

# GENESIS 48: JACOB BLESSES JOSEPH'S SONS

## I. INTRODUCTION

- A. What was it like growing up for you if you were the firstborn?
  - i. What responsibilities did you have?
- B. What about if you were not the firstborn?
  - i. What was it like looking up to an older sibling?
- C. In Genesis 48 we find the birthright is passed from Abraham down to Joseph's sons
  - i. But it's done in such a way that would prevent it from passing on further
  - ii. Because one day another Man would inherit the birthright
    - a. Along with the rights and responsibilities that come with it

## II. CHAPTER OUTLINE

- A. Joseph visits his sick father – v. 1-2
- B. Jacob re-tells his story to Joseph – v. 3-7
- C. Joseph brings his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim to Jacob – v. 8-13
- D. Jacob blesses Manasseh and Ephraim – v. 14-20
- E. Jacob gives Joseph an inheritance in Canaan – v. 21-22

## III. AFTER THIS – V. 1

- A. After Jacob asked Joseph to bury him in Canaan

## IV. SUMMONED HIS STRENGTH – V. 2

- A. Jacob was revived at being told he would see Joseph just as before
  - i. Genesis 45:27 ***But when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.***

## V. LUZ – V. 3

- A. Or, Bethel
- B. This is actually a re-telling of the second time Jacob had a dream in Bethel
  - i. Genesis 35:11-15 ***And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you." Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with***

**him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.**

- ii. Shows that God has been with Jacob this entire time
  - a. From Bethel to Egypt

#### **VI. I WILL MAKE YOU – V. 4**

- A. This is not what God said in the original blessing
  - i. But Jacob understood that the blessing would be God's doing

#### **VII. THEY SHALL BE MINE – V. 5**

- A. Jacob is adopting Joseph's sons as his own
- B. Gives him a total of 13 sons
  - i. But 12 tribes are still listed in the OT
    - a. Often because Levi did not receive an inheritance

#### **VIII. AS REUBEN AND SIMEON – V. 5**

- A. Jacob's two firstborn sons
  - i. Joseph's two firstborn sons are taking their place
- B. Reuben should have received the inheritance of the firstborn
  - i. Included a double portion of the inheritance
    - a. Double portion means the son receives double what the others sons receive
    - b. Not like what many today call a double portion
- C. Instead Joseph is getting a double portion
  - i. 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; though Judah became strong among his brothers and a chief came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph)...***
  - ii. But it's being split between his sons
    - a. This will prevent the birthright from being passed down again among Israel<sup>1</sup>
    - b. Because 13 portions are split between 13 men

#### **IX. RACHEL DIED – V. 7**

- A. Unclear why Jacob includes this in his speech

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<sup>1</sup> Armstrong, S. (2013, June 30). *Genesis 2011 - Lesson 48A*. Verse By Verse Ministries. Retrieved March 16, 2024, from [https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis\\_2011\\_lesson\\_48a](https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_48a)

- i. One possibility is that Jacob felt he was robbed of time with Rachel
  - a. He thought he could have had more children with her
  - b. So he is adopting Joseph's sons to make up for the sons Rachel didn't have
- ii. Another possibility is it's connected to his request to be buried in Canaan
  - a. Genesis 47:29-30 ***And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place." He answered, "I will do as you have said."***
  - b. He may have felt guilty about not burying Rachel in Machpelah with his family
    - i. So he wanted to explain why he buried her on the road to Ephrath

#### **X. WHO ARE THESE – V. 8**

- A. We find out soon that Jacob is going blind
- B. He recognized Joseph because he was told he was coming

#### **XI. DIM WITH AGE – V. 10**

- A. Just like Isaac's eyes were dim with age
  - i. Genesis 27:1 ***When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son"; and he answered, "Here I am."***
  - ii. Symbolizes how his spiritual vision had dulled as well
    - a. He conspired with Esau to bless the wrong son
    - b. But blessed Jacob accidentally because he couldn't see
- B. Jacob's natural vision was dulled but his spiritual vision was sharpened
  - i. Even though Manasseh was the firstborn he knew Ephraim would become greater
  - ii. He would also accurately bless his sons in chapter 49

#### **XII. FROM HIS KNEES – V. 12**

- A. Bilhah bore children on Rachel's knees
  - i. Genesis 30:3 (NKJV) ***So she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her."***
- B. This is a phrase referring to adoption<sup>2</sup>

#### **XIII. HE BOWED HIMSELF – V. 12**

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<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (2010). *Be Authentic: Exhibiting Real Faith in the Real World: OT Commentary, Genesis 25-50*. David C. Cook.

- A. Joseph was the second most powerful man in the world
  - i. His entire family bowed to him
  - ii. But he still honored his father
    - a. Exodus 20:12 ***“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”***

#### **XIV. EPHRAIM IN HIS RIGHT HAND – V. 13**

- A. Because he was the youngest
- B. So Jacob would put his left hand on him

#### **XV. MANASSEH IN HIS LEFT HAND – V. 13**

- A. Because he was the oldest
- B. So Jacob would put his right hand on him
  - i. The right hand spoke of favor, strength, skill<sup>3</sup>
    - a. Exodus 15:6 ***Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.***
    - b. Psalm 16:11 ***You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.***
    - c. Psalm 20:6 ***Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand.***
  - ii. It was the place belonging to the firstborn

#### **XVI. CROSSING HIS HANDS – V. 14**

- A. So he blessed Ephraim as the firstborn
- B. Jacob intentionally blessed the youngest as the firstborn
  - i. Unlike Isaac who was deceived into doing it

#### **XVII. HE BLESSED JOSEPH – V. 15**

- A. Through blessing Joseph’s sons
  - i. Fathers are blessed when their children experience success

#### **XVIII. WALKED – V. 15**

- A. Ties Abraham’s family to earlier patriarchs<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Guzik, D. (2018). *Genesis 48 - Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons*. Enduring Word. Retrieved March 16, 2024, from <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-48/>

<sup>4</sup> Sailhamer, J. H. (2008). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (T. Longman & D. E. Garland, Eds.; Revised Edition). Zondervan.

- i. Genesis 5:22-24 ***Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.***
- ii. Genesis 6:9 ***These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.***
- B. Also tied to how the people of God should relate to God
  - i. Micah 6:8 ***He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?***

#### **XIX. MY SHEPHERD – V. 15**

- A. First time God is mentioned as a Shepherd
  - i. Jacob was a good shepherd so he related to God as his Good Shepherd
- B. In contrast to Jacob's words to Pharaoh
  - i. Genesis 47:9 ***And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning."***
  - ii. Jacob has had 17 years to reflect on God's leadership in his life

#### **XX. THE ANGEL WHO HAS REDEEMED ME – V. 16**

- A. Or, my kinsman-redeemer
  - i. Jacob recognizes God as his next of kin
  - ii. The one who would purchase him from death and exile
  - iii. God would eventually redeem Israel from slavery
    - a. Exodus 6:6 ***"Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.'"***

#### **XXI. LET MY NAME BE CARRIED ON – V. 16**

- A. His sons would take the name "Israel" for their nation

#### **XXII. AND THE NAME OF MY FATHERS – V. 16**

- A. God promised to make Abraham's name great
  - i. Genesis 12:2 ***And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.***

**XXIII. GROW INTO A MULTITUDE – V. 16**

- A. Continuation of the promise made to Abraham

**XXIV. WHEN JOSEPH SAW – V. 17**

- A. A form of the word “see” is used four times in relation to Jacob
  - i. But only once in relation to Joseph
  - ii. Jacob could not see with his eyes but he could see what God had planned
  - iii. Joseph could see with his eyes but he was blind to God’s plans
    - a. Joseph showed great wisdom previously but he didn’t have it here
    - b. We must not assume the gift of wisdom is permanent
    - c. We must constantly seek the Lord for wisdom

**XXV. NOT THIS WAY – V. 18**

- A. Joseph’s attempt to correct his father was an attempt to correct God
  - i. He had the history of his family to know God never chose the firstborn

**XXVI. I KNOW – V. 19**

- A. Jacob knew exactly what he was doing
- B. This was not a mistake due to poor eyesight

**XXVII. HIS YOUNGER BROTHER SHALL BE GREATER – V. 19**

- A. Ephraim would become the dominant tribe of the northern kingdom of Israel
  - i. Its name would become synonymous with Israel
    - a. Isaiah 7:17 ***“The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father’s house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria!”***

**XXVIII. A MULTITUDE OF NATIONS – V. 19**

- A. Ephraim would not physically become the ancestor of a multitude of nations
  - i. But the Gentiles would be brought into fellowship with God through Israel
    - a. Of which Ephraim would be the pre-eminent tribe
- B. More literally, a fullness of nations
  - i. Or, fill the nations (Rashi)
    - a. Isaiah 11:9 ***They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.***

**XXIX. ISRAEL WILL PRONOUNCE BLESSINGS – V. 20**

- A. Whenever a man wants to bless his son he will bless him with these words

- i. That he will be as fruitful as Ephraim and Manasseh
  - a. This is the complete opposite of our culture today in the west

**XXX. HE PUT EPHRAIM BEFORE MANASSEH – V. 20**

- A. Ephraim was now considered the firstborn
  - i. Jeremiah 31:9 ***With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.***
- B. The biblical concept of the firstborn does not refer to order of birth
  - i. But to the one who has pre-eminence<sup>5</sup>

**XXXI. I AM ABOUT TO DIE – V. 21**

- A. So Jacob is essentially writing down his will

**XXXII. GOD WILL BE WITH YOU – V. 21**

- A. Jacob recognized that God was always with him
  - i. So he could pass on that assurance to his son
- B. Jacob may die but God's presence would not leave his family

**XXXIII. BRING YOU AGAIN – V. 21**

- A. Joseph's bones would be brought up to Canaan
  - i. Joshua 24:32 ***As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph.***

**XXXIV. MOUNTAIN SLOPE – V. 22**

- A. Hebrew *shekem*
  - i. Literally, one portion of the land
  - ii. Sounds like Shechem, the city destroyed by Simeon and Levi
    - a. Shechem was situated between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal
- B. Jacob gave him this land because he wouldn't have his own tribe

**XXXV. THAT I TOOK – V. 22**

- A. Simeon and Levi actually took the town of Shechem
  - i. It could have been their inheritance

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<sup>5</sup> Guzik

- ii. But they did it wickedly
- iii. So Jacob took it from them and gave it to Joseph
- B. Ephraim and Manasseh are replacing Simeon and Levi
  - i. Simeon would be absorbed by the kingdom of Judah
    - a. Joshua 19:9 ***The inheritance of the people of Simeon formed part of the territory of the people of Judah. Because the portion of the people of Judah was too large for them, the people of Simeon obtained an inheritance in the midst of their inheritance.***
  - ii. Levi would not receive an inheritance of land
    - a. Deuteronomy 18:2 ***“The Levitical priests, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel. They shall eat the LORD's food offerings as their inheritance. They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them.”***
  - iii. This would be God’s punishment on them for destroying Shechem<sup>6</sup>
- C. Jesus would meet a woman at the well here
  - i. John 4:5 ***So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.***
  - ii. Sychar was very close to Shechem
  - iii. Often thought to be the same city<sup>7</sup>

#### **XXXVI. POINTS TO JESUS**

- A. Jesus is called the firstborn
  - i. Colossians 1:15 ***He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.***
    - a. Refers to his pre-eminence and position
    - b. Not that he is God’s literal flesh-and-blood created son
      - i. That would be Adam
      - ii. This is where many cults like JW go wrong
- B. The theme of the birthright has been prominent throughout Genesis
  - i. But now we are seeing the birthright reach its ending
  - ii. No one individual will receive it any longer

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<sup>6</sup> Wiersbe

<sup>7</sup> Sychar. Bible Gateway. Retrieved March 16, 2024, from <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Sychar>



- a. It now belongs to the nation as a whole
- iii. Jesus as the firstborn has received the birthright and inheritance
  - a. Psalm 2:7-8 ***I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.***
- C. Jesus is Israel's kinsman-redeemer as well as our own<sup>8</sup>
  - i. He became a man just like us
    - a. John 1:14 ***And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.***
  - ii. He was willing
    - a. John 10:17-18 ***"For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."***
  - iii. He had the ability
    - a. Romans 5:18-19 ***Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.***
  - iv. He paid the full price
    - a. Titus 2:11-14 ***For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.***
- D. Israel's name will be carried on forever because Jesus brought in the Gentiles
  - i. Amos 9:9-11 ***"For behold, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall to the earth. All the sinners of***

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<sup>8</sup> Haynes, Jr., C. L. (2022, April 28). *The Beautiful Truth of How Jesus Is Our Kinsman-Redeemer*. Crosswalk.com. Retrieved March 16, 2024, from <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/the-beautiful-truth-of-how-christ-is-our-kinsman-redeemer.html>

***my people shall die by the sword, who say, ‘Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.’ In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,” declares the LORD who does this.”***

- a. Amos tells of a time when Israel would go through intense judgment
  - i. Afterwards, they would possess not only the land of Canaan
  - ii. But other nations who God has claimed as his own
- ii. Acts 15:14-18 ***Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, “After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.”***
  - a. James reveals that the invitation is now open to all Gentiles
  - b. They can all be called by God’s name

#### **XXXVII. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

- A. Isaac led a righteous life but his vision grew dim in the end. Jacob had a difficult life of his own doing but in the end his spiritual vision was sharp. How do we make sure we maintain sharp spiritual vision?

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- B. Why do you think Paul chose to use the image of a firstborn son to describe Jesus?

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- C. What does it look like for Jesus to have pre-eminence in your life? What do you need to surrender to him?

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- D. When you reflect on your life, how have you seen God's leadership in your life that you may not have recognized at the time?

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- E. Why does God lead us through suffering rather than leading us out of suffering?

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- F. Why do you think Joseph didn't receive his own tribe in Israel? What lesson can we learn from this?

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- G. What are some specific ways that you can reveal Jesus the Redeemer to those around you?

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**XXXVIII. FURTHER STUDY**

- A. Based on the story in this chapter, what does Jesus seem to be doing in Matthew 19:13-15?

- B. How does Psalm 34:11-22 echo Jacob's story? What can you learn about God's nature and his heart for redemption in this Psalm?

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- C. Compare the lives of Isaac and Jacob. What does this chapter teach us about the importance of finishing our lives well (1 Timothy 4:6-8; Hebrews 12:1-2)?

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- D. What is our inheritance once we have been brought into God's family? See Romans 8:16-23; Ephesians 1:3-14; Titus 3:4-7; Revelation 21:1-7).

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- E. What are some ways in which the psalmist shared Jacob's experiences in Psalm 23? How have you experienced the reality of this psalm in your own life?

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- F. Why do you think Joshua 24:32 describes Shechem as the land Jacob bought, rather than the land he won in battle?

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