

BOOK OF GENESIS

GENESIS 48

VERSES 1-7

1 Some time later Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim along with him.

2 When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed.

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

4 and said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.'

5 "Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine.

6 Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers.

ADDED TEXTUAL NOTES, QUESTIONS, OTHER

Verse 2— Notice the name shift: "Jacob" is told, but "Israel" rallies his strength. When acting in covenant faith, he's called by his God-given name. Why does the text alternate between Jacob and Israel in this chapter?

Verse 3-4— Jacob recalls God's appearance at Luz (Bethel) from Genesis 28:10-19 and 35:9-15. Why does he begin with this memory? He's establishing the authority for what he's about to do—this isn't just a dying wish, it's covenant transmission. "God Almighty" is El Shaddai, the covenant name emphasizing God's power to fulfill promises despite impossibility.

Verse 4— What does this mean for Ephraim and Manasseh?

BOOK OF GENESIS

GENESIS 48

7 As I was returning from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan while we were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath. So I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath" (that is, Bethlehem).

VERSES 8-16

8 When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, "Who are these?"

9 "They are the sons God has given me here," Joseph said to his father. Then Israel said, "Bring them to me so I may bless them."

10 Now Israel's eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see. So Joseph brought his sons close to him, and his father kissed them and embraced them.

11 Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face again,

Verse 7— Jacob suddenly mentions Rachel's death. Why?

What is even greater significance behind Ephraim and Manasseh's inclusion? Think thematically.

ADDED TEXTUAL NOTES, QUESTIONS, OTHER

Verse 8— "Who are these?"— Jacob's eyesight is failing (v. 10), echoing his father Isaac's blindness (27:1). This sets up another blessing-by-blind-father scene. But unlike Isaac being deceived, Jacob acts intentionally. Is this poetic justice—Jacob who deceived his blind father now blesses as a blind father?

BOOK OF GENESIS

GENESIS 48

and now God has allowed me to see your children too."

12 Then Joseph removed them from Israel's knees and bowed down with his face to the ground.

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

14 But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn.

15 Then he blessed Joseph and said, "May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,

16 the Angel who has delivered me from all harm—may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly on the earth."

Verse 9— Joseph's answer: "They are the sons God has given me HERE"—emphasizing Egypt. God blessed Joseph in the land of affliction. Joseph's sons are proof that God can bring life and fruitfulness even in exile. What does this remind you of from Genesis 1-3?

Verse 14— Jacob CROSSES his arms, deliberately placing his right hand (the blessing hand) on Ephraim the YOUNGER, and his left on Manasseh the FIRSTBORN. This continues the Genesis pattern: God chooses the younger over the older (Abel over Cain, Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over his brothers). Why does God consistently subvert primogeniture?

BOOK OF GENESIS

GENESIS 48

VERSES 17-22

17 When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim's head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

18 Joseph said to him, "No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."

19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations."

20 He blessed them that day and said, "In your name will Israel pronounce this blessing: 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.'" So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

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

22 And to you I give one more ridge of land than to your brothers, the ridge I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow."

ADDED TEXTUAL NOTES, QUESTIONS, OTHER

Verse 17— Joseph was "displeased"—the same Hebrew word (ra') used for "evil." Joseph thinks his father made a mistake. He tries to CORRECT Jacob's hands. Why does Joseph resist? Why should Joseph not be surprised?

Verse 20— "May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh"—this becomes the standard Jewish blessing for sons (still used today). Parents bless their boys: "May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh."

Verse 22— Jacob gives Joseph "one more ridge of land" (Hebrew: shekem ehad, which can mean "one portion" or "one shoulder/ridge"). Anything sound familiar here?

BOOK OF GENESIS

GENESIS 48

FINAL KEY NOTE: Jacob's refusal to be corrected (v. 19) shows spiritual maturity. In his youth, he grasped at blessing through deception. Now, blind and dying, he blesses with authority and wisdom. He's learned to trust God's sovereign choices. Tim Mackie observes that Joseph's displeasure mirrors the elder brothers' jealousy throughout Genesis—Cain's anger at Abel, Ishmael's mocking of Isaac, Esau's hatred of Jacob, the brothers' envy of Joseph. But unlike them, Joseph submits. He doesn't fight his father's decision. This is growth—accepting God's surprising choices even when they don't match our expectations. The blessing formula (v. 20) becomes permanent in Jewish liturgy. Every Sabbath, fathers bless their sons with these names. Why? Ephraim and Manasseh represent: (1) Faithfulness in exile—they remained true despite Egyptian culture. (2) Unity despite preference—Manasseh doesn't resent Ephraim getting greater blessing. (3) Fruitfulness through adoption—outsiders brought fully into covenant. They're the model of what Israel should be. Jacob's final word to Joseph (vv. 21-22) is personal inheritance. The "ridge of land" connects to Shechem, where Jacob first settled in Canaan (33:18-20) and where Joseph will be buried (Josh 24:32). Jacob ties Joseph to the land, ensuring his bones return to the promise. Genesis 1-3 connection: The elevation of Ephraim over Manasseh continues God's pattern of choosing the weak and unexpected to shame the strong (1 Cor 1:27). This subverts the fall's power structures and points to Jesus—God's chosen one, rejected by His brothers, exalted by the Father, through whom ALL nations are blessed. The chapter ends with covenant hope: we die in exile, but God will bring us home.