

GENESIS

Chapter 48

Jacob Blesses Manasseh and Ephraim

After this, Joseph was told, “Behold, your father is ill.” So he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. 2 And it was told to Jacob, “Your son Joseph has come to you.” Then Israel summoned his strength and sat up in bed. 3 And Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, 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 offspring after you for an everlasting possession.’ 5 And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. 6 And the children that you fathered after them shall be yours. They shall be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. 7 As for me, when I came from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).” 8 When Israel saw Joseph’s sons, he said, “Who are these?” 9 Joseph said to his father, “They are my sons, whom God has given me here.” And he said, “Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.” 10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. So Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. 11 And Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face; and behold, God has let me see your offspring also.” 12 Then Joseph removed them from his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. 13 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 him. 14 And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands (for Manasseh was the firstborn). 15 And he blessed Joseph and said, “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, 16 the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.” 17 When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he took his father’s hand to move it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. 18 And Joseph said to his father, “Not this way, my father; since 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 also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations.” 20 So he blessed them that day, saying, “By you Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, ‘God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.’” Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh. 21 Then Israel said to Joseph, “Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your fathers. 22 Moreover, I have given to you rather than to your brothers one mountain slope that I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow.”

48:3 *Luz.* The older name for Bethel (see 28:19). (CSB)

48:5 *your two sons ... are 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 shall 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)

name of their brothers in their inheritance. They would perpetuate the names of Ephraim and Manasseh for purposes of inheritance. 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. (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)

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

48:10 *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 *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. (CSB)

He blessed the two sons of Joseph. (TLSB)

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.* The angel—God himself—had earlier blessed Jacob. (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 shall be greater than he.* 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 *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 *one mountain slope.* 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)