

JOSEPH IS REUNITED WITH HIS FATHER JACOB **(Genesis 46:1-30)**

Family reunions often involve a summertime picnic at which aunts, uncles, and long lost cousins come together to catch up on events and review the branches of the family tree. When the potato salad is gone, so are the cousins—at least until the following year! But Genesis 46 records a family reunion that was nothing short of miraculous, rife with emotion and joy. Joseph, after more than twenty years of separation, was reunited with his father Jacob. Jacob, after more than twenty years of grief over the presumed death of his son, was reunited with Joseph. Even greater than this reunion of father and son was the assurance it provided that God was actively upholding His grand covenant with His chosen people. God wants to reunite with us today. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins so that we can return to a right relationship with Him. We can be reunited with our heavenly Father through faith in Jesus Christ.

Renewal—God delights in restoring our strained relationships with Him (46:1-7).

Jacob's journey to be reunited with his son Joseph involved one major stop along the way. Jacob paused to sacrifice to God and God spoke words of assurance to this seasoned patriarch.

Jacob began his journey to Egypt and stopped to offer sacrifices to God at Beersheba (46:1).

After decades of despair but now convinced that Joseph was still alive, Jacob—Israel—began his journey to Egypt. He was fully committed to this change of course in his life, taking with him all that belonged to him. He doubtless took many of his limited physical possessions, all of his cattle, and most importantly all of his family. Following his sojourn in Mesopotamia, Jacob had returned to Canaan, specifically to the region of Hebron (Genesis 35:27; 37:14). It was probably from Hebron that Jacob departed for his final journey, the journey to Egypt. Along the way he stopped at Beersheba, an ancient site of worship. It was at Beersheba that Abraham had called on God's name (Genesis 21:33). It was at Beersheba that Isaac offered sacrifices to the true and living God and heard God's reaffirmation of His grand covenant (Genesis 26:23-25). Following in the footsteps of his grandfather and father, Jacob now paused at Beersheba and offered sacrifices "to the God of his father Isaac." Jacob had experienced genuine spiritual renewal.

God spoke to Jacob and assured him that He would bless him and his family in Egypt (46:2-4).

At Beersheba God spoke to Israel by means of a night vision. He addressed this patriarch twice—“Jacob, Jacob”—to emphasize His desire to commune with Jacob. Jacob replied in surrender and expectation saying, “Here I am.” God identified Himself as “God, the God of your father.” There was a spiritual and familial link to God’s grand covenant through Abraham and Isaac to Jacob. However, God had previously warned Jacob’s father Isaac not to go to Egypt (Genesis 26:2). Was Jacob jeopardizing his participation in God’s blessing by moving his family to Egypt? While God had forbidden Isaac to seek refuge in Egypt, He permitted Jacob to make this journey. He said to Jacob, “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt.” It was in Egypt that God would make Israel into a great nation. God assured Jacob that He Himself would go with Jacob to Egypt and that He would bring the Israelites back to Canaan. Jacob must have known about God’s warning to Abraham that their descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land for four hundred years before God would release and enrich them (Genesis 15:13-14). God would indeed prosper His people, and Egypt would be the seedbed for Israel to become a great nation (compare Genesis 12:2). In addition, God promised Jacob that his son Joseph would be with him until his death, present to close Jacob’s eyes. Jacob would be with his son Joseph once again, never to be parted. God delighted in restoring Joseph to Jacob. God also delighted in restoring Jacob to a relationship with Him.

Jacob and all his descendants left Canaan and traveled to Egypt (46:5-7).

Having experienced this encounter with God, Jacob left Beersheba. His sons took charge of the journey, transporting their aging father, their children, and their wives in the carts that Pharaoh had sent for this purpose. They also drove their cattle and carried their possessions, making a full break with Canaan. So, “Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt”—Jacob and his sons, grandsons, daughters, and granddaughters—all of his descendants made the journey. Jacob had renewed his faith in God, and God was about to restore Jacob’s family and his faith.

**Reward—God richly fulfills
His promises to His people (46:8-27).**

God was beginning to reward His chosen people by building them into a great nation, a process that would expand dramatically in Egypt. But God had already rewarded Jacob in so many ways. The very size of his family that migrated to Egypt indicated that God was fulfilling His promise through Jacob.

The sons of Israel who migrated to Egypt were listed by name and family ties (46:8-25).

Genesis 46:8-25 provides a careful record of the names of Jacob’s descendants who migrated to Egypt. These were the “sons of Israel.” Jacob’s descendants are listed in order beginning with thirty-three sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons through Jacob’s

first wife, Leah (Genesis 46:8-15). Receiving special mention in this list are Er and Onan, who had died in Canaan (Genesis 46:12). In addition, the list mentions Jacob's daughter Dinah but does not seem to include her in the total of thirty-three (unless Er and Onan are excluded, with both Dinah and Jacob included). The second list of names records the sixteen sons, grandsons, a granddaughter, and great-grandsons born of Leah's handmaid, Zilpah (Genesis 46:16-18). Next are the fourteen names of the sons and grandsons who came through Jacob's favored wife Rachel, including Joseph and his two sons who were born in Egypt (Genesis 46:19-22). Finally, the seven sons and grandsons born of Rachel's handmaid, Bilhah, are listed (Genesis 46:23-25). God had truly blessed Jacob with a full and growing family.

The sons of Israel who migrated to Egypt numbered seventy people (46:26-27).

By adding the thirty-three descendants through Leah, the sixteen through Zilpah, the fourteen through Rachel, and the seven through Bilhah the text states that seventy descendants of Jacob migrated to Egypt. First, however, the text refers to sixty-six descendants. This number may exclude Joseph and his two sons who were already in Egypt along with Er and Onan who had died in Canaan. By adding Jacob's daughter Dinah to the list of those who migrated from Canaan to Egypt we arrive at the number sixty-six. So, in addition to Jacob and his surviving wives there were sixty-six descendants who migrated to Egypt and, with Joseph, Joseph's two sons, and Jacob himself, there were seventy Israelites in all who now lived in Egypt. God had kept His promise to bless His chosen people. Israel's descendants were well along the way to becoming a great nation.

**Reunion—God wants us to be reunited
with Him as our heavenly Father (46:28-29).**

At last it was time for the great family reunion. Jacob was about to see his son Joseph after an absence of over twenty years. Their reunion reminds us that our heavenly Father desires a reunion with us, a reunion through faith in Jesus Christ.

Jacob sent Judah ahead to guide them to the land of Goshen (46:28).

Judah had taken the forefront of leadership in the family by guaranteeing Benjamin's safety and offering to take Benjamin's place as a slave if necessary. Jacob sent Judah ahead of the slower moving family caravan to make preparations for their arrival. Judah would receive directions from Joseph and guide the family to promised region of Goshen. Apparently there were no incidents along the way, and Jacob's family arrived safely in Goshen. Goshen was probably located on the eastern edge of the Nile Delta, a land suitable for raising cattle and livestock.

Joseph went to meet his father Jacob in the land of Goshen, embraced him, and wept profusely (46:29).

Knowing that his family had arrived in Goshen, Joseph prepared his chariot and went to see his father. The splendor of Joseph's chariot and entourage must have been impressive to Jacob. More impressive was Joseph's love for his father. As soon as Joseph came into his father's presence he "fell on his neck" and "wept on his neck" for a long time. It's hard to imagine the emotion of that moment. Father and son were reunited. Sorrow was transformed into celebration, grief to gladness. This was nothing short of a miracle of God.

Jacob expressed the fulfillment of his life, having seen that his son Joseph was alive (46:30).

For the first time in over twenty years Israel now spoke to his son Joseph. His words expressed deep satisfaction, the fulfillment of a long-dismissed desire to be together. Jacob said to his son, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive." Nothing more in life could satisfy Jacob's heart. He had been reunited with Joseph. In fact, his whole family was together and safe in the land of Egypt. God had blessed Jacob according to His promise. Jacob would live for another seventeen years, never far from Joseph's loving and benevolent reach (Genesis 47:28). This reunion of father and son serves as a powerful reminder that we can be reunited with our heavenly Father through faith in Jesus Christ.