

# CHAPTER 48

## INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 48

Joseph, hearing that his father Jacob was sick, paid him a visit, (<sup><040E></sup>Genesis 49:1,2); at which time Jacob gave him an account of the Lord's appearing to him at Luz, and of the promise he made unto him, (<sup><040B></sup>Genesis 49:3,4); then he adopted his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and blessed them, and Joseph also, (<sup><040E></sup>Genesis 49:5-16); and whereas he crossed his hands when he blessed the sons of Joseph, putting his right hand on the youngest, and his left hand on the eldest, which was displeasing to Joseph, he gave him a reason for so doing, (<sup><040E></sup>Genesis 49:17-20); and then assured him that God would bring him, and the rest of his posterity, into the land of Canaan, where he assigned him a particular portion above his brethren, (<sup><040E></sup>Genesis 49:21,22).

**Ver. 1.** *And it came to pass after these things*, etc.] Some little time after Jacob had sent for Joseph, and conversed with him about his burial in the land of Canaan, and took an oath to bury him there, for then the time drew nigh that he must die:

*that [one] told Joseph, behold, thy father [is] sick*; he was very infirm when he was last with him, and his natural strength decaying apace, by which he knew his end was near; but now he was seized with a sickness which threatened him with death speedily, and therefore very probably dispatched a messenger to acquaint Joseph with it. Jarchi fancies that Ephraim, the son of Joseph, lived with Jacob in the land of Goshen, and when he was sick went and told his father of it, but this is not likely from what follows:

*and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim*; to see their grandfather before he died, to hear his dying words, and receive his blessing.

**Ver. 2.** *And [one] told Jacob*, etc.] The same that came from Jacob to Joseph might be sent back by him to, his father, to let him know that he was coming to see him, or some other messenger sent on purpose; for it can hardly be thought that this was an accidental thing on either side:

*and said, behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee*; to pay him a visit, and which no doubt gave him a pleasure, he being his beloved son, as well as he was great and honourable:

*and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon his bed*; his spirits revived, his strength renewed, he got fresh vigour on hearing his son Joseph was coming; and he exerted all his strength, and raised himself up by the help of his staff, and sat upon his bed to receive his son's visit; for now it was when he blessed the sons of Joseph, that he leaned upon the top of his staff and worshipped, as the apostle says, (<sup>312</sup>Hebrews 11:21).

**Ver. 3.** *And Jacob said unto Joseph*, etc.] Being come into his bedchamber, and sitting by him, or standing before him:

*God Almighty appeared unto at Luz in the land of Canaan*; the same with Bethel, where God appeared, both at his going to Padanaram, and at his return from thence, (<sup>121</sup>Genesis 28:11-19 35:6-12); which of those times is here referred to is not certain; very likely he refers to them both, since the same promises were made to him at both times, as after mentioned:

*and blessed me*; promised he would bless him, both with temporal and spiritual blessings, as he did as follows.

**Ver. 4.** *And said unto me, behold, I will make thee fruitful*, etc.] In a spiritual sense, in grace and good works; in a literal sense, in an increase of worldly substance, and especially of children:

*and multiply thee*; make his posterity numerous as the sand of the sea:

*and I will make of thee a multitude of people*; a large nation, consisting of many tribes, even a company of nations, as the twelve tribes of Israel were;

*and I will give this land unto thy seed after thee, [for] an everlasting possession*; the land of Canaan, they were to possess as long as they were the people of God, and obedient to his law; by which obedience they held the land, even unto the coming of the Messiah, whom they rejected, and then they were cast out, and a "Loammi" (i.e. not my people, (<sup>209</sup>Hosea 1:9) written upon them, and their civil polity, as well as church state, at an end: and besides, Canaan was a type of the eternal inheritance of the saints in heaven, the spiritual Israel of God, which will be possessed by them to all eternity.

**Ver. 5.** *And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh,* etc.] Ephraim was the youngest, but is mentioned first, as he afterwards was preferred in the blessing of him:

*which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, before I came unto thee into Egypt;* and therefore must be twenty years of age, or upwards: for Jacob had been in Egypt seventeen years, and he came there when there had been two years of famine, and Joseph's sons were born to him before the years of famine began, (<sup>(415)</sup>Genesis 41:50); of these Jacob says, they

*[are] mine: as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine;* that is, by adoption; should be reckoned not as his grandchildren, but as his children, even as his two eldest sons, Reuben and Simeon; and so should be distinct tribes or heads of them, as his sons would be, and have a distinct part and portion in the land of Canaan; and thus the birthright was transferred from Reuben, because of his incest, to Joseph, who in his posterity had a double portion assigned him.

**Ver. 6.** *And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine,* etc.] The children of Joseph, that either were, or would be begotten after Ephraim and Manasseh; though whether ever any were is not certain; and this is only mentioned by way of supposition, as Jarchi interprets it, "if thou shouldst beget", etc. these should be reckoned his own, and not as Jacob's sons, but be considered as other grandchildren of Jacob's were, and not as Ephraim and Manasseh:

*[and] shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance;* they should not have distinct names, or make distinct tribes, or have a distinct inheritance; but should be called either the children of Ephraim, or the children of Manasseh, and should be reckoned as belonging either to the one tribe, or the other, and have their inheritance in them, and with them, and not separate.

**Ver. 7.** *And as for me, when I came from Padan,* etc.] From Syria, from Laban's house:

*Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan;* his beloved wife, the mother of Joseph, on whose account he mentions her, and to show a reason why he took his sons as his own, because his mother dying so soon, he could have no more children by her; and she being his only lawful wife, Joseph was of right to be reckoned as the firstborn; and that as such he might have the double portion, he took his two sons as his own, and put them upon a level

with them, even with Reuben and Simeon. By this it appears, as by the preceding account, that Rachel came with him into the land of Canaan, and there died:

*in the way, when yet [there was] but a little way to come unto Ephrath;* about a mile, or two thousand cubits, as Jarchi observes:

*and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath;* where she died, and dying in childbed, could not be kept so long as to carry her to Machpelah, the burying place of his ancestors; and especially as he had his flocks and herds with him, which could move but slowly; and what might make it more difficult to keep her long, and carry her thither, it might be, as Ben Melech conjectures, summertime; and the Vulgate Latin adds to the text, without any warrant from the original, “and it was springtime”; however, she was buried in the land of Canaan, and which is taken notice of, that Joseph might observe it: it follows,

*the same [is] Bethlehem;* that is, Ephrath; and so Bethlehem is called Bethlehem Ephratah, (<sup><38B></sup>Micah 5:2); whether these are the words of Jacob, or of Moses, is not certain, but said with a view to the Messiah, the famous seed of Jacob that should be born there, and was.

**Ver. 8.** *And Israel beheld Joseph’s sons,* etc.] Ephraim and Manasseh, of whom he had been speaking as if they were absent, and he might not know until now that they were present, for his eyes were dim that he could not see clearly, (<sup><49B></sup>Genesis 49:10); he saw two young men standing by Joseph, but knew not who they were, and therefore asked the following question:

*and said, who [are] these?* whose sons are they? the Targum of Jonathan is,

“of whom were these born to thee?”

as if he knew them to be his sons, only inquired who the mother of them was; but the answer shows he knew them not to be his sons, and as for his wife, he could not be ignorant who she was.

**Ver. 9.** *And Joseph said unto his father, they [are] my sons, whom God hath given me in this [place],* etc.] In the land of Egypt; he accounts his sons as the gifts of God, as children are, (<sup><9C></sup>Psalm 127:3); and it was not only a sentiment of the Jews, that children are the gift of God; hence the names of Mattaniah, Nathaniel, etc. but of Heathens, as the Greeks and

Romans, among whom are frequent the names of men which show it, as Theodorus, Deodatus, Apollodorus, Artemidorus, etc.

*and he said, bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them;* not in a common way, barely wishing them prosperity and happiness, but as a patriarch and prophet, under the influence and inspiration of the Spirit of God, declaring what would befall them, and what blessings they should be partakers of, in time to come.

**Ver. 10.** *Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age,* etc.] Or “heavy”<sup>f1858</sup>, that he could not lift them up easily and see clearly; his eyebrows hung over, his eyes were sunk in his head, and the humours pressed them through old age, that it was with difficulty he could perceive an object, at least not distinctly:

*[so that] he could not see;* very plainly, otherwise he did see the sons of Joseph, though he could not discern who they were, (<sup>OLD</sup>Genesis 49:8);

*and he brought them near unto him;* that he might have a better sight of them and bless them:

*and he kissed them, and embraced them:* as a token of his affection for them.

**Ver. 11.** *And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face,* etc.] Some years ago he never expected to have seen him any more; he had given him up for lost, as a dead man, when his sons brought him his coat dipped in blood; and by reason of the long course of years which passed before ever he heard anything of him:

*and, lo, God hath showed me also thy seed;* it was an additional favour to see his offspring; it can hardly be thought, that in a course of seventeen years he had been in Egypt, he had not seen them before, only he takes this opportunity, which was the last he should have of expressing his pleasure on this occasion.

**Ver. 12.** *And Joseph brought them out from between his knees,* etc.] Either from between his own, where they were kneeling, as he was sitting, in order that they might be nearer his father, to receive his blessing by the putting on of his hands; or rather from between his father’s knees, he, as Aben Ezra observes, sitting on the bed, having kissed and embraced them, they were still between his knees; and that they might not be burdensome

to his aged father, leaning on his breast, and especially, in order to put them in a proper position for his benediction, he took them from thence, and placed them over against him to his right and left hand:

*and he bowed himself with his face to the earth*; in a civil way to his father, and in reverence of him; in a religious way to God, expressing his thankfulness for all favours to him and his, and as supplicating a blessing for his sons through his father, under a divine influence and direction.

**Ver. 13.** *And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand*, etc.] He took Ephraim his youngest son in his right hand, and led him up to his father, by which means he would stand in a right position to have his grandfather's left hand put upon him:

*and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand*; Manasseh his eldest son he took in his left hand, and brought him to his father, and so was in a proper position to have his right hand laid upon him, as seniority of birth required, and as he was desirous should be the case:

*and brought [them] near unto him*; in the above manner, so near as that he could lay his hands on them.

**Ver. 14.** *And Israel stretched out his right hand*, etc.] Not directly forward, but across, or otherwise it would have been laid on Manasseh, as Joseph designed it should by the position he placed him in:

*and laid [it] upon Ephraim's head, who [was] the younger*, the right hand being the strongest and most in use, as it was reckoned most honourable to sit at it, so to have it imposed, as being significative of the greater blessing:

*and his left hand upon Manasseh's head*; who was the older:

*guiding his hands wittingly*; this was not done accidentally, but on purpose: or made his "hands to understand"<sup>f1859</sup>, they acted as if they understood what he would have done, as Aben Ezra; as if they were conscious of what should be, or would be; though he could not see clearly and distinctly, yet he knew, by the position of them before him, which was the elder and which was the younger: he knew that Joseph would set the firstborn in such a position before him as naturally to put his right hand on him, and the younger in such a position as that it would be readiest for him to put his left hand on him; and therefore, being under a divine impulse and spirit of prophecy, by which he discerned that the younger was to have the

greater blessing, he crossed his bands, or changed them, and put his right hand on Ephraim, and his left hand on Manasseh:

*for Manasseh [was] the firstborn*; or rather, though <sup>f1860</sup> he was the firstborn, as Aben Ezra.

**Ver. 15.** *And he blessed Joseph*, etc.] In his sons who were reckoned for him, and became the heads of tribes in his room:

*and said, God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk*; in whom they believed, whom they professed, and whom they feared, served, and worshipped, and with whom they had communion:

*the God which fed me all my long unto this day*; who had upheld him in life, provided for him all the necessaries of life, food and raiment, and had followed him with his goodness ever since he had a being, and had fed him as the great shepherd of the flock, both with temporal and spiritual food, being the God of his life, and of his mercies in every sense.

**Ver. 16.** *The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads*, etc.] Ephraim and Manasseh, now about twenty years old or upwards: this is not to be understood of a created angel he wishes to be their guardian, but of an eternal one, the Son of God, the Angel of God's presence, the Angel of the covenant; the same with the God of his father before mentioned, as appears by the character he gives him, as having "redeemed [him] from all evil"; not only protected and preserved him from temporal evils and imminent dangers from Esau, Laban, and others; but had delivered him from the power, guilt, and punishment of sin, the greatest of evils, and from the dominion and tyranny of Satan the evil one, and from everlasting wrath, ruin, and damnation; all which none but a divine Person could do, as well as he wishes, desires, and prays, that he would "bless" the lads with blessings temporal and spiritual, which a created angel cannot do; and Jacob would never have asked it of him:

*and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac*; having adopted them, he foretells they would be called not only the sons of Joseph, but the children of Israel or Jacob, and would have a name among the tribes of Israel, and be heads of them, as well as would be called the seed of Abraham and of Isaac, and inherit their blessings: and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth; where they increased as fishes, as the word signifies <sup>f1861</sup>, and more than any other of the tribes; even in the times of Moses the number of them were 85,200 men fit for

war, (<sup>0254</sup>Numbers 26:34,37); and their situation was in the middle of the land of Canaan.

**Ver. 17.** *And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him,* etc.] To see the younger preferred to the elder; parents, generally speaking, having the greatest regard to the firstborn with respect to honour and estate, and to them, in those times, the patriarchal blessing particularly was thought to belong; but it did not always go to them, but to the younger, as in Jacob's own case:

*and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head;* he took him by the right hand, and lifted it up from the head of Ephraim, and held it in order that he might put it by his direction on the head of Manasseh.

**Ver. 18.** *And Joseph said unto his father, not so, my father,* etc.] It is not right, it should not so be, that the right hand should be put on the youngest, and the left hand on the eldest;

*for this [is] the firstborn;* directing him to Manasseh, and seeking to guide his hand towards him:

*put thy right hand upon his head;* Joseph was for proceeding according to the order of birthright, but Jacob was directed by a spirit of prophecy, as follows.

**Ver. 19.** *And his father refused,* etc.] To have any alteration made, and therefore, though Joseph lifted it up from Ephraim's head and held it over it, Jacob put it on again and went on with the blessing:

*and said, I know [it], my son, I know [it];* he knew what he did, and he repeats it to confirm it, as well as to show the vehemency of his mind, and his resolution to abide by what he had done; he knew on whom he laid his right hand, and he knew that Manasseh was the firstborn: so the Targum of Jonathan:

*and he also shall become a people;* a tribe or nation:

*and he also shall be great;* in number, riches, and honour:

*but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he;* more numerous, as the tribe of Ephraim was, than that of Manasseh, when they came out of Egypt; for in numbering them there appeared to be 8300 more in the one



tribe than in the other, (<sup><041E3></sup>Numbers 1:33,35), as well as more honourable; Ephraim's standard was placed before Manasseh's, (<sup><042E8></sup>Numbers 2:18,20); and upon the division of the tribes in Rehoboam's time, as Jeroboam was of the tribe of Ephraim, that tribe was at the head of the ten tribes, and the seat of the kingdom was in it, and the whole kingdom of Israel often goes by the name of Ephraim:

*and his seed shall become a multitude of nations*; that is, of families, for as nations are called families, (<sup><310E></sup>Amos 3:1,2); so families may be called nations; the Targum of Onkelos is,

“his sons shall be rulers among the people,”

so Joshua, who was of the tribe of Ephraim, conquered and subdued the nations of the Canaanites, and Jeroboam of this tribe ruled over the ten tribes or nations of Israel: it may be rendered, “his seed shall fill the nations”<sup>f1862</sup>, or be “the fulness” of them; which Jarchi interprets of the whole world being filled with the fame and renown of Joshua, who was of this tribe, when the sun and moon stood still in his days; but it is best to understand this of the large share he should have of the land of Canaan among the rest of the tribes or nations of Israel.

**Ver. 20.** *And he blessed them that day*, etc.] That Joseph visited him, and this he did “by faith”; believing that what he had said concerning them would be accomplished, as the apostle observes, (<sup><812E></sup>Hebrews 11:21);

*saying, in thee shall Israel bless*; in Joseph, as the Targum of Jonathan, that is, in his seed, in his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, when the Israelites blessed any, they should make use of their names:

*saying, God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh*: as great and honourable, as rich and wealthy, as fruitful and prosperous as they; and the Targum says, this custom continues with the Jews to this day, to put their hands on persons to bless them; if a son, they say,

“God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh;”

if a daughter,

“God make thee as Sarah and Rebekah:”

*and he set Ephraim before Manasseh*; not only in this form of benediction, but in all that he had said and done before; he preferred him to Manasseh

by putting his right hand upon him, and giving him the superior blessing: and it is no unusual thing for the younger to be set before the elder, both by God and man, but especially by the Lord, who seeth not as man seeth, and proceeds not according to carnal descent, or those rules men go by: there had been many instances before this, as Abel was preferred to Cain, Shem to Japheth, Abraham to Nahor, Isaac to Ishmael, and Jacob to Esau; as there were after it, as Moses to Aaron, and David to his brethren.

**Ver. 21.** *And Israel said unto Joseph, behold, I die,* etc.] Expected to die very shortly; and he not only speaks of it as a certain thing, and what would quickly be, but with pleasure and comfort, having no fear and dread of it on him, but as what was agreeable to him, and he had made himself familiar with:

*but God shall be with you;* with Joseph and his posterity, and with all his brethren, and theirs, to comfort and support them, to guide and counsel them, to protect and defend them, to carry them through all they had to endure in Egypt, and at length bring them out of it; he signifies he was departing from them, but God would not depart from them, whose presence would be infinitely more to them than his; and which, as it made him the more easy to leave them, so it might make them more easy to part with him:

*and bring you again unto the land of your fathers;* the land of Canaan, where their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had dwelt, and which was given to them and theirs for an inheritance, and where Joseph and his brethren had lived, and would be brought thither again, as the bones of Joseph were, and as all of them in their posterity were in Joshua's time.

**Ver. 22.** *Moreover, I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren,* etc.] The word for "portion" is "Shechem", and which some take to be, not an appellative, as we do, but the name of a city, even Shechem; so the Targum of Jonathan and Jarchi interpret it; and though that is not directly meant, yet there is a reference had to it, and it seems to be enigmatically understood; for this portion or parcel spoken of was near to Shechem, and not only that, but the city itself, and all the adjacent country, came to the lot of Ephraim, and were possessed by that tribe:

*which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow;* not referring, as some think, to the taking and spoiling of the city of Shechem by his sons, and so said to be done by him in them; for Jacob

would never make that his act and deed, which he so much abhorred and detested, and still did, as appears by what he says of it in the following chapter; nor was this taken from the Amorite, but from the Hivite, and not by his sword and bow, whether taken literally or metaphorically, and so interpreted of his prayer and supplication, as by Onkelos; but he was so far from assisting in that affair by supplication, that his imprecations fell on Levi and Simeon, for that fact of theirs: if this is to be understood of the city of Shechem, what Aben Ezra and Ben Gersom propose seems most agreeable, that this is said by way of anticipation, the past tense being put for the future; Jacob, under a spirit of prophecy, foreseeing and declaring that his sons, and he in his sons in future time, would take it out of the hands of the Amorites, the principal of the Canaanitish nations, and then it should be given to Joseph's seed; but the first and special regard is to the part or parcel of ground which lay near Shechem; and this Jacob is said to take by his sword and bow, which some interpret of his money, which were his arms and defence, and which he had got by much labour; and if it could be proved that his money was marked with a sword and bow upon it, as the Persian Darics were with an archer with his bow and arrow, and therefore called sagittaries or archers <sup>f1863</sup>, it would countenance this sense; though even then it could not with propriety be said that he by this means obtained it of the Amorite, since he bought it of the children of Hamor the Hivite; but it seems more likely, that after Jacob departed from Shechem to Hebron, the Amorite came and seized on this parcel of ground; which he hearing of, went with his sons and servants, and recovered it out of their hands by his sword and bow; though this warlike action of his is nowhere recorded in Scripture, the Jewish writers <sup>f1864</sup> say, that Jacob and his sons had very grievous war with the Amorites on account of the slaughter and captivity of the Shechemites: by giving to Joseph this portion above his brethren, it appears that the birthright was become his, he having the double portion, and indeed all that Jacob had of his own in the land of Canaan; and hence Joseph's bones were buried here, it being his own ground; (see ~~Gen~~ Joshua 24:32 ~~John~~ John 4:5).