

The Family of Abraham - Part 36—Jacob's Descent into Egypt

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[0 : 00] Welcome to this, the 36th in my series on the story of the family of Abraham. Today I, or we, are looking at chapter 46 of the book of Genesis.

And by we, I mean me and James Bajon, who is joining me. Hello, it's good to be here. This story begins with God appearing to Jacob in Beersheba, and then it tells of Jacob's journey down to Egypt and the appearance to Joseph.

This is perhaps the climax of the story of Joseph. It's the point where the reunion really occurs, the reunion between Joseph and his father.

As we look in chapter 37, they've departed from each other, and there's all these themes that have been playing throughout of the sacrifice of Isaac, and it's replaying out in this later generation.

And here we see those themes resolved. We've seen many of these themes resolved in the relationship between Judah and the other brothers and Joseph. But now we see that the soul of Jacob is revived.

[1 : 11] That soul that was, as it were, going down to the grave in death and mourning over his son Joseph. And now he is being restored. So the story is taking its full circle at this point.

And God's appearance to Jacob at this particular juncture is at a specific location. It's in the site of Beersheba, which is where, in chapter 26, God appeared to his father Isaac.

In chapter 26, verse 23, On that particular occasion, God identified himself as the God of Isaac's father Abraham.

And here he identifies himself as the God of Jacob's father. And here I think that there is a connection.

There's a thread that's being followed. And later on we'll see, in Exodus chapter 3, a similar expression being used, as God speaks to Moses and declares himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[2 : 31] There's a chain of divine grace that follows through all of these stories. I was interested by, in verse 2, for instance, this call from God, Jacob, Jacob, the response to which is, Here I am.

This reminds me very much of the call to Abraham, the double name Abraham, Abraham, to which the response is, Here I am.

And I wonder if we're to see this as the aversion of a potential threat. When Abraham was about to sacrifice, it looked like his offspring, the promise and potential of future fruit.

God reassured him with that call, Abraham, Abraham. And here is, to my mind at least, a threat.

Jacob is going to go down to Egypt, a place which has been a place of hostility and potential danger for Israel in the past.

But it is going to be fruitful. And God says, I myself will go down with you to Egypt and I will also bring you up again.

[3 : 42] And I'm intrigued there by the sense of, I will bring you up. This is you singular. There seems to be a very corporate figurehead type sense here.

All Israel are in the loins of Jacob, I suppose. And as they come up to Israel, I see, come up to Israel from Egypt, I see Jacob as rising up along with them, in a sense.

That instruction that we have later on that Jacob gives to Joseph concerning his burial, I think, is partly in view here.

But there's also something greater. Back in chapter 15, we saw an announcement of the forthcoming of the Exodus that would happen in the future and foretelling of God's work with Abraham's descendants.

And I think we have something similar here that Jacob is the individual, but he's also Isaac. He's the one who contains the whole nation within himself. And your reference to the not fearing, as we look back in the vision of God to Isaac at that same location, again, it's that instruction, do not fear.

[4 : 52] That particular location on the borders of the land, the land is defined from Dan to Beersheba. And here they are on the borders of the land. And at that juncture where they're about to, as it were, put their foot over the borders of the land and leave it, that's where God gives an assurance, not just that God will bless, but that God will be with him and eventually restore him and his body and his body as in his nation to the land.

The other thing that's interesting is seeing the ways that so much of this language reminds us of God's appearance to Moses in the burning bush, and then also the themes of the Exodus, that there is an event happening to the completion of Jacob's story and the completion of Joseph's story won't actually occur until Israel is brought out of Egypt.

And also that expression, here I am, in response to the divine summons. These are words that we've seen throughout the story at key junctures.

Here I am, the way that Abraham responds to God's first declaration that he needs to sacrifice Isaac. Then his response to the son. Then his response to the angel.

At each point, his presence and his acknowledgement of he's not cutting himself off. And we see it also at the beginning of the story of where Joseph is sent to Shechem to see his brothers.

[6 : 20] That is Joseph's response. So I think those particular words, they're quite powerful and poignant that they should appear at this point. And that particular expression as well.

Joseph will put his hands on your eyes. Presumably, again, that's referring to a context of death. And looking back to chapter 37, where there is this relationship between Joseph's apparent death and Jacob's sense of going down to the grave in mourning.

Now that relationship between the physical touch of the lost son and being laid to rest in peace. There is a resolution of that theme that we find in that chapter.

On the continued theme of reconciliation, this is now leaping slightly ahead towards the end of the chapter. But Joseph falls on Jacob's neck and there is weeping.

And this is very much an idea of reconciliation elsewhere in Genesis, in the case of Esau and Jacob's reconciliation, for instance. How do you think we're to see this?

[7 : 34] Is it just a reconciliation of geographic separation? Or does, for instance, Jacob feel that Joseph should have come to reconcile earlier?

That he should have come back and sought out his father? Is there bad sentiment as well? I think they did not know where, I mean, Jacob did not know until just a few weeks, perhaps, that Joseph was in fact alive.

And then for all that Joseph knew, his father was the one that sent him to, his father was immediately before he sent him to Shechem. The last thing that we read is that his father was angry, even though he kept the matter in mind.

So, to Joseph's mind, maybe his father sent him to his brothers to deal with him, to cut him down a peg or two. And so, why doesn't Joseph send letters home?

That's a question that Rabbi David Foreman asks. And I've found that an interesting thing to reflect upon. He's in a position of rule within Egypt. Surely he has many people at his beck and call. He can send someone back to the land of Canaan and say, Can you search for my father and find out that he's okay?

[8 : 46] But he forgets his father's house. And as he names his children, that is what we see, that he's turning. His heart is no longer set upon what he has left behind.

Rather, he's found this new life and the life that he had back in Canaan is left behind. But in that reconciliation, in his knowledge that's in chapter 44, that his father was devastated by his loss.

I think that gives him a knowledge that he did not have previously. That there is an understanding that maybe he has now that he did not have before. And so both of them were misapprehending the fate of the other or the situation or the state of mind of the other.

And now it's a reconciliation as both understand the true nature of the situation. There's also details in this. Like, why would you say Joseph made ready his chariot?

It's a strange thing to mention. It reminds me of Abraham saddling his donkey in chapter 22. Those sorts of incidental details that cause you to maybe connect some of these stories and to recognize within them that this is the return of...

[9 : 57] It's like the return of Isaac to Abraham. Abraham is prepared to sacrifice his son. And this is a reverse of all the themes of losing Joseph.

At this point, as it were, the angel has stayed the hand. The ram's been offered in exchange. And now Isaac has returned. And we're seeing that theme that has been playing out throughout the entirety of the narrative since in the generations that follow.

Also in the story of Jacob himself. Now it's reached a sort of resolution. And the rest of the story is very much a coda to this. It's leading up to events of death and then laying these people to rest in peace.

And it's a very different tone from the tone that we've had in these previous chapters of lost sons and the tragedy associated with that. I would be interested to hear your thoughts on...

We come in the middle of this chapter to this dense period, this dense section of names. What do we make of all of... I mean, why would God, in the middle of this exciting story of Joseph and the story of the reconciliation with his brothers, finally getting to meet his father...

[11 : 11] And it seems at this critical juncture, Jacob has just had this appearance from God. And then we get names and genealogy. Why would God be such a poor narrator as to give us that?

Now, this is something I wanted to ask you. So why don't you go first and then we compare notes. I mean, in a sense, there's not a particularly natural place for it, a particularly natural other place for it, insofar as it is describing the relocation of Jacob and his sons and his wealth.

But did you have a particular view on its placement? I'm not sure. I think that when we go back to chapter 37, we have the declaration.

Now, Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. This is the genealogy of Jacob. Joseph being 17 years old, etc. That's where we might expect to find some sort of genealogy of Jacob.

But in fact, we don't find that. We just find the announcement of Joseph's identity and what he's doing with his brothers and then the whole story of Joseph. And it seems as if the genealogy of Jacob, there's a sort of missing stare there.

[12 : 32] You're expecting for it to appear at that point. And it doesn't. You have the genealogy of Esau just beforehand. But then it seems as if the genealogy of Jacob hinges entirely upon this character of Joseph, his son who ends up being lost.

And now, as Joseph is restored to his father, then you suddenly have this, as it were, there's been a blockage in the narrative pipe. And now as that's cleared, you suddenly have this rush of the details of this is his genealogy.

Now that this reconciliation has occurred, there is the time for this genealogy to be given. And that's my suspicion. In some senses, I guess, an earlier genealogy in, say, chapter 37 would be a slight spoiler for the storyline.

Insofar as a big part of this genealogy is that it is split between Canaan and Egypt. And the two numbers, the 66, refer to those in Canaan.

And the full 70 is only by combining both geographies of the branches of Jacob's family tree. So I wonder if in some ways it is to emphasize that reconciliation, the full number of 70 coming together.

[13 : 51] But in some senses, because it does reflect the story and the migration to Egypt where Joseph has gone ahead of his father.

The other thing there is that it is a story of lost sons. As we read through the story, there's Joseph who's lost and then later on there's Simeon who's lost. And then it seems as if Benjamin's going to be lost too.

And so the entire legacy, the entire or the children of Jacob's family seem to be in jeopardy. And then there is this moment of rescue.

And maybe leaving the genealogy to this point is a theological statement of the fact that these are children of promise, ultimately.

These are children that are saved through an event of divine providence as he restores the family of Jacob to him. The family that seemingly was lost.

[14 : 47] It seems as if his legacy was lost. But now at this point, with the reconciliation with the brothers and then the reunification with Joseph, everything's restored.

But that's through divine action and divine promise, not through just the power of the flesh. And so it's not just these are the children of Jacob.

This is what God has done to restore the lineage and the legacy of Jacob to him. And now you can have the genealogy. There are two lost sons in, I guess, the earlier chapters in Sepharosimian and Benjamin have gone up.

There are two lost to death in Canaan in Judah's line. And in a sense, there are two grandsons separated from Jacob in Sepharosimian and Benjamin have gone up.

Which strikes me perhaps as some allusions there. There are two types of lost sons in Luke 15, which is another matter altogether.

[15 : 54] But I wonder if I could just sort of try and get inside your mindset to some extent. What do you do when you're faced with a list of names like this?

What kind of questions do you want to ask the text? How do you go about processing it? Well, first of all, genealogies usually serve a narrative purpose.

And as you look at the genealogies, you need to consider what place they are within the narrative. So, for instance, Matthew begins with a genealogy, whereas Luke doesn't begin with a genealogy. It has a genealogy a few chapters later. It has a genealogy that's associated with Christ's baptism, which is supposedly, it's not where you'd expect to find it.

But it's there for a reason. And in the same way, you have other areas where there is a genealogy within a natural pause within the story. It's a sort of, it's a full stop to begin a new sentence.

[16 : 54] At other times, within the book of Genesis in particular, many times you have, these are the generations, that statement, and you don't find what you might expect next.

And so there's the surprising statement that wrong-foots you, but in wrong-footing you, it gets you to think about why the narrator would put it at that point, and what might be declared through this.

So, for instance, the fact that we see Joseph at the point where we might expect the genealogy of Jacob tells us something about the way that Joseph represents the legacy of Jacob, the entire legacy of Jacob to him.

At other points, we have a statement that the genealogy, I think, has a structure to it. Many of the genealogies have a structure to them. If we look at the genealogy of Matthew chapter 1, it can be divided in two.

It can also be divided in three. It has a significant number of names, 42. And the way that it's structured is significant, and it follows a particular history.

[17 : 57] There are certain names that are included that invite you to look not just in the specific links in the chain, but in the figures around them.

So people like Tamar, or the brothers of Jeconiah, or Judah and his brothers. These sorts of characters that are part of the wider story surrounding these figures. And I think that is where I'd start.

The question of the narrative placement. Then I'd look at the numbers. I'd look at the structure, the literary parallels. Why is it that you have brothers mentioned for these characters and these characters, but not for the others?

Or why do you have a particular woman mentioned at this particular point? Or at other points, we might see similarities between genealogies. We've already mentioned this in looking through the book of Genesis, that you read the genealogy of Nahor, or you read the genealogy of Esau.

And these characters are in some senses juxtaposed with the character of Abraham and his family. And as you hold those two alongside each other, it can help you to read the two characters next to each other and learn something more about how they relate.

[19 : 11] Or the character of Benjamin and Esau, both of them associated with a sort of entrance into kingship. In something like chapter five of the book of Genesis, I think the genealogy there can be related in part to the genealogy of chapter four of Cain and his family.

And so those are some of the places I'd start and then try and reconcile some of the complicated details. And within that reconciliation, often you'll find surprising insight.

I was struck by the way in which the whole genealogy seems to be patterned around the number seven quite deliberately. The geographical backdrop is Beersheba, which has an allusion to seven in the sense of its name.

Seven named women are included in the genealogy. It totals 70 individuals, which divide into a couple of subgroups.

Leah is responsible for seven lots of seven, 49 individuals, and the remainder are Rachel's. Jacob served Laban seven years for each of these wives of his.

[20 : 24] And then there are even further subgroupings of seven within Rachel and Leah's descendants. So Zilpa, for instance, has 14 grandsons.

Bilha has seven descendants. Rachel has 14 descendants. And so it continues. And I'm struck by the way in which those patterns don't seem contrived in the genealogy at all.

It's got an irregularity to it. Dan has only one descendant. There are some descendants who die early. Some descendants have 10 grandsons and so on.

It doesn't read in this monotonous fashion. And yet, when we look at it carefully, patterns come out of this. And this strikes to me, this comes across to me as resonant even with the whole concept of Genesis and of God as a God who brings order out of chaos.

And looking at those particular numbers, I think there's a lot of theology to be discovered within those details. Those details, as you think about them a bit more, they're not random.

[21 : 36] Why should Rachel have 14 children or Bilha have seven? There's something suggested there about the significance of the handmaid that's taken and then of Rachel herself.

And then also comparing Rachel with Leah, that Leah has so many more children. There is a statement about the ethics of taking these extra wives, perhaps, within that.

And also that 14, for instance, associated with Rachel, that's such a significant number within the story. 14 is the 14th year that Joseph is born.

And Joseph's seen as this sign that they're about to enter or that they can go back to the land. It's the point where Jacob inquires of Laban and he stays another few years.

But it's a significant moment in the story. 14 years between Ishmael and Isaac and 14 years of the famine that they passed through.

[22 : 39] And Joseph, presumably at the end of 13 years, stands before Pharaoh. All of these, I think, suggest that these patterns are deeply embedded within the theology and also the narrative of Genesis.

They're not accidental. What do you think about the similarities between this 70 and the could be 70 in Genesis 10 and that genealogy?

And do you see Deuteronomy 32 as playing into this? There is this similarity there between the numbers of the inheritance of the nations when they were divided.

And there are textual issues that surround it, but potentially the numbers of the sons of Israel. Are we to see allusions between those two genealogies?

Yes, I think we should. As we look at the number 70 throughout Scripture, it's one that occurs on a regular basis. And it's often associated with the elders of Israel.

[23 : 48] So, for instance, in Exodus 24, we see 70 elders. Later on in Numbers 11, there are 70 elders of Israel who receive the spirit of Moses.

In the story of Christ, of course, there are 70 disciples sent out, 12 and then 70. And those two numbers, 12 and 70, we see it in places like Elim, where there are 12 wells and 70 palm trees.

Or we can see it in the 70 sacrifices on the Feast of Tabernacles. These numbers, I think, do create a very natural connection between the nations, but also between Jacob and Noah.

That Jacob is associated, he's a Noah-like figure. And just as Noah is the head of 70 families of humanity, so Jacob is the one who is the father of 12, but also of 70.

I'm struck by the way in which the backdrop of the calling of Abraham can be seen as really a tangled mass of genealogies, from the midst of which God calls out Abraham.

[25 : 00] And it seems to me that Abraham's generations then slowly come to replace those of Noah, which are set out in Genesis 10.

We talk about them in 70, and they can both be reduced to 70, but a simple count of the names are 74. And so there is this deliberate juxtaposition of the two, I think.

Israel is carrying forth the mandate of Noah to be fruitful and ultimately, in fact, to bless and to fill the earth, which strikes me as quite deliberate.

And yet, I think at the same time, there is these 70 descendants of Jacob. They are said to come forth from his thigh, which I think is significant.

The thigh is associated with the promise of Abraham. His servant puts his hand under Abraham's thigh and swears to get him a wife from Abraham's own folk.

[26 : 05] But also with the wrestling of Jacob and the way in which he is given this limp as he interacts with God. And these 70 descendants then have behind them conflict and struggles.

They're not given to Jacob on a plate. These 70 descendants are the result and the fruit of a long-awaited promise in difficult situations and struggles in Canaan. And they come very much from that backdrop. And when you read from chapter 29 onwards, this is all the story of Jacob's struggle to bring forth these children. Jacob, Leah and Rachel and the handmaids in the entirety of these chapters. It's given to the struggle of first bringing forth those children, protecting them from the wrath of Esau. And then later on, just losing them at certain, seeming to lose them, the threat of Shechem, other things like that. And just one thing after another in these chapters. [27 : 13] And yet there's also something about this chapter that I think reminds, certainly reminds me of the story of Noah entering the ark. That Jacob and his family are about to, they're not just leaving an ark.

They're about to enter the ark of Egypt. They will be brought back up again. But it's as if they're descending into this ark where they will be kept safe. And then they'll be restored at a point in the future.

And God's promise that they will be restored. And the entrance of the animals and the children and all these other things into this realm of safety for the time being. But a realm of safety that will also, as we see later, be kept distinct from the realm of the Egyptians. They're not just going to be part of the regular cities of the Egyptians. They're going to have their own part of the land that enables them to be distinct. I think there is a lot of Noah that's playing behind the story. There's a great symmetry, I think, to the genealogy, which seems very intricate to me.

[28 : 18] Leah, for instance, has six sons and she is responsible in total for six times six, 36 descendants, if you count up the full range of them.

And her name has a gematrial value of 36. In isolation, that may not be particularly significant. But she then leads on when her generations are finished to Gad, who is the seventh son and who has seven sons.

His genealogy is preceded by 77 words. And Gad has the gematrial value seven. These kind of patterns intrigue me.

And I'm very intrigued to follow them through in Scripture more generally. A well-known example is the way David is the 14th generation from Abraham.

And his name has a gematrial value of 14. Now, in isolation, these things could be coincidences. But I'm very interested in trying to build this up as a picture.

[29 : 29] Even just these little glimpses give me some confidence there might be something here. And some confidence also in the preservation of a text in an accurate manner.

The little details seem significant. And the fact that people who are aware of these details, in many ways, it would help you to remember these genealogies.

That one of the reasons why I think Scripture was preserved was you have these structures that are very hard to...

I mean, when these things go awry, it leaves a trace. There is a structure to it. And you can see the preservation of it. First of all, it's a source of confidence to us that we see these patterns, that they have been preserved.

On the other hand, it's one of the means by which they can be more readily preserved. That you can trace very distinct details that represent patterns.

[30 : 27] That if there were no patterns, you'd just have this mass of names. And you could really question whether it was preserved well. When you see the patterns, first of all, it enables you to preserve it better.

And also, I think it helps you to find confidence that these aren't just accidental details. And the more that we search in these genealogies, I think we also find... We'll find confirming details of the historicity of these sorts of events.

That these are names that are associated with times and places and regions. And there are also names, I think, that as we follow the narrative through, we can maybe trace certain connections. So I'm interested, for instance, that Benjamin's son is called Bella. And that association with the first king of the Edomites. And is there something there, for instance?

And Jacob is told that kings will come from his loins. And then shortly after that, Benjamin is born. And then in the next chapter, you have, in chapter 36, you have the kings of Edom.

[31 : 37] Bella, the son of Beor, is the first one. Is there some connection with Benjamin, that Benjamin has a son of a similar name? Yeah, these genealogies certainly set what is happening in a context.

As you say, there are significance comparing this to Genesis 36 and seeing the way in which the two genealogies play out.

One, Genesis 36 is Esau's descendants much more quickly, it seems, comes to fruition. But yeah, it sets Jacob's descendants in a relationship with his surroundings and with the nations he will interact with.

I like, in particular, your suggestion of a memory aid. Numbers in and of themselves can very quickly get lost from a text because they don't leave much of a hole.

If you miss out a verb or a noun or something, it will leave a hole in the sentence. But if kind of the and five drops out from after 30 or something, it's not going to cause a problem in and of itself unless you have these subtotals and these patterns.

[32 : 55] And so I like very much that suggestion that these things would function as a memory aid. The names in this particular genealogy are given in the order that we would expect.

It's the order of the children, the birth order, the order of the wives as well. There's the fact that you have the start with Leah, then you have Zilpah, then you have Rachel, then you have Bilhah.

And that would seem to be the order that we expect. But yet throughout the narrative to this point, we've had different orders. So we have the orders of the wives being sent, the handmaids being sent first to, in the order of the wives meeting Esau, and then Leah and Rachel.

You have Leah being inspected first in the pursuit by Laban, and then the handmaids, and then Rachel. Then you have Joseph being favored over the other brothers.

You have a lot of different orders, but here this seems to be, this is the order that we find in the order of birth in chapter 29 and 30. It seems to restore that pattern, which we'll later see again in chapter 49.

[34 : 11] I think that's right. I think maybe some of Leah's sons, I think the last two of them may have been interspersed with her servants.

I'm not quite sure, but it's certainly far more chronological, isn't it? And it doesn't show this favoritism. Are all these groups, how exactly do they interact with the four bands that Jacob sends out in front of him?

Is that Rachel last? Rachel is last. Right. And I've suggested that that connects back to chapter 29, where there are three flocks encountered at the well.

Very much, there's a chiasm playing out in the Jacob in Padam Aram story. And then there are three flocks encountered at the well. And then the final flock occurs, comes along with Rachel, the shepherdess.

And then Jacob himself becomes four flocks associated with the four wives. And in that situation, Rachel again is last.

[35 : 22] When they arrive, this talking about sheep and so forth, when they arrive in Egypt, Joseph advises them to introduce themselves to Pharaoh as shepherds.

And one effect of this, it seems, is that they would get separation, a very natural separation from in Goshen, from the rest of Egypt.

And the Egyptians were told, where is it in verse 34? Every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians. So there would be a pragmatic aspect to this, and it would ensure some degree of safety and preservation of a seed.

Do you see other symbolism going on here in terms of shepherding? As we look back in Genesis 4, I think that there is this opposition between Abel and Cain, that Abel is the one who keeps the sheep and Cain is the one who works the land.

And in the line of Cain, there seems to be a connection with working the land at various points and working with metals, perhaps. Yet a few generations down Cain's line, there is a similar opposition between Jabal and Tubal Cain.

[36 : 42] So Jabal, which reminds us of Abel, he is the father of all those who dwell in tents and have livestock. And Tubal Cain is an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron.

In the story of Esau and Jacob, we have a similar thing. We have a man of the field, a man associated with land, an earthy man, hairy, a man associated with the red color of the earth, and a man associated with hunting in the field like Nimrod.

And on the other hand, we have a man who's a mild man who dwells in tents. I think there's a similar sort of thing playing out here. In the story of Babel, we have the contrast between Abraham, who's a man of flocks, and the people of Babel who are technological people who are involved in, defined by the brick kiln.

And again, in the story of Laban, Laban, his name is associated with the brick kiln, whereas Jacob is a man of stones. So I think there are these sorts of oppositions that are at play.

As we hear about the time in Egypt and later on other times of slavery, they're associated with certain technologies. So Egypt is the iron furnace. We have the connection of Babel with the brick kiln or the fiery furnace or the lion's den.

[37 : 58] So I think there are symbols that are at play here that Israel's distinction from Egypt is defined by the different types of jobs that they have.

That in one case, the work of the Israelites is associated with Abel and what he did, whereas the others are associated with Cain. And again, this gets down to the relationship between sons.

How should these two groups relate to each other? The one priestly people associated with the sheep and with sacrifice, and the other people who are more technological, people maybe associated with Babel and the work of building.

Later on, we'll see that they subdue the Israelites and make them form these bricks. So I think there are those things taking place. I think Israel will also be associated with particular animals.

Israel in chapter 15 is associated with those five animals. The heifer, the female ram, the male sheep, and then you have the turtle dove and the pigeon.

[39 : 09] And within the history of Israel, I think that plays out a bit more. And particularly at the time of the Passover, Israel was associated with, not just with the task of keeping sheep, but as a people who are associated with the Passover lamb.

And Moses is a shepherd. Moses leads them out with a rod to strike Egypt. And that shepherding theme, I think, is a very deep one.

I'm not sure exactly all the ways it plays out, but Israel is a flock and its leaders tend to be shepherds. David, of course, is called from keeping the sheep. As such, the Exodus feels like a return to what Israel were meant to be doing in Egypt and to their true identity.

They were making bricks for the Egyptians and to build up the kingdom of Egypt. But initially they were there to be fruitful and to multiply themselves.

And so that connection with bricks seems significant. The Lord, of course, will liberate them from Egypt and put them to a new building project, although not in bricks, but in this construction of the tabernacle.

[40 : 21] And then ultimately, of course, leading to Canaan. It might also be something about a resolution of the themes of the story. The story began with Joseph keeping sheep, his father's sheep, with his brothers.

And now we have the restoration of the theme of keeping sheep. It's appeared at the point of chapter 38 as Judah goes to shear his sheep.

But apart from that, there's not really been a lot of reference to sheep. But now it seems that there's a return to normality, that there's something of the occupation of Israel and his family that is being preserved.

Even when they're in a foreign land, they're acting in a way that is characteristic, that they're retaining their identity. They're not just assimilating. They're still defined by that task of keeping the sheep.

Well, we've made it roughly to the end of the chapter. I don't know if you have anything particular to add in terms of just overall thoughts. One verse that really stands out to me from this is the Nunc Demeter's statement of Jacob.

[41 : 33] Jacob, Israel says to Joseph, again, it's Israel. He's referred to as Israel at this point. He's the nation. There's a wholeness that's been restored to him. He's no longer just Jacob, the individual who's mourning the death of his sons.

But he is Israel, the leader of the nation. And he says to Joseph, now let me die since I have seen your face because you are still alive. And earlier on in chapter 37, he declared that he would go down to his grave in mourning.

So there's a connection between his expectation or his wishing for death in that occasion. But now that's resolved in a very different tone to it.

Now there's a sense of now let your servant depart in peace for my eyes have seen your salvation. That there is a fulfillment of all this expectation. That all these terrible occurrences have been restored.

All the dashed hopes, all the tragedy of the Joseph narrative has been brought to closure. And at this point, Jacob can let himself depart in peace.

[42 : 41] He no longer feels that there is something holding him back. He can feel everything has been accomplished, that God has restored to him everything that once seemed lost. Which may be brought out that Joseph will close Jacob's eyes.

He is the one who will round this story off, if you like, and put usher Jacob into sleep. And yet, as we saw in verse 4, there is still this, as well as this going down into Egypt, there is a bringing up again, which this looks forward to.

And that reference you made to sleep is interesting. It reminds me of Abraham being in deep sleep when God speaks about the Exodus. That here is the family of Jacob.

Jacob and his son Joseph are being placed into a deep sleep. And they will one day be raised up. And they'll be returned to the land from which they came. And this deep sleep is part of a creation story.

We saw in chapter 15 and 16 that the deep sleep of Abraham and then the woman comes to him. It's Sarah, but then he takes Hagar instead. In this story here, I think there's another sort of deep sleep anticipating this formation of a new peoplehood.

[44 : 04] And as they arise out of the land of Egypt, I think Egypt is like a womb. And they'll be born as a new people. But that entrance into deep sleep at the end of the book of Genesis is a very fitting note to end upon.

Thank you very much for joining me. And Lord willing, I will be back again tomorrow with more on chapter 47 of the book of Genesis. Thank you for listening. If you have any questions, please leave them on my Curious Cat account.

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