

### Jacob Adopts Joseph's Sons

#### Genesis 48:1-11

Genesis 48:1-11 - *"Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, 'Indeed your father is sick'; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. <sup>2</sup> And Jacob was told, 'Look, your son Joseph is coming to you'; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed. <sup>3</sup> Then Jacob said to Joseph: 'God Almighty appeared to me at Luz 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 multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.' <sup>5</sup> And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. <sup>6</sup> Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. <sup>7</sup> But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."*

*<sup>8</sup> Then Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, 'Who are these?'*

*<sup>9</sup> Joseph said to his father, 'They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place.'*

*And he said, 'Please bring them to me, and I will bless them.' <sup>10</sup> Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. <sup>11</sup> And Israel said to Joseph, 'I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!'*

#### Background Notes

At the end of Genesis 47, Jacob was elderly and close to death. In fact, Genesis 47:29 says, *"When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, 'Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt.'"*

According to Ecclesiastes 3:2, there is a time to die: *"A time to be born, and a time to die..."* We will all pass through death if the Lord doesn't return in our lifetime. The important thing is that we should be ready to die. Jacob was ready to die. Jacob trusted the Lord, and he believed the promises of God.

Genesis 48:1 Joseph was told that Jacob was sick. Joseph realized that his father could die at any time, so he came to Goshen. He probably came from the important city of Memphis, where he it is likely lived at this time. He brought with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

How old to you think Joseph's sons were at this time? Genesis 47:28 says that Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. When Jacob and the family came down to Egypt, there were still five years of famine left (Genesis

45:11). And Genesis 41:50 and this chapter tell us that Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were born to him during the years of plenty. When all that data is put together, it's likely that Ephraim and Manasseh were in their early twenties at this point.

The important background note here is that Jacob officially adopted these young men as his own. As a result, they became the heads of two tribes in Israel. Verses 5-6: *"Your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance."*

There was no "tribe of Joseph" in Israel. Instead there were two tribes, the descendants of Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Any other children who were born to Joseph would become part of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (v6). That means there were thirteen tribes in Israel; twelve sons of Jacob, but thirteen tribes of Israel. However, when the land of Canaan was divided up into twelve tribal areas, the tribe of Levi was assigned no tribal area, because they became the priestly tribe.

Why did Jacob mention Reuben and Simeon in verse 5? *"And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine."* What did Jacob mean? In this statement, Jacob removed the birthright from Reuben, his firstborn, and the rights from Simeon, his second born. Jacob gave their rights to the offspring of Joseph, who was Jacob's firstborn with his wife Rachel. Thus Joseph received the "double portion" of the inheritance that was part of the birthright of the firstborn. He received the double portion in his two sons, who became the heads of tribes in Israel.

In this connection, 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 says: *"The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (he was the firstborn, but when he defiled his father's marriage bed, his rights as firstborn were given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel..... the rights of the firstborn belonged to Joseph)"*

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God controls the unexpected twists and turns of history.

1 Chronicles 5:1 says that Reuben's sin was the reason the birthright was removed from him and given to Joseph. Genesis 35:22, *"While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father's concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard of it."*

Who would have ever expected that such an abhorrent event would take place? Jacob had finally returned to the Land, and he had finally come back to Bethel in line with the will of God - and then of all things, his firstborn son became

involved in an incestuous relationship with one of Jacob's wives! What an unexpected tragedy! But here in Genesis 48 we see that God overruled, even in that sad and sinful event, and history took an unexpected turn.

Because of Reuben's sin, Joseph was given the birthright and the double portion of the blessing, and Ephraim and Manasseh were brought in with Jacob's sons as leaders of the tribes in Israel. God overruled in events, even Reuben's sin, to bring about this unexpected twist of history. God controls the unexpected twists and turns of history.

About 400 years after the time of Joseph, history took another unexpected turn. A large group of Hebrew slaves escaped *en masse* from Egypt, and became one of the greatest nations ever to live on the face of this earth! God overruled the satanic schemes of Pharaoh to kill all the male Hebrew babies. He preserved a little baby boy named Moses - and you know the rest of the story! God controls the unexpected twists and turns of history.

This doctrinal point is true in reference to nations, and it is also true of individuals - including you, and including me! God controls the unexpected twists and turns of our personal histories.

## **2. God controls the unexpected blessings and sorrows of life.**

*"But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)" (v7).*

The death of his beloved wife Rachel was a severe unexpected sorrow for Jacob. God allowed this to happen. We don't know all the reasons why, but we do know that Jacob recognized that God was in control. He changed Rachel's name for the child from Benoni, "son of my sorrow," to Benjamin, "son of my right hand." Even in his grief, that name change indicated that Jacob recognized that God was in control of this unexpected and grievous loss.

We also know that this unexpected sorrow prepared Jacob for great sorrows that were yet in the future. And the overall result of the sorrows in his life brought Jacob closer to the Lord.

Just this past week we received word that a Christian friend of ours was left partially paralyzed as a result of surgery - but she would be the first to tell you that she believes that God is in control. There are all kinds of unexpected sorrows in this life, but God controls all of them.

God also controls the unexpected blessings of our lives. Look at verse 11: *"And Israel said to Joseph, 'I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!'"* What an unexpected blessing! Jacob thought that he would never see Joseph again - but he did get to see Joseph again, and he got to see his grandchildren as well! What a blessing! Those of you who have grandchildren know exactly what I'm talking about. Look at the wonderful relationship in verse 10: *"Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them."* Unexpected blessing!

Last weekend at our home Bible study, a Christian couple shared the happy news that they are expecting a baby, and we all rejoiced together. They have been hoping to have a child for a long time, and felt perhaps they might never have children. But now an “unexpected blessing” has come along! They would be the first to tell you that this baby is an answer to many prayers. God is in control of the timing, and He has worked everything out perfectly. God controls the unexpected blessings and sorrows of life.

## Practical Application

### Let's pass on a legacy of faith!

Notice that the last days of Jacob were **God-centered** - not self-centered! We saw that at the end of chapter 47, and we see it in chapter 48 as well. No wonder Jacob's new name, “Israel,” was used much more than his old name, “Jacob,” in this chapter.

When Jacob spoke to Joseph, he didn't discuss the weather or conditions in his home in Goshen, and he didn't complain about the arthritis of his old age. No, his focus was on the Lord, and his main concern was to pass on the legacy of faith. In verse 3 Jacob told Joseph how God Almighty, “El Shaddai,” appeared to him at Luz. After meeting God there, Jacob gave “Luz” a new name: “Bethel,” which means “House of God.” Jacob related how God had appeared to him and communicated with him at Bethel - first, when he was running away from Esau (Genesis 28), and again when Jacob finally returned to the Land, as God wanted him to do (Genesis 35). Jacob wanted to pass on all that God had revealed to him of the covenant promises. He wanted to make sure he passed on this legacy of faith.

What about you? What about me? Will we pass on the legacy of faith? **It's *our responsibility!*** I'm so glad that my parents and my parents-in-law passed on the legacy of faith to me and to my wife. The things of God characterized their lives - including their last days. They passed on the legacy of faith, and it is our prayer that we'll pass on the legacy of faith to our family.

What kind of person will you be in your “Golden Years”? Will you be a complainer, because of the aches and pains and limitations of old age? Will you be bitter because no one seems to care about you anymore? Will you have a “poison tongue” and a vindictive spirit because you feel some people were unkind to you in the past (or in the present)? Or will you be like Jacob? Will you primarily be concerned about passing on the legacy of faith?

### Let's pass on the legacy of faith!