

# A Nation of Seventy

## *Jacob Journeys to Egypt and God's Plans for the Future*

- <sup>1</sup> So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.
- <sup>2</sup> And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."
- <sup>3</sup> Then he said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation.
- <sup>4</sup> I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes."
- <sup>5</sup> Then Jacob set out from Beersheba. The sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him.
- <sup>6</sup> They also took their livestock and their goods, which they had gained in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him,
- <sup>7</sup> his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters. All his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.
- <sup>8</sup> Now these are the names of the descendants of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn,
- <sup>9</sup> and the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.
- <sup>10</sup> The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman.
- <sup>11</sup> The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.
- <sup>12</sup> The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan); and the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.
- <sup>13</sup> The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Yob, and Shimron.
- <sup>14</sup> The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.
- <sup>15</sup> These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, together with his daughter Dinah; altogether his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three.
- <sup>16</sup> The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.
- <sup>17</sup> The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, with Serah their sister. And the sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel.
- <sup>18</sup> These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bore to Jacob-- sixteen persons.
- <sup>19</sup> The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife: Joseph and Benjamin.
- <sup>20</sup> And to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera the priest of On, bore to him.
- <sup>21</sup> And the sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard.
- <sup>22</sup> These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob-- fourteen persons in all.
- <sup>23</sup> The son of Dan: Hushim.
- <sup>24</sup> The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.
- <sup>25</sup> These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, and these she bore to Jacob-- seven persons in all.
- <sup>26</sup> All the persons belonging to Jacob who came into Egypt, who were his own descendants, not including Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all.

- <sup>27</sup> And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two. All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy.
- <sup>28</sup> He had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to show the way before him in Goshen, and they came into the land of Goshen.
- <sup>29</sup> Then Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father in Goshen. He presented himself to him and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.
- <sup>30</sup> Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive."
- <sup>31</sup> Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me.
- <sup>32</sup> And the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock, and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.'
- <sup>33</sup> When Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?'
- <sup>34</sup> you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians."

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### Genesis 46:1-34

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## Going Somewhere?

Genesis is a long book, at least as far as the Bible is concerned. Divided into ten sections with the formula “these are the generations of...” it is easy to lose sight of the fact that this book, like any book, is going somewhere. It has a purpose (perhaps many of them). Today, we run into the last of those genealogy sections that mark various points of this book. Unless you keep in mind the greater story, it would be easy to let this chapter stand alone with nothing greater than itself to ground it in the purposes of God.

Genesis 46 tells us about a move to a different land and a vision of God to Jacob. In light of that first gospel promise in the book, one commentator notes, “Jacob leaves the promised land for a heathen land: his departure marks the end of the patriarchal period. A major theological issue of Genesis is highlighted again, and that is, how will the seed of the woman survive among the seed of the serpent? How will the promised seed receive the land of promise?”<sup>1</sup> The answer to this question will be unpacked in the next few chapters, but this chapter is their beginning, their genesis if you will.

Chapter 47 will describe a meeting between Pharaoh and Jacob, which begins the history of Israel living in the midst of foreign nations. Then it gives a kind of early preview of the slavery and exodus that will become the destiny of Israel, as Joseph buys up all the land of the Egyptians, helping to create a different kind of

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis: Genesis 25:19–50:26*, vol. 2, EP Study Commentary (Darlington, England; Carlisle, PA: Evangelical Press, 2003), 334.

Egypt than had existed prior. Chapters 48-49 will tell us about Jacob's last will and testament, including blessings, curses, and prophecies for his children that will stand as a signal and a banner for the rest of biblical history. Chapter 50 completes the book, describing the last days of both Jacob and Joseph and telling us about their deaths.

Our chapter is the preface to these things, as it recounts the greatest move of Jacob's life—his move down to Egypt. Not only is Genesis going somewhere. So is Jacob! Egypt has come up in the lives of all three of the Great Patriarchs of the Bible: Abraham went down to Egypt (12:10). Isaac was told *not to go* to Egypt (26:2). And now Jacob is told *to go* to Egypt (46:3). He is told this by God himself.

It is the greatest move because it is climactic. It is the last time a Patriarch will move in Genesis. It begins in Beersheba where Jacob is living. “So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba.” Beersheba was a major hub for both Abraham (Gen 21:33) and Isaac (26:23). It is a place where both worshiped God (see passages above). Likewise, our passage begins by telling us, “... and [Jacob] offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac” (46:1).

It is the greatest move because from here God appeared to Jacob one last time. God had appeared to Abraham and Isaac from here as well (22:1; 26:24). This appearance will solidify God's promises and help Jacob make the move. For three verses we now see the last recorded appearance of God to Jacob. “And God (Elohim) spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, ‘Jacob, Jacob.’ And he said, ‘Here I am’” (46:2). “Here I am” is how Abraham replied after the Angel of God appeared to him at Beersheba when he had made his way to Mt. Moriah to sacrifice Isaac (22:11). It is how Jacob responded when he saw the Angel of God in Haran (31:11). It is how Moses (Ex 3:4) and Samuel (1 Sam 3:4-7) will respond to the Angel later in the Bible. Who, therefore, do you suppose the “God” speaking to Jacob now is? It is the Angel of the LORD (cf. 48:16).

He said, “I am God<sup>2</sup>, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation.” Back when we first saw the “LORD” come to Abraham, he was simply called Yahweh (Gen 12:1). But he said, “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you” (12:2). Immediately after this, Abraham goes down to Egypt (Gen 12:10ff). Therefore, the God speaking to

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<sup>2</sup> **Going deeper:** Here the word is **El**. It has only been used in the singular for “God” unaccompanied by adjectives (El Shaddai, El Elyon, El Roi, etc) one other time in Genesis (Gen 31:3). It is an amazing word, because El is the highest god of the Canaanite pantheon. El (along with his consort Asherah) was the father of the 70 sons of god who include Baal. Here, then, the Angel of the LORD is actually calling himself the high God of the northern enemies of Israel. At other times the Angel is distinguished from the LORD in heaven (i.e. Gen 19:24), and therefore his use of this term shows that he partakes of the same essence as El (whom we would call the Father).

Jacob now is “Yahweh” who spoke to Abraham so many years earlier.<sup>3</sup>

The other part of this verse has God tell Jacob, “Do not be afraid.” Why? The next verse answers, “I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph’s hand shall close your eyes” (4). This beautiful promise contains something that we are not yet ready to understand, and I will come back to it later. But it does contain something we can see now.

When God came to Joshua he said, “Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel” (Josh 11:6). Still later, “The Angel of the LORD said to Elijah, ‘Go down [to Ahaziah]; do not be afraid of him’” (2Kgs 1:15). And again through Isaiah the LORD said, “Do not be afraid” of the king of Assyria (2 Kgs 19:6). Why? In every case it is because God would do something to protect his people. In other words, these words of comfort help his people to know that he will be with them no matter what fears they may have in life. It is such a glorious promise to know that God will be with those whom he has called to himself, no matter where they are. I hope later to show you how profoundly amazing this actually is.

But why would he be afraid? I think the answer is mainly because he is leaving the Promised Land, the land God swore to give to Abraham and his seed forever. It would be an act of sheer faithlessness to leave *if* God had not told him to, especially after 200 years of such endurance by his parents and grandparents to possess the land. But why would God command such a thing now? This question is part of what we will return to later.

Until then, let us continue looking at how, again, this move of Jacob to Egypt is the greatest. In the next verses it becomes clear that it is because Jacob is so old. All the other journeys taken by the Patriarchs were either short or done in their youth. But the emphasis in Genesis 46-50 is on Jacob’s old age.

“Then Jacob set out from Beersheba” (Gen 46:5). To get from Beersheba to Egypt you have to travel through a great deal of desert and wasteland. “The sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him” (5). Here we see the torch being passed from father to sons as they carried him. At the end of the chapter Jacob will say, “Now let me die” because he has seen Joseph face to face (30). In the next chapter, Jacob will tell Pharaoh how old he is (47:9) and then we will see his last words in the chapters that follow.

But not only was he old. Everything was going with him. He was completely leaving Canaan behind. Livestock, goods, offspring, sons, sons’ sons, daughters,

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<sup>3</sup> “Yahweh” (LORD) is not used in Genesis 46 at all.

son's daughters (6-7) all came to Egypt with Jacob. So this was a complete and permanent (as far as Jacob is concerned) move.

Finally, it is the greatest move because of how more than any other **reminds of us the past**. We have already seen connections with Abraham and Isaac and with past references to Egypt. But as Wenham points out, the language used here reminds us also of the Flood. “Some phraseology echoes key terms from the flood story—‘enter’/‘bring in’ (vv 6–7; cf. 6:18–20), ‘descendants’ (vv 6–7; cf. 7:3)—while ‘the possessions which they had acquired in the land of Canaan’ echoes the descriptions of earlier major migrations (v 6; cf. 12:5; 31:18; 36:6). These parallels implicitly compare Jacob’s move to Egypt to Noah’s entry into the ark.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, the move of Jacob to Egypt connects us to the past, to the purpose of Genesis as a whole, even as it points us forward to the future, to the Exodus and beyond. But what is that future and how does it relate to that central prophecy of the Seed we talked about a while ago?

## **Seventy Sons**

The answer to this question begins to present itself in the lengthy genealogy that follows. Vv. 8-27 give us **the names** of all those who went down into Egypt with Jacob. But we won’t find out its purpose and how it helps to answer our question until vs. 27. Let’s work our way up to it.

It is prefaced with vs. 8, “Now these are the names of the descendants of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons. Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn...” We already know that Reuben is the firstborn and we know all twelve of Jacob’s sons. This genealogy goes deeper, telling us about his grandchildren. It is divided according to the order of his wives.

### *Children of Leah*

It begins with **Leah**. “These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram” (15). She had half of Jacob’s sons. They are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. Each man in turn is then listed with his own sons.

**Reuben has four sons** (Gen 46:9). His first is named Hanoch (Initiated, Teacher). I’m not really sure what is up with the spelling, since it is the identical name as **Enoch** (Gen 5:18). Next is **Pallu**<sup>5</sup> (from the root “wonderful”), then **Hezron**

<sup>4</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, vol. 2, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 442.

<sup>5</sup> **Going Deeper:** The Greek equivalent is Phallus. The Greek translated names are often VERY different from the Hebrew (such as the next name Hezron which is Asron), but other times very similar (such as Carmi which becomes Charmi). The genealogy of Jacob in Gen 46:8ff. and those in Num 26:5ff. and 1 Chr. 2–8 have some major differences. These include **name differences:** Jemuel (Gen. 46:10) vs. Nemuel (Num. 26:12); Puwwah (Gen. 46:13) vs. Puah (Num. 26:13); Iob (Gen. 46:13) vs. Jashub (Num. 26:24); Ziphion (Gen. 46:16) vs. Zephon (Num. 26:15); Ezbon (Gen. 46:16) vs. Ozni (Num. 26:15). They also include some **names omitted**

(“Enclosure”?) and **Carmi** (Vineyard of God).<sup>6</sup>

**Simeon** has six sons (**Gen 46:10**). The first is **Jemuel** (Desire of God?). Second is **Jamin** (Right Hand or Lucky). Third is **Ohad** (Joined Together?). Fourth is **Jachin** (Let God Establish). Fifth is **Zohar** (White?). Sixth is **Shaul** (Asked For). As one commentator puts the story of this last fellow, “**Simeon followed the objectionable practice of Judah by marrying a Canaanite who bore the last-listed son, Shaul.**” Even in a genealogy, the Bible is not shy about hinting at the sins of God’s people. These are not demigods or superheroes, but ordinary, fallen men who need salvation.<sup>7</sup>

**Levi** has three sons (**46:11**). They are **Gershon** (Bell?), **Kohath** (Obedient?), and **Merari** (Strong). It is from Kohath that Moses and Aaron will be born. These three boys will sire tribes that will become the Levites. They were not the Priests (they come from Aaron), but were the servants of the tabernacle, acting much like deacons do in the NT church.

**Judah** has seven “sons” (**46:12**). **Er** and **Onan** have been mentioned previously. They died because God killed them for refusing to receive the promise of the Seed which was so graciously offered to go through them. Their younger brother was **Shelah**. Because of Judah’s own wickedness, he had two more sons through an illicit encounter with Er’s wife Tamar. These were the twins **Perez** and **Zerah**. The passages tells us that ER and Onan died, and the purpose is to help us with the final count of people at the end. Two other “sons”<sup>8</sup> are mentioned. They are **Hezron** (see above) and **Hamul** (Spared).

**Issachar** has four sons (**46:13**). The first is **Tola** (Worm or Scarlet). Many of David’s mighty men came through him (**1 Chr 7:2**). **Puvah** (Madder), **Yob** (Job or Yashub which means May God Return), and **Shimron** (Samaria).

Finally **Zebulun** has three sons (**Gen 46:14**). They are **Sered** (root: to fear), **Elon** (Oak), **Jahleel** (Let Him Wait for God). One other person is mentioned. This is **Dinah** (**15**). “**Altogether his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three**” from Leah.

### *Children of Zilpah*

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from one list or another which lead to **different totals of numbers**. This is because genealogies are as much theological as they are historical. The numbers themselves mean something (see below). On the differences see Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18–50*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 599.

<sup>6</sup> There is no discernible behind the scenes “story” to the names of Jacob’s descendants, though I’m sure each person was given a name for a good reason. “They fall into three main types, animal names, parts of the body, and theophoric names” (Wenham, 442).

<sup>7</sup> K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 830.

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew does not have a word for a “grandson,” so they are simply counted as “sons.”

Gad and Asher come next (**Gen 46:16-17**). These are the sons of Jacob that come from **Zilpah**, Leah's handmaiden who was given to him by his uncle Laban (**18**). Each son has seven sons.

The sons of **Gad** are **Ziphion** (Longing), **Haggi** (Festival of God), **Shuni** (Calm), **Ezbon** (Finger or Bald), **Eri** (Watchful), **Arodi** (Wild Donkey?), and **Areli** (Lion is My God?).

The children of **Asher** are **Imnah** (May God Allot His Portion), **Ishvah** (root: to praise), **Ishvi** (root: to praise), **Beriah** (Outstanding), and **Serah** (Cause to Flourish) their sister. Beriah has two sons. They are **Heber** (Companion) and **Malchiel** (My King is El). Again, the total of each is seven. Together with Gad and Asher they number **sixteen** people.

#### *Children of Rachel*

Next we come to **Rachel** (**46:19**). Unlike the other three wives who are mentioned after their sons, Rachel alone is mentioned *before* her sons. Dear beloved Rachel. She alone is more important to Jacob than his children. She had two children. They were Joseph and Benjamin.<sup>9</sup>

**Joseph** has two sons (**46:20**). One is **Manasseh** (Forgetting). The other is **Ephraim** (Fruitful). Along with them, Joseph's beautiful wife **Asenath** is mentioned. She was a daughter of Potiphora the priest of On.<sup>10</sup>

**Benjamin** has ten sons (**21**). This is remarkable, because he is the youngest of them all, yet has the most sons listed. They are **Bela** (Eloquent or Glutton), **Becher** (Young Camel), **Ashbel** (With a Long Upper Lip), **Gera** (Sojourner of Some God), **Naaman** (Pleasantness), **Ehi** (God's Name), **Rosh** (Head/Chief), (my favorite) **Muphim** (Anxieties? Viper?) and **Huphim** (root: the shore), and **Ard** (Hunchbacked?). In all, **fourteen** persons are counted (**22**).<sup>11</sup>

#### *Children of Bilhah*

Finally, we have the sons of **Bilhah** (**25**), the handmaid whom Laban gave to Rachel. She had two sons. The first is Dan. **Dan** only had one son (**23**). His name is **Hushim** (Those Who Hasten Their Birth?). I think this fact shows the grace of God, for through that one son, God still managed to create an entire tribe of people.

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<sup>9</sup> Of course, Joseph is already in Egypt, so technically he should not be numbered among those who went down with Jacob. However, to arrive at "seventy" he ends up being counted (on "seventy" see below).

<sup>10</sup> The LXX adds five names to this list. They are a son of Manasseh: **Machir** who himself has **Galaad**; and two sons of Ephraim: **Sutalaam** and **Taam**, where Sutalaam has **Edom**. Adding these five names you get 75 total names. 75 is the number that Stephen uses in his sermon in Acts 7:14. Therefore, Stephen is using the LXX.

<sup>11</sup> The number Fourteen includes Joseph and his two sons, even though they did not actually go down to Egypt. Here we have a hint that number 70 serves a theological purpose more than anything else, especially considering that the list ends by saying "All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy" (Gen 46:27).

**Naphtali** is the last son and he has **four sons** (24). They are **Jahzeel** (God Grant Him a Share), **Guni** (My Garden?), **Jezer** (God Has Created?), and **Shillem** (God Has Rewarded).

Two verses complete the genealogy. **Gen 46:26** gives us a count without Jacob's son's wives (or most of their daughters).<sup>12</sup> The count gives us **sixty-six** persons. **Vs. 27** adds Joseph, his two sons (and Dinah) giving us the number **seventy**.<sup>13</sup> It is at this point that the purpose of this genealogy presents itself in the greater plan of God's holy word.

### **Building a House in the Midst of the Nations**

Here is where things are going to get fun. Remember now, the purpose of a sermon is not merely to impart information to help make sense of what you read. It needs to do that. But it needs to do more. This is where genealogies can sometimes get tricky to preach. How do you impart a life-giving word of overflowing abundant water through a genealogy, a list of names?

Thus, I want to ask, **why have this genealogy**, and why have it here? We know that Genesis loves these things. But we also know that they serve several purposes. They all link us to the past with actual history. These were real people. Christianity is no fiction. Keeping this in mind when it comes to the Bible is always important, because our faith necessitates actual history. If these people were not real, then the events of the Bible didn't actually happen. But everything we know about God from the Bible is based on the idea that they did actually happen.

Yet, we also know that some lists are actually quite **choosy**. This one is no exception. In fact, this same basic list occurs in other places in the Bible<sup>14</sup> where it has different names and different numbers of total names (see note 5). In fact, the LXX has five names in this very passage that are not given in the Hebrew. Stephen

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<sup>12</sup> The ambiguous *ishshah* can mean "wives" or also "female." Given that of the total number of children only two are females, it is a good bet that there are many daughters not mentioned at all.

<sup>13</sup> "The first number given to Jacob's descendants is *sixty-six* (v. 26). This group is identified as those *who migrated to Egypt* with Jacob. Excluded from that caravan are Er and Onan, for they are already dead (v. 12; see 38:7, 10), as well as Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim, who are already in Egypt. Thus, eliminating those five names from the seventy listed brings the number to sixty-five, but sixty-six is obtained by the addition of Dinah. Thus 32 (Leah) plus 16 (Zilpah) plus 11 (Rachel, and excluding Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh) plus 7 (Bilhah) equals 66; or, less likely, 31 (Leah, excluding Jacob and Dinah) plus 16 (Zilpah) plus 12 (Rachel, excluding Ephraim and Manasseh) plus 7 (Bilhah) equals 66.

"The second number computed for Jacob's offspring is *seventy* (v. 27). The increase from sixty-six in v. 26 to seventy in v. 27 is arrived at by the inclusion of Jacob himself, Joseph, and Joseph's two children. The LXX's seventy-five<sup>35</sup> comes about by the deletion of Jacob and Joseph and the addition of nine sons of Joseph instead of two." See Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18–50*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 598.

<sup>14</sup> Gen 46:8ff; Num 26:5ff; and 1 Chr 2–8.



cites 75 names not 70, and he gets it from the LXX (see note 10). That means we should at least be on the lookout for a symbolic meaning to the total number.

Furthermore, there are **numerical patterns** that are discernible in our list. They revolve around that favorite of numbers in Genesis: the number 7. Thus, Victor Hamilton writes, “It is clear that seven (and multiples thereof) is prominent in this genealogy, whose total number of entries is 70. Rachel has fourteen descendants [7x2], and Bilhah has seven. Together they have twenty-one [7x3]. Together Leah and Bilhah have forty-nine descendants [7x7]. The seventh son of Jacob listed in this genealogy is Gad. Gen. 29–30 (see 30:11) is the only other Jacobite genealogy in which Gad is placed in the seventh position. Interestingly, the numerical value of the seventh-placed Gad is seven ( $g = 3; d = 4$ ).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, seventy is the significant number that Genesis wants us to reflect upon. It does this because it is viewing seventy here as a *theological* number.

E.W. Bullinger, the descendant of the famous Reformer Heinrich Bullinger, in his book *Number in Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance*, reflects upon the number 70 saying, “Seventy is another combination of two of the perfect numbers, seven and ten ... the product [that is multiplying them together] exhibits the significance of each in an intensified form. Hence 7 x 10 signifies perfect spiritual order carried out with all spiritual power and significance. Both spirit and order are greatly emphasized.”<sup>16</sup>

We have seen the number seventy appear **twice** in our study of Genesis. First, there were **seventy nations** listed in Genesis 10. I titled that sermon *Seventy Nations*. The title of his sermon is *A Nation of Seventy*. They are intimately related in the purposes of God. How so?

The other “seventy” we have seen was found in our study of **Genesis 6:1-4** and the heavenly beings called the sons of God. We found in Deuteronomy, commenting on both passages together, says that God divided up the nations according to the “**number**” of the sons of God (**Deut 32:8**). That number, as the Targum puts it and which is inferred from Genesis 10, is **seventy**. Jacob’s leading seventy people into a foreign land absolutely fits this context.<sup>17</sup> But how?

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<sup>15</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18–50*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 598–599. He cites J. M. Sasson, “A Genealogical ‘Convention’ in Biblical Chronography?” *ZAW* 90 (1978) 181. For comparisons with the Hebrew and LXX and the Hebrew and Jubilees see the charts at the end of the sermon. See also Bullinger (n. 16).

<sup>16</sup> Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*, p. 25-26.

[http://www.levendwater.org/books/numbers/number\\_in\\_scripture\\_bullinger.pdf](http://www.levendwater.org/books/numbers/number_in_scripture_bullinger.pdf), last accessed 4-23-2015.

<sup>17</sup> The Rabbis understood this when they changed the text from the “number of the sons of God” to the “number of the sons of Israel” in Deut 32:8. *Both* numbers are seventy.

Jesus' famous teaching in the Lord's Prayer is, "On earth as it is in heaven." Psalm 78:69 says, "He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever." In other words, on earth like it is in heaven. This sanctuary is often called God's "house" (1Kg 6:17; Ps 5:7; 65:4; etc). So the house on earth is patterned after the house in heaven. The earthly things "serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Heb 8:5; cf. 9:23).

Now, in 146 verses in the ESV, the nation of Israel is also called the "house of Israel." So **not only is the building a house, the nation is a house** as well. It is to this house that all the other houses of nations will one day find their happiness and hope. Micah says, "And many nations shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths'" (Mic 4:2). Isaiah says, "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it" (Isa 2:2).

This is all in accordance with the promise given to Abraham and reconfirmed here with Jacob, "I will make you into a great nation" (Gen 46:3), with Isaac, "In your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 26:4), and with Abraham, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations" (Gen 17:4).

### **Reclaiming the Nations while Binding the gods**

So how does this fit in with the seventy? **First**, at Babel, you have seventy nations going into one world. **Next**, as punishment for creating their own version of the mountain-house of God and for trying to do so through lesser gods (*elohim*) in order to make a name for themselves (of course, names are probably the most important feature of our text today), God allots to each nation a heavenly being to rule over it, as punishment for both the angelic and the human sins in the flood and at Babel (see Deut 4:19; 17:3; 29:26; 32:7-9). **Seventy heavenly beings to rule seventy nations.** All the ancients knew this. All talked about it. All believed it. It was a punishment however, and it led to complete spiritual darkness.

"But Yahweh's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance"  
(Deut 32:9).

This verse shines light a beacon in that darkness. Notice that the language here is not "Abraham," even though the promise first came through Abraham. Rather, the language is Jacob. It is through Jacob that a nation would be created. This is why the nation is called Israel rather than Abraham. The text today is

showing you that. It does so through the number seventy. **Rather than seventy houses of nations going into one world, we have a house of seventy people going into one nation.** To put it differently, this is God's redemptive-historical reclamation project, begun through his allotted inheritance, through Jacob.

This is the official beginning of God's taking back the nations. Seventy people will come up again later in the Bible. Together, they form the complete picture of what begins here with Jacob. **First**, Israel is led into the wilderness to be tempted at a place called Elim ("gods"), where there are seventy palm trees and twelve springs of water (**Ex 15:27ff**). **Second**, in a scene that basically begins the reversal of Babel, seventy elders of Israel go up Mt. Sinai to meet with God (**Ex 24:1ff**). **Third**, God has Moses set aside 70 judges who will lead the people of Israel. (**Num 11:16ff**). In this way, they emulate their heavenly counterparts who rule the nations (compare **Ps 82:2** and **Ex 18:22**). Eventually, these 70 elders would become the famous Jewish Sanhedrin, a group of seventy, and the Rabbis compared this number directly to the seventy nations.<sup>18</sup>

But of course Israel was sinful, just like the other nations. They could not ultimately inherit the promises through their own righteousness, for they went astray from the LORD and worshiped the gods of the nations. Therefore, God sent them into exile for **seventy years**. "Thus says the LORD: 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place'" (**Jer 29:10**). Are you starting to get the picture why? Israel has become just another one of the nations, and so they are treated as such, being sent away into a foreign land over the authority of foreign gods.

But God made a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He made a promise that the nations would be saved through them. How then could God do that if Israel had become just like the other nations? Daniel says, "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place" (**Dan 9:24**). This prophecy does not refer to the tribulation and the Antichrist in our own future as I was taught as a child, but to the atoning for sin and ushering in everlasting righteousness through the Lord Jesus Christ at his First Coming. It is in the middle of that seventieth week that the Lord Jesus died on the cross and was raised to life.

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<sup>18</sup> Babylonian Talmud Tractate Sanhedrin Folio 17a puts the number at seventy and compares this direction to the seventy languages of the nations. They do this because they Jews saw themselves as a light to the nations, even though they never actually had any jurisdiction over them. [http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin\\_17.html](http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_17.html), last accessed 4-24-2015.

Do you think this is a coincidence? No, but rather this is where God finally shows his Son to be glorious over the gods of the world. “By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (Col 2:14-15). And he “has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him” (1Pe 3:22).

The end of our story today shows us the simple faith of Jacob that rested in the promise of God. Christ had to tell him to go into Egypt. It was part of the plan. The LORD had to remind him that he would make him into a great nation. The Angel had to encourage him not to be afraid to go down to Egypt. Just here, remember that I said we would come back to this point. Now you are ready to understand why. “I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again” (Gen 46:4).

In our post-NT contemporary Christianity, we simply take it for granted that Jesus could be with him in Egypt. But this was a serious promise, a subversive promise, a promise of anticipated warfare (Exodus) that the Angel of the LORD would go into hostile territory, into land inherited by other gods—the gods of Egypt—and that everything would still be OK. It is as amazing as the LORD coming to Ezekiel in Babylon, for Babylon was the territory of the Prince of Persia. What gives him this right? He is God, that’s what gives him this right! This all foreshadows the exodus and more, and so it is with these promises that Jacob is able to rest, even though he did not see their fulfillment in his lifetime.

This is how our story ends. Jacob had sent Judah—the father of Christ—ahead of him to Joseph to show the way into Goshen (Gen 46:28). Goshen means “Drawing Near” or “The Temple of the Sun.” This would become the heart of enemy territory, though because of Joseph—the type of Christ—Egypt is friendly towards Israel. In order to get his family to Goshen, Joseph hatched a plan.

Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father in Goshen (29). What a reunion that must have been! After a couple dozen years of grieving for his dead son, the father and son are reunited in this foreshadowing of life from death. And they wept together a good while. It is at this moment that Jacob knows he can rest with his fathers in peace. “Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive” (30). Having seen his son—this great picture of Christ, Israel can die happy in a foreign land. That is the moral of this story.

At this, Joseph decides that let Pharaoh know that his whole family has arrived in Egypt (31). He tells him that they are shepherds with livestock, and they have brought all that they have here to this land (32). He tells them that when they

come to Pharaoh and he asks them their occupation (33), they are to tell him that they are shepherds in order that Pharaoh might separate them out from Egypt, putting them on the margins of civilization, out on their own in the land of Goshen, away from the people of that land (34).

In this way, the people of God are distinguished from the people of Egypt through the occupation of the shepherd. The sheep are separated from the goats, as it were. God's people will remain distinct. They will be able to grow into a mighty nation. God's plan for the future will succeed. And the Great Shepherd of the sheep will come to the earth and call his sheep from other pastures, until the whole fold is brought into the pen.

Today, in the church, this reclamation of the “other sheep who hear his voice” is still being heard, though many have forgotten the only Voice that is able to make the animals bow before the Good Shepherd. We must recapture what the Disciples once learned. Thus it says, “Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come” (Luke 10:1 NAS). And what did they return saying? “And the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name’” (Luke 10:17 NAS). Jesus says, “I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you” (Luke 10:19). Friends, this is not some kind of bizarre snake handling cult that Jesus is starting. Rather, it is the very power of the gospel, the keys of the kingdom that he is giving to his church to bind the forces of Satan and the sons of God to save people out of the dark nations and bring them into the kingdom of the Son of God. Do you hear the past tense right in this context? “He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven’” (Luke 10:18).

Today, this very moment, the Lord Jesus is calling you through his word to flee the kingdom of Satan and come into the glorious freedom of the children of God. See? He has written this plan into the very fabric of history. Since the very beginning with the promise to Eve of a Seed that would crush the head of the serpent, he has had this in mind. Our Lord Jesus has not yet returned in judgment, and so it is not yet too late to repent of your sins and turn to him for forgiveness. Today is the day of salvation.

And when you turn, know that in the midst of the foreign nation that you find yourself in, with its wickedness and turmoil, sorrow and sadness, that because you have seen the Son, you can die happy, knowing that God fulfills all of his promises which are “Yes” and “Amen” in Christ Jesus. May you receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and may you be his witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the very end of the earth (Acts 1:8) that every

knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

(Gen 46:1-34 ESV)	(Gen 46:1-34 LXA)
So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.	<b>Genesis 46:1</b> And Israel departed, he and all that he had, and came to the well of the oath; and he offered sacrifice to the God of his father Isaac.
2 And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."	2 And God spoke to Israel in a night vision, saying, Jacob, Jacob; and he said, What is it?
3 Then he said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation.	3 And he says to him, I am the God of thy fathers; fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will make thee there a great nation.
4 I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes."	4 And I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will bring thee up at the end; and Joseph shall put his hands on thine eyes.
5 Then Jacob set out from Beersheba. The sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him.	5 And Jacob rose up from the well of the oath; and the sons of Israel took up their father, and the baggage, and their wives on the waggons, which Joseph sent to take them.
6 They also took their livestock and their goods, which they had gained in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him,	6 And they took up their goods, and all their property, which they had gotten in the land of Chanaan; they came into the land of Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him.
7 his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters. All his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.	7 The sons, and the sons of his sons with him; <i>his</i> daughters, and the daughters of his daughters; and he brought all his seed into Egypt.
8 Now these are the names of the descendants of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn,	8 And these are the names of the sons of Israel that went into Egypt with their father Jacob--Jacob and his sons. The first-born of Jacob, Ruben.
9 and the sons of <b>Reuben</b> : <b>Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.</b>	9 And the sons of <b>Ruben</b> ; <b>Enoch, and Phallus, Asron, and Chami.</b>
10 The sons of <b>Simeon</b> : <b>Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul</b> , the son of a Canaanite woman.	10 and the sons of <b>Symeon</b> ; <b>Jemuel, and Jamin, and Aod, and Achin, and Saar, and Saul</b> , the son of a Chananitish woman.
11 The sons of <b>Levi</b> : <b>Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.</b>	11 And the sons of <b>Levi</b> ; <b>Gerson, Cath, and Merari.</b>
12 The sons of <b>Judah</b> : <b>Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah</b> (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan); and the sons of Perez were <b>Hezron and Hamul.</b>	12 And the sons of <b>Judas</b> ; <b>Er, and Anun, and Selom, and Phares, and Zara</b> : and Er and Anun died in the land of Chanaan. 13 And the sons of Phares were <b>Esrion, and Jemuel.</b>
13 The sons of <b>Issachar</b> : <b>Tola, Puvah, Yob, and Shimron.</b>	And the sons of <b>Issachar</b> ; <b>Thola, and Phua, and Asum, and Sambran.</b>
14 The sons of <b>Zebulun</b> : <b>Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.</b>	14 And the sons of <b>Zabulun</b> , <b>Sered, and Allon, and Achoel.</b>
15 These are the <b>sons of Leah</b> , whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, together with his daughter <b>Dinah</b> ; altogether his sons and his daughters numbered <b>thirty-three.</b>	15 These are the <b>sons of Lea</b> , which she bore to Jacob in Mesopotamia of Syria, and <b>Dina</b> his daughter; all the souls, sons and daughters, <b>thirty-three.</b>
16 The sons of <b>Gad</b> : <b>Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.</b>	16 And the sons of <b>Gad</b> ; <b>Saphon, and Angis, and Sannis, and Thasoban, and Aedis, and Aroedis, and Areelis.</b>
17 The sons of <b>Asher</b> : <b>Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah</b> , with <b>Serah</b> their sister. And the sons of Beriah: <b>Heber and Malchiel.</b>	17 And the sons of <b>Aser</b> ; <b>Jemna, Jessua, and Jeul, and Baria, and Sara</b> their sister. And the sons of Baria; <b>Chobor, and Melchiil.</b>
18 These are the <b>sons of Zilpah</b> , whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bore to Jacob-- <b>sixteen persons.</b>	18 These are the <b>sons of Zelpha</b> , which Laban gave to his daughter Lea, who bore these to Jacob, <b>sixteen souls.</b>
19 The <b>sons of Rachel</b> , Jacob's wife: Joseph and Benjamin.	19 And the <b>sons of Rachel</b> , the wife of Jacob; Joseph, and Benjamin.
20 And to <b>Joseph</b> in the land of Egypt were born <b>Manasseh</b> and <b>Ephraim</b> , whom <b>Asenath</b> , the daughter of Potiphera the priest of On, bore to him.	20 And there were sons born to <b>Joseph</b> in the land of Egypt, whom <b>Aseneth</b> , the daughter of Petephres, priest of Heliopolis, bore to him, <i>even</i> <b>Manasses</b> and <b>Ephraim</b> . And there were sons born to Manasses, which the Syrian concubine bore to him, <i>even</i> <b>Machir</b> . And Machir begot <b>Galaad</b> . And the sons of Ephraim, the brother of Manasses; <b>Sutalaam, and Taam</b> . And the sons of Sutalaam; <b>Edom</b> .
21 And the sons of <b>Benjamin</b> : <b>Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard.</b>	21 and the sons of <b>Benjamin</b> ; <b>Bala, and Bochor, and Asbel</b> . And the sons of Bala were <b>Gera, and Noeman, and Anchis, and Ros, and Mamphim</b> . And Gera begot <b>Arad</b> .
22 These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob-- <b>fourteen</b> persons in all.	22 These are the sons of Rachel, which she bore to Jacob; all the souls <b>eighteen.</b>
23 The son of <b>Dan</b> : <b>Hushim.</b>	23 And the sons of <b>Dan</b> ; <b>Asom.</b>
24 The sons of <b>Naphtali</b> : <b>Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.</b>	24 And the sons of <b>Nephtalim</b> ; <b>Asiel, and Goni, and Issaar, and Sollem.</b>
25 These are the <b>sons of Bilhah</b> , whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, and these she bore to Jacob-- <b>seven</b> persons in all.	25 These are the <b>sons of Balla</b> , whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel, who bore these to Jacob; all the souls, <b>seven.</b>
26 All the persons belonging to Jacob who came into Egypt, who were his own descendants, not including Jacob's sons' wives, were <b>sixty-six</b> persons in all.	26 And all the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, who came out of his loins, besides the wives of the sons of Jacob, <i>even</i> all the souls were <b>sixty-six.</b>
27 And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two. All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were <b>seventy.</b>	27 And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in the land of Egypt, were nine souls; all the souls of the house of Jacob who came with Joseph into Egypt, were <b>seventy-five</b> souls.

<p><sup>28</sup> He had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to show the way before him in Goshen, and they came into <b>the land of Goshen</b>.</p> <p><sup>29</sup> Then Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father in Goshen. He presented himself to him and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.</p> <p><sup>30</sup> Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive."</p> <p><sup>31</sup> Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me.'</p> <p><sup>32</sup> And the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock, and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.'</p> <p><sup>33</sup> When Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?'</p> <p><sup>34</sup> you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians."</p>	<p><sup>28</sup> And he sent Judas before him to Joseph, to meet him to the <b>city of Heroës</b>, into <b>the land of Ramesses</b>.</p> <p><sup>29</sup> And Joseph having made ready his chariots, went up to meet Israel his father, at the city of Heroës; and having appeared to him, fell on his neck, and wept with abundant weeping.</p> <p><sup>30</sup> And Israel said to Joseph, After this I will <i>gladly</i> die, since I have seen thy face, for thou art yet living.</p> <p><sup>31</sup> And Joseph said to his brethren, I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and will say to him, My brethren, and my father's house, who were in the land of Chanaan, are come to me.</p> <p><sup>32</sup> And the men are shepherds; for they have been feeders of cattle, and they have brought with them their cattle, and their kine, and all their property.</p> <p><sup>33</sup> If then Pharaoh call you, and say to you, What is your occupation?'</p> <p><sup>34</sup> Ye shall say, We thy servants are herdsmen from our youth until now, both we and our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Gesem of Arabia, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.</p>
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**Gen. 46 (MT)**

**Jub. 44:12-33**

<i>Leah's children:</i>		<i>Leah's children:</i>	
Reuben and 4 sons	5	Reuben and 4 sons	5
Simeon and 6 sons	7	Simeon and 6 sons	7
Levi and 3 sons	4	Levi and 3 sons	4
Judah, 3 sons, 2 grandsons	6	Judah, 1 sons, 2 grandsons	4
Issachar and 4 sons	5	Issachar and 4 sons	5
Zebulon and 3 sons	4	Zebulon and 3 sons	4
Dinah	1	[Jacob]	1
[Jacob]	1		
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>30</b>
<i>Zilpah's children:</i>		<i>Zilpah's children:</i>	
Gad and 7 sons	8	Gad and 7 sons	8
Asher, 4 sons, 1 daughter, 2 grandsons	8	Asher, 4 sons, 1 daughter	6
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Rachel's children:</i>		<i>Rachel's children:</i>	
Joseph and 2 sons	3	Joseph and 2 sons	3
Benjamin and 10 sons	11	Benjamin and 10 sons	11
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Bilhah's children:</i>		<i>Bilhah's children:</i>	
Dan and 1 son	2	Dan and 5 sons	3
Naphtali and 4 sons	5	Naphtali and 5 sons	6
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>70</b>

This chart is from Hamilton, p. 598.