

Jacob's Genealogy

46: 8-27

DIG: What does the number seventy represent? Why is the actual number of people who went down to Egypt substantially more than seventy? When Jacob's sons went to Egypt to buy grain, could they carry enough back for this many people? How long do you think the grain would last?

REFLECT: Is there more to your genealogy than meets the eye? Who are the characters in your family line? What story does your family genealogy tell? But more importantly, are you written in the genealogy of ADONAI, the Lamb's Book of Life (Psalm 69:28; Revelation 3:5 and 21:27)?

This is Jacob's genealogy, probably written by Joseph after they had all settled in Egypt. He was interested in knowing all his relatives and wanted a formal document. Some time later, Moses, who compiled eleven family documents, added it to the record of Genesis. Because it was a formal genealogy, Yosef was only interested in Ya'akov's direct descendants. (We must remember that we need not expect genealogies to operate in the Jewish culture as they do in ours). As a result, both his daughters and his daughters-in-law are not mentioned (46:26). Because this was a patriarchal society, only his grandsons are mentioned, not his granddaughters. In addition, a few great grandchildren are mentioned, while most are not.

By the time of Messiah, formal Jewish genealogies had evolved to the point where no women were to be mentioned at all. For example, Luke tells us about the birth of Christ from Mary's perspective and follows the strict Jewish law of his time (Luke 3:23-38). He mentions no women, not even Mary whose line he is tracing, but he uses her father's name, Heli. As a result, it was no accident that in ancient Jewish writings of the first and second century Yeshua was referred to as the son of Heli. Therefore, the purpose of Luke's genealogy is to show us why Jesus could be king, because He was a descendant of David, but apart from Jeconiah. Matthew, on the other hand, tells us about the birth of Messiah from Joseph's perspective. But Matthew's was not a formal Jewish genealogy of his time. Even though he names Yeshua as a descendant of David, he mentions women, skips names and includes Jeconiah. Therefore, the purpose of Matthew's genealogy is to show us that if Jesus really were Joseph's son, He could not be king.

Jacob's genealogy is not based upon the order of the birth of his **sons**. It is based on his **wives**, and there are *four lists*. The *first* six **sons** are listed as **children of Leah**; the *second* lists the **two sons** who belong to **Zilpah**, then **Rachel's two sons** are mentioned in the *third* list, and *fourthly*, the last **two sons** belong to **Bilhah**.

First, we have the names of the **sons** of **Leah** and Isra'el (Jacob and his direct descendants) who went to Egypt (46:8a): Several times here, his **daughters-in-law** are not mentioned (46:26), even though we know that his **sons** had **wives** and children when they left Beersheba (46:5). It is similar to the genealogy recorded in Numbers 26:4-62, although the latter includes later generations as well.

Reuben was the firstborn of Ya'akov (46:8b). The **sons** of **Reuben** were **Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron** and **Carmi** (46:9). The **sons** of **Simeon** were **Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar** and **Shaul** the son of a Canaanite woman (46:10). This phrase may have been inserted as a stinging rebuke of **Simeon** and of his relations with a pagan woman. Ironically, it was **Simeon** (along with **Levi**) who slaughtered the men of Shechem for dishonoring his sister **Dinah** (34:25-31).⁷⁰⁵ The **sons** of **Levi** were **Gershon, Kohath** and **Merari** (46:11).

The **sons** of **Judah** were **Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez** and **Zerah** (but **Er** and **Onan** had died in the land of Canaan). The **sons** of **Perez** were **Hezron** and **Hamul** (46:12). There are thirteen living **grandsons** of **Jacob** listed before we get to his twin **grandsons, Perez** and **Zerah**, and thirty-eight in all (not counting **Manasseh, Ephraim** and **Benjamin's sons**). Then we are told that **Perez** had two **children, Hezron** and **Hamul**. How many other **great grandchildren** were there? **Joseph** was almost forty by that time, and his **brothers** were all older than him except for **Benjamin**. Therefore, it is improbable that no **great grandchildren** were born at all by this time because we know that the **sons** of Isra'el grew into a great nation. We get all the way down to **Asher** and we are told that his last son **Beriah**, had two **great grandsons** of **Jacob, Heber** and **Malkiel** (46:17b). Did **Dan** or **Naphtali's** children have any **grandsons** or **granddaughters** by then? No **granddaughters** are mentioned even among the older **brothers**, although I am sure there were many. There is no way of knowing. But it is safe to say that if the thirteen **grandsons** of Ya'akov (let alone the thirty-eight) had only two **children** each, which does not seem that far fetched when you look at the number of **children their fathers** had, there would be at least twenty **great grandchildren**.

This concept of only counting the **men** continued up until the time of **Christ**. When **Jesus** fed the five thousand, **Matthew** records: **The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides the women and the children**, which indicates the total could have been as large as twenty-five thousand (**Matthew 14:21**).⁷⁰⁶

The sons of Issachar were Tola, Puah, Jashub and Shimron (46:13). The sons of Zebulan were Sered, Elon and Jahleel (46:14). These were the sons Leah bore to Jacob in Paddan Aram, besides his daughter Dinah. Each of the four sections delineating Jacob's offspring, ends with a summarizing formula.⁷⁰⁷ These direct sons and daughters of his were thirty-three in all (46:15).

Second, we have the names of the sons of Zilpah and Isra'el (Jacob and his direct descendants) who went to Egypt. The sons of Gad were Zephon, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi and Areli. The sons of Asher were Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi and Beriah. No other daughters are mentioned except for Serah, although I am sure there were many. The sons of Beriah were Heber and Malkiel. These were the direct children born to Jacob by Zilpah, whom Laban had given to his daughter Leah, sixteen in all (46:16-18).

Third, Joseph and Benjamin were the names of the sons of Jacob's wife Rachel. She is called Ya'akov's wife, and is a distinction reserved for her and not applied to any of the other wives in Jacob's genealogy. It indicates her favored position in Ya'akov's and Joseph's eyes.⁷⁰⁸ In Egypt, Ephraim and Manasseh were born to Yosef (The Septuagint, or the Greek translation of the Bible, added five of Jacob's great grandchildren through Ephraim and Manasseh here) by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. The Greek translation of the Bible added five descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh here. Even though the ten sons of Benjamin probably were not actually born in Canaan because he was only in his early twenties, they are listed in order to make this roll of founders parallel and complete, since all of Jacob's grandsons were to be listed among the founders. You could say that they were in the loins of Benjamin. The sons of Benjamin were Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard (46:21). These were the direct sons and grandsons of Rachel who were born to Ya'akov, fourteen in all (46:19-22).

Fourth, we have the names of the sons of Bilhah and Isra'el (Jacob and his direct descendants) who went to Egypt. The sons of Dan were hushim (46:23). Hushim is not the name of a son although you will see it listed that way in genealogies. The im ending is plural and a tribal collective. It's like saying the sons of Dan were those guys. He is the only one of the brothers whose sons were not listed. We will discover the tribe of Dan is singled out for disdain by the Holy Spirit from day one. The reason for that will become evident as we study further in 49:16-17. The sons of Naphtali were Jahziel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem (46:24). These were the direct sons and grandsons born to Jacob by Bilhah, whom Laban had given to his daughter Rachel, seven in all (46:25).

All those who actually went to Egypt with Jacob (but not including Jacob), those who were his direct descendants, not counting his daughters-in-law, numbered sixty-six persons (46:26), but when Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, or the two sons who had been

born to him in Egypt and Ya'akov were added to the members of Jacob's direct descendants which went to Egypt, there were seventy in all (46:27). However, *seventy is merely a symbolic figure.*

The number **seventy** seems to have been associated in a particular way with the nation of **Isra'el** ever since the time when these **seventy** apparently became its official founders. (Note **Deuteronomy 32:8**, which suggest that this number was tied to the **seventy** other nations of the world first established by **ADONAI**, as listed in **Chapter 10**. (See Dj - **The Line of Shem**). There were **seventy** elders in **Numbers 11:16**, there were **seventy** years of Babylonian dominance declared (see my commentary on **Jeremiah Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**), there are **seventy** weeks decreed on the nation of **Isra'el** to atone for **their** sin, there were **seventy** translators of the Septuagint translation of the TaNaKh into Greek, there were **seventy** members of the Sanhedrin in the days of **Yeshua** and there were **seventy** witnesses to **Isra'el** sent by **Messiah** in **Luke 10:1**.⁷⁰⁹

Stephen's speech in **Acts 7:14** seems to contradict this account by saying that there were **seventy-five** people who came into **Egypt** with **Ya'akov**. But **Stephen**, being Hellenistic or Greek, would have used the Septuagint translation of the Bible, which added five of **Jacob's great grandchildren** through **Ephraim** and **Manasseh**.

Because this genealogy contains only the names of his direct descendants, *there are four groups that are not accounted for.* First, **Ya'akov** took his **daughters** with him to **Egypt**. Only **Dinah** was named, but there must have been about an equal number of **daughters** as **sons**. Second, there are **Jacob's** eleven **daughters-in-law** (**Asenath** being already in **Egypt**). Third, there were probably at least thirty-five **granddaughters** when they left **Beersheba** (46:7) and fourth, there were his **great grandchildren**, which could possibly number twenty or thirty. *Therefore, I think it would be conservative to say that the number of people who accompanied **Ya'akov** into **Egypt** must have amounted to hundreds, at least.*

Notice what care **the Holy Spirit** takes with each name. Many of these names are only listed here in the Bible and not found anywhere else. We don't know who they are, but **ADONAI** does. He has a list of those who are in **His** family; it is called **the Lamb's Book of Life** (**Revelation 21:27**). **Yeshua** said: **He who overcomes will be dressed in white. I will never blot out his or her name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his or her name before my Father and His angels** (**Revelation 3:5**). Have you ever heard of it? The better question is this, is your name written in it? You were born into the family of **Adam**, but the only way you can get into **His** genealogy is by adoption when you receive **Christ** as your personal **Lord** and **Savior**. When you do that, you become a child of **God**.⁷¹⁰ (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith**).