GENESIS

Chapter 48

*Manasseh and Ephraim*

**Some time later Joseph was told, “Your father is ill.” So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim along with him. 2 When Jacob was told, “Your son Joseph has come to you,” Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed. 3 Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me 4 and said to me, ‘I am going to make you fruitful and will increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.’ 5 “Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. 6 Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers. 7 As I was returning from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan while we were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath. So I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath” (that is, Bethlehem). 8 When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, “Who are these?” 9 “They are the sons God has given me here,” Joseph said to his father. Then Israel said, “Bring them to me so I may bless them.” 10 Now Israel’s eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see. So Joseph brought his sons close to him, and his father kissed them and embraced them. 11 Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too.” 12 Then Joseph removed them from Israel’s knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. 13 And Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel’s left hand and Manasseh on his left toward Israel’s right hand, and brought them close to him. 14 But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim’s head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh’s head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn. 15 Then he blessed Joseph and said, “May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, 16 the Angel who has delivered me from all harm —may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly upon the earth.” 17 When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim’s head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father’s hand to move it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. 18 Joseph said to him, “No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.” 19 But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations.” 20 He blessed them that day and said, “In your name will Israel pronounce this blessing: ‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.’ ” So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. 21 Then Israel said to Joseph, “I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers. 22 And to you, as one who is over your brothers, I give the ridge of land I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow.”**

**48:3** *God Almighty.* See note on 17:1. *Luz.* The older name for Bethel (see 28:19). (CSB)

**48:5** *your two sons … will be reckoned as mine.* Jacob would adopt them as his own. (CSB)

There would be no tribe of Joseph. Jacob’s adoption of Joseph’s two sons gave Joseph a double share when Canaan was later divided (Jsh 13–22) and allowed 12 divisions in the land of Canaan, even though the priestly tribe (Levi) would be landless. (TLSB)

*Ephraim and Manasseh.* See v. 1 for the expected order, since Manasseh was Joseph’s firstborn (see 41:51). Jacob mentions Ephraim first because he intends to give him the primary blessing and thus “put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh” (v. 20). (CSB)

*mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine.* Joseph’s first two sons would enjoy equal status with Jacob’s first two sons (35:23) and in fact would eventually supersede them. Because of an earlier sinful act (see 35:22 and note), Reuben would lose his birthright to Jacob’s favorite son, Joseph (see 49:3–4; 1Ch 5:2), and thus to Joseph’s sons (see 1Ch 5:1). (CSB)

**48:6** *children born to you after them will be yours.* They would take the place of Ephraim and Manasseh, whom Jacob had adopted. (CSB)

Though Jacob had adopted Ephraim and Manasseh, he did not adopt Joseph’s other children or grant them a special inheritance. Descendants of Joseph’s other children would live in the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh. (TLSB)

*in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers.* They would perpetuate the names of Ephraim and Manasseh for purposes of inheritance (for a similar provision see 38:8 and note; Dt 25:5–6). Joseph’s territory would thus be divided between Ephraim and Manasseh, but Levi (Jacob’s third son; see 35:23) would receive “no share of the land” (Jos 14:4). The total number of tribal allotments would therefore remain the same. (CSB)

**48:7** *Paddan.* That is, Paddan Aram, meaning “plain of Aram,” another name for Aram Naharaim (see note on 24:10). (CSB)

*Rachel died.* See 35:16–19. Adopted by Joseph’s father, Ephraim and Manasseh in effect took the place of other sons whom Joseph’s mother, Rachel, might have borne had she not died. (CSB)

*Ephrath.* See note on 35:16. (CSB)

**48:8** *Israel … asked, “Who are these?”* Either because he had never met them or because, being old, he could not see them clearly. (CSB)

**48:10** *because of old age … he could hardly see.* See note on 27:1. (CSB)

*kissed them and embraced them.* While they were on Jacob’s knees (see v. 12), probably symbolizing adoption (see note on 30:3). (CSB)

**48:12** *removed them from his knees*. Luther: “It is strange that those two men of such size and age were in the embrace of Joseph’s father. I think, however, that the sons sat beside Jacob while he was lying on his bed. Moses calls this sitting in his embrace or at his knees, namely, at his side or at his feet. Therefore Joseph orders them to rise from the side and falls on his knees with both of them before Jacob, who is sitting on his bed. For this was the custom; they received the blessing on bended knees and with the gesture of worshipers” (AE 8:159). (TLSB)

**48:13–20** See note on Ac 6:6. (CSB)

**48:13** *Manasseh … toward Israel’s right hand.* Joseph wanted Jacob to bless Manasseh, Joseph’s firstborn, by placing his right hand on Manasseh’s head. (CSB)

Joseph placed his older son, Manasseh, by Jacob’s right hand and the younger son, Ephraim, by the left, anticipating the greater blessing for the older son. (TLSB)

**48:14** *laid it on the head*. Luther: “The custom of the laying on of hands is very ancient and was also transferred by the fathers into the New Testament.… This has been employed as a ceremony of the fathers, the prophets, and the whole church at all times when they entrusted an office or some administration to a person” (AE 8:159). (TLSB)

*crossing his hands*. His crossed hands gave priority to the younger Ephraim. Luther: “According to this rule, the first-born remains the first-born on the basis of legal justice and the command of God. But God, who is the Author and Lord of the Law, sets bounds to it or breaks it and appoints Jacob and Isaac as the first-born after rejecting Esau and Ishmael. Jacob does the same thing here with the two sons” (AE 8:160). (TLSB)

**48:15** *blessed.* As his father Isaac had blessed him (27:27–29). (CSB)

*Joseph.* Used here collectively for Ephraim and Manasseh (see NIV text note on v. 21). (CSB)

He blessed the two sons of Joseph. (TLSB)

*before whom … Abraham and Isaac … walked.* See notes on 5:22; 17:1. (CSB)

*shepherd.* An intimate royal metaphor for God (see Ps 23:1), used in Genesis only here and in Jacob’s later blessing of Joseph (49:24). (CSB)

**48:16** *Angel.* See note on 16:7. The angel—God himself—had earlier blessed Jacob (see 32:29; see also note on 32:24). (CSB)

Parallel with “God … God” in v 15. The Son of God, the uncreated Messenger of the Lord. (TLSB)

*name be carried on*. Although Joseph’s sons by birth, they would be identified as adopted sons of Jacob. (TLSB)

**48:19** *his younger brother will be greater than he.* See note on 25:23. During the divided monarchy (930–722 b.c.), Ephraim’s descendants were the most powerful tribe in the north. “Ephraim” was often used to refer to the northern kingdom as a whole (see, e.g., Isa 7:2, 5, 8–9; Hos 9:13; 12:1, 8). (CSB)

**48:20** *he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.* Jacob, the younger son who struggled with Esau for the birthright and blessing and who preferred the younger sister (Rachel) above the older (Leah), now advanced Joseph’s younger son ahead of the older. (CSB)

**48:21** *Joseph.* See note on v. 15. (CSB)

*I am about to die.* Years later, Joseph spoke these words to his brothers (50:24). (CSB)

*God will be with you*. With His grace, consolation, and help. (TLSB)

**48:22** *ridge of land.* The Hebrew for this phrase is identical with the place-name Shechem, where Joseph was later buried in a plot of ground inherited by his descendants (see Jos 24:32; see also 33:19; Jn 4:5). (CSB)

Joseph himself would later be buried at Shechem. Cf 33:18–19; 34:25–27. (TLSB)

*I took from the Amorites.* Possibly referring to the event of 34:25–29. (CSB)

**Ch 48** Jacob (Israel) adopts and blesses Joseph’s sons. Though born in Egypt to an Egyptian mother, they have full status as “children of Israel,” people through whom God will bless the world. Like their father, Joseph, we must learn not to value human convention over God’s Word and purposes. As Jacob adopted Ephraim and Manasseh, God has graciously adopted us in Holy Baptism (Gal 3:27–4:7). • “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Your might and come to save us! Restore us, O God; let Your face shine, that we may be saved!” (Ps 80:1–3). Amen. (TLSB)