

CHAPTER 46

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 46

In this chapter we are told, that Jacob with all his family and substance took a journey to Egypt to see his son Joseph, as he determined, in which he was encouraged to proceed by a vision from God, (⁽⁰⁴⁴¹⁾Genesis 46:1-7); and an account is given of all his sons, his sons' sons and daughters that went thither with him, (⁽⁰⁴⁴⁸⁾Genesis 46:8-27); when he came near to Egypt he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to acquaint him of his coming, who met him at Goshen, where there was a most affectionate interview between them, (⁽⁰⁴⁴⁸⁾Genesis 46:28-30); and when he gave directions and instructions what answers to give to Pharaoh's questions, when they should appear before him, to whom he proposed to go and inform him of their being come into Egypt, (⁽⁰⁴⁵¹⁾Genesis 46:31-34).

Ver. 1. *And Israel took his journey with all that he had*, etc.] Set forward in it immediately, as soon as possible after he had resolved to take it, and with him he took all his children and grandchildren, and all his cattle and goods; which shows that he took his journey not only to see his son Joseph, but to continue in Egypt, at least during the years of famine, as his son desired he would, otherwise there would have been no occasion of taking all along with him:

and came to Beersheba: where he and his ancestors Abraham and Isaac had formerly lived; a place where sacrifices had often been offered up, and the worship of God performed, and much communion enjoyed with him. This is said to be sixteen miles from Hebron ^{f1808}, where Jacob dwelt, and according to Musculus was six German miles from it:

and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac; which were attended with prayer and praise; with praise for hearing that his son Joseph was alive, and with prayer that he might have a good, safe, and prosperous journey.

Ver. 2. *And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night*, etc.] He appeared to Jacob as he lay upon his bed in the night season, and with an articulate voice spoke to him as follows:

and said, Jacob, Jacob: not “Israel”, the more honourable name he had given him, but Jacob, putting him in mind of his former low estate; and doubling this name, either out of love and affection to him, as Jarchi intimates; or rather in order to awake him, at least to stir up his attention to what he was about to say to him:

and he said, here [am] I; signifying his readiness to hearken to him in what he should say to him, and to obey him in whatsoever he should command him.

Ver. 3. *And he said, I [am] God, the God of thy father*, etc.] His father Isaac, who was now dead, and who is the rather mentioned, because in him Abraham’s seed was to be called, and in his line the promise both of the land of Canaan, and of the Messiah, ran, and from him Jacob received the blessing; and this might be a confirmation of it to him, in that Jehovah calls himself his God; he first declares himself to be his God, and so able to perform whatever he should promise him, and his father’s God, who would show him favour, as he had to him:

fear not to go down into Egypt; Jacob might have many fears arise in his mind about this journey, as interpreters generally observe; as lest it should not be agreeable to the will of God, since his father Isaac was forbidden to go into Egypt, when in like circumstances with him, (~~Gen~~ Genesis 26:1,2); as well as he, might fear it would be too great a journey for him in his old age, some evil would befall him, or he die by the way and not see his son; or lest going with his family thither, and there continuing for some time, they might be tempted with the pleasantness and fruitfulness of the land, and settle there, and forget and neglect the promised land of Canaan; and especially lest they should be drawn into the idolatry of the Egyptians, and forsake the worship of the true God; and very probably he might call to mind the prophecy delivered to Abraham, of his seed being strangers and servants, and afflicted in a land not theirs for the space of four hundred years, (~~Gen~~ Genesis 15:13); and Jacob might fear this step he was now taking would bring on, as indeed it did, the completion of this prediction, by which his offspring would be oppressed and diminished. The Targum of Jonathan makes this to be Jacob’s principal fear;

“fear not to go down into Egypt, because of the business of the servitude decreed with Abraham;”

as also he might fear his going thither might seem to be a giving up his title to, and expectation of the promised land: to remove which fears the following is said,

for I will there make of thee a great nation: as he did; for though in process of time his seed were greatly afflicted here, yet the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied; and their increase in Egypt was vastly greater than it had been in a like space of time before; for in the space of two hundred fifteen years before their descent into Egypt, they were become no more than seventy persons, whereas in the like number of years in Egypt, they became 600,000, besides children; (see ^{f0467}Genesis 46:27) (^{f0127}Exodus 12:37).

Ver. 4. *I will go down with thee into Egypt,* etc.] Which was enough to silence all his fears; for if the presence of God went with him to protect and defend him, to bless and prosper him, and to direct, support, and comfort, he had nothing to fear from any quarter:

and I will also surely bring thee up [again]: Jarchi takes this to be a promise that he should be buried in the land of Canaan, which had its fulfilment, when his corpse was carried out of Egypt to Machpelah, and there interred; but rather this refers to the bringing up of his posterity from thence in due time, for which Jacob might be most solicitous, and so the Targum of Jonathan,

“and I will bring up thy children from thence:”

and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes: and so close them when he was dead; this, as Aben Ezra says, was a custom of the living to the dead, and it used to be done by the nearest relations and friends, though now with us commonly by strangers, or those that are not akin: this was a custom among the Greeks and Romans, as appears from Homer ^{f1809}, Virgil ^{f1810}, Ovid ^{f1811}, and other writers ^{f1812}; and so, among the Jews, Tobias is said to shut the eyes of his wife’s father and mother, and to bury them honourably,

“Where he became old with honour, and he buried his father and mother in law honourably, and he inherited their substance, and his father Tobit’s.” (Tobit 14:13)

Of the Vulgate Latin version: Maimonides ^{f1813} reckons this of closing the eyes of the dead, among the rites used towards them, and so in the Talmud

f1814: now by this expression Jacob was assured that Joseph was alive, and that he should live to see him, and that Joseph would outlive him, and do this last office for him; and, as Ben Melech observes, by this he had the good news told him that Joseph should remain behind him, to sustain and support his sons, and his sons' sons, all the years that he should live after him.

Ver. 5. *And Jacob rose up from Beersheba*, etc.] In high spirits, and proceeded on in his journey, being encouraged and animated by the promises of God now made unto him:

and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him; it may be wondered at that Joseph did not send his chariot to fetch his father; it could not be for want of due respect and honour to him, but it may be such a carriage was not fit for so long a journey, and especially to travel in, in some parts of the road through which they went: no mention being made of Jacob's wives, it may be presumed they were all now dead; it is certain Rachel was, (see ⁻⁰³⁵⁹Genesis 35:19); and it is more than probable that Leah died before this time, since Jacob says he buried her himself in Machpelah in Canaan, (⁻⁰⁴⁸¹Genesis 49:31); and it is very likely also that his two concubine wives Bilhah and Zilpah were also dead, since no notice is taken of them.

Ver. 6. *And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan*, etc.] Some interpreters add, by way of explanation, and in Mesopotamia; much of Jacob's substance being yet there, though the greatest part was got in Canaan, and so that is put for the whole; and Jarchi supposes that Jacob gave all that he got in Padanaram to Esau for his part in the cave of Machpelah, and therefore mention is only made of his substance in Canaan; but there is no need of any such additions or suppositions, since the text only speaks of the substance of Jacob's sons, and what they had was only gotten in Canaan, into which they came very young; all which they brought with them as being their property, and not obliged to leave it behind to strangers; though they were bid not to regard their stuff, yet they were not willing to live upon others, but upon their own, and as much as they could independent of others; and that they might not be upbraided hereafter that they came into Egypt poor and destitute of everything:

and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him; safe and well.

Ver. 7. *His sons, and his sons' sons with him*, etc.] His eleven sons, and their sons, his grandchildren:

and his daughters; his own daughter Dinah, and his daughters in law, the wives of his sons; for these came with him into Egypt, as appears from (⁰⁴¹⁵Genesis 46:5); though the plural may be put for the singular, as in (⁰⁴²³Genesis 46:23):

and his sons' daughters; and mention is made of Sarah the daughter of Asher, (⁰⁴¹⁷Genesis 46:17); Jarchi adds, Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, but it is certain she was born in Egypt, (⁰²⁵⁹Numbers 26:59):

and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt; left none behind him in Canaan, son or daughter; no mention is made of servants, though no doubt many came along with him: the design of the historian is to give an account of Jacob's children, who they were, and their number, when they came into Egypt, that the increase of them might be observed.

Ver. 8. *And these [are] the names of the children of Israel which came into Egypt*, etc.] Not meaning precisely Jacob's seed and offspring, but the body of the people of Israel, as they were when they went into Egypt, including Jacob himself:

Jacob and his sons; for he went with them to Egypt, and was the head and principal of them:

Reuben, Jacob's firstborn; (see ⁰¹²²Genesis 29:32).

Ver. 9. *And the sons of Reuben, Hanoch, and Phallu, and Hezron, and Carmi.*] From whom came the families named after them, of which they were the heads, (⁰²¹⁵Numbers 26:5,6).

Ver. 10. *And the sons of Simeon*, etc.] Who was the second son of Jacob:

Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar; the first of these is called Nemuel, (⁰²¹²Numbers 26:12 ¹³⁰²1 Chronicles 4:24); the third, Ohad, is omitted in the places referred to, he dying without children, as may be supposed, and so was not the head of any family; and the fourth, Jachin, is called Jarib, (¹³⁰²1 Chronicles 4:24); and the fifth is called Zerah, in the above place, by a transposition of letters:

and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman; whom Simeon married, very probably after the death of his first wife, by whom he had the above five

sons, or she was his concubine: many Jewish writers ^{f1815} say, this was Dinah, married to a Canaanite, but this is impossible: according to the Targum of Jonathan, this Shaul was Zimri, who did the work of the Canaanites at Shittim, (^{<0254>}Numbers 25:14), which is not at all likely, the distance of time will not admit of it.

Ver. 11. *And the sons of Levi, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.*] From these sprung the priests and Levites, (see ^{<0430>}Numbers 3:1-4).

Ver. 12. *And the sons of Judah, Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zarah,* etc.] Five of them:

but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan; and so did not go with Jacob into Egypt; and which is observed that they might not be reckoned among them, though it was proper to take notice of them in the genealogy:

and the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul; some think that these could not be born in Canaan, but in Egypt; and that they are mentioned among those that went down to Egypt, because they went there in the loins of their father, and to supply the places of Er and Onan, who died before, and have the honour to be here named, because they might be the first of Jacob's great grandchildren born there; though others suppose that Pharez was at this time fourteen years of age, and instances are given of some, who before that age have been fathers of children; the difficulty is not easily solved: the Targum of Jonathan expressly says,

“Shelah and Zarah did not beget children in Canaan, but there were two sons of Pharez who went down into Egypt, Hezron and Hamul.”

Ver. 13. *And the sons of Issachar, Tola, and Phuvah; and Job, and Shimron.*] The first of these was the father of a numerous race in the days of David, their number was 22,600; (see Gill on “^{<1302>}1 Chronicles 7:2”); the second is called Puah, and the third Jashub, and the fourth Shimrom, (^{<1300>}1 Chronicles 7:1); and were all the heads of families, as appears from the places referred to.

Ver. 14. *And the sons of Zebulun, Sered, and Elon, and Jahleel.*] Whose names are the same in (^{<0436>}Numbers 26:26).

Ver. 15. *These are the sons of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob in Padanaram,* etc.] Which must be restrained to the six sons only, who were

properly Leah's, and not to their sons' sons, for they were not born in Padanaram, but in Canaan:

with his daughter Dinah; who also was by Leah:

all the souls of his sons and daughters [were] thirty and three; that is, together with himself, or otherwise it will be difficult to give the exact number; if all before mentioned are to be reckoned there will be thirty four, wherefore some are for excluding Dinah; but she is not only expressly mentioned, but is the only one intended by his daughters here, the plural being put for the singular; and there is as much reason for retaining her here, as Sarah the daughter of Asher hereafter: some think Er and Onan are to be excluded, as indeed they are, because they died in the land of Canaan, and then there will be but thirty two; wherefore some are for adding Jochebed the daughter of Levi, but she is neither mentioned in the genealogy, nor did she go with Jacob into Egypt, but was born in Egypt long after: it seems best therefore to take Jacob himself into the account, as several Jewish writers do ^{f1816}, and who is expressly named and set at the head of this account, (⁰⁴⁴⁸Genesis 46:8), which will make thirty three.

Ver. 16. *And the sons of Gad*, etc.] A son of Jacob by Zilpah, Leah's maid; for the historian, before he proceeds to give an account of his sons by Rachel, finishes the account of all his sons by Leah and her maid;

Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, and Eri, and Arodi, and Areli; in all seven; the same number is given, and in the same order, (⁰⁴³⁵Numbers 26:15-17).

Ver. 17. *And the sons of Asher*, etc.] Another son of Jacob by Leah's maid Zilpah, whose sons were,

Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isui, and Beriah, and Serah their sister; who is called Sarah, (⁰⁴³⁶Numbers 26:46), and by the Septuagint here. She seems to have been a person of some note, being so particularly remarked in both places:

and the sons of Beriah, Heber and Malchiel; this Beriah seems to be the youngest son of Asher, and yet had two sons; who, as the Targum of Jonathan adds, went down into Egypt; he must marry, and have sons when very young; the thing is not impossible: (see Gill on "⁰⁴⁴²Genesis 46:12");

Ver. 18. *These [are] the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter*, etc.] To be her maid, when she was married to Jacob, by whom he had Gad and Asher:

and these she bare unto Jacob, [even] sixteen souls; not that Zilpah bare sixteen children to Jacob, for she bore but two; but the children and grandchildren of these two with them made sixteen.

Ver. 19. *The sons Rachel, Jacob's wife*, etc.] The wife of his affection and choice, his principal wife, yea, his only lawful wife; Zilpah and Bilhah were his concubines, and as for Leah, she was imposed and forced upon him:

Joseph and Benjamin; the first was in Egypt already, the other now went down with Jacob.

Ver. 20. *And unto Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim*, etc.] And therefore not to be reckoned with those that went down with Jacob thither; for which reason the clause, “in the land of Egypt”, is inserted, (see ^{<0415>}Genesis 41:50);

which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah, priest of On, bare unto him; here again the Targum of Jonathan makes Asenath to be the daughter of Dinah, who it says was educated in the house of Potipherah prince of Tanis; (see Gill on “^{<0415>}Genesis 41:50”).

Ver. 21. *And the sons of Benjamin*, etc.] The second son of Jacob by his wife Rachel; whose sons

[were] Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard; in all one hundred and ten. It is a difficulty to account for it, that Benjamin, Jacob's youngest son, often called a lad at this time, and generally supposed to be about twenty three or four years of age, should have so many sons: some think he had more wives than one, which is not likely, since we never read of any of Jacob's sons that had more than one at a time; and others, that his sons were born twins, and so had them in a little time, which is a much better solution of the difficulty: but others are of opinion, that though the greater part of them might be born in Canaan, yet others might be born in Egypt; and being denominated from the greater part, and that being put for the whole, may be reckoned among the descendants into Egypt; and even those that were in Egypt, being born while Jacob was alive, might be said to descend there in his loins; which may be the best of the ways proposed for

removing this difficulty: though I should rather think they were all born before the descent into Egypt, the whole narrative seems to require this of them all; for otherwise many more might be, said to descend in the loins of Jacob, or in the loins of his sons, which would greatly increase the number of those said to go down with him, after mentioned: to which it may be added, that Benjamin was at least thirty two years of age, and so may very well be thought to have had these children before he went to Egypt.

Ver. 22. *These are the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob, etc.]* That is, sons and grandsons:

all the souls [were] fourteen; two sons, Joseph and Benjamin; twelve grandsons, two of Joseph's, and ten of Benjamin's.

Ver. 23. *And the sons of Dan, Hushim.]* He had but one son, wherefore the plural is put for the singular, (see ^{<01407>}Genesis 46:7,15); Aben Ezra thinks he had two sons, and that one of them was dead, and therefore not mentioned; but the other way best accounts for the expression; though, as Schmidt observes, the plural may be indefinitely put, and the sense be this, as for the sons of Dan, there was only one, whose name was Hushim. Dan was a son of Jacob by Bilhah, Rachel's maid, as the following was another.

Ver. 24. *And the sons of Naphtali, Jahzeel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shillem.]* The last is called Shallum in (^{<1373>}1 Chronicles 7:13).

Ver. 25. *These [are] the sons of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter, etc.]* To be her maid, when she was married to Jacob:

and she bare these unto Jacob, all the souls [were] seven; not that she bare seven sons to Jacob, she bore but two, Dan and Naphtali; but the children of these with them made seven, one of Dan's, and four of Naphtali's, who went down with Jacob into Egypt.

Ver. 26. *All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, etc.]* These are in parcels before mentioned, but here they are brought to a sum total; and by this phrase are excluded those that died before, as Er and Onan, and those that were in Egypt before, as Joseph and his two sons; and I should think also all that were born in Egypt afterwards, even while Jacob was living: those reckoned are only such,

which came out of his loins: such as were his seed and offspring. This is observed for the sake of what follows, and to exclude them:

besides Jacob's sons' wives; these do not come into the account, because they did not spring from him:

all the souls [were] threescore and six; thirty two of Leah's, leaving out Er and Onan, sixteen of Zilpah's, fourteen of Rachel's, and seven of Bilhah's, make sixty nine; take out of them Joseph and his two sons, who were in Egypt before, and you have the exact number of sixty six.

Ver. 27. *And the sons of Joseph, which were born in Egypt, [were] two souls*, etc.] Ephraim and Manasseh; which is observed to show that they do not come into the above reckoning, but are to be taken into another that follows:

all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, [were] threescore and ten; here it may be observed, the phrase is varied; it is not said, "all the souls which came out of the loins of Jacob", but "all the souls of the house" or family of Jacob; all that that consisted of, and takes in Jacob himself, the head of his house or family; nor is it said, "which came with Jacob into Egypt", as before, but "which came into Egypt"; not which came with him thither, but yet were there by some means or another, as Joseph and his two sons; Joseph by being brought down, and sold there, and his two sons by being born there; if therefore Jacob, Joseph, and his two sons, are added to the above number of sixty six, it will make seventy; as for the account of Stephen, making the number seventy five, (see Gill on "~~4074~~ Acts 7:14").

Ver. 28. *And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph*, etc.] Who was the more honourable of his sons, and in greater esteem with Jacob than his elder brethren were, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, who by their conduct had greatly displeased him: moreover, he was a man of a polite address, and had endeared himself to Joseph by his speech to him, in which he discovered so much affection both to his father, and his brother Benjamin, and was upon all accounts the fittest person to be sent to Joseph:

to direct his face unto Goshen; to inform Joseph of his father's coming, that a place might be prepared for him to dwell in, as both the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem paraphrase it; and particularly to direct what place in Goshen he would have him come to, and meet him at:

and they came into the land of Goshen; which was the first part of the land of Egypt that lay nearest to Canaan: the Greek version of the whole verse is,

“he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to meet him at Heroopolis, or the city of the heroes, in the land of Rameses,”

which is confirmed by Josephus ^{f1817}; (see Gill on “~~0450~~Genesis 45:10”).

Ver. 29. *And Joseph made ready his chariot*, etc.] Or “bound” ^{f1818} it, fastened the horses to it, harnessed them, and put them to; this he did not himself, as Jarchi thinks, for the honour of his father; but rather, as Aben Ezra, by ordering his servants to do it:

and went up to meet Israel his father in Goshen; that being higher than the other part of Egypt, as it must be, if it was in Thebes, or upper Egypt, as some Jewish writers say ^{f1819}; and Fium, supposed to be the place the Israelites dwelt in, (see ~~0471~~Genesis 47:11), stood very high ^{f1820}:

and presented himself unto him; alighted from his chariot, and came up to his father, and stood before him, and showed himself to him, declaring who he was:

and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while: either Jacob fell on the neck of Joseph, and wept over him a good while before he could speak to him, as the father of the prodigal son fell on his neck and kissed him, (~~0150~~Luke 15:20); or, as Jarchi, Joseph fell on his father’s neck, as he had done upon his brethren before, but wept over him longer; their embraces were no doubt mutual and extremely affectionate, that for a while they were not able to speak a word to each other.

Ver. 30. *And Israel said unto Joseph*, etc.] He broke silence first:

now let me die, since I have seen thy face; not that he was impatient to die, and not desirous to live any longer; for it could not but yield pleasure to him, and make the remainder of his life more comfortable to live with such a son, his darling, and now in so much honour and grandeur; but this he said to express his great satisfaction at the sight of him, that he could now be content to die, having all his heart could wish for, an interview with his beloved son:

because thou [art] yet alive; whom he had looked upon as dead, and the receiving him now was as life from the dead, and could not but fill him with the greatest joy, (see ~~0153~~Luke 15:23,24,32); Jacob lived after this seventeen years, (~~0478~~Genesis 47:28).

Ver. 31. *And Joseph said unto his brethren, and to his father's house,* etc.] To them and their families, after he had paid his filial respects to his father, in honour, reverence, and affection:

I will go up and shew Pharaoh; acquaint him that his father and all his family were come to Egypt; he says, "I will go up"; which same phrase is used of him, (⁰¹⁴⁷³Genesis 46:29); when he came, and carries some difficulty in it how to account for it, that he should be said to go up when he came, and to go up when he returned. Some have thought of upper Egypt, others of the upper part of the Nile, and others, that Pharaoh's palace was situated on an eminence; but then, as it is to be supposed he went the same road he came, it would have been said, that when he came, he came down; what Ben Melech suggests seems most agreeable, I will go up to my chariot, mount that, and return to Pharaoh, and give him an account of his father's arrival, which it was very proper, prudent, and politic to do:

and say unto him, my brethren, and my father's house, which [were] in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; not merely to pay him a visit, but to continue there.

Ver. 32. *And the men [are] shepherds,* etc.] That was their occupation and employment, by which they got their livelihood. Joseph was not ashamed of the business his father and brethren followed, even though mean; and besides, such men were an abomination to the Egyptians: this he thought proper to tell Pharaoh, lest he should think of putting them into some offices of the court or army, which would expose them to the envy of the Egyptians, and might endanger the corruption of their religion and manners, as well as be the means of separating them one from another, which he was careful to guard against, as Josephus ^{f1821} the historian suggests:

for their trade hath been to feed cattle; this was what they were brought up to from their youth, and were always employed in, and for which only they were fit:

and they have brought their flocks and their herds, and all that they have; in order to carry on the same business, and lead the same course of life.

Ver. 33. *And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you,* etc.] Order them to come before him, to see them, and have some conversation with them:

and shall say, what [is] your occupation? or your works ^{f1822}, their business and employment, whether they exercised any manufacture or handicraft, and what it was.

Ver. 34. *That ye shall say, thy servants' trade hath been about cattle,* etc.] Breeding, feeding, and selling them:

from our youth, even until now: this had been their constant employment, they never followed any other:

both we, [and] also our fathers; their father, grandfather, and great grandfather, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were all of the same occupation:

that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; Joseph instructed his brethren to be very particular in the account of their occupation to Pharaoh, that it might be a direction to him how to dispose of them, and where to settle them, namely, in the land of Goshen; which was a country that abounded with good pasture, and so the fittest place for them to be fixed in: and besides this, Joseph had some other reasons for placing them there, as that they might be near to him, who might dwell at On or Heliopolis, to which place, or province, Goshen belonged; and that being also the nearest part of the land to Canaan, they might the more easily and sooner get away when there was an occasion for it; as well as he was desirous they should not be brought into the heart of the land, lest they should be corrupted with the superstition, and idolatry, and vices of the people; and being afar off, both from the court, and the body of the people, might be less subject to their contempt and insults, since it follows:

for every shepherd [is] an abomination unto the Egyptians; not because shepherds ate of the milk and flesh of the creatures they fed, which the Egyptians abstained from; for the Egyptians in those times did eat the flesh of slain beasts, (see ^{<0436>}Genesis 43:16,32); nor because they fed, and slew, and ate those creatures, which the Egyptians worshipped as gods, as Jarchi; for it does not appear that the Egyptians were so early worshippers of such creatures; nor is this phrase, “every shepherd”, to be understood of any other than foreign shepherds; for one of the three sorts of the people of Egypt, as distinct from, and under the king, priests, and soldiers, according to Diodorus Siculus ^{f1823}, were shepherds, and were not despised on that account; for, as the same writer says, all the Egyptians were reckoned equally noble and honourable ^{f1824}; and such it is plain there were in Egypt, in the times of Joseph, (see ^{<0476>}Genesis 47:6,16,17); and goat herds were

had in esteem and honour by those about Mendes, though swine herds were not ^{f1825}: wherefore this must be understood of foreign shepherds, the Egyptians having been greatly distressed by such, who either came out of Ethiopia, and lived by plunder and robbery ^{f1826}, or out of Phoenicia or Arabia; for, according to Manetho ^{f1827}, it was said that they were Arabians or Phoenicians who entered into Egypt, burnt their cities, etc. and set up kings of their own, called their Hycsi, or pastor kings: and therefore Joseph might the rather fear his brethren and father's family would be the more contemptible in that they came from Canaan, which was near to Arabia and Phoenicia; but Dr. Lightfoot ^{f1828} is of opinion, that the Egyptians, being plagued for Abraham's and Sarah's sake, made a law, that for the future none should converse with Hebrews, nor with foreign shepherds, so familiarly as to eat or drink with them.