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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.