

Discrepancy or Misunderstanding

by Phillip Patton

Marshall Church of Christ

Marshall, Texas

To the critic the Bible, at first glance, appears to have contradictions or discrepancies. To the seeker of truth, regardless of personal bias, the Scriptures themselves will reveal truth. One such, alleged, discrepancy is found in Acts 7:12-14 which reads, "But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls." When studying the OT account of this event one will notice that instead of the 75, which Stephen mentioned, is found another number. Genesis 46:26-27 records "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six; And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten," which would equal 70. So this segment will show investigation as to this being a discrepancy, or simply a need to read and do simple math.

1. One thing to keep in mind is that most of the time in Jewish numbering the women were not counted.
 - a. This by no means takes away from the importance of women in the world or degrades their position at all, nor does it allow for anyone to treat a woman as inferior, which Paul taught directly against in Ephesians 5:23ff.
 - b. Consider the feeding of the five thousand- Matthew 14.
 - i. Verse 21 says 5 thousand men "beside women and children."
 - ii. Mark's, Luke's, and John's accounts all say, "five thousand men."
 - c. When the children of Israel were numbered after leaving Egypt before entering into the land of Canaan they counted the men of fighting age.
 - d. This was the normal means of progress to show the rightful heir as well
 - i. This is the position which Jacob took from Esau in stealing his birthright

- ii. When the inheritance was passed down the first and greater portion of it went to the first born son
 - e. This is also seen in the 12 sons of Jacob which became known as the 12 tribes of Israel
2. Verse 26 speaks of those who went with Jacob into Egypt, except the wives of his sons: (The following sub points are found in Bob Winton's Commentary on Acts)
- a. The numbers sixty-six and seventy of these two verses are reconciled simply by adding the family of Joseph to the sixty-six. There were 66 which accompanied Jacob into Egypt (not counting his daughters-in-law; there were seventy in all counting Joseph's family).
 - b. Judah's wife was dead, Benjamin was unmarried, Joseph and his family are not considered, so the nine wives of the other brothers make 75.
3. It might be helpful as well to look at the use of "souls" in the Bible.
- a. There is a triune in the human body
 - b. 1Ths 5.23- body, soul, and spirit
 - i. The text speaks of the spirit, the soul, and the body of each of the saints; the spirit is the eternal part of the person; the soul in this usage is a reference to the life of the person; and the body referred to is the physical body in which the spirit dwells. Paul expresses his desire that the spirit, soul, and body of each of the saints might be preserved blameless unto the coming of Christ.
 - c. In the usual case, the words spirit and soul are used interchangeably in the Scriptures.
 - i. Ecc 12.7, Matt 10.28, Eze 18.20, Gen 35.18, James 2.26, 1Kings 17.21, Zech 12.1, Dan 7.15
 - d. The word soul is also used in the Scriptures in reference to individuals (persons) 1Pet 3.20.
 - e. Souls here, in like manner of Jewish numbering could, possibly, only be counting the men considered.
4. Lets put it to light in the passage

“All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob’s sons’ wives, (Remember stated above that Judah’s wife was dead, Benjamin was unmarried. Joseph and his family were already there awaiting the arrival of Jacob—they are not in this count. That leaves the 9 wives of the other 9 brothers. The 9 wives added to the 66 are the 75 mentioned in Acts 7.14) all the souls were threescore and six; And the sons of Joseph (He had 2 sons while in Egypt), which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, (v26 speaks of those which came with Jacob, v27 speaks of all of those of Jacobs house which would include Jospheh, his two sons, and Jacob as those in v26 came WITH him, to equal the following, 70) which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.” (Gen 46:26–27 KJV). (Parenthetical Emphasis by Me)

Conclusion: There is no discrepancy here. As with all alleged discrepancies critics will run to every extreme possible to prove what “they see” as a contradiction or discrepancy to take authority and credibility from the Scriptures. There are some differences in names in the OT that are the same person, the same is seen in the NT (Matt 3.3—speaking of Isaiah, Matthew recorded Esaias in the English). To call that a discrepancy or a contradiction is nothing more than malicious intent by those who choose to rebel against God and His inspired word (2Tim 3:16-17). If the critic was so interested in proving truth he would spend time researching history, and archaeology. With honesty in himself he would realize and admit that every single instance the Bible has recorded is accurate. A document that took 1200-1500 years to record by some 40+authors, shows unity, rationality, logic, along with its truthfulness demands acceptance of truth and reliability. All would do well to remember Psalm 102:12, “But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations,” Luke 21:33, “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away,” Isaiah 55:11 “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”