

# **Jacob's Blessing of Manasseh and Ephraim**

**Genesis 48**

# Introduction

- God had moved upon Pharoah's heart to be generous to Joseph's extended family and offer them Goshen, "the best of the land of Egypt" (45:18).
- The 7 years of famine has concluded.
- Twelve years have passed and Jacob is living the last year of his life.

# Jacob is Sick

**Genesis 48:1-4:** After this, Joseph was told, "Behold, your father is ill." So he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. <sup>2</sup> And it was told to Jacob, "Your son Joseph has come to you." Then Israel summoned his strength and sat up in bed.

<sup>3</sup> And Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty [El Shaddai] appeared to me at Luz [Bethel] in the land of Canaan and blessed me, <sup>4</sup> and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.

- Jacob is sick and bedfast. He knows that his end is near.
- The famine had been over for approximately 12 years. Jacob is now 147 years old.
- Joseph is now 56 years old and will live for another 54 years, finally dying at the age of 110.

- When Joseph walked into the room, Jacob mustered enough strength to sit up on the side of his bed and talk with his son about matters that were too important to delay.
- Interestingly, he didn't talk about the difficulties of his life.
- He spoke about God Almighty (vv. 3, 11, 15, 20–21) and what He had done for Jacob.

- He spoke about the Abrahamic blessing, given also to his father Isaac, which involved: 1) a promise of becoming a fruitful people; 2) a promise of a land (Canaan); 3) a promise that through Abraham all the families of the earth will be blessed (Messiah-Jesus).
- Jacob mentions the first two of these promises.

- Jacob believed God's promises to him were certain, and even after his death, he wanted to be buried in the land of promise (47:28-31).



# Jacob Adopts Joseph's Sons

**Genesis 48:5-7:** And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. <sup>6</sup> And the children that you fathered after them shall be yours. They shall be

called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. <sup>7</sup> As for me, when I came from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."



- Jacob tells Joseph that the “birthright” will be given to him (1 Chron. 5:1-2).
- **1 Chronicles 5:1** The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel, so that he

- could not be enrolled as the oldest son; <sup>2</sup> though Judah became strong among his brothers and a chief came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph).
- Jacob claims the sons of Joseph as his own, making them full recipients of his inheritance on the same order as Jacob's other sons.

- Ephraim and Manasseh will have full status as Jacob's sons (not merely grandsons), receiving their rightful legacy.
- Historically, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh continue to be known as the sons of Joseph.

# The 12 Sons of Jacob



1. Reuben



2. Simeon



3. Levi



4. Judah



5. Dan



6. Naphtali



7. Gad



8. Asher



9. Issachar



10. Zebulun



11. Joseph



12. Benjamin

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# The 12 Tribes of Israel



1. Reuben



2. Simeon



3. \*Ephraim



4. Judah



5. Dan



6. Naphtali



7. Gad



8. Asher



9. Issachar



10. Zebulun



11. \*Manasseh



12. Benjamin

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# Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons

**Genesis 48:8-12:** When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?"<sup>9</sup> Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." And he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them."<sup>10</sup> Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see.

So Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. <sup>11</sup> And Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face; and behold, God has let me see your offspring also." <sup>12</sup> Then Joseph removed them from his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

# Ephraim is Favored

**Genesis 48:13-16:** And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him. <sup>14</sup> And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his

left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands (for Manasseh was the firstborn). <sup>15</sup> And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, <sup>16</sup> the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be

carried on, and the name of my fathers  
Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow  
into a multitude in the midst of the  
earth."

- Notice how Jacob speaks about God.
- He is the God before whom Jacob's fathers Abraham and Isaac walked.
- He has been Jacob's shepherd all of his life.
- He is the Angel who delivered him out of all his trouble.

- These remarkable descriptions of God reveal how Jacob's faith had matured through the years. He had learned to appreciate the providential hand of God in his life as he looked back upon the events of his life.

# Joseph is Displeased

**Genesis 48:17-20:** When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. <sup>18</sup> And Joseph said to his father, "Not this way, my father; since this one



is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head." <sup>19</sup> But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations." <sup>20</sup> So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel

will pronounce blessings, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.'" Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

- Joseph's sons were not young boys at this time, but had grown to maturity.

- We know Joseph's sons were born before the famine began, during the 7 years of plenty (Gen. 41:50-52).
- Since Jacob had been in Egypt for seventeen years (47:28), and he arrived during the 2-3 yr. of famine, Ephraim would have been about 19-20 years of age and Manasseh would have been at between 21-22 years old.

- For the fifth time in the Book of Genesis, we meet a reversal of the birth order.
- God had chosen Abel, not Cain; Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau; and Joseph, not Reuben; and now He would choose Ephraim over Manasseh.

- Joseph was upset with what his father did and tried to change his hands, but Jacob was guided by God and knew what he was doing.
- It has taken Jacob a lifetime of discipline of learn to submit to God's will. Although Joseph urged his father, Jacob would not attempt to bless the wrong one, as his father

- (Isaac) had attempted to do; nor would he handle the blessing dishonestly.
- The writer of Hebrews was inspired by God to choose this as an example of Jacob's faith: "By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff." (Heb, 11:21).

# Jacob Gives Joseph Land

**Genesis 48:21-22** Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your fathers. <sup>22</sup>

Moreover, I have given to you rather than to your brothers one mountain slope that I took from the hand of the

Amorites with my sword and with my bow.”

- Joseph received an unexpected gift that day, a piece of land that Jacob had taken in battle from the Amorites.
- This is the only evidence we have that Jacob was an accomplished warrior.



# Conclusion

- If God can change a man like Jacob and make him a man of faith, be assured that God can do the same with each of us if we will let Him.
- God does not always work His plan and purposes the same way. But He always does what is best!

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