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The Descendants of Jacob Numbered Seventy in All 1: 1-7

Parashah 13: Sh'mot (Names) 1:1-6:1

(See the commentary on Deuteronomy, to see link click [Af](#) - Parashah)

The Key People are descendants of **Jacob**, a new **Pharaoh**, midwives, **Moshe**, **Mariam**, **Zipporah**, **Pharaoh's daughter**, and **Jethro**.

The Scenes include **Egypt**, **Midian**, and **Mount Horeb** in **Sinai**.

The Main Events include **Jacob's** family multiplying, enslaved in **Egypt**; baby **Moshe** hidden in a **basket**, rescued, raised in **the palace** of **the king of Egypt**, killing an **Egyptian**, fleeing to **Midian**, and marrying; **God's** call from **the burning bush**, identified as **YHVH**; **staff**, **signs**, **wonders**, and **Aaron** as spokesman; the first encounter with **Pharaoh** and tougher slavery without **straw for bricks**.

In the book of **Exodus**, we see the history of **the children of Isra'el** progress from being a family of a couple of hundred who descended into **Egypt**, to becoming a nation of about three million strong. The themes of exile and redemption come to the forefront. We learn that the first generation of **Israelites** to live in **Egypt** died. Then **a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know of Joseph**. That **king** put **the children of Isra'el** under harsh servitude. This was done in fulfillment of **God's** promise to **Abraham** when **He** said that **He** was going to take **his** descendants down to **Egypt** to **be foreigners in a land that is not theirs**. **They will be slaves and held in oppression there four hundred years (Genesis 15:13)**.



Moshe, the human author, opens the book of **Exodus** with the Hebrew word **and**, or *waw*. This conjunction is not reflected in most English translations. It is, however, important to recognize its existence because it connects the exodus story to the preceding material of **Genesis**. The first six words of **Exodus** are the same exact words of **Genesis 46:8**. **And these are the names of the sons of Isra'el who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family (1:1)**. The **names** do not appear in order of birth, but according to their respective mothers. The children of **Leah** and **Rachel** come first, and then the children of **Bilhah** and **Zilpah**. They are listed as: **Ruben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher (1:2-4)**.

The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all. The Hebrew readers would have immediately noticed that there were only eleven tribes listed above, so the writer now explains that **Joseph** did not enter the land with **Jacob** because **he was already in Egypt (1:5)**. But **seventy** is merely a symbolic figure (see the commentary on **Genesis**, to see [link click Km - All Who Went to Egypt with Joseph Were Sixty-Six in Number](#)). The daughters-in-law and others were not numbered among **the seventy**. Thus the number of people who accompanied **Jacob** to **Egypt** must have amounted to hundreds, at least.

These verses bring the reader up to date. **Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died (1:6)**. It appears that there is no real leadership of **Isra'el** after the deaths of the twelve sons of **Jacob**. We find no key names between them and the rise of **Moses** four centuries later. From a human perspective, they seem to be in real danger of being absorbed by the Gentiles and disappearing. Nevertheless, **Isra'el** remained distinct and **multiplied greatly**, growing from about two hundred people to approximately two million.

But the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly

numerous, so that the land of Goshen was filled with them (1:7). All five verbs **Moshe** uses in this verse remind us of the command to **be fruitful and increase in number** in **Genesis 1:28** and **9:7**. **Moses** does this to show that **YHVH** had blessed **the Hebrews** in **Egypt**. **ADONAI's** promise to **Abraham** was that **He** would make **his descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky and as the sand on the seashore (Genesis 22:17)**. Therefore, even though it was many centuries after the promise had been given, **God** kept **His** promise to **Abraham**. **He** always does **His** work according to **His** own timetable.