

# Pentwater Bible Church

*Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons  
Genesis Message Eighty - Five  
Genesis 47: 27-48: 1-22*



Jacob Blesses Ephraim & Manasseh, Rembrandt 1656

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## Genesis Message Eighty-Five

### JACOB BLESSES JOSEPH'S CHILDREN

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Daniel E. Woodhead

#### Review:

#### JACOB IS WELCOMED BY PHARAOH

#### Genesis 47: 1-10

Jacob had arrived in Egypt and was met with the royal procession led by Joseph to give them the best welcome imaginable. Joseph approached Pharaoh to let him know that his brothers had returned with his father to immigrate to Egypt. It was Pharaoh that had extended the invitation so it was only proper that Joseph announced their arrival to him upon their arrival. He let Pharaoh know that they had arrived along with their flocks and herds as well as their possessions. Joseph told him that according to plan they are now in Goshen. Pharaoh was probably in Memphis. Joseph then selected five of the brothers to represent the entire family and presented them to Pharaoh. Just as Joseph had anticipated Pharaoh asked them what their occupations were. This was a question that would give Pharaoh some insight as to their ability to earn a living in Egypt. He would not want a family coming into the countries that were not able to provide for themselves. They did not respond as Joseph had instructed them to reply to his question. Joseph told them to use the term cattle not shepherds. They ignored Joseph's instructions and told Pharaoh that they were shepherds and have always been shepherds. They followed this with their reasons for coming, which were due to the famine that it had reached everywhere. Then very politely they requested if they could stay in the land of Goshen. Pharaoh did not seem to mind their occupation and even suggested there would be additional work for some of them keeping his cattle in the kingdom. Pharaoh as promised told them that they have free and unlimited access to the best facilities in Goshen.

At this juncture Joseph brought in Jacob his father to meet Pharaoh. Here were two great men meeting for the first time. Pharaoh the mightiest ruler of the greatest nation on the earth at that time, and the man God had chosen to develop His Covenant and build the nation Israel into a mighty force in the world. Jacob's first expression of greeting to Pharaoh was to bless him. It is not clear if Pharaoh realized the power that could come through Jacob as a child of Jehovah God. He blessed him for all he had done for Joseph and now for his family rescuing them from the famine and giving them a safe place to live. Interestingly Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he was by saying, "*How many are the days of the years of thy life?*" Jacob responded by saying that he was a hundred thirty but added that, "*few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.*" What Jacob was saying was that the "few" meant that they went by quickly and he probably looked older than he actually was. His use of the term evil was meant to express that fact that his life had been filled with toil and trouble or calamities. He was comparing his life to that of Abraham and Isaac who had appreciably less trouble in their

lives and lived longer. Abraham made it to one hundred seventy five and Isaac the longest living patriarch lived to be one hundred eighty years old. After this conversation Jacob again blessed Pharaoh then went out from his presence. The finality of the text here implies that the two never met again.

#### THE FAMILY SETTLES IN GOSHEN

Genesis 47: 11-12

Joseph then installed his family under Pharaoh's command in the best spot he could provide for them in Egypt. They were given the property in which they would reside. They owned it and Joseph made them permanent residents. The text here calls the area of Goshen the land of Rameses. Rameses was a latter Pharaoh. The word Goshen does not appear in some ancient Egyptian writings but the name it had in latter times was the district of Rameses (Exodus 1:11). It is quite probably that Moses when he was compiling the various different authors who had written segments of Genesis decided to call this area Rameses after the name of the region when he was in Pharaoh's household. The district of Goshen is now the modern province of el Sharkiyeh on the east side of the Nile, towards Saudi Arabia, and is still the most fertile and productive province of Egypt.

#### THE FAMINE IN FOUR STAGES

##### STAGE ONE

Genesis 47: 13-14

Within the Bible there is a Law of Recurrence. It introduces a concept in one section and adds color and details later. This one such sections. It gives additional details about the famine that was introduced earlier. In the first stage of the famine all the liquid funds were depleted. The famine was affecting the land of Egypt and Canaan as well which of course affirmed the need for the Jews to leave Canaan and sojourn in Egypt for food and as it were protection under Joseph. Joseph was wholly honest and brought all the revenues collected into the government treasury. He did not siphon any off for himself. He trusted God and followed God's ways which so far had always been the best way in the long run. So the need of the populations of both Canaan and Egypt to purchase grain had depleted both their treasuries.

##### STAGE TWO

Genesis 47: 15-17

When their money finally was expended the Egyptians came to the government asking for food. They said they did not want to die, especially in front of the government. Joseph remained in control of the situation and did not simply give them what they asked for. He had planned well and would have a good idea how much grain was already used, the rate the population was using it and, how much he would need to last throughout the seven-year famine. He had to ration the grain so it would last and he would not resort to welfare at this point in the famine. So he told them to trade their cattle for the grain if they wanted to eat since they were out of money.

## STAGE THREE

### Genesis 47-22

It was now the second year of the famine and there was no abatement. It would run for the seven years that Joseph had prophesied in response to Pharaoh's dreams. They did bring their livestock in to him in exchange for bread during the first year. So now in the second year with the need for additional food and no livestock to trade they offered themselves as bondservants and to sell their land to the government in exchange for food. Joseph did not force this upon the Egyptian citizens. He knew he had to ration the food and still have resources to last throughout the famine. If the people bought the food themselves either with cash, barter or indenturing themselves they would be more frugal with the food than if it was simply given to them. If it were just given to them they would not be frugal with it, because it would have come too easy. When one works for something its value is realized. So in exchange for their land and servitude they wanted food and seed for which to try and later plant crops themselves. The famine would not last forever and when it did some meaningful crops would be ready to sow near the end of the seven years. Their new role would be sharecroppers of the land they previously had owned.

As Joseph accepted their offer he implemented it right away. He bought all their land for the government and the land became Pharaoh's. Then he moved all the people from the rural areas into the cities where the grain had been stored. There was one exception to the land acquisition and that was the property owned by the priests. They received a governmental grant. The priesthood in Egypt was a very powerful organization in ancient times, which was supported by the government. It would continue to be supported regardless of the status of the famine. Joseph also had a vested interest in preserving this group, as his father in law was Potiphara the priest of On. He would provide for him and others in that class which was the elite in Egypt.

## STAGE FOUR

### Genesis 47: 23-26

Joseph now announces the status of the land transfer and his offer to lease the land back to them as sharecroppers. They were removed from the land and settled in the cities and were about to go back when the time was right to start working the land. This time however they would give twenty percent of the harvests to Pharaoh. They agreed because Joseph and his prudent planning had saved their lives and their country. This was a small price to pay for what they had received. In any event they had given the government twenty percent tax in the seven years just prior to the famine. This would not be a hardship for them. Joseph enacted this agreement into law. The priesthood would also be exempt from this tax Here the text *unto this day* means that this law was in effect at least to the time when Moses (Cir. 1443 B.C.) compiled the various individual accounts of the segments of Genesis. This further means that the Pharaoh of the Exodus was still realizing the benefit of Joseph's careful planning and astute implementation of his plans even though he did not realize or appreciate it (Exodus 1: 8).

## Today's Message:

### JACOB NOW LIVES IN EGYPT

#### Genesis 47: 27-31

*<sup>27</sup>And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; and they gat them possessions therein, and were fruitful, and multiplied exceedingly. <sup>28</sup>And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were a hundred forty and seven years. <sup>29</sup>And the time drew near that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found favor in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me: bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt; <sup>30</sup>but when I sleep with my fathers, thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. <sup>31</sup>And he said, Swear unto me: and he sware unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head (ASV 1901).*

The text of Genesis 47: 27 states the bountiful existence the Hebrews enjoyed in Egypt under Joseph living in the Eastern Nile Delta. They experienced growth in their possessions, food and family. Over the seventeen years that Jacob lived with his family in Egypt they increased at least an average of five percent per year. This would put their family size nearly one hundred seventy individuals at this time. Jacob saw the effects of the famine in Canaan for two years prior to moving to Egypt. It lasted five years more once he got there. Jacob lived to be one hundred forty seven. His demise is told in extraordinary detail, and several scenes come between the account of his lifespan and his death. Near the time he was sure he was about to die he called Joseph to make an oath regarding his burial. He did not want to be buried in Egypt. It was not his home and it was not the home of his father and grandfather.

So on the certainty of Joseph's loyalty, which had been established throughout his life he called for him to be his executor. The established practice to signify a solemn oath was to place the hand under the thigh to the other party while the oath was being stated. Israel was about to sleep with his fathers. The Hebrew word for father and ancestor is *av* and Joseph is making a direct reference to his knowledge of the hereafter. He realized that his body would go into the ground but his spirit would go to meet with his ancestors. Israel wanted to be buried in the cave at Machpelah. Joseph swore an oath to do as his father said to do. Jacob was crippled up with old age and drew himself up upon his bed to support himself as he bowed his head in assent to God as an act of worship. He was comforted that his trusted son Joseph would carry out his final wishes.

### JOSEPH IS CALLED TO JACOB'S BED

#### Genesis 48: 1-7

*<sup>1</sup>And it came to pass after these things, that one said to Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. <sup>2</sup>And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and*

*Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. <sup>3</sup>And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, <sup>4</sup>and said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a company of peoples, and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. <sup>5</sup>And now thy two sons, who were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine. <sup>6</sup>And thy issue, that thou begetteth after them, shall be thine; they shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. <sup>7</sup>And as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when there was still some distance to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way to Ephrath (the same is Beth-lehem) (ASV 1901).*

Later an unnamed servant notified Joseph that Jacob had taken ill. He was now one hundred forty seven years old and any illness could be fatal. Jacob knew he had little time left so he wanted to again speak about his unfinished business to Joseph. The next two chapters will detail the rest of Jacob's account of his life and what will follow his family after he has gone to be with the Lord. Interestingly he is the only patriarch to die on foreign soil.

Upon receiving the notice of Jacob's illness he goes to see him along with his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh who were now about eighteen to twenty years old. As Joseph approached Jacob, Jacob strengthened himself by pulling himself up on the bed to be receptive to Joseph. Jacob begins to relate his experiences with God as he received the Abrahamic Covenant from Him.

He starts by recalling the first time God appeared to him in Bethel in the land of Canaan. Bethel and Luz are interchangeable names for the same place. Jacob also is designating Joseph as the birthright heir. This would give him a double portion of the blessings according to the practice at that time. Jacob restates the essential components of the Covenant as, *God blessed me, and said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a company of peoples, and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.* Giving him a large household had fulfilled the *first* promise. The *second* was to multiply him, which was a national blessing. The nation Israel did come from him. *Third*, this promise was to make him a company of peoples, which are the twelve tribes that came from Jacob. *Fourth*, came the promise of the Land for an everlasting possession. So reconfirming the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant that passed to Jacob was a promise of the Land, seed, and the blessings.

Following the reconfirmation of the blessed Covenant Jacob officially adopts Joseph's two sons. Surely this surprised Joseph. Jacob then incorporated these two into the number of his descendants. They were born in Egypt so technically they would not be heirs unless he made a formal declaration to adopt them. He wanted them to receive an equal share in the promised inheritance with his own eldest sons. In other words "*thy two sons, who were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine.*" Ephraim and Manasseh will replace Ruben and Simeon in the birth order for blessing through Joseph. I Chronicles 5: 1-2 states that while Judah had the preeminence of the tribes,

Joseph had the birthright and with this adoption the two sons of Joseph legally were heirs of Jacob.

The other sons of Joseph which he mentions as “*thy issue, that thou begettest after them, shall be thine; they shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.*” are not mentioned anywhere; but their descendants are at any rate included in the families of Ephraim and Manasseh mentioned in Numbers 26: 28–37; 1 Chronicles 7:14–29. Insofar as the adoption was concerning inheritance, Joseph was placed in the position of the first-born. (1 Chronicles 5:2). Joseph’s mother, Rachel was also honored with this. This explains the allusion made by Jacob in verse seven to his beloved Rachel, the wife of his affections, and to her death—how she died by his side on his return from *Padan* (for *Padan-Aram*, the only place in which it is so called, Genesis 25: 20), without living to see her first-born exalted to the position of Viceroy of Egypt and savior of Israel. He was honoring her too.

#### JACOB BLESSES EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH

Genesis 48: 8-21

*<sup>8</sup>And Israel beheld Joseph’s sons, and said, Who are these? <sup>9</sup>And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me here. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. <sup>10</sup>Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. <sup>11</sup>And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath let me see thy seed also. <sup>12</sup>And Joseph brought them out from between his knees; and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. <sup>13</sup>And 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 unto him. <sup>14</sup>And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the first-born. <sup>15</sup>And he blessed Joseph, and said, The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God who hath fed me all my life long unto this day, <sup>16</sup>the angel who hath 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; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. <sup>17</sup>And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father’s hand, to remove it from Ephraim’s head unto Manasseh’s head. <sup>18</sup>And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father; for this is the first-born; put thy right hand upon his head. <sup>19</sup>And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: howbeit his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. <sup>20</sup>And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee will Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh (ASV 1901).*

Jacob's eyes were probably covered with cataracts and he was unable to see Ephraim and Manasseh when Joseph brought them into Jacob's presence. Once identified he told Joseph that he wanted to be close to them and had Joseph bring them near. He embraced the sons and kissed them. Jacob had the intention of blessing them but Joseph thinks the real purpose is so he can see them through the cataracts at a closer distance. Jacob says that he never thought he would see Joseph again after he thought he was dead some fifty-nine years ago. Now he has adopted his sons as his own for inheritance purposes. Joseph had the two young men close in front of himself and he bowed himself low to the ground in submission to his father the family patriarch. *And 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 unto him.* Joseph positioned the sons as he thought they should be blessed the eldest first then the youngest. For 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 unto him.* Manasseh would be on Jacob's right hand to receive the higher blessing as the first born of the two. Then unexpectedly, Israel placed his right hand on *Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the first-born.* Jacob knew what he was doing as the text says he *placed his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly.* In other words he knew what he was doing. The sons were close to him in proximity and he could properly identify them regardless of his poor eyesight.

Israel then proceeded to conduct the blessing of the two sons. He does it through Joseph, because the blessing of the sons is a blessing of their father. Jacob focuses on the covenant he received from God who had led him lovingly as a sheep all his life. Even though there were many adversarial experiences during his life God preserved him through them all. He even mentions the Angel of Jehovah who wrestled with him and changed his name to Israel. After these few words of blessing he says, *“let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”* With this, the adoption and blessing is complete.

Joseph then notices that the blessing was crisscrossed and he was displeased at the thought of a mistake of this magnitude. So he *held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.* He corrected his father as to which son was the correct first-born. He just assumed that Jacob's poor eyesight was the issue. Jacob assured him that it was no mistake. He intended it that way and did not change hands. Ephraim the youngest would have the benefits of the first-born. In doing so he said the *“younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.”* Ephraim became the most dominant tribe and name. Ephraim had lower population numbers than Manasseh at most of the counts (Numbers 26; 28-37) but is listed on a higher order of the tribal chiefs (Numbers 7: 48-53; 7: 54-59). Sometimes the name Ephraim is used in place of Israel (Isaiah 7: 2, 7: 5. 7: 9, 7: 17; Hosea 9: 3-16). Although more numerous than Ephraim shortly before the conquest of Canaan (Cir. 1400 B.C.), Manasseh did not compare with Ephraim in wealth, power, and population in later times; Western Manasseh never completely expelled the natives (Joshua 17: 12; Judges 1: 27). He set Ephraim before Manasseh.



## RETURN TO THE LAND PROPHECY

Genesis 48: 21-22

*<sup>21</sup>And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God will be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. <sup>22</sup>Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow (ASV 1901).*

As Jacob is near death he says to Joseph that God will be with him and he as well as the Israelites will go back to the Land. The Jews will go back in the Exodus and Joseph would eventually be brought back too and buried there. Jacob references the extra portion that Joseph would receive through his two sons. The land he is specifically giving to Joseph is Shechem, which was taken by the sword during the incident of the rape of Dinah. Jacob had also purchased property during his sojourn there, which is where he built his home. This is the also very place within Manasseh's territory where Joseph would be buried.

Joshua 24: 32

*<sup>32</sup>And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money: and they became the inheritance of the children of Joseph (ASV 1901).*

NEXT WEEK: JACOB BLESSES & PROPHECIES OVER HIS SONS

**Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments**

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