
GENESIS 48:1 After these things, someone said to Joseph, "Behold, your father is sick." He took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

Joseph, hearing that his father was near death, took his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and went to Goshen, to visit him, Gen 48:1. Jacob strengthens himself to receive them, Gen 48:2. Gives Joseph an account of God's appearing to him at Luz, and repeating the promise, Gen 48:3, Gen 48:4. Adopts Ephraim and Manasseh as his own sons, Gen 48:5, Gen 48:6. Mentions the death of Rachel at Ephrath, Gen 48:7. He blesses Ephraim and Manasseh, preferring the former, who was the younger, to his elder brother, Gen 48:8-17. Joseph, supposing his father had mistaken in giving the right of primogeniture to the youngest, endeavors to correct him, Gen 48:18. Jacob shows that he did it designedly, prophecies much good concerning both; but sets Ephraim the youngest before Manasseh, Gen 48:19, Gen 48:20. Jacob speaks of his death, and predicts the return of his posterity from Egypt, Gen 48:21. And gives Joseph a portion above his brethren, which he had taken from the Amorites, Gen 48:22.

Verse 1

One told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick - He was ill before, and Joseph knew it; but it appears that a messenger had been now dispatched to inform Joseph that his father was apparently at the point of death.

GENESIS 48:2 Someone told Jacob, and said, "Behold, your son Joseph comes to you," and Israel strengthened himself, and sat on the bed.

Verse 2

Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed - He had been confined to his bed before, (see Gen 47:31), and now, hearing that Joseph was come to see him, he made what efforts his little remaining strength would admit, to sit up in bed to receive his son. This verse proves that a bed, not a staff, is intended in the preceding chapter, Gen 47:31.

GENESIS 48:3 Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,

Verse 3

God Almighty - אֱלֹהֵי שָׁדַי El Shaddai, the all-sufficient God, the Outpourer and Dispenser of mercies, (see Gen 17:1), appeared to me at Luz, afterwards called Beth-El; see Gen 28:13; Gen 35:6, Gen 35:9.

GENESIS 48:4 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 seed after you for an everlasting possession.'

GENESIS 48:5 Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you into Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, will be mine.

Verse 5

And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh - are mine - I now adopt them into my own family, and they shall have their place among my twelve sons, and be treated in every respect as those, and have an equal interest in all the spiritual and temporal blessings of the covenant.

GENESIS 48:6 Your issue, whom you become the father of after them, will be yours. They will be called after the name of their brothers in their inheritance.

GENESIS 48:7 As for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was still some distance to come to Ephrath, and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (the same is Bethlehem)."

Verse 7

Rachel died by me, etc. - Rachel was the wife of Jacob's choice, and the object of his unvarying affection; he loved her in life - he loves her in death: many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. A match of a man's own making when guided by reason and religion, will necessarily be a happy one. When fathers and mothers make matches for their children, which are dictated by motives, not of affection, but merely of convenience, worldly gain, etc., etc., such matches are generally wretched; it is Leah in the place of Rachel to the end of life's pilgrimage.

GENESIS 48:8 Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, "Who are these?"

Verse 8

Who are these? - At Gen 48:10 it is said, that Jacob's eyes were dim for age, that he could not see - could not discern any object unless it were near him; therefore, though he saw Ephraim and Manasseh, yet he could not distinguish them till they were brought nigh unto him.

GENESIS 48:9 Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." He said, "Please bring them to me, and I will bless them."

GENESIS 48:10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he couldn't see. He brought them near to him; and he kissed them, and embraced them.

GENESIS 48:11 Israel said to Joseph, "I didn't think I would see your face, and behold, God has let me see your seed also."

Verse 11

I had not thought to see thy face - There is much delicacy and much tenderness in these expressions. He feels himself now amply recompensed for his long grief and trouble on account of the supposed death of Joseph, in seeing not only himself but his two sons, whom God, by an especial act of favor, is about to add to the number of his own. Thus we find that as Reuben and Simeon were heads of two distinct tribes in Israel, so were Ephraim and Manasseh; because Jacob, in a sort of sacramental way, had adopted them with equal privileges to those of his own sons.

GENESIS 48:12 Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

Verse 12

Joseph - bowed himself with his face to the earth - This act of Joseph has been extravagantly extolled by Dr. Delaney and others. "When I consider him on his knees to God," says Dr. Delaney, "I regard him as a poor mortal in the discharge of his duty to his Creator. When I behold him bowing before Pharaoh, I consider him in the dutiful posture of a subject to his prince. But when I see him bending to the earth before a poor, old, blind, decrepit father, I behold him with admiration and delight. How doth that humiliation exalt him!" This is insufferable! For it in effect says that it is a wondrous condescension in a young man, who, in the course of God's providence, with scarcely any efforts of his own, was raised to affluence and worldly grandeur, to show respect to his father! And that respect was the more gratuitous and condescending, because that father was poor, old, blind, and decrepit! The maxim of this most exceptionable flight of admiration is, that "children who have risen to affluence are not obliged to reverence their parents when reduced in their circumstances, and brought down by the weight of years and infirmities to the sides of the grave; and should they acknowledge and reverence them, it would be a mark of singular goodness, and be highly meritorious." Should positions of this kind pass without reprehension? I trow not. By the law of God and nature Joseph was as much bound to pay his dying father this filial respect, as he was to reverence his king, or to worship his God. As to myself, I must freely confess that I see nothing peculiarly amiable in this part of Joseph's conduct; he simply acquitted himself of a duty which God, nature, decency, and common sense, imperiously demanded of him, and all such in his circumstances, to discharge. To the present day children in the east, next to God, pay the deepest reverence to their parents.

Besides, before whom was Joseph bowing? Not merely his father, but a most eminent Patriarch; one highly distinguished by the Lord, and one of the three of whom the Supreme Being speaks in the most favorable and affectionate manner; the three who received and transmitted the true faith, and kept unbroken the Divine covenant; I Am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He has never said, I am the God of Joseph. And if we compare the father and the son as men, we shall find that the latter was exceeded by the former in almost endless degrees. Joseph owed his advancement and his eminence to what some would call good fortune, and what we know to have been the especial providence of God working in his behalf, wholly independent of his own industry,

etc., every event of that providence issuing in his favor. Jacob owed his own support and preservation, and the support and preservation of his numerous family, under God, to the continual exercise of the vast powers of a strong and vigorous mind, to which the providence of God seemed ever in opposition; because God chose to try to the uttermost the great gifts which he had bestowed. If therefore the most humble and abject inferior should reverence dignity and eminence raised to no common height, so should Joseph bow down his face to the earth before Jacob.

Besides, Joseph, in thus reverencing his father, only followed the customs of the Egyptians among whom he lived, who, according to Herodotus, (Euterpe, c. 80), were particularly remarkable for the reverence they paid to old age. "For if a young person meet his senior, he instantly turns aside to make way for him; if an aged person enter an apartment, the youth always rise from their seats;" and Mr. Savary observes that the reverence mentioned by Herodotus is yet paid to old age on every occasion in Egypt. In Mohammedan countries the children sit as if dumb in the presence of their parents, never attempting to speak unless spoken to. Among the ancient Romans it was considered a crime worthy of death not to rise up in the presence of an aged person, and acting a contrary part was deemed an awful mark of the deep degeneracy of the times. Thus the satirist: -

Credebant hoc grande nefas, et morte piandum,
Si Juvenis Vetulo non assurrexerat; et si
Barbato cuicumque puer.
Juv. Sat. xiii., v. 54.
And had not men the hoary heads revered,
Or boys paid reverence when a man appear'd.
Both must have died.
Dryden.

Indeed, though Dr. Delaney is much struck with what he thinks to be great and meritorious condescension and humility on the part of Joseph; yet we find the thing itself, the deepest reverence to parents and old age, practiced by all the civilized nations in the world, not as a matter of meritorious courtesy, but as a point of rational and absolute duty.

GENESIS 48:13 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 to him.

GENESIS 48:14 Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.

Verse 14

Israel stretched out his right hand, etc. - Laying hands on the head was always used among the Jews in giving blessings, designating men to any office, and in the consecration of solemn sacrifices. This is the first time we find it mentioned; but we often read of it afterwards. See Num 27:18, Num 27:23; Deu 34:9; Mat 19:13, Mat 19:15; Act 6:6; 1Tim 4:14. Jacob laid his right hand on the head of the younger, which we are told he did wittingly - well knowing what he was about, for (or although) Manasseh was the first-born, knowing by the Spirit of prophecy that Ephraim's posterity would be more powerful than that of Manasseh. It is observable how God from the beginning has preferred the younger to the elder, as Abel before Cain; Shem before Japheth; Isaac before Ishmael; Jacob

before Esau; Judah and Joseph before Reuben; Ephraim before Manasseh; Moses before Aaron; and David before his brethren. "This is to be resolved entirely into the wise and secret counsel of God, so far as it regards temporal blessings and national privileges, as the apostle tells us, Rom 9:11; See Clarke on Gen 25:23 (note). But this preference has no concern with God's conferring a greater measure of his love and approbation on one person more than another; compare Gen 4:7, with Heb 11:4, and you will see that a difference in moral character was the sole cause why God preferred Abel to Cain." - Dodd. The grace that converts the soul certainly comes from the mere mercy of God, without any merit on man's part; and a sufficiency of this is offered to every man, Tit 2:11, Tit 2:12. But it is not less certain that God loves those best who are most faithful to this grace.

GENESIS 48:15 He blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day,

Verse 15

He blessed Joseph - The father first, and then the sons afterwards. And this is an additional proof to what has been adduced under Gen 48:12, of Jacob's superiority; for the less is always blessed of the greater.

The God which fed me all my life long - Jacob is now standing on the verge of eternity, with his faith strong in God. He sees his life to be a series of mercies; and as he had been affectionately attentive, provident, and kind to his most helpless child, so has God been unto him; he has fed him all his life long; he plainly perceives that he owes every morsel of food which he has received to the mere mercy and kindness of God.

GENESIS 48:16 the angel who has 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. Let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Verse 16

The Angel which redeemed me from all evil - המלאך הגאֵל hammalac haggioel. The Messenger, the Redeemer or Kinsman; for so גאֵל goel signifies; for this term, in the law of Moses, is applied to that person whose right it is, from his being nearest akin, to redeem or purchase back a forfeited inheritance. But of whom does Jacob speak? We have often seen, in the preceding chapters, an angel of God appearing to the patriarchs; (see particularly Gen 16:7 (note)) and we have full proof that this was no created angel, but the Messenger of the Divine Council, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who then was the angel that redeemed Jacob, and whom he invoked to bless Ephraim and Manasseh? Is it not Jesus? He alone can be called Goel, the redeeming Kinsman; for he alone took part of our flesh and blood that the right of redemption might be his; and that the forfeited possession of the favor and image of God might be redeemed, brought back, and restored to all those who believe in his name. To have invoked any other angel or messenger in such a business would have been impiety. Angels bless not; to God alone this prerogative belongs. With what confidence may a truly religious father use these words in behalf of his children: "Jesus, the Christ, who hath redeemed me, bless the lads, redeem them also, and save them unto eternal life!"

Let my name be named on them - "Let them be ever accounted as a part of my own family; let them be true Israelites - persons who shall prevail with God as I have done; and the name of Abraham - being partakers of his faith; and the name of Isaac - let them be as remarkable for submissive obedience as he was. Let the virtues of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be accumulated in them, and invariably displayed by them!" These are the very words of adoption; and by the imposition of hands, the invocation of the Redeemer, and the solemn blessing pronounced, the adoption was completed. From this moment Ephraim and Manasseh had the same rights and privileges as Jacob's sons, which as the sons of Joseph they could never have possessed.

And let them grow into a multitude - וידגו לרב veyidgu larob; Let them increase like fishes into a multitude. Fish are the most prolific of all animals; see the instances produced on Gen 1:20 (note). This prophetic blessing was verified in a most remarkable manner; see Num 26:34, Num 26:37; Deu 33:17; Jos 17:17. At one time the tribe of Ephraim amounted to 40,500 effective men, and that of Manasseh to 52,700, amounting in the whole to 93,200.

GENESIS 48:17 When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him. He held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

GENESIS 48:18 Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father; for this is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."

Verse 18

Joseph said - Not so, my father - Joseph supposed that his father had made a mistake in laying his right hand on the head of the youngest, because the right hand was considered as the most noble, and the instrument of conveying the highest dignities, and thus it has ever been considered among all nations, though the reason of it is not particularly obvious. Even in the heavens the right hand of God is the place of the most exalted dignity. It has been observed that Joseph spoke here as he was moved by natural affection, and that Jacob acted as he was influenced by the Holy Spirit.

GENESIS 48:19 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 will be greater than he, and his seed will become a multitude of nations."

GENESIS 48:20 He blessed them that day, saying, "In you will Israel bless, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh'" He set Ephraim before Manasseh.

Verse 20

In thee shall Israel bless - That is, in future generations the Israelites shall take their form of wishing prosperity to any nation or family from the circumstance of the good which it shall be known that God has done to Ephraim and Manasseh: May God make thee as fruitful as Ephraim, and multiply thee as Manasseh! So, to their daughters when married, the Jewish women are accustomed to say, God make thee as Sarah and Rebekah! The forms are still in use.

GENESIS 48:21 Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you, and bring you again to the land of your fathers."

Verse 21

Behold, I die - With what composure is this most awful word expressed! Surely of Jacob it might be now said, "He turns his sight undaunted on the tomb;" for though it is not said that he was full of days, as were Abraham and Isaac, yet he is perfectly willing to bid adieu to earthly things, and lay his body in the grave. Could any person act as the patriarchs did in their last moments, who had no hopes of eternal life, no belief in the immortality of the soul? Impossible! With such a conviction of the being of God, with such proofs of his tenderness and regard, with such experience of his providential and miraculous interference in their behalf, could they suppose that they were only creatures of a day, and that God had wasted so much care, attention, providence, grace, and goodness, on creatures who were to be ultimately like the beasts that perish? The supposition that they could have no correct notion of the immortality of the soul is as dishonorable to God as to themselves. But what shall we think of Christians who have formed this hypothesis into a system to prove what? Why, that the patriarchs lived and died in the dark! That either the soul has no immortality, or that God has not thought proper to reveal it. Away with such an opinion! It cannot be said to merit serious refutation.

GENESIS 48:22 Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow."

Verse 22

Moreover I have given to thee one portion - **שֶׁכֶם אֶחָד** shechem achad, one shechem or one shoulder. We have already seen the transactions between Jacob and his family on one part, and Shechem and the sons of Hamor on the other. See Gen 33:18, Gen 33:19, and Genesis 24. As he uses the word shechem here, I think it likely that he alludes to the purchase of the field or parcel of ground mentioned Gen 33:18, Gen 33:19. It has been supposed that this parcel of ground, which Jacob bought from Shechem, had been taken from him by the Amorites, and that he afterwards had recovered it by his sword and by his bow, i. e., by force of arms. Shechem appears to have fallen to the lot of Joseph's sons; (see Jos 17:1, and Jos 20:7); and in our Lord's time there was a parcel of ground near to Sychar or Shechem which was still considered as that portion which Jacob gave to his son Joseph, Joh 4:5; and on the whole it was probably the same that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of money, Gen 33:18, Gen 33:19. But how it could be said that he took this out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and his bow, we cannot tell. Many attempts have been made to explain this abstruse verse, but they have all hitherto been fruitless. Jacob's words were no doubt perfectly well understood by Joseph, and probably alluded to some transaction that is not now on record; and it is much safer for us to confess our ignorance, than to hazard conjecture after conjecture on a subject of which we can know nothing certainly.

1. On filial respect to aged and destitute parents we have already had occasion to speak; see Gen 48:11. The duty of children to their parents only ceases when the parents are laid in their graves, and this duty is the next in order and importance to the duty we owe to God. No circumstances can alter its nature or lessen its importance; Honor thy father and thy mother is the sovereign,

everlasting command of God. While the relations of parent and child exist, this commandment will be in full force.

2. The Redeeming Angel, the Messenger of the covenant, in his preserving and saving influence, is invoked by dying Jacob to be the protector and Savior of Ephraim and Manasseh, Gen 48:16. With what advantage and effect can a dying parent recommend the Lord Jesus to his children, who can testify with his last breath that this Jesus has redeemed him from all evil! Reader, canst thou call Christ thy Redeemer? Hast thou, through him, recovered the forfeited inheritance? Or dost thou expect redemption from all evil by any other means? Through him, and him alone, God will redeem thee from all thy sins; and as thou knowest not what a moment may bring forth, thou hast not a moment to lose. Thou hast sinned, and there is no name given under heaven among men whereby thou canst be saved but Jesus Christ. Acquaint thyself now with him, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee.

3. We find that the patriarchs ever held the promised land in the most sacred point of view. It was God's gift to them; it was confirmed by a covenant that spoke of and referred to better things. We believe that this land typified the rest which remains for the people of God, and can we be indifferent to the excellence of this rest! A patriarch could not die in peace, however distant from this land, without an assurance that his bones should be laid in it. How can we live, how can we die comfortably, without the assurance that our lives are hid with Christ in God, and that we shall dwell in his presence for ever? There remains a rest for the people of God, and only for the people of God; for those alone who love, serve, reverence, and obey him, in his Son Jesus Christ, shall ever enjoy it.