

# Jacob's Descendants

## Jacob's Move to Egypt

*Genesis 46:1-47:31*

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# Jacob's Move to Egypt

## Scripture

We are currently in a series of sermons that I am calling “Jacob’s Descendants,” based on Genesis 37-50.

Most of the story so far has focused on Joseph, Jacob’s favorite son, who was sold into slavery in Egypt. Joseph experienced adversity and prosperity in Egypt. He eventually became Prime Minister in Egypt as a result of God enabling him to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams about seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. During the second year of the famine, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. After a joyful reunion, he invited his father, his brothers, and all their families to move to Egypt for the duration of the famine.

Let’s read about Jacob’s move to Egypt in Genesis 46:1-47:31. However, for the sake of time, I am going to read selected portions from these two chapters. Let’s read Genesis 46:1-7; 46:27b-47:12; and 47:27-31. Please keep your Bibles open so that you can follow the entire story in this sermon:

**<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."

47 So Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, "My father and my brothers, with their flocks and herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan. They are now in the land of Goshen." <sup>2</sup> And from among his brothers he took five men and presented them to Pharaoh. <sup>3</sup> Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?" And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, as our fathers were." <sup>4</sup> They said to Pharaoh, "We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. And now, please let your servants

dwell in the land of Goshen.” <sup>5</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Your father and your brothers have come to you. <sup>6</sup> The land of Egypt is before you. Settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land. Let them settle in the land of Goshen, and if you know any able men among them, put them in charge of my livestock.”

<sup>7</sup> Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. <sup>8</sup> And Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How many are the days of the years of your life?” <sup>9</sup> And Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning.” <sup>10</sup> And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from the presence of Pharaoh. <sup>11</sup> Then Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. <sup>12</sup> And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with food, according to the number of their dependents.

<sup>13</sup> Now there was no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished by reason of the famine. <sup>14</sup> And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, in exchange for the grain that they bought. And Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh’s house. <sup>15</sup> And when the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, “Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone.” <sup>16</sup> And Joseph answered, “Give your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock, if your money is gone.” <sup>17</sup> So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and the donkeys. He supplied them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year.

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<sup>18</sup> And when that year was ended, they came to him the following year and said to him, “We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent. The herds of livestock are my lord’s. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our land. <sup>19</sup> Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we with our land will be servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.”

<sup>20</sup> So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for all the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe on them. The land became Pharaoh’s. <sup>21</sup> As for the people, he made servants of them from one end of Egypt to the other. <sup>22</sup> Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh and lived on the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land.

<sup>23</sup> Then Joseph said to the people, “Behold, I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh. Now here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. <sup>24</sup> And at the harvests you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones.” <sup>25</sup> And they said, “You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be servants to Pharaoh.” <sup>26</sup> So Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; the land of the priests alone did not become Pharaoh’s.

**<sup>27</sup> Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly. <sup>28</sup> And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years.**

**<sup>29</sup> And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, “If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh**

and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt,<sup>30</sup> but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place.” He answered, “I will do as you have said.”<sup>31</sup> And he said, “Swear to me”; and he swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed. (Genesis 46:1-47:31)

## Introduction

A young American engineer was sent to Ireland by his company to work in a new electronics plant. It was a two-year assignment that he had accepted because it would enable him to earn enough to marry his long-time girlfriend. She had a job near her home in Tennessee, and their plan was to pool their resources and put a down payment on a house when he returned. They corresponded often, but as the lonely weeks went by, she began expressing doubts that he was being true to her, exposed as he was to lovely Irish girls.

The young engineer wrote back that he was paying no attention to the local girls. “I admit,” he wrote, “that sometimes I am tempted. But I fight it. I am keeping myself for you.”

In the next mail, the engineer received a package. It contained a note from his girl and a harmonica. “I’m sending this to you,” she wrote, “so you can learn to play it and have something to take your mind off those girls.”

The engineer replied, “Thanks for the harmonica. I’m practicing on it every night while I am thinking of you.”

At the end of his two-year stint, the engineer was transferred back to company headquarters. He took the first plane to Tennessee to be reunited with his girl. Her whole family was with her. But as he rushed forward to embrace her, she held up a restraining hand and said sternly, “Just hold on there a

minute, Billy Bob. Before any serious kissin' and huggin' gets started here, let me hear you play that harmonica!"<sup>1</sup>

Billy Bob and his girlfriend had been apart for two years, and they had been in touch with each other during that time. Joseph and his father Jacob had been apart for twenty-two years, but they had no contact with each other during that time. In fact, Jacob thought that Joseph was dead, having been devoured by a fierce animal. So, when Jacob learned that Joseph was in fact still alive he said, "Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die" (Genesis 45:28).

## Lesson

Jacob's move to Egypt in Genesis 46:1-47:31 teaches us that in accordance with his promise, God goes with his people wherever they go.

Let's use the following outline:

1. Jacob's Trip to Egypt (46:1-27)
2. Jacob's Time in Egypt (46:28-47:31)

### I. Jacob's Trip to Egypt (46:1-27)

First, let's look at Jacob's trip to Egypt.

#### A. *The Promise of God (46:1-4)*

The first thing I want us to see is the promise of God.

Genesis 46:1 says, "**So Israel [that is, Jacob] took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba [which is on the southern border of the Promised Land], and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.**" Many decades

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<sup>1</sup> *Bits & Pieces*, October 15, 1992, pp. 17-18, quoted in Galaxie Software, *10,000 Sermon Illustrations* (Biblical Studies Press, 2002).

earlier, when Jacob's father Isaac was at Beersheba, God had appeared to him at night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. *Fear not, for I am with you* and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake" (Genesis 26:24). In response, Isaac built an altar there. Now, as Jacob was about to leave the Promised Land, he stopped **and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.**

That night, **"God spoke to Israel [which was Jacob's covenantal name given to him by God], in visions of the night and said, 'Jacob, Jacob.' And he said, 'Here I am.' 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. 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' "** (46:2-4).

Though he was excited to see his long-lost son, Joseph, Jacob was afraid of going down to Egypt. God told him not to be afraid. God would make him into a great nation. He would fulfill the promise made to Abraham and Isaac before him.

Moreover, God would go down with him to Egypt. Commentator Sidney Greidanus says, "This was a revolutionary idea for that culture. People at that time believed in local deities who had power only in a certain country, but beyond its borders they were powerless. Israel's God, however, is the sovereign God who controls the whole world. Earlier he went with Abraham and Sarah from Haran in Mesopotamia to Canaan. He went with Jacob from Canaan to his uncle Laban in Haran and back to Canaan again. Regional borders do not apply to Israel's God: 'I myself will go down with you to Egypt.'"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 444.

Finally, God said that Joseph's hand would close Jacob's eyes. God promised Jacob that he would see Joseph again. Apparently, in Jewish culture "the eldest son or nearest relative would gently close the eyes of the deceased."<sup>3</sup> God assured Jacob that his beloved son would perform that rite for him.

Encouraged by the promise of God, Jacob left the Promised Land on his trip to Egypt.

B. *The People of God (46:5-27)*

And second, notice the people of God.

Verses 5-7 say:

**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. 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, his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters. All his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.**

Moses wanted to emphasize that Jacob took **"all his offspring with him"** to Egypt. No one remained in the Promised Land. Jacob vacated the Promised Land entirely.

To underscore his point, Moses listed the names of all of Jacob's offspring who went down to Egypt. Verse 27b summarized the total, **"All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy."** Interestingly, Genesis 10 lists seventy descendants, leading one commentator to say,

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<sup>3</sup> Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons*, 445.

“Seventy is the full, complete number of God’s people. Just as the ‘seventy nations’ [Genesis 10] represent all the descendants of Adam, so now the ‘seventy sons’ represent all the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the sons of Israel.”<sup>4</sup>

All the people of God moved down to Egypt. Not one of God’s people was left behind in the Promised Land.

## II. Jacob’s Time in Egypt (46:28-47:31)

And second, let’s examine Jacob’s time in Egypt.

Jacob’s trip to Egypt took several weeks. Much took place once Jacob and his family arrived in Egypt.

### A. *The Meetings (46:28-47:10)*

First, let’s look at the meetings.

There were two meetings.

#### 1. The Meeting Between Jacob and Joseph (46:28-34)

The first meeting was between Jacob and Joseph.

Verses 28-29 say that Jacob **“sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to show the way before him in Goshen, and they came into the land of Goshen. 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.”** After a twenty-two-year separation, Jacob and Joseph had a very emotional reunion. I am sure that the entire family stood around them and were also filled with tears watching this emotional reunion.

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<sup>4</sup> Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons*, 446.

Eventually, Jacob composed himself and **said to Joseph, “Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive”** (46:30). Jacob’s aching heart had been healed at the wonderful sight of his long-lost son, and he felt that he could now die knowing that he no longer had unanswered questions about his beloved Joseph’s circumstances.

Joseph then talked to his family about their upcoming meeting with Pharaoh. By now Joseph was a seasoned statesman, and he rehearsed with the family what they were to say in order to live as shepherds in the land of Goshen, the best of the land in Egypt on its northeastern border.

## 2. The Meeting Between Jacob and Pharaoh (47:1-10)

The second meeting was between Jacob and Pharaoh.

Joseph first went in and spoke to Pharaoh. He told him that his father and family had arrived. Then five of Joseph’s brothers were presented to Pharaoh. They said that they were shepherds, and requested to live in Goshen. Pharaoh agreed to their request to settle in Goshen, and also invited any who wished to do so to take care of his own cattle.

**Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh.** But, to everyone’s surprise, instead of bowing low before Pharaoh, **Jacob blessed Pharaoh** (47:7). In fact, Jacob blessed Pharaoh twice, because we read in verse 10 that **“Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from the presence of Pharaoh.”** My Old Testament professor, Dr. John Sailhamer, said that the importance of Jacob blessing Pharaoh “can be seen from the fact that it is mentioned twice. Lying behind such an emphasis in the narrative was God’s promise to Abraham that he would bless those who blessed the offspring of Abraham. The passage shows that in Joseph

and Jacob, the promise to Abraham was being fulfilled with the nations round about them.”<sup>5</sup>

B. *The Ministry (47:11-31)*

Second, let's look at the ministry that took place during Jacob's time in Egypt.

1. The Provision (47:11-26)

First, there was the provision.

Joseph made sure that his family had all the food that they needed. We read in verses 11-12, **“Then Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Ramesses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their dependents.”** Even though there was a famine in the land, God was taking care of all the people of God through the ministry of Joseph.

Joseph, however, not only took care of his family, he also took care of the Egyptians as well. Verse 13 says, **“Now there was no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished by reason of the famine.”** Because the famine was so severe, over the next few years the Egyptians eventually sold all their possessions, all their land, and even themselves to Pharaoh in order not to die of starvation. In verses 23-24 **Joseph said to the people, “Behold, I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh. Now here is seed for you,**

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons*, 448.

**and you shall sow the land. And at the harvests you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones.”** At first glance, a 20% tax may seem harsh. However, I understand that in the Ancient Near East at the time, a 40% tax was the norm, and in some instances, the tax was even as high as 60%. Furthermore, the Egyptians seemed delighted with Joseph’s proposal because **they said, “You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be servants to Pharaoh”** (47:25).

## 2. The Promise (47:27-31)

And second, let’s look at the promise.

Moses said in verse 28, **“And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years.”** Interestingly, Jacob lived with Joseph the same number of years—seventeen—in the land of Egypt that Joseph lived with Jacob in the land of Hebron.

Moses closed off this narrative with Joseph promising Jacob that he would not bury his father Jacob in Egypt. Jacob wanted to be buried with his forefathers in the Promised Land. Joseph promised that he would do as Jacob requested.

## Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed Jacob’s move to Egypt in Genesis 46:1-47:31, let us be assured that our sovereign God goes with us wherever we go.

God was present with Jacob and his entire family when they went down to Egypt. And he was present with them when he brought them up out of Egypt back to the Promised Land.

Today, God is present in Jesus Christ with his children wherever we go. You remember that Jesus said to his disciples after his resurrection, in Matthew 28:18–20, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, *I am with you always, to the end of the age.*” If you go to Bogota, Colombia, God is with you. If you go to Suitcase City, God is with you. If you go to the grocery store, God is with you. If you go to hospice, God is with you. If you are a Christian, God is with you wherever you go.

However, the fact that God is with you wherever you go does not mean that you will always prosper. God’s presence with Jacob did not mean an end to hardship: Jacob died. God’s presence with the nation of Israel did not prevent great affliction later under a Pharaoh that did not know Joseph.

However, God is with his people even in their hardships, trials, and sufferings. The Apostle Paul asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?” And he answers, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, *will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 8:35–39). That, dear Christian, is our hope and our confidence! Amen.

## **Mission Statement**

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and membership in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike maturity,  
equip them for their ministry in the church  
and life mission in the world,  
in order to magnify God's name.*

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