

Ask Away – February 1

1) How do all the names of the sons of Israel add up to 66 and 70? (Gen 46:26–27)

We can understand how this works by looking at the descendants of Jacob's wives and concubines.

Leah (33): 1-Reuben, 2-Hanoch, 3-Pallu, 4-Hezron, 5-Carmi, 6-Simeon, 7-Jemuel, 8-Jamin, 9-Ohad, 10-Jachin, 11-Zohar, 12-Shaul, 13-Levi, 14-Gershon, 15-Kohath, 16-Merari, 17-Judah, 18-Er, 19-Onan, 20-Shelah, 21-Zerah, 22-Perez, 23-Hezron, 24-Hamul, 25-Issachar, 26-Tola, 27-Puvah, 28-Yob, 29-Shimron, 30-Zebulun, 31-Sered, 32-Elon, 33-Jahleel. *Note that Dinah is not included in the count of 33.*

Zilpah (16): 1-Gad, 2-Ziphion, 3-Haggi, 4-Shuni, 5-Ezbon, 6-Eri, 7-Arodi, 8-Areli, 9-Asher, 10-Imnah, 11-Ishvah, 12-Ishvi, 13-Beriah, 14-Serah, 15-Heber, 16-Malchiel. *Note that Serah, a woman, is included in the count of 16.*

Rachel (14): 1-Joseph, 2-Benjamin, 3-Manasseh, 4-Ephraim, 5-Bela, 6-Becher, 7-Ashbel, 8-Gera, 9-Naaman, 10-Ehi, 11-Rosh, 12-Muppm, 13-Huppm, 14-Arad.

Bilhah (7): 1-Dan, 2-Hushim, 3-Naphtali, 4-Jahzeel, 5-Guni, 6-Jezer, 7-Shillem.

To get the total of 66 mentioned in Genesis 46:26, we add Leah's 33 + Zilpah's 16 + Rachel's 14 + Bilhah's 7 = 70. We then subtract 2 for Er and Onan who died in Canaan and 3 for Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim who were already in Egypt: $70 - 2 - 3 = 65$. We then add Dinah: $65 + 1 = 66$.

To get the total of 70 mentioned in Genesis 46:27, we add Jacob, Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim: $66 + 4 = 70$.¹

Technically, Jacob had 14 sons: 12 of his own plus the adoption of Joseph's two sons (Gen 48:5–6). However, the land was divided among 12 tribes, since Levi did not inherit land (Deut 18:1–2) and Joseph was counted through Manasseh and Ephraim.

¹The Septuagint (LXX) count of 75 (cited by Stephen in Acts 7:14) comes from excluding Jacob and Joseph and including *all* of Joseph's nine children rather than just two: $70 - 4 + 9 = 75$. The LXX of Genesis 46:27 reads, "And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in the land of Egypt were nine persons."