Benjamin."

"The sons Rachel, Jacob's wife":

The wife of his affection and choice, his principal wife, yea, his only lawful wife; Zilpah and Bilhah were his concubines, and as for Leah, she was imposed and forced upon him.

"Joseph and Benjamin":

The first was in Egypt already, the other now went down with Jacob.

Genesis 46:20 "And unto Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him."

"And unto Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim":

And therefore not to be reckoned with those that went down with Jacob there; for which reason the clause, "in the land of Egypt", is inserted (see Gen. 41:50).

"Which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah, priest of On, bare unto him":

Here again the Targum of Jonathan makes Asenath to be the daughter of Dinah, who it says was educated in the house of Poti-pherah prince of Tanis (See Gen. 41:50).

Genesis 46:21 "And the sons of Benjamin [were] Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard."

"And the sons of Benjamin":

The second son of Jacob by his wife Rachel; whose sons were Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh.

"Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard":

In all ten.

It is a difficulty to account for it that Benjamin, who was Jacob's youngest son, often called a lad at this time, and generally supposed to be about twenty three or four years of age, should have so many sons.

Genesis 46:22 "These [are] the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob: all the souls [were] fourteen."

"These are the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob":

That is, sons and grandsons.

"All the souls were fourteen; two sons, Joseph and Benjamin":

Twelve grandsons, two of Joseph's, and ten of Benjamin's.

Rachel's descendants who went into Egypt totaled fourteen.

Genesis 46:23 "And the sons of Dan; Hushim."

"And the sons of Dan, Hushim":

He had but one son, wherefore the plural is put for the singular (see Gen. 46:7).

Aben Ezra thinks he had two sons, and that one of them was dead, and therefore not mentioned.

But the other way best accounts for the expression.

Though, as Schmidt observes, the plural may be indefinitely put, and the sense be this, as for the sons of Dan, there was only one, whose name was Hushim.

Dan was a son of Jacob by Bilhah, Rachel's maid, as the following was another.

Genesis 46:24 "And the sons of Naphtali; Jahzeel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shillem."

"And the sons of Naphtali, Jahzeel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shillem":

The last is called Shallum (in 1 Chronicles 7:13).

Genesis 46:25 "These [are] the sons of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter, and she bare these unto Jacob: all the souls [were] seven."

"These are the sons of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter":

To be her maid, when she was married to Jacob.

"And she bare these unto Jacob, all the souls were seven":

Not that she bare seven sons to Jacob, she bore but two, Dan and Naphtali; but the children of these with them made seven, one of Dan's, and four of Naphtali's, who went down with Jacob into Egypt.

Bilhah, Rachel's handmaiden, accounted seven descendants who went to Egypt.

Genesis 46:26 "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls [were] threescore and six;"

"All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt":

These are in parcels before mentioned, but here they are brought to a sum total.

And by this phrase are excluded those that died before, as Er and Onan, and those that were in Egypt before, as Joseph and his two sons.

And I should think also all that were born in Egypt afterwards, even while Jacob was living.

"Which came out of his loins":

Such as were his seed and offspring.

This is observed for the sake of what follows, and to exclude them.

"Besides Jacob's sons' wives":

These do not come into the account, because they did not spring from him.

"All the souls were threescore and six":

Thirty two of Leah's, leaving out Er and Onan, sixteen of Zilpah's, fourteen of Rachel's, and seven of Bilhah's, make sixty nine; take out of them Joseph and his two sons, who were in Egypt before, and you have the exact number of sixty six.

Genesis 46:27 "And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, [were] two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, [were] threescore and ten."

“Threescore and ten”:

Jacob, Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim should be added to the 66.

The 75 of Acts 7:14 included an additional 5 people, born in the land, which were added in the LXX reading of (46:8-27; Exodus 1:5, Deut. 10:22).

These 5 included two sons of Manasseh, two sons of Ephraim, and one grandson of the latter (see note on Exodus 1:5).

This agrees with (Deuteronomy 10:22 and the Hebrew text of Exodus 1:5).

(Exodus 1:5 in the Septuagint, however, reads 75), which Stephen apparently quoted in his sermon (Acts 7:14), and which the Dead sea Scrolls support the number 75 probably includes five later descendants of Joseph.

These seventy souls, if you add Israel and his four wives, made a grand total of seventy five people who would grow to be approximately three million at the exodus.

They fulfilled God's promise that they truly be a multitude.

This seventy five includes Joseph's family who are already in Egypt.

Genesis 46:28 "And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen."

"And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph":

Who was the more honorable of his sons and in greater esteem with Jacob than any of his elder brethren were.

Reuben, Simeon, and Levi; who by their conduct had greatly displeased him.

Once again Judah was the leader going ahead as Jacob's representative, not Reuben (see the note on 44:16).

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.

"To direct his face unto Goshen":

To inform Joseph of his father's coming, that a place might be prepared for him to dwell in, as both the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem paraphrase it.

And particularly to direct what place in Goshen he would have him come to, and meet him at.

"And they came into the land of Goshen":

Which was the first part of the land of Egypt that lay nearest to Canaan.

"Goshen" (see note on 45:10).

Here, Jacob was just unfamiliar with Egypt, and needed directions to find the area of Goshen.

Genesis 46:29 "And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while."

"And Joseph made ready his chariot":

Or "bound" it, fastened the horses to it.

Harnessed them, and put them to.

This he did not himself, as Jarchi thinks, for the honor of his father; but rather, as Aben Ezra, by ordering his servants to do it.

"And went up to meet Israel his father to Goshen":

That being higher than the other part of Egypt, as it must be, if it was in Thebes, or upper Egypt, as some Jewish writers say; and Fium, supposed to be the place the Israelites dwelt in (see Gen. 47:11), stood very high.

"And presented himself unto him":

Alighted from his chariot, and came up to his father, and stood before him, and showed himself to him, declaring who he was.

"And he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while":

Either Jacob fell on the neck of Joseph, and wept over him a good while before he could speak to him, as the father of the prodigal son fell on his neck and kissed him (Luke 15:20).

Or, as Jarchi, Joseph fell on his father's neck, as he had done upon his brethren before, but wept over him longer.

Their embraces were no doubt mutual and extremely affectionate, that for a while they were not able to speak a word to each other.

This had to be a very touching scene.

Joseph had waited over twenty years for this moment.

The tears of loneliness to see his father and has finally has been turned into joy. He came in all this new found Egyptian pomp, but fell on his face on his father's neck, and wept tears of Joy.

All the power and circumstances were gone; this was his long awaited father.

He just could not let go of Jacob, just as if he did, he would disappear again.

Genesis 46:30 "And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou [art] yet alive."

"And Israel said unto Joseph":

He broke silence first.

"Now let me die, since I have seen thy face":

Not that he was impatient to die, and not desirous to live any longer.

For it could not but yield pleasure to him, and make the remainder of his life more comfortable to live with such a son, his darling, and now in so much honor and grandeur.

But this he said to express his great satisfaction at the sight of him, that he could now be content to die, having all his heart could wish for, a meeting with his beloved son.

"Because thou art yet alive":

Whom he had looked upon as dead, and the receiving him now was as life from the dead, and could not but fill him with the greatest joy (see Luke 15:23).

Jacob lived after this, seventeen years (Gen. 47:28).

Israel was so delighted; his statement meant that he could die in peace now that he had seen his son Joseph.

Verses 31-34

Joseph's instructions about his preparatory interview with Pharaoh were designed to secure his relatives a place somewhat separate from the mainstream of Egyptian society.

The social stigma regarding the Hebrews (43:32), who were shepherds also (verse 34), played a crucial role in protecting Israel from intermingling and losing their identity in Egypt (see the note on 43:22).

Genesis 46:31 "And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and show Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which [were] in the land of Canaan, are come unto me;"

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, and to his father's house":

To them and their families, after he had paid his loving respects to his father, in honor, reverence, and affection.

"I will go up and shew Pharaoh":

Acquaint him that his father and all his family were come to Egypt.

He says, "I will go up"; which same phrase is used of him (Gen. 46:29); when he came, and carries some difficulty in it how to account for it, that he should be said to go up when he came, and to go up when he returned.

Some have thought of upper Egypt, others of the upper part of the Nile, and others, that Pharaoh's palace was situated on an elevation. But then, as it is to be supposed he went the same road he came.

It would have been said, that when he came, he came down.

What Ben Melech suggests seems most agreeable, I will go up to my chariot, mount that, and return to Pharaoh, and give him an account of his father's arrival, which it was very proper, prudent, and sensible to do.

"And say unto him, my brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me":

Not merely to pay him a visit, but to continue there.

Jacob wanted the Pharaoh to know that his family had now settled in Egypt.

They brought their animals with them, so they would not be solely dependent on Pharaoh.

Genesis 46:32 "And the men [are] shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have."

"And the men are shepherds":

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 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, as Josephus the historian suggests.

"For their trade hath been to feed cattle":

This was what they were brought up to from their youth, and were always employed in, and for which only they were fit.

"And they have brought their flocks and their herds, and all that they have":

In order to carry on the same business, and lead the same course of life.

Genesis 46:33 "And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What [is] your occupation?"

"And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you":

Order them to come before him, to see them, and have some conversation with them.

"And shall say, what is your occupation?"

Or your works, their business or employment, whether they exercised any manufacture or handicraft, and what it was.

Genesis 46:34 "That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, [and] also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd [is] an abomination unto the Egyptians."

"That ye shall say, thy servants' trade hath been about cattle":

Breeding, feeding, and selling them.

From our youth, even until now: this had been their constant employment, they never followed any other, both we, and also our fathers.

Their father, grandfather, and great grandfather, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were all of the very same occupation.

"That ye may dwell in the land of Goshen":

Joseph instructed his brethren to be very particular in the account of their occupation to Pharaoh, that it might be a direction to him how to dispose of them, and where to settle them.

Namely, in the land of Goshen, which was a country that abounded with good pasture, and so the fittest place for them to be fixed in.

Besides this, Joseph had some other reasons for placing them there, as that they might be near to him, who might dwell at On or Heliopolis, to which place, or province, Goshen belonged.

And that being also the nearest part of the land to Canaan, they might the more easily and sooner get away when there was an occasion for it.

As well as he was desirous they should not be brought into the heart of the land, lest they should be corrupted with the superstition, and idolatry, and vices of the people.

And being afar off, both from the court, and the body of the people, might be less subject to their contempt and insults.

"For every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians":

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).

Or because they fed, 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, were shepherds, and were not despised on that account.

For, as the same writer says, all the Egyptians were reckoned equally noble and honorable; 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 the swine herds were not.

Therefore 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, or out of Phoenicia or Arabia.

For, according to Manetho, it was said that they were Arabians or Phoenicians who entered into Egypt, burnt their cities, etc. 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 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.

The Egyptians were not friendly to shepherds.

Joseph told his father to just say he was a cattleman.

Goshen had easy access to Canaan, so that was where they settled.

Genesis Chapter 46 Questions

1. Where did Jacob go and sacrifice to God?
2. How did God speak to Jacob?
3. Why did God call him Jacob, instead of Israel?
4. What did He tell Jacob not to fear?
5. God was going to make what of Jacob's family?
6. Where had Abraham and Isaac worshipped?
7. How long had it been since Jacob talked to God?
8. What prophecy had been given Abraham, that caused Jacob fear going to Egypt?
9. What did Jacob want even more than his life?
10. Joseph would do what for Jacob in Egypt?

11. What did Jacob take to Egypt with his family?
12. How old was Jacob?
13. How many of Leah's ancestors came to Egypt??
14. How many of Zilpah's ancestors came to Egypt?
15. How many of Rachel's ancestors came to Egypt?
16. How many of Bilhah's ancestors came to Egypt?
17. What was the total number of Jacob's ancestors came to Egypt?
18. Who was sent to Joseph to tell him of Jacob's arrival?
19. Where were they to settle in Egypt?
20. What two things did Joseph do when he saw his father?
21. What did Israel say when he saw Joseph?
22. What news did Joseph give Pharaoh?
23. If they were asked, what was their occupation, what were they to say?
24. How did the Egyptians feel about shepherds?