

Message #2**Exodus 1:1-7**

As the book of Genesis closes, all of Israel is in Egypt (Gen. 50:22) and as this book of Exodus opens, it opens with a conjunction “now,” which is clearly designed to connect us back to the book of Genesis and inform us they are still all there. In fact, the identical phrase “now these are the names of” which opens Exodus, occurs in Genesis 46:8 and it is very clear that both contexts deal with Egypt. There is a very clear connection between this text in Exodus and Genesis 46.

The story of how they got to Egypt actually entails the last 14 chapters of the book of Genesis. It is a dramatic story of the sovereignty of God actually directing Joseph there so he could save Israel (Gen. 50:19-20).

Now I think the key to understanding this part of the book is found in Genesis 46:4. God promises Jacob that He will be with him in Egypt and He will bless him in Egypt, but He will eventually bring Israel out of Egypt.

For many years life was good for Israel in Egypt. During the days of Joseph, life was great. Now if things would have stayed that way, Israel would not on her own get up one morning and say, you know we are not where we are supposed to be. So events started to change and God was orchestrating those events. The theme is this:

GOD WANTED HIS PEOPLE TO LEAVE EGYPT AND GO TO THEIR PROMISED LAND AND SO HE SOVEREIGNLY STARTS DIRECTING CIRCUMSTANCES AND EVENTS IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THIS.

The way God gets His people to do His will is to cause some negative things to hit. The primary point of this book is to get Israel out of Egypt. As we said last time, the noun “Exodus” means a way out.

There are three main, simple geographical divisions to the book of Exodus:

Geographical Division #1 - Israel is in Egypt and is taken out of Egypt. 1:1-15:21

Geographical Division #2 - Israel moves from Red Sea to Sinai. 15:21-18:27

Geographical Division #3 - Israel is at Sinai. 19:1-40:38

As we come to the opening of the book of Exodus, there are primarily four historical facts that are brought out in this text:

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – Jacob’s entire family came to Egypt. **1:1**

Now one of the first things that catches our eye from **verse 1** is that both names for Jacob are used. We may remember that his original name was Jacob; however, God changed the name to Israel (Gen. 32:28) as a result of an all night wrestling match that Jacob had with the angel of the LORD.

We may also recall that just about daybreak the angel of the LORD touched Jacob's socket so He could leave before daybreak so Jacob would not see God face to face and die. Years later, Jacob would specifically refer back to this moment and say this was the moment God had redeemed him from all evil (Gen. 48:16). This was the time Jacob turned his life completely over to God. In the aftermath of giving Jacob this name Israel, God pronounced a blessing of fruitfulness and multiplication (Gen. 35:11). Through Jacob would eventually come the entire nation Israel and one day that nation would have a specific land (Gen. 35:12).

Now the book of Exodus opens with us learning that all of Israel, with all of their relatives, had come to Egypt. **When Jacob first made this move to go to Egypt, God came to him and told him that He would go with him and his family into Egypt, and He would bless them there but He would also bring them up out of Egypt (Gen. 46:3-4).** So Israel was going to be down south in Egypt for awhile and then God promised that He was going to bring her back up north to her land.

Now of course the reason they are in Egypt is because Joseph had been sold as a slave by his brothers into the hands of the Egyptians, but God had raised him up so that Pharaoh permitted Joseph to allow all of his Jewish family to live in the best places of Egypt (Gen. 47:1-11).

Now Egypt is a very peculiar place. For the most part it is a desert-type place filled with a lot of sand. However, the Nile river flows for 500 miles down into the Mediterranean, and the river overflows every year with water that comes down from the mountain areas of Central Africa. Because this water overflows every year, about seven miles on each side of the Nile is some of the most fertile and productive land in the world. So the majority of the Egyptian world lives in areas around the Nile and the rest of Egypt is a bunch of reddish-colored sand.

Now Israel was living in the "best of the land" (Gen. 47:6) in Egypt. Life was productive here. Life was good here. Life was plush here.

So when the book opens with the fact that Jacob, who is Israel, and all of their households are in Egypt, we may expect at some point God is going to go get that nation and bring her back north to her Promised Land.

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – All of Israel was in Egypt. 1:2-5

It is interesting that what brought Israel to Egypt was a famine (Gen. 42:1). So the cause of this emigration was economic distress. There was no food except for that which was in Egypt. God can and does use disasters to accomplish His perfect will. God can cause things to fall apart in one place because He wants to get His people to another place. That is how He moved Israel to Egypt.

If we think through our history we certainly can see that this is, in part, what God did do in the United States. He led the Pilgrims here to this land so they could have the freedom to worship Him. He used oppressive circumstances to get His people to move.

At the time of Jacob's initial move, his family had grown to about 70 people. Now what we have listed here are the sons of Jacob/Israel. All of the twelve sons of Israel were in Egypt along with all of their families. **God wants us to realize that not one Jew was left in the Promised Land. The entire family was in Egypt.**

Now Jacob's family came from a very bizarre background. Jacob had worked for Laban for seven years because he wanted Rachel, but Laban tricked him, just like he tricked Esau. Laban gave him Leah and then Laban made Jacob work seven more years for Rachel (Gen. 29). Eventually in this mess, there came a baby-making competition between Leah and Rachel. Actually it is kind of a sordid story that shows up in Genesis 29-30. Jacob was a busy boy in producing children.

The fact is this was what we would probably call today a dysfunctional family. Rachel was insanely jealous of Leah and came up with a bizarre scheme to start breeding her husband with her handmaid. So all of these sons of Israel were born in this context and now all of them were in Egypt.

What we certainly do see in this list is the grace of God. The list of names here contains some serious sin issues. Judah had an immoral fling with Tamar, his daughter-in-law, who he thought was a prostitute (Gen. 38). Simeon and Levi were hotheaded guys who were on a revenge warpath (Gen. 34:30). Reuben was immoral with his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22). Even though there had been these horrific sins, there was also the amazing grace. God is in the business of blessing and using people who come from bizarre backgrounds, who face sin and purpose to walk in ways that are right. This is not the perfect family story. But this story certainly magnifies the grace of God. When people turn to God and to His grace no matter what their family background, God can and will greatly use them.

The actual listing here is given. The list of sons here starts with Leah, Jacob's first wife, then goes to Rachel, Jacob's second wife, and then to the handmaids—first Rachel's handmaid, then Leah's handmaid, and then it ends with Joseph. In this context there are twelve total names. These names are critical not only to Exodus, but to the rest of the Bible.

Son #1 - Reuben - this was Jacob's first son through Leah. 1:2a/Gen. 29:32

Son #2 - Simeon - this was Jacob's second son through Leah. 1:2b/Gen. 29:33

Son #3 - Levi - this was Jacob's third son through Leah. 1:2c/Gen. 29:34

Son #4 - Judah - This was Jacob's fourth son through Leah. 1:2d/Gen. 29:35

Son #5 - Issachar - This was Jacob's fifth son through Leah. 1:3a/Gen. 30:18

Son #6 - Zebulun - This was Jacob's sixth son through Leah. 1:3b/Gen. 30:20

Son #7 - Benjamin - This was Jacob's second son through Rachel. **1:3c/Gen. 35:18**

Son #8 - Dan - This was Jacob's first son through Bilhah, Rachel's maid. **1:4a/Gen. 30:6**

Son #9 - Naphtali - This was Jacob's second son through Bilhah, Rachel's maid.
1:4b/Gen. 30:8

Son #10 - Gad - This was Jacob's first son through Zilpah, Leah's maid. **1:4c/Gen.30:11**

Son #11 - Asher - This was Jacob's second son through Zilpah, Leah's maid. **1:4d/Gen.30:13**

Son #12 - Joseph - This was Jacob's first son through Rachel. **1:5/Gen. 30:24**

Now it is specifically mentioned that these are the ones who came from the "loins of Jacob," who were 70 in number. Now if we look at Genesis 46:26, the number says 66 persons came to Egypt. So how do we arrive at the number 70?

The solution is found in Genesis 46:27. If you include "Jacob," that makes 67 and then if you include Joseph and his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, who were already in Egypt, that makes 70. So the total number is exactly right, 70 Israelis are in Egypt.

Also if you take the number 66 (Gen. 46:26) and leave out Joseph and Jacob, but add Ephraim and Manasseh, you get 68. Then if you add the seven grandsons of Joseph—Manasseh had three sons—Machir; Asriel; Zelophehad (I Chron. 7:14-15) and Ephraim had four sons—Shuthelah, Shuthelah, Ezer, Elead (I Chron. 7:20-24)—the total number is 75 (68 + 7 = 75), which is exactly the number Stephen cited in the book of Acts (Acts 7:14).

So whether you are studying the O.T. or the N.T., the inspired record is clear; all of Israel was in Egypt. Now **verse 5** ends with the statement that "Joseph was already in Egypt." How did Joseph get there? Remember the story, his brothers sold him as a slave, but God's sovereignty was in it all. God directed Joseph and blessed Joseph and elevated Joseph even when he was shafted by others.

While we are traveling through this Egyptian world of ours, there may be times when we are mistreated and abused. It is a great thing to remember that our God is still sovereign and He is still directing us and protecting us and can bless us. Joseph is proof of that. God can use his people anywhere.

HISTORICAL FACT #3 – Joseph died and so all of that generation. **1:6**

No matter who the person is, no matter how greatly the person has been used, the fact is if the Lord carries we will die. Joseph died, Jacob died, Isaac died, Abraham died and so will we. As great a man as Joseph was, according to Genesis 50:26, he ended up in a coffin. The truth is when you lose a great man of God like Joseph, things are never the same.

Joseph was 30 when he began to reign and he was 110 years old when he died (Gen. 50:26). The last message we get from Joseph is that of him telling his brothers to take his bones back to the Promised Land (Gen. 50:25). This is something Moses will specifically do (Ex. 13:19).

So as good a life as Joseph had, and as greatly as he had been used, he clearly realized we are not supposed to be here in Egypt. We are supposed to be in a land that has been promised to us by God. As long as Israel was in Egypt, she was not home.

At the end of **verse 6**, we learn that all of Joseph's generation died also. What that means is that not only did Joseph die, but also all of his Jewish family of that generation died and so also did all of the Egyptians who were of that generation died.

HISTORICAL FACT #4 – God was greatly blessing and increasing Israel. **1:7**

There was apparently quite a gap of time between the death of Joseph and all of the generation passing away and while this time was taking place, Israel was flourishing in Egypt. Now remember this is exactly what God said He was going to do for Israel in Egypt (Gen. 46:3). God said that He would be with them in Egypt and they would be fruitful and prosper and they did.

You can be any place, you can live anywhere, you can work at any job, you can be in any school, you can be on any team, you can come from any family and have God's blessings on you and your life. God was blessing Israel in Egypt and He can bless you in your world.

Now as Israel is in Egypt, keep in mind that she is living in the best of the Egyptian land along the Nile River. Pharaoh had told Joseph to put them in the best land, which Joseph did (Gen. 47:6). Life for the people of God was good in Egypt. They are prosperous and their families were growing and they were becoming a "mighty" people. We know from Exodus 12:37 and 38:36 that the number of men who were 20 years old and older was over 600,000.

According to the calculations of Dr. Malthus, population tends to double itself every 25 years. He said if you do the math on all of this, in less than three centuries the Israelites would have grown to a population of over 2 million people. So we may assume that if you add the women and children to the 600,000 men over 20, this nation, Israel, has flourished to the tune of about 2 million people. (Cited from George Rawlinson, *Exodus*, p. 9.)

Now it is estimated that the lush delta of the Nile is approximately 7000-8000 square miles. Malthus said if you put 500-600 persons to the square mile, then the Israelites are living in about half of the totality of the good Egyptian land and they are living in the most fertile part of the land. We may begin to sense that this would not go over too well with the Egyptians. But the truth is not only was life good for Israel, but God was blessing Egypt because Israel was there.

There are three concluding observations to make here:

Observation #1 - Life was great for Egypt as long as they treated God's people right.

God was blessing His people who were living in Egypt at the time and the Egyptians were sharing in those blessings. When the Egyptians turn against God's people, it becomes the beginning of the end. When there are believers in the nation, state, city or organization, the whole community benefits. God blesses His people and those who are kind to His people share in those blessings.

Observation #2 - Life was so good for Israel that Israel forgot this wasn't home.

This is such an important point. Had God permitted everything to sail along in Egypt as it was, then Israel would never even think in terms of the fact that we need to get out of here. Let's face it; if you are in a place where everything is great and you are prospering and flourishing, the danger is to neglect God's Word and dependency on Him. What would prompt God's people to want to move if everything was positive? Why would Israel ever want to leave Egypt when they are living in the best that Egypt has to offer?

One way God will direct His people and get His people to make a move is to cause everything to fall apart.

Observation #3 - As sinful as some of these people had been, they were still God's people and God, in His grace, was going to lead them to do His will.

You don't have to be perfect to have God lead you and bless you. God is a God of amazing grace. If anyone will turn to the Lord and follow Him, He will bless abundantly and make one very fruitful.