

# THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

## Part 2

### The Birthright Blessings go to Ephraim & Manasseh

By Dave Ramey

In the last Study, Jacob officially received the Covenant Promise from God, the same Promise given to his father Isaac, and his grandfather Abraham. This blessing to Jacob from God came after he had made the ‘pillar’ of stone his pillow, and had anointed it because of the dream he had while asleep upon it, and had wrestled with the angel, overcoming, and now Jacob was on the way to live with Laban, his mother’s brother, in the land Haran (Mesopotamia) (Gen.29:1). More on this ‘stone of destiny’ will be covered later in these studies.

When Jacob came to the land Paddan Aram, he worked for his uncle Laban under contract for to wed Rachel, Laban’s daughter. Jacob had to take Leah, Laban’s elder daughter to wife first, and then Rachel later. By these daughters of Laban, and their handmaids, Jacob begat twelve sons. Reuben was the oldest and the rightful heir to the birthright Promise (Gen.29). However, Reuben ‘defiled his father’s bed with one of Jacob’s wives, Bilhah, the handmaid of Rachel. This diverted the ‘birthright blessing’:

Gen 35:22 And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine: and Israel heard *it*. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve:

Naturally then, the next in line should have been Simeon, the second son of Jacob, and then Levi ... Judah, and so on, but it was not to be. Jacob then dwells in Canaan with his twelve sons, the twelve tribes of Israel, being from eldest to youngest: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and the youngest, Benjamin (Gen.30). Israel (Jacob) favored Joseph more than his other sons, and his brethren hated him for this. Then Joseph had a dream and told to his brothers and to his father Jacob (Israel):

Gen 37:5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told *it* his brethren: and they hated *him* yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, “Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 For, behold, *we were* binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.”

This was a prophetic dream showing that Joseph and his offspring would receive the ‘birthright’ blessings of God’s Covenant Promise to Israel. Joseph had yet another dream which his father Jacob even wondered at:

Gen 37:9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told *it* his brethren, and said, “Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.”

10 And he told *it* to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, “What *is* this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall *I* and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?”

What Jacob has said about Joseph being over all the other tribes is a fact, concerning the ‘Birthright Blessings’ of God’s Covenant Promise. This will be further revealed as we go along. The original Covenant Promise included the ‘Scepter’ of Rulership also, but that Royal Scepter went to Judah:

Gen 49:10 The Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him *shall* the gathering of the people be.

Ps 60:6 God hath spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

7 Gilead *is* Mine, and Manasseh *is* Mine; Ephraim also *is* the strength of Mine head; Judah *is* My lawgiver;

This is Jacob blessing his sons in Gen.49. That the Royal ‘Scepter’ will always stay with Judah is fixed. It cannot change outside the tribe of Judah. Only with the coming of The True King Jesus Christ (Shiloh), will the Scepter be handed over from the tribe of Judah. This is very important to keep in mind during these studies. With the tribe of Judah is the care of The Law, meaning God’s Law, not man’s. God through Moses gave Judah The Law. Much of this Law still stands today; It is not done away with as many would think. Our United States Constitution is based upon this same God’s Law handed down to His People. Naturally then, some foreigners (not all), within America who are not of God’s People wish to change this Law for their own reasons. This would be equal to someone from a foreign nation going to Jerusalem and wishing to change God’s Law there also (I’m not saying it hasn’t happened already in some degrees though, the importance of the matter is that God set up certain chosen Peoples to guard and protect It.)

1 Chr 5:1 Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (*for he was* the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father’s bed, **his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright.**

2 For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him *came* the chief ruler; **but the birthright was Joseph’s.**

With the above verses can be seen that the Covenant Promise originally given to Abraham, was divided into two parts, the heritage of ‘Scepter Rulership’ to Judah, and secondly the ‘Birthright Blessing’ to Joseph. What were some of the events which may have led to this? Let’s continue the story of Joseph.

Going back to Joseph and his brothers being envious of his dreams, they plotted against him (Joseph) to slay him, but Reuben and Judah talked the other brothers out of it, and it was decided to sell him into slavery. As his brothers had cast Joseph into an empty pit, while talking it over what to do with him, some Medianite merchants came by, pulled Joseph out of the pit, and the merchants sold Joseph, not his brothers. This put the cap on their crime so to speak; there was no turning around now. Joseph’s brothers then had to smear lamb’s blood on Joseph’s multi-colored coat which his father Jacob had made for him, and then say to their father that Joseph was dead (Gen.37). As Joseph was sold into Egypt, he progressed by his God given ability to interpret Pharaoh’s dream, and was set up as second in rule over all Egypt. In that land Joseph took Asenath for wife, the daughter of Potiphara, priest of On (Gen.41:45). Asenath bear Joseph two sons, Manasseh the eldest, and Ephraim. The story of Joseph’s trials in Egypt, and the reconciliation with his family is a wonderful study, and I strongly suggest you read the account in Genesis starting around Chapter 37.

Gen 41:50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potiphara priest of On bare unto him.

51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: “For God”, *said he*, “hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house.”

52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: “For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

Jacob and all his offspring move to the land of Goshen in Egypt with Joseph, and Jacob (Israel) is near death and Joseph brings his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim unto Jacob.

Gen 48:3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, “GOD ALMIGHTY appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed *me*,

4 And said unto me, ‘Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee *for* an everlasting possession.’

### **The Birthright Blessing Goes to Joseph’s Sons**

Jacob (Israel) is preparing to carry over the Birthright blessing which God gave him at ‘Luz’. Notice the phrase ‘everlasting possession’? This means even unto the eternity. There is nothing here about divine rule, as that belongs to the tribe of Judah.

Gen 48:5 And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, *are* mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

6 And thy issue, which thou begets after them, shall be thine, *and* shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.

In these verses, Jacob is bringing the sons of Joseph born to him in Egypt, into the National Name Israel. Manasseh and Ephraim are to be figured among the twelve tribes of Israel. Since Israel is the Covenant Birthright Name, this same name is delivered over from Jacob (also named ‘Israel’ by God), to Manasseh and Ephraim. God is giving us many hints at the conditions of ‘names’ dealing with heritage with this idea of Joseph carrying over the Name Israel.

Gen 48:13 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 unto him.

14 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 firstborn.

Now Israel (Jacob) had bad eyesight, but his right hand which is for the elder firstborn blessing was on Ephraim, the younger. Then came the blessing Promise from God given through Abraham and Isaac and Israel:

Gen 48:15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, “God, before Whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God Which fed *me* all my life long unto this day.

16 The Angel which 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.”

With this blessing the National Name of Israel is transferred to Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, with Ephraim the younger receiving the direct transfer of the ‘Birthright Blessing’, and will later also be called ‘Israel’, being the larger of all the other tribes. In many places later in The Old Testament, one will discover the names ‘house of Israel’, ‘Ephraim’, ‘Joseph’, and ‘Samaria’. This word ‘Samaria’ was the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, with the other tribes included, **except** Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, which made up the Southern Kingdom of Israel, referred to in Scripture as the ‘house of Judah’, or ‘Judah’. This will be brought out more as we continue.

Gen 48:18 And Joseph said unto his father, “Not so, my father: for this *is* the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.”

19 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: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.”

Joseph is trying to correct his father’s placement of his hands in the blessing, but divine providence overruled here. Ephraim the younger would become ‘*a multitude of nations*’.

Now it’s time to stop and think for a moment. If Ephraim was to become ‘*a multitude of nations*’, which definitely means more than the Nation State of Israel today, then which nations are they? Likewise, if Manasseh was to become ‘*a great people*’ and nation, then they must also be excluded from today’s land of Israel in the Middle East. This word ‘*nations*’ in v.19 is ‘*gowy*’ in the Hebrew meaning ‘*a foreign nation; hence, a Gentile*’ (Strong’s no.1471). A good question here might be, ‘How can a people be figured as Gentile and be called ‘Israel’ at the same time?’ Well, we don’t have a good trace on the lineage of Joseph’s wife Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara, priest of the Egyptian city of On. So Ephraim and Manasseh are half Israelite (Joseph) and half Gentile (Egyptian). They are ‘adopted’ sons so to speak. So it was, and is, God’s Plan, to scatter His People among the Gentiles, so they who believe on Christ Jesus as Savior, might become also, the adopted ‘sons of God’ in ‘one’, of both Israelite and Gentile (see John 1; Rom.8-9).

**It is important to understand about names for Judah also.** The word ‘Jew’ wasn’t used until the split between the northern part of Israel and the southern part, and it can apply to someone of the bloodline tribe of Judah, or to someone of foreign birth who happens to live in Judea, and take the name ‘Jew’ (see Esther 8:17). Those Israelites born from the other tribes **are not** Jewish. So one born of the tribe of Judah can be called both ‘Jew’, and also an Israelite from their heritage in Jacob (Israel). Mainly then, the word ‘Jew’ purely applies to the tribe of Judah only.

For example, someone born of the Israelite tribes of Dan or Zebulun are not Jews, but they are Israelites, having Jacob also as their lineage. When one comes to realize this matter, and that those in Israel today claiming to be direct descendents from Isaac call themselves Jews, then where are the rest of the other tribes? It can easily be seen from Scripture that the number of the other tribes way outnumbered Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, with Ephraim being the largest before the split. So where are they? Some try to teach that all the other tribes mixed in with Judah, Benjamin, and Levi all in Judea (around Jerusalem), but the Book of Ezra gives us which tribes of Israel actually returned to Jerusalem after the captivities and how many: a mere approx. 44,000. The majority returning to Jerusalem along with Judah, Benjamin, and Levi were Nethinims (Nethinims were non-Israelites. They served as slaves in the temple because there were not enough Levites. Many of the Nethinims were descendants of the Gibeonites), foreigners from other nations, i.e., Gentiles, as recorded in Ezra. It is not written in The Word that the other tribes of Israel returned from the Assyrian captivity.

Gen 48:20 And he blessed them that day, saying, “In thee shall Israel bless, saying, ‘God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh.’” and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

21 And Israel said unto Joseph, “Behold, *I* die: but God shall be with you, and bring *you* again unto the land of your fathers.

22 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.”

Through this ‘Birthright Blessing’, Joseph received a double portion, which is the meaning of ‘*one portion above thy brethren*’. As Ephraim and Manasseh are counted with the twelve tribes of Israel, with

the double portion given through Joseph, we now have 'thirteen tribes', Ephraim taking the place of Joseph in carrying the largest portion of the Birthright, and Manasseh being the 'thirteenth', the second portion of the Birthright. Remember this number 'thirteen', it is a very important symbol for part of the 'house of Israel'. This is why we find the interchange of those names such as 'Joseph', 'Ephraim', 'Samaria', and 'house of Israel', swapped back and forth in Old Testament prophecy. They all refer to the 'Birthright' Blessing of God's Covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is the reason for so much confusion when studying the Books of the prophets. If one didn't understand God's Covenant Promises, then you would think that the 'house of Judah', the 'house of Israel', 'Joseph', 'Ephraim', 'Samaria', and 'Jerusalem' all meant the complete whole twelve tribes of Israel.

Remember back to God's original Covenant Blessing to Abraham, that *"in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"* (Gen.12:3); and to Jacob *"And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."* Gen.28:14. You should realize that this can not mean just the little land over in the Middle East today called Israel. If God's Word and Covenant Promise to Abraham be true, then many other peoples are involved. And as we have seen with the 'Birthright' blessings to Joseph's two sons, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh are no longer found in the Israel state in the Middle East.

In this Study we have covered mainly one part of God's Covenant Promise to Abraham, that of the Birthright Blessing of wealth, resources, etc. The other part of Divine Rule was and is to stay with Judah until Shiloh (Jesus Christ) returns to set up His Kingdom upon this earth (Rev.20). The Covenant portion dealing with the Seed bloodline also stayed with Judah, that is, the lineage from 'the man Adam' down to Christ (I Chr.5).

After the Exodus from Egypt of all 'thirteen tribes' back to Canaan, the first Nation state called Israel was set up, eventually with the first earthy king by the name of Saul. David was crowned king of Israel after Saul's departure, and Ephraim was the largest populated tribe of Israel which lived in the northern geographical section of Israel. Judah's 'stay' was in Jerusalem, the capital of all Israel. In the next Letter, we'll start with the dividing up of Israel into two separate kingdoms, with two separate capital cities, Jerusalem in the south, and Samaria in the north.

Peace be with you in Christ Jesus,  
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