

So Isra'el Took All His Offspring with Him to Egypt

46: 1-7

DIG: What concerns Isra'el as he leaves his homeland of Canaan? As he prepares to meet his long lost son Joseph? As he goes where he has never been before, an alien, likely never to return? How did God reassure Jacob about going to Egypt?

REFLECT: If ADONAI were calling you, rather than Yosef, what would He be asking you to leave behind? Why? What would God want you to keep for your journey? When the Lord wants you to alter your lifestyle, what does He do? How does He get your attention? What might God be asking you to change about your lifestyle now?

Isra'el probably thought he was going to Egypt for only a few years, and even then it was with some reluctance and hesitation that he consented. God had instructed his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac (Hebrew: Yitz'chak) to stay out of Egypt. He was going, but he felt uncomfortable about it. Until then, each time he had made an important move in his life, God had spoken to him directly. When he left his parents to go to Haran, God had appeared to him at Bethel (28:13-15), when he had been with Laban long enough, God instructed him to return to Canaan (31:3) and even when he left Shechem, God had appeared to him (35:1).⁶⁹⁹ He needed a little more encouragement than the invitation from his son Joseph or even from Pharaoh. He needed a green light from God.⁷⁰⁰

Nevertheless, Isra'el set out with all that was his, and as he journeyed south from Hebron to Egypt, he stopped just before leaving the Promised Land at Beersheba. It was the southern border of the Land and the "point of no return" before entering Egypt. It was there that Abraham had a special revelation from God (21:33), and where he lived after the offering of Yitz'chak (22:19). Jacob had grown up there, but even more, it was a significant location in the life of his father Isaac. It was at Beersheba that God had appeared to Isaac in the night and spoken to him words of promise and comfort. In response, Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD (26:23-25). Now, perhaps on the same altar, Jacob offered sacrifices to the God of his father Yitz'chak (46:1).

And then, the God of his father Isaac spoke to Isra'el in a vision at night. The inspired author Moses commonly used the name Isra'el, when referring to Jacob. Therefore, God spoke to him and said: Ya'akov ! Ya'akov! The repetition was for emphasis. And Jacob replied: Here I am (46:2). Then for the third time, God comforted Isra'el by reaffirming the Abrahamic Covenant. He said: I AM God, the God of your father. There is no doubt who was speaking to Isra'el. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt (46:3). **This is the only time that God approved of the family leaving the Promised Land.** Previously, God had

told **Jacob's** grandfather **Abraham** *not* to go down to **Egypt**, but he disobeyed, and in the process acquired an **Egyptian** maidservant named **Hagar** with disastrous consequences (16:1-15). Likewise, the **LORD** appeared to **Isaac** and told him, “Do *not* go down to **Egypt**; live in the land where I tell you to live” (26:2). But like his father **Abraham**, he did not listen and almost had his wife taken from him. Even **Jacob** himself had fled to **Haran** against **God's** wishes after deceiving his father. But here, for the first time, **God** approved of **Ya'akov** leaving the **Promised Land** with his family.

Then the reason is given. **God** said: For I will make you into a great nation there (46:3). This was a foreshadowing that his journey to **Egypt** would not be a short one. The **Holy Spirit** knew that **Jacob's** family was in fact leaving the **Land** of promise and entering a land of slavery. In **Egypt**, the **Israelites** would multiply without intermarriage with the *goyim*. They were fruitful and multiplied greatly, and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land [of **Egypt**] was filled with them (Exodus 1:7; Psalm 105:24). Eventually their slavery would accomplish **God's** purposes just as **Joseph's** slavery had been used to His glory. The **Israelites** would eventually escape from **Egypt** because of **God's** mighty acts (Exodus 7:1 to 14:31), and by His grace they would enter **Canaan** as a great nation.⁷⁰¹

I will go down to **Egypt** with you, as He was in **Haran** and in the **Promised Land**, and I will surely bring you, singular you meaning **Ya'akov**, back again (46:4a). Is this an absolute singular or a collective singular? If it is an absolute singular, it means that **Jacob** will be carried back to the **Land** and buried there, but if it is being used as a collective singular, it means that the sons of **Isra'el** will be brought out of **Egypt**, and therefore **God** promises the exodus. But either way, his going down to **Egypt** will fulfill **God's** covenant with **Abraham**. Earlier **ADONAI** said to **Abraham**, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the **Amorites** has not yet reached its full measure” (15:13-16).

And **Joseph's** own hand will close your eyes in death (46:4b). How comforting for **Jacob** to know that the one he thought dead will be with him at his death.⁷⁰² He now knows that his life will end in **Egypt**, and indeed, he would spend the next seventeen years there. But there was no turning back once **God** spoke to him.

Therefore, at **Beersheba**, **God** encouraged **Ya'akov** about going down to **Egypt**. Identifying Himself as the **God** of his father **Yitz'chak**, He assured **Jacob** that He (*El, the strong Creator and Sovereign of all men*) would protect and bless him in **Egypt**, even as He had in **Canaan**.⁷⁰³ That was the green light **Ya'akov** had been looking for!

No longer hesitant, **Jacob** left **Beersheba**, and **Isra'el's** sons took their father **Ya'akov** and their children and their wives in the carts that **Pharaoh** had sent to transport him. They also took with them their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in **Canaan**, and **Jacob** and all his offspring went to **Egypt**. He took with him to **Egypt** his **sons** and **grandsons** and his **daughters** and **granddaughters**. All his offspring were included in **God's** divine blessing (**46:5-7**). **Jacob's** family had certainly had as much, if not more, friction as that of **Abraham** and of **Yitz'chak**. Yet **Ya'akov** had no **Ishmael**, as **Abraham** had, and no **Esau**, as **Isaac** had. **Jacob's** decidedly dysfunctional family was on the verge of coming together again, but this time in peace.⁷⁰⁴