

Genesis 46-50: the Birth of a Nation a People

- 46.1-7:** **Jacob/Israel journeys from Canaan to Egypt**
God promises in a vision to be with Jacob in Egypt and bring him back to Canaan
- 46.8-27:** **Names of sons of Jacob/Israel “who came to Egypt”**
Links the sons’ offspring as “tribes” and extends the image into Exodus as a bridge to connect the two books
- 46.28-47.12, 47.27-31:** **Egypt vs. Canaan as the place of settlement**
Jacob and his sons settle in Egypt, anticipating the Exodus
- 47.13-26:** **Joseph manages famine for profit**
Joseph takes silver, animals, bodies and land in exchange for grain, enslaving and impoverishing all the Egyptians
- 48.1-22:** **Ephraim and Manasseh: Egyptians or “sons of Israel”**
Jacob insists the Egyptian-born sons of Joseph “are mine”, refusing assimilation into an imperial identity
- 49.1-28:** **Jacob blesses his sons by (tribal) name, offering group characteristics**
Links with Deuteronomy 33 as a “departure blessing” (Jacob, Moses)
- 49.29-50.13:** **Death of Jacob (in Egypt) and burial (in Machpelah, Canaan)**
Egyptians and “Israelites” journey back to the burial place of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah and Leah, then return to Egypt. The bodies left in Canaan express hope for future return to the land of promise (cf. Jeremiah 32)
- 50.14-26:** **Final conversation between Joseph and his brothers**
The brothers remain afraid of Joseph, who offers assurance that God is with them in Egypt.

With these chapters in place, the book of Genesis accomplishes:

1. **The creation of a story that claims “Israel” is a “people” derived from a series of common ancestors** (as opposed to a “nation” centered in a hierarchical state).
2. **The movement toward a collection of texts** which, while offering different understandings of God/YHWH and the divine purpose for “Israel,” share enough **to become collective torah**, “instruction,” for future generations.
3. **Generates an enduring tension between human life situated directly on the earth and in harmony with it and urban life controlled by elites** in the name of god(s).