

CCLEB SERMON NOTES



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GENESIS 46:1-34

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GOD CALLED ISRAEL TO EGYPT?



I want to share again about my family's calling. When I was nine years old, my family left our home country and moved to Brazil. In late June of 1980, we said goodbye to our family in Bedford valley. We said goodbye to the land we knew as home. We said good-bye to everything familiar and comfortable. We loaded everything we were taking with us into our Ford van- and drove to Florida. From there we left our van with friends and boarded a plane for Brazil.

On that trip were my parents, my three older siblings, myself and a fellow missionary.

My parents believed they had been called by God to serve as church planters in western Brazil. And because God had called them they went. Because God called them, they trusted that God would be with them and God blessed their humble work. What started small eventually became six churches, a bible institute, and a Christian camp, all now led by nationals.

What I witnessed with my own eyes was the formation of something God had ordained. And it all began with a calling.

Formation

Ordained

Calling

In today's passage we see the formation of something even greater, the formation of the nation of Israel. And this formation is also God ordained. We know from God's covenant first given to Abraham, then Isaac and now Jacob that God would make them into a mighty nation. And this formation into that mighty nation begins with God calling Jacob – whom God also calls "Israel" – to move to Egypt.

Now God promises to be with them in Egypt. God promises to grow what begins small into a great nation in Egypt. But that raises an important question. Why Egypt? To explore that question and see how this applies to us, our passage is **Genesis 46:1-34**.

Let's read **Genesis 46:1-7**. Here are the themes we are going to see in this passage.

**GENESIS 46
THEMES**

- 1 God's **calling** may involve uncomfortable detours.
- 2 If God **calls** you, He will be with you.
- 3 In a **calling**, small beginnings carry big promise.
- 4 God **calls** us to places of fruitfulness and multiplying.
- 5 Sometimes God **calls** us to a season of separation to protect us as we grow.

Let's begin. In **verse 1 NASB** the author refers to Jacob's second name --"Israel". That change to using the name Israel alerts us that this next chapter is not primarily about Jacob the man. Rather it is about Israel becoming a nation.

Here is how we got here. In **Chapter 45** Joseph revealed his identity to his shocked brothers. He sent them back to Canaan to bring their father and their families back to Egypt. And in **Genesis 46:1** Israel begins to go.

Israel's first stop is Beersheba. Beersheba matters deeply in Jacob's history.

Beersheba

- It was his childhood home - **Genesis 28:10**
- It was the place where God reaffirmed the covenant - **Genesis 26:23-24**
- It was the place of worship and oath.



So, it should not surprise us that 50 years later when Jacob stops at Beersheba to worship God, God speaks again.

In **verse 2** God calls out: "Jacob, Jacob" and Jacob responds, "Here I am". This is not a casual interaction. This is the language of calling.

This scene intentionally echoes another calling moment in scripture. In **Genesis 22:1**, **Genesis 46:2**, when God called Abraham to radical obedience re: binding Isaac, Abraham answered with the exact same phrase Jacob used – identical in Hebrew.

The Holy Spirit is inviting us to compare these moments.

In that story Abraham's response to God of "Here I am" reflected: Attentiveness, Availability, and Readiness for costly obedience. God literally called out to Abraham and Abraham was attentive. He was also available to God, and at this point in his faith journey, he was ready for costly obedience.

"Here I am" reflected:

Attentiveness, Availability, and
Readiness for costly obedience.



Jacob's response in **Genesis 46:1** reflects the same heart.

This response of "Here I am" becomes a pattern in scripture. "Here I am" was also Moses' response to the LORD in the story the burning bush in **Exodus 3:4b** when God called Moses to lead his people.

"Here I am" was also Samuel's response to the LORD's calling in **1 Samuel 3:4,6,8**

And it was the response of Isaiah to the LORD's calling in **Isaiah 6:8**.

Every time one of those said, "Here I am" in response to God calling them, their life changes because they are then used by God in God's sovereign plan - what God had ordained.

That's what is happening here in **Genesis 46:2**.

Before God tells Jacob what he is calling him to, God first reminds Jacob of who He is. In **verse 3a** God says, "I am God, the God of your father". This statement is a declaration of: God's authority, God's power and God's covenant faithfulness. This statement is intended to strengthen Jacob's faith re: the calling God was giving him.

In this statement God reminds Jacob that He is the same God who created all of creation, The same God who blesses creation, and the same God who makes creation fruitful and multiplies. All this matters because God is about to call Jacob to a long scary detour.



1. God's calling may involve
"detours".

God continues in **Genesis 46:3b**, “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make your family into a great nation”. This is God calling Jacob to Egypt. Pause and let that sink in. The great nation of Israel would not be formed in Canaan - the land of promise. Rather Israel will be formed in Egypt. What feels like a detour is actually God’s plan.

In **verse 4** God tells Jacob “I will go down with you to Egypt” This further adds to the encouragement of what God already said. God first reminded Jacob of His great authority and power and reminded him of his covenant faithfulness, now God tells Jacob that He will go with him.

This is our second point. If God calls you, He will be with you. God’s calling never comes without his presence. If God calls you: His power goes with you, His covenant faithfulness goes with you, and His blessing goes with you. Think about how important that is to the success of what God is calling you to do. Would you want to attempt to do what God called you to without God? Of course not!

2. If God calls you, He will be with you.

His power goes with you, His covenant faithfulness goes with you, and His blessing goes with you.



God then says to Jacob in v4 that “I will bring you back again”. That even though God was calling Jacob to a long detour in Egypt, this was God’s promise that He would bring Jacob’s descendants the Israelites back to the land of promise, Canaan.

And how does Jacob respond? Jacob obeys. This is costly obedience. Jacob and his entire household moves to Egypt.

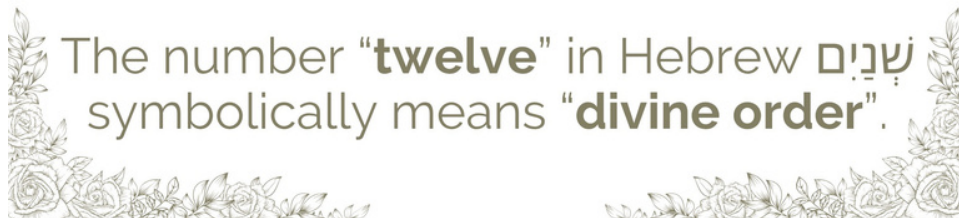
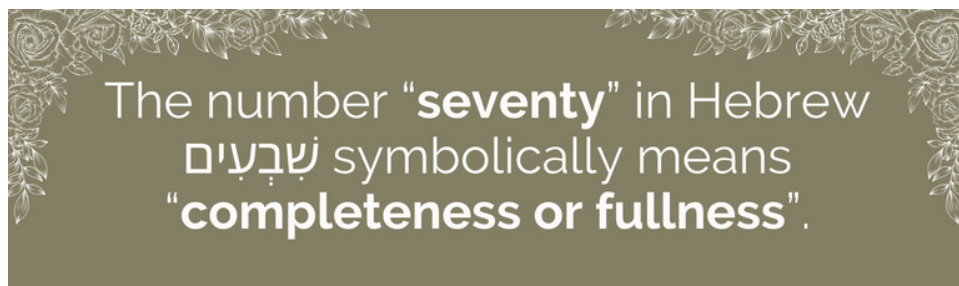


How many people were part of the caravan/wagon train moving to Egypt? **Verses 8-27** lists them. **verse 27b**.

Verses 8-27 looks like a genealogy! I personally love genealogies, however I know that for some of you genealogies can be boring.

To understand these “genealogy-like” verses we need to go back to **verse 1**. Again, note the name change from “Jacob” to “Israel” that tells us this chapter is about the formation of the nation of Israel.

The second thing that helps us understand these verses is the number seventy.



The number “seventy” in Hebrew שבעים symbolically means completeness or fullness. So, picture God bringing the formation of the nation of Israel to “completeness”. At the head of the seventy, just under Jacob, were the twelve sons of Jacob. These twelve sons later became the twelve tribes of Israel. The number “twelve” in Hebrew שנים symbolically means “divine order”. God is showing us that this nation based on twelve sons, though starting small, will be complete and divinely ordered.

One more thing on the genealogy. “Seventy” is a link back to the seventy nations that are the descendants of Noah in **Genesis 10** also known as the Table of Nations. That the Holy Spirit in inspiring this writing in **Chapter 46** would include seventy descendants of Jacob is a subtle message by God that Israel would rise to become the nation that rules them all, “the nation through which Jesus our King and Savior rules.”

Now just to shake it up a bit more, the list of seventy descendants of Jacob however is not really a genealogy. Rather it is a migration record as in the complete list of people that migrate from one country to another.

This matters because it shows that the nation God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the covenant that becomes “as numerous as the stars in the sky” starts very small.

Which leads us to our next point.



“Seventy” becomes a nation too large to count. How does that happen? God does the growing. God brings the fruit. Our role is to answer His call with Abraham and Isaac’s response: “Here I am”.

Regarding starting small God says in **Zechariah 4:10** “Do not despise small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin”.

When we officially opened the women’s shelter – we stood on the back porch in a circle and read this verse.

Look at the Women's Shelter ministry now and the beautiful fruit it has produced. In a calling, small beginnings carry big promise.

Something else happens in **Genesis 46:28** that is important to the nation of Israel. Judah is assigned leadership.

Judah was the one who offered his life to Joseph in exchange for Benjamin's. And now Jacob appoints Judah to lead them. This leadership by Judah is consistent in the bible.

In **Numbers 2:9 NASB** we see Judah physically leading Israel as they journeyed in the wilderness – the tribe of Judah was first in the procession of tribes. Also, in **Numbers 2** the tribe of Judah was given the prominent location in the Israelite camp – nearest to the entrance to the tabernacle. The Tabernacle was where God was. "Judah" having leadership of Israel carries thru the Bible David was from Judah, and then of course, Jesus – the "Lion of the tribe of Judah". Let's move on.

Genesis 46:29-30. In your mind picture Joseph – 2nd in command of all of Egypt, probably in full regalia, in his chariot, most likely surrounded by troops coming up to Jacob in a wagon – and Joseph sees his father for the first time in about 22 years.

And the text tells us that Joseph threw himself on his father's neck and wept. What a beautiful reunion between Joseph and his father. Think of all the years they both suffered apart... Joseph betrayed by his brothers into slavery, Jacob thinking Joseph was dead.

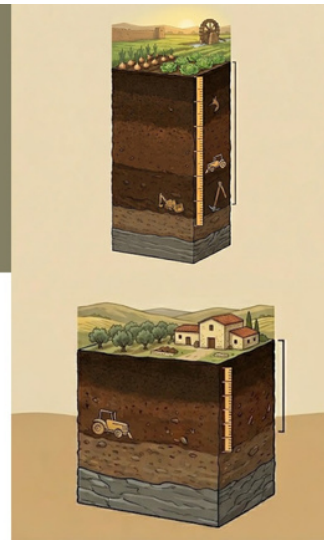
So Jacob's family arrived in Egypt, and now what? How do you begin again? Mighty Joseph wants his family taken care of, so he makes sure they end up in "Goshen". **Verses 31-34.**

"Goshen" matters to the nation of Israel's formation for two reasons.

First, Goshen is an incredibly fertile land – think fertile as in "fruitful and multiplying". According to the encyclopedia Britannica the topsoil in Goshen – fed by yearly flood sedimentation, is between 30 – 60 feet deep.

Topsoil in Goshen
is between
30–60 feet deep.

Lancaster County
averages six feet
of topsoil.



This is our 4th point

4. God calls us to places of fruitfulness
and multiplying.



Here's the second reason why Goshen matters to the formation of the nation of Israel. Think about the young nation of Israel as tender plant. If the young tender nation of Israel is going to grow and be fruitful and multiply then those tender shoots need to be protected like one protects a garden. Protection is the second reason why "Goshen" matters.



In Goshen the Israelites were more protected from Egyptian influence. The Egyptians despised shepherds **verse 34** – some translations use the stronger word “abomination”. That despising of the Israelites by the Egyptians created a natural social barrier between the Israelites and Egyptians. If young tender Israel was going to be formed into the great nation God wanted it to be, Israel would have to be protected through separation from the evil influence of the idolatrous nation surrounding them.

Both Isaac and Jacob's generation failed to resist the evil influence of the Canaanites – now God has the Israelites socially isolated in Goshen which offers protection for them as the nation is formed.

And that is our last point – 5. Sometimes God calls us to a season of separation to protect us as we grow. One place where we can witness this is in our residential discipleship ministries, U-TURN and Women's shelter. Those residents who are new in their faith, need a season of separation from the influences of the world so they can grow in their relationship with Christ. If young disciples of Jesus are going to survive in this world they need to have deep roots into Jesus. Those discipleship programs offer that protection for a season while those roots grow.



5. Sometimes God calls us to a
season of separation to protect us
as we grow.

And I think that is true for all of us in some seasons of our lives. We all need seasons where we are protected from the world so we can grow in our relationship with Christ.

Thoughts for your meditation and application.

As we leave this scene of Israel arriving in Goshen to be formed into a nation - Let's review what this story has taught us about God's calling.

GENESIS 46 THEMES

1

God's **calling** may involve uncomfortable detours.

2

If God **calls** you, He will be with you.

3

In a **calling**, small beginnings carry big promise.

4

God **calls** us to places of fruitfulness and multiplying.

5

Sometimes God **calls** us to a season of separation to protect us as we grow.

Just like Israel was called to Egypt on a long uncomfortable detour...God's calling may involve what feels like an uncomfortable detour. But know this - the detour is actually God's plan. It was not Paul's plan to end up in prison for two years in Caesarea or Rome - that would have felt like an uncomfortable detour, but that was God's plan for Paul. Likewise God's calling for you may involve what feels like a detour - but trust that is God's plan.

And we can rest in this truth, that if God calls us to those places or tasks, If God calls you, He will be with you.

And at the beginning of that calling things may start small. And what we learned from Jacob moving to Egypt is that small beginnings carry big promise.

We also saw that God calls us to a places of fruitfulness and multiplying. We may or may not see that kingdom fruit in our lifetime - but because God is there, and God does the multiplying - the multiplying will happen! Just like it did and continues to for my mom and dad. Sixteen years after my parents left Brazil the work is still bearing fruit and multiplying.

But we also saw that sometimes before that fruitfulness happens, God calls us to a season of separation to protect us as we grow to the place where we can be fruitful. Are you respecting those seasons of your life?

So, let's talk about your calling. Every person who has put their faith in Jesus Christ, **Colossians 1:13** tells us that God has "transferred them into the Kingdom" of Jesus. It is within God's Kingdom, it is within the protection of a church family, within the flock, that God wants to protect you and where God wants to grow you to the place of fruitfulness for his kingdom.

Where God wants to use your "fruitfulness" is your calling.

The response God wants from us to His calling is "Here I am" which we learned from Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel and Isaiah means that you are: attentive and listening, available before God, and ready for costly obedience. Is that you?

"Here I am" reflected:

Attentiveness, Availability, and
Readiness for costly obedience.



For some of you God has called and you have answered. "Here I am". Praise the Lord. And I encourage you to always be continue listening for more of God's callings.

Others of you God has called, and you let it go to voicemail. When God called me, I waited too long before responding. Maybe scared, insecure, lazy?

But here is what we learned today about God promises regarding calling. That if God calls you, He will go with you. And that means that God's power and authority as God and creator will God with you.

That also means that God's covenant faithfulness will go with you.

Others of you are trying to discern God's calling - and if that is you, I encourage you to actively engage in being discipled. Here are things that are helpful: Press into God's word. Fast and pray. Find a mature mentor. Join a small group! Small groups are tremendous places to grow roots in Jesus! These will create an environment for God to grow you to fruitful maturity. And when God grows you to fruitful maturity, be ready because God will call you.

And when He does call will you say "Here I am"?

BONUS

CONTENT:

Genesis 46:1 “Israel” was also used for “Jacob” in the previous verse, **Genesis 45:28**, indicating a change in focus from “Jacob” the patriarch to “Israel” the nation. The change of pattern from using the name “Jacob” consistently, to suddenly using the name “Israel”, alerts us to the focus now shifting to “Jacob” being formed into the nation of Israel. Where there is a change in pattern it as if the author is telling the reader to “pay attention, something important is happening here”.

Genesis 46:1 Beersheba has much historical significance prior to **chapter 46**. Beersheba is where Abraham dug a well and made an oath of peace with King Abimelech. And it is also where Abraham in **Genesis 21:33** stopped to worship the LORD, the eternal God. Beersheba is also where Jacob fled from his brother Esau and went to his uncle Laban’s.

Genesis 46:4 “I will bring you back again”. This was also a personal promise for Jacob -that he would be brought back to Canaan. We see this fulfilled in **Genesis 50:5-10** when Joseph took his father’s bones back to Canaan to bury them.

Genesis 46:27 “Seventy & Sheba”. Just for fun, the Hebrew word “seventy” shares the same root word as “Beersheba”. The shared root word is – “sheba” meaning “seven”. Beersheba is where God gave his covenant to Jacob in **verses 2-4** that involved 70 descendants (**verse 27**) becoming the complete, ordained nation of Israel.

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