

Genesis 48 - Joseph Visits Jacob; Jacob Blesses Ephraim and Manasseh; The Prophecy of the Family's Return to the Land

II. Epilogue: Patriarchal history (Gen 11:10—50:26)

(4) Life of Joseph (Gen 37:1—50:26)

(D) Guarantee of future covenant preservation (Gen 47:27—50:26)

(b) Jacob blesses Joseph's sons (48:1-22)

(i) Review of God's promises (48:1-7)

(ii) Blessing of Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh (48:8-16)

(iii) Reaffirmation of the order of God's blessing (48:17-22)

Genesis 48

(b) Jacob blesses Joseph's sons (48:1-22)

(i) Review of God's promises (48:1-7)

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1 Some time later, somebody informed Joseph, "Your father is ill!" So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him to visit Jacob.

1 And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

- Timing: sometime in the next 15-17 years, Joseph received this report

- There was a recognition that Jacob's sickness would lead to death

- Joseph went to see his father, and brought his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim to see their grandfather for the last time, and to receive the Patriarchal Blessing

— Manasseh and Ephraim are somewhere between the ages of 18-20 because according to 41:50, they were born before the famine began, and according to 47:28, Jacob lived in Egypt 17 years

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2 As soon as Jacob was informed, "Look! Your son Joseph has come to visit you," Israel rallied his strength and sat up in bed.

2 And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

- "...bed" - likely, his "staff" (See note on 47:31; Cf. Heb 11:21)

3 Then Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at **Luz** in the land of Canaan and blessed me,

3 Then Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me,

3 Jacob reminded Joseph, "God Almighty revealed himself to me at Luz in Canaan and blessed me.

3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,

- "...Luz" - Bethel (28:13,19)

— Jacob recalled God's first appearance to him in Bethel, on his way to Haran, just before leaving the Land

4 and He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a multitude of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.'

4 and He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.'

4 He told me, 'Pay attention! I'm going to make you fruitful and numerous. I'm going to build you into a vast nation of people and then I'll give this land to your descendants for an eternal possession.'

4 And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.

- Jacob recounts God's reconfirmation of the Abrahamic Covenant to Jacob (Cf. 28:13-15)

5 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.

5 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.

5 You have two sons who were born to you in Egypt before I came to be with you, whom I now take as my own. Ephraim and Manasseh are mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are.

5 And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

- Jacob officially adopted Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, making them equal brothers to Reuben and Simeon (the firstborn and second-born brothers) and giving Joseph a double-portion of inheritance
- The point is that Joseph will have the birthright in place of Reuben and Simeon, and his two sons will take over the places of Reuben and Simeon. Jacob replaced Reuben and Simeon with Manasseh and Ephraim in the line of the birthright.
- 1 Chr 5:1-2 points out that Judah had the preeminence, Joseph had the birthright
- With this adoption, the two sons of Joseph became legal sons of Jacob; this recognition would have an effect on the apportioning of the land of promise years later in the days of Joshua (Josh 16-17)

[This provides for a total of 13 to choose from and permits various listings to omit one (for various reasons) and still have a list of "Twelve" Tribes]

6 But your children that you have fathered after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance.

6 But your offspring that have been born after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance.

6 Your descendants are to be reckoned as yours, but are to be referred to among the names of their brothers in their respective inheritances.

6 And thy issue, which thou begetteth after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.

- Manasseh and Ephraim are now legal sons of Jacob, and only if Joseph has additional sons will they be legally his (Joseph had no more sons)
- They will develop into separate tribes and be counted as the one Tribe of Joseph (Num 26:28-37; 1 Chr 7:14-29)

7 Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath. I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

7 Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried

her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

7 "Now as for me, Rachel died after I arrived in Canaan from Paddan, much to my sorrow. While I was on my journey to Ephrathah (also known as Bethlehem), I buried her there."

7 And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem.

- Jacob concludes by recounting the death of Rachel (Cf. 35:19)

— His point was that Rachel died too soon and thus there were not more sons from her; however, now three tribes would end up descending from her two sons: Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin.

(ii) Blessing of Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh (48:8-16)

8 When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?"

8 When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?"

8 Just then, Israel saw Joseph's sons and asked, "Who are these?"

8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these?

9 And Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." So he said, "Bring them to me, please, so that I may bless them."

9 Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." So he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them."

9 "These are my sons," Joseph replied. "God gave them to me here in Egypt."

Please bring them close to me," Jacob said, "so I can bless them."

9 And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.

10 Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age *that* he could not see. And Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them.

10 Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age *that* he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them.

10 Now Israel's eyesight had become poor from age. Because he couldn't see well, Joseph brought them close to him, and Israel kissed them both and embraced them.

10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them.

- Jacob's eyesight was good enough to distinguish individual persons, but not good enough to identify who they were

11 And Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well!"

11 Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well."

11 Then he told Joseph, "I never thought I'd see you again, and now God has allowed me to see your children as well!"

11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

12 Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground.

12 Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground.

12 Joseph took them off his knees and then bowed low with his face to the ground.

12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

- Bowing was a sign of submission

13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him.

13 Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him.

13 Then he brought them both close to his father, placing Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right.

13 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 unto him.

- Ephraim was positioned on Joseph's right hand, toward Israel's left hand; in this way, Jacob's left hand would be on the younger son

- Manasseh was positioned on Joseph's left hand, toward Israel's right hand; this would put Jacob's right hand on the firstborn, which would be the norm, since the right hand was viewed as the greater and the more important.

— Therefore, this positioning would bless the firstborn (Manasseh)

14 But Israel reached out his right hand and placed it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn.

14 But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn.

14 But Israel stretched out his right hand, laying it on Ephraim's head (he was the younger son) and laying his left hand on Manasseh's head (even though Manasseh was the firstborn).

14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn.

- This was the opposite of Joseph's expectation; the brothers were close enough for Jacob to distinguish who they were, and he crossed his arms deliberately to bless the younger
— This was the first blessing in Scripture with the laying on of hands

15 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 to this day,

15 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 to this day,

15 Then Israel blessed Joseph by saying: "May the God in whose presence my ancestors Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has continued shepherding me my whole life even until today,

15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

- The blessing of the two sons were reckoned as the blessing of Joseph; the blessing of the sons is the blessing of the father

— The content of the blessing focused on the covenant of God

— "...has been my shepherd" - the Hebrew reads, "shepherded me"

— Jacob recognized that in spite of all his adversities, his whole life was under God's control

16 **The angel** who has **redeemed** me from all evil, Bless the boys; And **may my name live on in them**, And **the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac**; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

16 The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

16 the angel who has been rescuing me from all sorts of evil, bless these young men. May my name continue to live on within them, including the names of my ancestors Abraham and Isaac, and may they grow into a vast multitude throughout the earth."

16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

- "The angel" - the Angel of Jehovah, the Second Person of the Trinity
- "...redeemed" - *goel*, redeemer; first use of this word in the Hebrew Bible
- "...may my name live on in them" - they were now part of the House of Israel
- "...the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac" - they were now part of the Jewish line from Abraham through Isaac
- Out of Jacob's long career, the Book of Hebrews selects this blessing of Joseph's sons by the patriarch as his great act of faith (Heb 11:21)
 - It was his reaching out for the continuation of God's promise in the face of death
 - Ironically this is the very thing he had once accomplished by deception (Gen 27)
 - Once more the blessing would be given to the younger, but this time there was not scheming or bitterness. It was an act of faith.

(iii) Reaffirmation of the order of God's blessing (48:17-22)

17 When Joseph saw that his father placed his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

17 When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

17 But Joseph observed that his father had laid his right hand on Ephraim's head. That displeased him, so he grabbed his father's hand and started to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

18 And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head."

18 Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head."

18 "No, father, this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head."

18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.

- Joseph attempts to correct Jacob's blessing; he assumed Jacob's poor eyesight caused the error

19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

19 But his father refused. "I know," he said. "I know. He's going to produce a large nation, and he's going to be very great. However, his younger brother will become even greater than he, and his descendants will become a multitude of nations."

19 And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

- Jacob's response shows that he knew exactly what he was doing: the promise of v4 would now be focused on the Tribe of Ephraim, which will become the most dominate tribe and name

— Ephraim would later be applied to all the northern tribes of Israel

— Initially, there was numerical growth as recorded in the Book of Numbers. The first census (Num 1:32-35), gives Manasseh 32,200 and Ephraim 40,500

— Also in the first census, Ephraim was clearly larger than Manasseh

— In the second census (Num 26:28-37), Manasseh rose to 52,700, an increase of 20,500 people, while Ephraim declined to 32,500, a decrease by 8,000. So initially, Ephraim was a larger tribe, but after the 40 years of wandering, his was the smaller tribe.

— While this might seem to contradict the blessing of Jacob and Jacob's prophecy, this is not really the case. The blessings of Jacob are not necessarily in numbers but in status: preeminence. Ephraim precedes Manasseh in the genealogy of Num 1:10; Ephraim preceded Manasseh in the census results (Num 1:32-35); Ephraim preceded Manasseh in the list of tribal chiefs (Num 7:48-59); and Ephraim was placed in the middle position on the west side of the Tabernacle between Manasseh and Benjamin.

— Ephraim took leadership of the northern tribes as early as the period of the Judges. Ephraim became a key tribe, and eventually the name Ephraim also became a synonym for all Israel. Sometimes in place of saying "Israel," the people would say Ephraim, not referring to only the Tribe of Ephraim but referring to the entire nation of Israel, especially the Northern Kingdom (Is 7:2,5,9,17; Hosea 9:3-16)

20 So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'" And so he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

20 He blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'" Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

20 That very day, Jacob blessed them with this blessing: "By you Israel will extend this blessing: 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'" By doing this, he placed

Ephraim before Manasseh.

20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

- For four consecutive generations this reversed pattern of bypassing the firstborn was followed:

- Isaac over Ishmael
- Jacob over Esau
- Joseph over Reuben
- Ephraim over Manasseh

21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers.

21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers.

21 Then Israel told Joseph, "Pay attention! I'm about to die, but God will be with you. He'll bring you back to the land that belongs to your ancestors.

21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.

- Before Jacob's passing, he prophesied about the future Exodus

— Jacob knew he would die in Egypt, but that an Exodus would take place beyond his lifetime and perhaps beyond the lifetime of his sons

— While this was Jacob's immediate future, he dealt with the nation's future

22 And I give you one **portion** more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

22 I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

22 I'm assigning you one portion more than your brothers from the land that I confiscated from the control of the Amorites in battle."

22 Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

- Jacob gave Joseph a double-portion of inheritance, which was a privilege of the firstborn: that is, instead of being the father of one tribe, he became the father of two tribes

- "...portion" - *shechem*, translated "portion," but it is also a city where Jacob bought a parcel of ground (33:19)

— Thus, Jacob gave that parcel of ground that he purchased near Shechem to the ownership of Joseph

- This would be the later place where Joseph's bones were buried (Joshua 24:32), and it fell in Manasseh's territory
- There is a reference to this in John 4:5-6 which mentioned Sychar (a suburb of Shechem), the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to Joseph
- The irony is that Jacob's gift of the coat of many colors to Joseph originally created a major problem between Joseph and his brothers; now at the end of his life, Jacob gave another gift to Joseph
- Jacob said of this parcel of land: "I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow"
- This is a reference back to Gen 34
- The "sword" and "bow" are Simeon and Levi, and vicariously through them, Jacob took the city