

## An Overview of Genesis 47:1-49:33 and Deuteronomy 33:1-29 With Focus Directed upon the Blessings to Joseph By: Dr. Roger Luther

### Genesis 47

<sup>1</sup> Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they *[are]* in the land of Goshen. <sup>2</sup> And he took some of his brethren, *[even]* five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. <sup>3</sup> And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What *[is]* your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants *[are]* shepherds, both we, *[and]* also our fathers. <sup>4</sup> They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine *[is]* sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen. <sup>5</sup> And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: <sup>6</sup> The land of Egypt *[is]* before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest *[any]* men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.

Although Joseph had previously spoken to Pharaoh about his father and brothers, before us we note that Joseph announced their arrival to Pharaoh and then he proceeded in selecting five of the new emigrants and personally introduced them to Rameses. One is inclined to consider that Pharaoh may have possibly attributed Joseph's genius to his Father. In any case, Pharaoh willingly extended an invitation for some of Joseph's qualified relatives to be overseers of his precious cattle. In addition, Pharaoh not only displayed confidence in Joseph but, Joseph's introduction of Jacob to Pharaoh set the stage for a relationship of on-going respect and admiration between these two very different leaders. Joseph quickly proceeded with getting his entire family settled down on an already predetermined parcel of some of Egypt's finest land. Joseph's perpetual actions of caring for their every need continued to magnify his complete forgiveness of his brethren.

<sup>7</sup> And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. <sup>8</sup> And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old *[art]* thou? <sup>9</sup> And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage *[are]* an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. <sup>10</sup> And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh. <sup>11</sup> And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. <sup>12</sup> And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to *[their]* families. <sup>13</sup> And *[there was]* no bread in all the land; for the famine *[was]* very sore, so that the land of Egypt and *[all]* the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. <sup>14</sup> And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. <sup>15</sup> And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the

Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth. <sup>16</sup> And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. <sup>17</sup> And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread [in exchange] for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year. <sup>18</sup> When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide [it] from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: <sup>19</sup> Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give [us] seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate. <sup>20</sup> And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's. <sup>21</sup> And as for the people, he removed them to cities from [one] end of the borders of Egypt even to the [other] end thereof. <sup>22</sup> Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion [assigned them] of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands. <sup>23</sup> Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, [here is] seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. <sup>24</sup> And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. <sup>25</sup> And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. <sup>26</sup> And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, [that] Pharaoh should have the fifth [part]; except the land of the priests only, [which] became not Pharaoh's. <sup>27</sup> And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly. <sup>28</sup> And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years. <sup>29</sup> And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace 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 I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their buryingplace. 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.

It is safe to assume that during his seventeen years in Egypt Jacob must have observed Joseph at work and realized that his son was a responsible, loving, and a fair prince. Also, observing and understanding how God had used Joseph to preserve the Egyptians as well as the entire clan, he was firmly convicted that if any man would be led of God in the future to care for his family it was, undoubtedly, Joseph.

We now see Jacob about to commission and to repay his son. First, he sent for Joseph. Secondly, he asked if he had found “*grace*” (*khane*) in his sight. Joseph answered with silence. This answer seemed to give Jacob the necessary peace to proceed. It is as if Jacob desired to only proceed if Joseph deemed his father a man worthy of such an act. The old warrior of God was certainly testing his son. Thus, Jacob had carefully laid the foundation for the next phase of his intentions. We may also safely surmise that Joseph understood quite well that that his father was about to introduce a very serious matter. Jacob proceeded with his intentions by directing Joseph

to take an oath by placing his open hand under his thigh (or perhaps generative parts) and lifting up. To Jacob, this was the highest form of oath taking. The word for “*swear*” is *shaw-bah*. It carries the meaning - to *seven oneself*. That is: Jacob asked Joseph to assure him seven times that, when the proper time arrived, his committal service would be in the land promised by God. Therefore, by Joseph taking this type of oath, not only would he be reflecting his sincerity, allegiance, and character but also he would be swearing upon the entire lineage line containing God’s promises. Joseph willingly complied.

Jacob had now settled two of his life’s greatest matters. First, he could now die in peace with the assurance of ending up in the Promised Land. Secondly, Joseph had proven himself trustworthy enough to assume the responsibility and accept the up-coming family blessing. In all probability, Joseph must have expected some sort of blessing but certainly nothing on the scale he was about to discover. The following parallel passage continues the narrative.

### Genesis 48

<sup>1</sup> And it came to pass after these things, that [one] told 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 multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee [for] an everlasting possession. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> And thy issue, which thou begetteth after them, shall be thine, [and] shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. <sup>7</sup> And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet [there was] but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same [is] Bethlehem. <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 in this [place]. 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 shewed me also thy seed. <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 firstborn. <sup>15</sup> 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, <sup>16</sup> 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. <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 firstborn; 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: but truly 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 shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. <sup>21</sup> And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall 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.

Although he was a long way from Canaan, the old patriarch knew that one day his entire family would be in the land God had promised to grandfather Abraham.<sup>i</sup> Joseph had previously sworn to his father that he would bury him in Canaan but Jacob realized Joseph's need to understand that God had very special plans for him and his family in Canaan.

Thus, we begin looking at this most interesting blessing. The narrative seems to imply that soon after taking the oath Joseph received word of Jacob's illness. He quickly returned only this time he was accompanied by his two sons – Ephraim (“*double fruit*”) and Manasseh (“*causing to forget*”). The boys were probably around eighteen to twenty years of age at this time. When Joseph arrived, Jacob immediately, “**strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed,**” welcomed him, and then proceeded with informing Joseph of a very special covenant God initiated with him at Bethel a long time before.<sup>ii</sup>

Jacob continued his conversation with Joseph by informing him of his willingness to bless him, adopt his two Egyptian-born sons as his own, and present to them an inheritance of their own distinguished by their respective names.

Just being with Joseph must have directed the old patriarch's memory toward the death of Rachel - Joseph's mother for, we read, he quickly delivered an overview of her death. Although years had passed, nothing, accept the possibility of God's providence with Joseph, had filled this tremendous void in Jacob's heart.

Jacob detected the presence of some figures with Joseph. Without doubt, Jacob had seen Ephraim and Manasseh before but now his eyesight had evidentially deteriorated to the point where he no longer could identify the boys. Joseph, realizing that his father was about to pronounce a blessing upon his sons, attempted to assist his father by carefully placing the boys in front of him so as he would not make a mistake. He positioned Ephraim near his left hand and Manasseh near his right. Joseph believed this act would insure the proper blessing to each son. Yet, we clearly see God's providential work in the text. First, Jacob pronounced a blessing upon Joseph and his sons in a general way. Secondly, Jacobs next act perplexed Joseph. Jacob placed his opened right hand upon Ephraim and his opened left hand on Manasseh. This was opposite of how Joseph had positioned the lads to begin with. His arms make an x or a type of cross. Joseph tried to correct his father's hands but Jacob lovingly rebuked him. Without a doubt, God had directed Jacob's maneuver for we read that Jacob guided “**his hands wittingly**”.

The three soon discovered that, although the older would receive a blessing, the younger would receive the inheritance<sup>iii</sup> and double blessing<sup>iv</sup> usually given to the firstborn<sup>v</sup>. Although in reality, Reuben was Jacob's firstborn and in direct line for the first-born's double inheritance and blessing, Jacob, even in his old age, had never forgotten the time when Reuben brought great

shame on his family by lying with his father's concubine—Billah, as recorder in Genesis 35:21. The Bible records, in our very next chapter, **“Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: 4 Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.” (Gen. 49:3-4)** Another reference to this shameful act, and its repercussions, is recorder in the Chronicles, **“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.” (1Chr.5:1)**

Joseph learned that he would have a portion **“above thy brethren”** and that this portion was the one his father had taken as spoils from the Amorites (*“the westerner”*). What could the Amorites have possessed, perhaps unbeknown to themselves that made it valuable enough to pass along as an inheritance by Jacob to Ephraim through Joseph? Could it be something in, around, near or perhaps something under the mountains? In 1 Chronicles 5:2 we find two outstanding things: First, from God's standpoint, the genealogy of Judah, which would eventually lead to our Savior, warrants more attention than the genealogy of Joseph thus, it is emphasized more through out the Bible. Secondly, God, eventually will utilize the blessing of the birthright passed down from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and finally to Joseph, in some fashion to bless, protect, and to sustain Israel within their homeland! Although the entire tribe of Joseph was extremely large and very powerful, for obvious redemptive reasons, emphasis in Scripture focuses more on the tribe of Judah.

In vs.19 we note: **“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.”** This blessing was not just a good wish. It was to have prophetic significance and guaranteed fulfillment at God's appointed time. A vast span of time would need to occur first, though. God's prophecy to Abraham would certainly be fulfilled to the letter! **“And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land [that is] not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.” (Gen.15:13-14).** Under Moses' leadership, we note that the tribe Manasseh is still vastly larger than that of Ephraim. **“ These [are] the families of Manasseh, and those that were numbered of them, fifty and two thousand and seven hundred.” (Num 26:34) “These [are] the families of the sons of Ephraim according to those that were numbered of them, thirty and two thousand and five hundred. These [are] the sons of Joseph after their families.” (Num.26:37)** As Jewish history progressed, especially during the time of the Judges, the tribe of Ephraim would greatly increase in power and number. For a period, especially during the era of the divided kingdom, the tribe of Ephraim would practically become synonymous with the name Israel. Its power and resources would assume leadership of the northern tribes. Personally, Joseph would never live in the Promised Land. God's history recorded that not only would his seed eventually receive a tract of land there but also they would be instrumental in its conquest.

Before moving along, it is important to remember that this Promised Land would be an **“...everlasting possession.” (48:4).** Certainly Jacob and his family were not inhabitants of the land when he pronounced this blessing but one day things would be different. Intermittently, history has shown short periods of this partially fulfilled but, as we breathe, it carries future fulfillment in its entirety. Regardless of the beliefs and actions of critics, liberals, politicians, seculars philosophers, and military might, God will soon give the entire land to Jacob's descendants!

As noted before, Joseph would have no land by his name. Instead, his inheritance would be a double portion divided between his two sons. Strange as it may seem, in the book of Revelation, chapter seven, when we read of God's plans to seal His 144,000, the tribes of Ephraim and Dan are omitted. In the list, God replaced Ephraim and Dan with Levi and Joseph and retained the name of the tribe of Manasseh. Thus, it appears that God has plans for Manasseh in the promised land. Could it be that God will use the blessings given to one of Joseph's sons to help preserve the Jews in the promised land and then seal them, along with the rest of the lineage, for later redemptive purposes? I am personally inclined to believe so.

### Genesis 49

<sup>1</sup> And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you *[that]* which shall befall you in the last days. <sup>2</sup> Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father. <sup>3</sup> Reuben, thou *[art]* my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: <sup>4</sup> Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou *[it]*: he went up to my couch. <sup>5</sup> Simeon and Levi *[are]* brettekhen; instruments of cruelty *[are in]* their habitations. <sup>6</sup> O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. <sup>7</sup> Cursed *[be]* their anger, for *[it was]* fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel. <sup>8</sup> Judah, thou *[art he]* whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand *[shall be]* in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. <sup>9</sup> Judah *[is]* a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? <sup>10</sup> The sceptre 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]*. <sup>11</sup> Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: <sup>12</sup> His eyes *[shall be]* red with wine, and his teeth white with milk. <sup>13</sup> Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he *[shall be]* for an haven of ships; and his border *[shall be]* unto Zidon. <sup>14</sup> Issachar *[is]* a strong ass couching down between two burdens: <sup>15</sup> And he saw that rest *[was]* good, and the land that *[it was]* pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute. <sup>16</sup> Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. <sup>17</sup> Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. <sup>18</sup> I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD. <sup>19</sup> Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last. <sup>20</sup> Out of Asher his bread *[shall be]* fat, and he shall yield royal dainties. <sup>21</sup> Naphtali *[is]* a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words. <sup>22</sup> Joseph *[is]* a fruitful bough, *[even]* a fruitful bough by a well; *[whose]* branches run over the wall: <sup>23</sup> The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot *[at him]*, and hated him: <sup>24</sup> But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty *[God]* of Jacob; (from thence *[is]* the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) <sup>25</sup> *[Even]* by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: <sup>26</sup> The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. <sup>27</sup> Benjamin shall ravine *[as]* a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil. <sup>28</sup> All these *[are]* the twelve tribes of Israel: and this *[is it]* that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them. <sup>29</sup> And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that *[is]* in the field of Ephron the Hittite, <sup>30</sup> In the cave that *[is]* in the field of Machpelah, which *[is]* before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace. <sup>31</sup> There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and

**Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.** <sup>32</sup> **The purchase of the field and of the cave that [is] therein [was] from the children of Heth.** <sup>33</sup> **And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.**

In the above text, we are quick to detect the approaching death of Jacob. Thus, he called his sons together one last time to pass along his lasting thoughts, blessings, and prophetic utterances.

In order to stay with our objective, it is needful to jump ahead to verse twenty. Asher (“*happiness*”) was the eighth of Jacob’s sons. Asher’s seed would eventually experience the reality of this prophecy by receiving one of the most fertile tracts of land in all of Canaan. This parcel would rest along the Mediterranean coast just north of the land of Manasseh. The allotment would richly abound with wheat and olive trees. A little later in history, King Solomon would supply commodities from this land to King Hiram. **“And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year.”** (1Ki.5:11) Without a doubt, God’s prophetic will would soon to become reality in Jacob’s use of the term **“royal dainties”**! Was this prophecy to have only a one-time fulfillment? Truthfully, only the immediate future holds this answer.

When we advance to verse twenty-two, we quickly bump into the over-all blessings for the entire tribe of Joseph. Under God’s direction Jacob boldly uses some very figurative, significant, and prophetic words to summarize his God-given convictions of what he now sees in Joseph and what he sees in the future for Joseph’s seed.

<sup>22</sup>“ **Joseph is a fruitful** [ *paw-raw'*=a primitive root; to *bear fruit* (literally or figuratively): - bear, bring forth (fruit), (be, cause to be, make) fruitful, grow, increase.] **bough**, [*bane* - a *son* (as a *builder* of the family name), in the widest sense (of literal and figurative relationship, including *grandson*, *subject*, *nation*, *quality* or *condition*, etc., one born, bough, branch,] **even a fruitful bough by a well;** [*ah'-yin* = probably a primitive word; an *eye* (literally or figuratively); by analogy a *fountain* (as the *eye* of the landscape)] **whose branches run over the wall:**

Jacob saw Joseph as no mortal could. He compared him to a young fruit tree planted by a well. His people would be very prolific and, when they received their tract of land, something very significant about them and their inheritance, would enable them to stand out among others. Joseph also learned that his descendents would never want for necessities and, in some unknown fashion, they would also be equipped to supply a wonderful commodity to all.

<sup>23</sup> **“The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot [at him], and hated him: <sup>24</sup> But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty [God] of Jacob; (from thence [is] the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)** <sup>25</sup> **Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with...**

Jacob’s did not pen these utterances to brag about Joseph’s accomplishments or his moral character. Instead, they are purely prophetic of what awaited his people in the land. The majestic, sovereign, shepherding God of his father would be their strength when strength when needed.

**“... blessings of heaven above,”** [ *shaw-mah'-yim*, *shaw-meh'* = from an unused root meaning to *be lofty*; the *sky* (as *aloft*; the dual perhaps alluding to the visible arch in which the clouds move, as well as to the higher ether where the celestial bodies revolve)] **blessings of the deep** [*teh-home'*= an *abyss* (as a *surging* mass of water), especially the *deep* (the *main* sea or the subterranean *water supply*): - deep (place), depth.] **that lieth** [*raw-bats'*= to *crouch* (on all four legs folded, like a recumbent animal); by

implication to *recline, repose, brood, lurk, imbed*] **under**, [*akh'-ath* = the *bottom* (as *depressed*); only adverbially *below* (often with prepositional prefix *underneath*)].

We now begin to discover, in a more specific fashion, the special blessings awaiting Joseph's seed in the Promised Land. Jacob tells of three and then he uses verse twenty-six to re-gather it all together.

First, God would soon be sending Heavenly prosperity their way. This prophecy could be anything from good weather to answered prayers. God would use time in teaching everyone that only He could fill some desperate needs by utilizing Heavenly resources! Even relatives and friends would even have their limitations.

Secondly, Jacob told Joseph of still another unique blessing awaiting his people. This blessing would be liquid, deep in the ground, resting and waiting, and it would be in a depressed form. Many commentators have said this to be a spring or underground lake. I have difficulty with this for several reasons. If it were a spring why describe its depth plus the fact it is depressed? If it were an underground lake why mention it to Joseph? His poor children would have no way of digging down to the depths implied. Their wells were all shallow hand dug wells that were dependent upon streams near the surface and an underground lake, if accessible, could possibly be stagnated. The words carry the meaning "*as a mass of water*" – but not necessarily water. Besides all this, God would somehow someday use this buried resource in a prophetic way to draw, provide for, and unify His people, through Joseph's descendants, in the land of promise. Later on God, Himself, would tell Moses on the Mount, "**And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey;...**" (Exo 3:8)

"...blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:" Not only would Joseph's seed be well taken care of in the promised land but, their well being would keep them in good health and lead to their prolific ability.

<sup>26</sup> "**The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills:...**" Jacob must have stood in awe as he heard of the blessing's magnitude! His family's blessings would be far superior to those passed down to Jacob. Jacob proceeded to use the illustration of the mountains to aid in his communication. Not only would Joseph's blessing be higher, as the mountains are above the plain, but they would also have, by analogy, a sense of longevity. In addition, qualitatively, his blessings would be richer than the treasures of the oldest mountains.

"... they shall be on the head of Joseph," [*roshe* = from an unused root apparently meaning to *shake*; the *head* (as most easily *shaken*), whether literally or figuratively (in many applications, of place, time, rank, etc.) ] "**... and on the crown ...**" [*kod-kode'* = the *crown* of the head (as the part most *bowed*): - crown (of the head), pate, scalp, top of the head.]

"... of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." These blessings would rest specifically on the scalp of Joseph's head. I feel that there are at least two implications here. First, this blessing of information would be foremost in Joseph's mind. It would reside there as a crown resting upon the head of a prince. Secondly, if these words have prophetic implications to the geographical land grant as a whole, we are entering a completely different avenue of study. We would then need to consider the above-mentioned blessing finding its location at the top edge of the land given to Joseph's sons.

Even though God used the same man (Moses) to record both the above and below passages, we now jump ahead in Israel's history some four centuries. In the following excerpt, we find Moses giving the laws and blessings of God to a new generation on the verge of entering into the promise land under Joshua's leadership. Once again, for the sake of time and staying with our objective, we jump down to those only dealing with Joseph and Asher.

### Deuteronomy 33

<sup>1</sup> “And this [*is*] the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. <sup>2</sup> And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand [*went*] a fiery law for them. <sup>3</sup> Yea, he loved the people; all his saints [*are*] in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; [*every one*] shall receive of thy words. <sup>4</sup> Moses commanded us a law, [*even*] the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. <sup>5</sup> And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people [*and*] the tribes of Israel were gathered together. <sup>6</sup> Let Reuben live, and not die; and let [*not*] his men be few. <sup>7</sup> And this [*is the blessing*] of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help [*to him*] from his enemies. <sup>8</sup> And of Levi he said, [*Let*] thy Thummim and thy Urim [*be*] with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, [*and with*] whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; <sup>9</sup> Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. <sup>10</sup> They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. <sup>11</sup> Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again. <sup>12</sup> [*And*] of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; [*and the LORD*] shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.

<sup>13</sup> “And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD [*be*] his land,” [*eh'-rets* = from an unused root probably meaning to *be firm*; the earth] “... for the precious things of heaven,” [two words make up this phrase: *min-nay'* = from or out of & *meh'-ghed* = from an unused root properly meaning to *be eminent*; properly a *distinguished* thing; hence something *valuable*, as a product or fruit] “... for the dew,” [two words are once again used: *min-nay'* = from or out of & *tal* = dew (as covering vegetation)] “... and for the deep ...” [once again we see two words used at this point: *min-nay'* = from or out of & *teh-home'* =; an *abyss* (as a *surging* mass of water), especially the *deep* (the *main* sea or the subterranean *water supply*): - deep (place), depth.] “... that coucheth ...” [*raw-bats'* = to *crouch* (on all four legs folded, like a recumbent animal); by implication to *recline*, *repose*, *brood*, *lurk*, *imbed*: - crouch (down), fall down, make a fold, lay (cause to, make to) lie (down), make to rest, sit.] “... beneath,” [*takh'-ath* = the *bottom* (as *depressed*); only adverbially *below* (often with prepositional prefix *underneath*) ].

By reading and comparing word definitions, the reader will discover this verse is almost identical to the statements Jacob made much earlier in Geneses 49:22 & 25 [“Joseph is a fruitful bough, [*even*] a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: ... Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:”] It is extremely important, though, to understand there is a bit of difference in the motive of the blessing given the second time by Moses. Whereas Jacob wished God's prosperity primarily upon Joseph's growth into a powerful, productive, prolific, and healthy people, having all their needs met in the new land, Moses is pronouncing a blessing upon the land, itself, to accomplish this most significant task. We continue to see this as we progress in the next few verses.

<sup>14</sup> “And for the precious fruits [brought forth] by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, <sup>15</sup> And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, <sup>16</sup> And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and [for] the good will of him that dwelt in the bush:” All discovered, planted, and received in this tract of land would be richly beneficial for the dwellers and their neighbors. Taking into consideration my proposal of Moses focusing on the land, let us continue to examine a few more verses.

“... let [the blessing] come upon the head of Joseph,” [*roshe* = from an unused root apparently meaning to *shake*; the *head* (as most easily *shaken*)] “... and upon the top of the head ...” [*kod-kode* = the *crown* of the head (as the part most *bowed*): - crown (of the head), pate, scalp, top of the head.] “... of him [that was] separated ...” [*naw-zeer* = *separate*, that is, consecrated (as *prince*, a *Nazirite* ) “... from his brethren.”

Two things are quickly noted. First, Joseph’s land grant blessing would be near the geographical top of the land and, more specifically, on the part resembling the resting place of a crown on a man’s head (directly on the top). Taking into consideration the difficulty of often discerning ancient boundaries, I thought that perhaps the little map would aid in illustrating the above sentence. Please note that the combined tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh do strangely resemble the side profile of a man’s head supporting a type of crown. Secondly, God set aside Joseph’s blessing for a specific tribe and geographical area destined for a specific divine purpose.



<sup>17</sup> “His glory [is like] the firstling of his bullock, and his horns [are like] the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they [are] the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they [are] the thousands of Manasseh.”

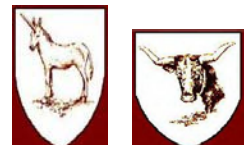
Joseph’s family members would be people of might, resembling the horns of powerful animals of the highest choice. His two primary horns would be Ephraim and Manasseh. Hundreds of years later, when the tribes eventually left Egypt and migrated toward Canaan, they had already adopted their individual tribal standards.

Numbers chapter two verses one to thirty two record the organization and assembly of these standards. Rabbinical tradition has it that Manasseh’s standard was a type of unicorn and that of Ephraim as a golden flag with the head of a calf.

Actually, the tribe of Manasseh consisted of two parts. The larger section settled on the east side of the Jordan River and possessed warlike tendencies. The smaller Manasseh, located in the fertile plains on the north side of Ephraim, seemed to focus more on farming. Although Ephraim would be the descendants of Joseph steeped more in public affairs, the total tribe of Manasseh would supply four judges to Israel: Gideon, Abimelech, Jair, and Jephthah.



JOSEPH  
(Ephraim and Manasseh)



It is somewhat interesting to note that during the march through the wilderness the positions of Ephraim and Manasseh were on west of the tabernacle (Num.2:18-20) - the sections of land focused upon in this work.<sup>vi</sup>

When Moses commissioned the spies to check out the promised land all but two the returning crowd, Joshua and Caleb, were fearful. Joshua was out of the tribe of Ephraim and Caleb of the tribe of Judah. Just as God once greatly used representatives of the tribes of Joseph and Judah to cry out for the land and eventually became leaders in its conquest, He may very well plans to use them again.

Believers know that our wonderful Messiah is out of the lineage of Judah and ultimately He, and He alone will bring about the final conquest, security, and fulfill His covenants to that small tract of land.

It is highly possible and very probable, however, that God has additional plans in the future that include the land, products, and inhabitants from the land once promised to the sons of Joseph! If God used the productivity and power from the land of Joseph, to conquest and drive away once, He certainly can use it again! What ever comes out of that land will have might and this might will be of the utmost quality and quantity.

<sup>18</sup> **And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents.** <sup>19</sup> **They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck [of] the abundance of the seas, and [of] treasures hid in the sand.** <sup>20</sup> **And of Gad he said, Blessed [be] he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head.** <sup>21</sup> **And he provided the first part for himself, because there, [in] a portion of the lawgiver, [was he] seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel.** <sup>22</sup> **And of Dan he said, Dan [is] a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan.** <sup>23</sup> **And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south.**

<sup>24</sup> **And of Asher he said, Let Asher ...** [“aw-share’ = happy”] **“... be blessed ...”** [“baw-rak’ = as an act of adoration”] **“... with children; let him be acceptable ...”** [“raw-tsaw = to be pleased with”] **“... to his brethren, and let him dip ...”** [“taw-bal’ = dip, plunge”] **“... his foot ...”** [“reh-gel = a foot (as used in walking)”] **“... in oil.”** [“sheh-men = grease, especially liquid”]

<sup>25</sup> **Thy shoes ...** [“man-awl’ = shoe”] **“... shall be iron ...”** [“bar-zel’ = iron (as cutting); by extension an iron implement”] **“... and brass;”** [“nekh-o’-sheth = copper; hence, something made of that metal, that is, coin, a fetter; figuratively base”] **“... and as thy days ...”** [“yome = a day or to be used figuratively as a space of time”] **“... [so shall] thy strength ...”** [“do-beh = a quietness that provides strength”] **“... be.”**

Moses now pronounces a blessing of richness upon the tribe of Asher. Asher would experience several aspects of this blessing. First, Asher would produce many happy and peaceful children whom would become greatly pleasing to the other tribes. Security and rest were required for the enjoyment of this blessing. Thus, Asher would dwell in castle-type cities.

Additionally, the text speaks of shoes made of iron and brass. The feet are on the bottom and provide stability. At least one foot would be plunged into something - oil. Dipping the foot in oil pointed to a location with oil and strength. Although the Jews would not be miners, the words definitely point to rich natural resources awaiting them in the land. When one studies a

map reflecting the ancient land division among the twelve tribes of Israel, something very unusual is noticeable about Asher's land. The land actually resembles a leg with the tip or point of the land expending into the land of Manasseh. This blessing would be available for and through the tribe of Asher because of what the land contained or could produce. Moses essentially pronounced a blessing for the people and their neighbors with some sort of prosperity from the earth. Thus, the land already promised to Jacob in Genesis 49:20 was to be rich and fertile throughout.

If one were to place a dot on this southeastern most point of the land of Asher, follow the boundary northwest to the sea, come back to our dot and then continue on in a southeasterly direction, a student of prophecy would be quick to note that this is the plain of Esdraelon {*another name for Jezreel = "God sows"*}.

Without question, scripture teaches that this tip area of Asher's foot, not just has the potential but, contains some of the greatest wealth of all the land promised to Abraham's children and it was assigned specifically to the tribe of Asher. Secondly, part of this wealth is mineral and part of it was, or is, in liquid form. In the Old Testament time, I am very certain that, at least for a while, there had to be a *might* from the land for the people of Asher. Perhaps some of it did take the form of oil from olives but, please stay with me a minute. Common sense tells me that a land with all this prosperity should have had some sort of lasting historical input. Strangely enough, during the time of the Judges we find God recording this about the people of Asher, **"Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob: But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out."** (Judges 1:31-32) For some reason the tribe of Asher seems to have rapidly degenerated. Perhaps due to the proximity of the Phoenicians, it gradually blended in with them. I discovered, with the exception of Simeon, Asher is the only tribe West of the Jordan River that furnished no judge or hero to the nation.

Taking the above into consideration, there is the very strong possibility that the fullest wealth of this land tip, and its nearby area, as of yet, has not been discovered, fully utilized, or tapped into!

In summarizing, let me see if I can bring some pieces together. The promise given by God to Abraham was passed on to Isaac and then, eventually, on to Isaac's sons. More specifically, the bulk of the promises went to Jacob. God then gave Jacob the opportunity to pass this blessing on to all his sons. Two of the twelve did not directly receive land grants (Levi and Joseph). When Jacob gave Joseph's blessing to his two sons the total number of the tribes receiving land bounced back up to twelve. This succession of blessings quickly pointed out several things: First, we quickly see God's divine guidance produced a progressive revelation of the promises. This act of God generated multiplication in number and detail as they moved from father to son or sons. Secondly, the blessing and blessings all had, and have, a prophetic significance. Thirdly, God turned the act Reuben's sin against his father around and thereby produced another strange twist. Jacob gave Joseph the blessings of the firstborn instead of Reuben. Since this blessing was that of a double portion, each son quickly acquired an inheritance.

Jacob has to stand out as one of the wisest and God-fearing men of the entire Old Testament! I am very certain that Jacob never forgot the wonderful gracious act of God when He

permitting him to discover that his favorite son was very much alive. I'm also persuaded that this aging saint of God must have often pondered the story of Joseph's strange dream when he was just a lad of seventeen years of age, as recorded in Genesis 37. Thirdly, Jacob would forever remember God's promise to his grandfather, Abraham [**"That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which [is] upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;"** (Gen. 22:17)] and, more recently, the promise God had given to his father Isaac [**"And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;"** (Gen. 26:4)].

Throughout Jacob's life, God would continually savor Jacob with direct and indirect personal blessings. There was the special blessing from his father Isaac when he was just a young boy [**"Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed [be] every one that curseth thee, and blessed [be] he that blesseth thee."** (Gen. 27:28-29)] and, the additional blessing as he set out to Padanaram to find a wife [**"And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham."** (Gen. 28:3-4)]. Also, we must always remember the very special time when God privately gave Jacob rich and gracious promises as he traveled to Padanaram [**"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I [am] the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; 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. And, behold, I [am] with thee, and will keep thee in all [places] whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done [that] which I have spoken to thee of"** (Gen. 28:12-15)].

I feel that we can clearly assert that Jacob, having reflected over God's providential work through out his life, had no problem seeing God's finger pointing to his favorite son, Joseph, whom God had preserved and utilized in a marvelous way. Thus, this blessing for Joseph seems to be a very natural reaction for Jacob. At the same time, we must always remember that God was a work behind the scene fulfilling His perfect will.

Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were, obviously, the recipients of this double portion blessing of the first-born. Once in the new land, the lives of their seeds were, prophetically, enriched with abundance, productive, health, physical might, and praise to their redeemer. God's objective for His people in the Promised Land was that of worshipping Him and being God-honoring witnesses.

Unfortunately, their habitual yielding to sin led them away from God's directive will. This departure eventually demanded a tremendous price.

Pointers from the proceeding Scriptures lead me to conclude that the primary wealth of Joseph's land grant, passed on to his sons, would be located near its top geographical boundary where the tip of Asher's land dips into the land of Manasseh. Some of its great wealth would result from the productive fertile soil when coupled with the climate and the refreshing rains coming in from the Mediterranean. Even in our times, this breadbasket area is still providing blessings from its richness. Secondly, even though we lack evidence of any of Joseph's

descendents becoming miners, mineral wealth would certainly be awaiting them. Thirdly, this land area holds still another wealth. This last wealth is in liquid form, resting, and pressurized deep underground. Whatever specific identity this wealth may assume, it remains crouched like an animal waiting to pounce. These promises given to Abraham, passed on to Isaac, and then on to Jacob and, finally, to Jacob's children, have not yet been fulfilled in their entirety.

Since the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 A.D., no Jew alive knows, with certainty, which tribe he is from, yet he knows he is a Jew and deep inside there is a God-planted concern about him and the land promised his people! Although many Jews have returned to Israel, countless others are still scattered over the world and suffering from some sort of persecution. Dear reader, rest assured, God is not finished yet!

God has always provided, or will provide, everything needed to accomplish His divine will. In our New Testament we are quickly reminded of this promise to the redeemed, **“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”** (Phil. 4:19). This supply may take the form of produce, mineral, liquid, or it may take a form unknown to man. What ever is needed to provide for or protect the people of God walking in the will of God, both Jews and Gentiles alike, God already has it available or He will soon make it available in order to accomplish His objective! Thank God, He has brought to fulfillment many prophecies concerning the Jews and their land but there remains much ahead! One day God will establish His land as promised to Abraham and He will have His Jewish people in it.

The Bible teaches that one day the antichrist will direct all his evil strengths on the little nation of Israel with intentions of annihilating the people whom God called a long time ago – the Jews. His primary reason will be that of making a mockery of God. (Those who reject this reflect to all their need for sound doctrinal Biblical exposition.) Just what if there is a secondary reason the antichrist directs his coalition toward the little land?

Today, a company called Zion Oil and Gas is in the process of oil exploration in the very afore mentioned section of Joseph's inheritance through his sons. If Zion's discoveries prove to be what they thus far appear to be, the company may very well discover itself being in the center of world history with God at work behind the scene! Oil beneath this area of Israel could undoubtedly be a tool in God's hands. A number of years ago, the company's founder shared with me that his personal goal, and his company's objective, was that of ministering to the Jews and to do what ever needful to help people, both Jews and gentiles alike, to come to a saving knowledge of our Wonderful Lord. I know of no other higher goals that carry with them such an extreme level of divine provision and blessing!

Our entire Bible has as its underlying theme, and main objective, that of redemption. To carry this burden is to carry the empowered will of God! Secondly, long ago God told Abraham, **“...I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”** (Gen.12:3) As you see, God promised blessings to those who help the Jews. This especially holds true if it has to do with redemption and His promised land for them. The verse also promises otherwise to those who desire to rid the world of the Jewish people. A quick overview of history, from Bible times to now, with regards to the Jewish people, should enlighten even the hardest critic's mind to the on- going reality of this verse. Oh how much different our world would be if only our leaders would believe God, grab hold of, and apply, just this single verse!

God's Word also contains all He desires for us to know about Him, His plans, about ourselves, and our adversary – the devil. All of our Biblical writers either refer to or write about the wonders of God. Regardless of how much we know or may think we know there is always something new to discover. Years ago, Jesus encountered some men whom were placing more emphasis on the print of the scriptures than upon the identity of its real Author. His response was simply, **“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”** (Jn.5:39) We can dig out deep theological and doctrinal riches, assemble our findings, cross reference verses, perform deep word studies, pour over the writings of great scholars but, there is a time when we must lay down our findings and look to Him as never before.

Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, in their wonderful book on Jewish symbols make the following statement, *“On Friday nights, parents bless their sons with the words bestowed by Jacob upon Joseph's sons [Through you shall Israel bless, saying]: God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh. Joseph's line thus represents family continuity and hope for the future.”*<sup>vii</sup>

Remember, all Scripture still points to the Author! One way or the other, with or without us, God's directive will, will prevail! Oh, how much better it is for us to be a part of it!

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<sup>i</sup>God called Abram when he was the 75-year-old son of a pagan living in Mesopotamia. God's appearance and calling were very clearly understood. The ball was then in his court. Abram was convicted enough to pull up stakes and travel to a general geographical area know only to him as Canaan. According to Stephen in Acts 7, he heeded the call but paused and lived in Charan (Haran) until his father, Terah, died. He finally arrived in the land, traveled through it, and continued looking **“for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”** (Heb.11:10) Even though Abram was along in years, Stephen again, quoting from Genesis 15, reminds us that God promised the land to his seed. This vast stretch of land extended from the Nile in Egypt, eastward to the river Euphrates and then to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon (Gen.15; Deu.1:7). God informed Abram that his descendents would dwell in this land and eventually forced into servitude in strange land for four hundred years. Abraham learned that God would eventually judge this nation and once again bring them into this land of promise. This must have been a vast thing for a man like Abram, now Abraham, to swallow but he obeyed by simply believing God. Through this act of faith, Paul, in Romans 4:3 and Galatians 3:6, and James, in 2:23, both record that God declared him as being righteous.

In his old age, Abraham fathered a son Isaac (*“laughter”*). Before Isaac's birth Abraham succumbing to an old Mesopotamian custom by fathering a son, Ishmael, through Sarah's handmade Hagar. Great problems and levels of friction would follow through out their lives and even ripple down to our day. According to Genesis 25, when Abraham was 175 years of age he summoned all his children, gave gifts to all the sons of his concubines, and then sent them to **“the land of the East”** to be away from Isaac. The scripture also clearly teaches that Abraham personally oversaw all this before his death. Abraham knew that Isaac was his promised child so he gave **“all”** he had to him. When Abraham died Isaac and Ishmael came together to burry their father in **“the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;”** (Gen. 25:9). At the age of 40, Isaac's wife, Rebekah, gave birth to twins. The first-born son was Esau (*“hairy”*). The second son's name was Jacob (*“heal catcher”*). It is extremely important to note that God had previously told Rebekah that she was carrying two nations in her womb. God also informed Rebekah that older one, Esau, would be weak and serve his younger and stronger brother -Jacob. (Gen. 25)

He went on to additionally enlighten her with the everlasting truth that these two nations would grow apart and have entirely different manners and customs. Before Isaac's death, the time came for him to pass his blessing to his sons. In spite of what commentators have said about Rebekah's actions, God apparently used her to guarantee the fulfillment of His words to the letter! This blessing was as follows **“Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee”** (Gen.27:29). Many later years later Jacob would hunt for, and find, his father Isaac dwelling near his grandfather's beloved town of Hebron. Before Isaac's death, Esau would also show up. Isaac died at the ripe old age 180. Together the two sons buried their father. During the last portion of

their lives, Jacob and Esau seemed to be friends but, as scripture, history and time revealed, they gradually grew apart – just as God had told Rebekah. Without a doubt, Jacob was the most knowledgeable person in his era of his people’s history with God. He knew all too well that one day his people would be in the land just as promised to grandfather Abraham many years before. Today they still do not have the entire land grant as prophecy declared but rest assured one day they will!

<sup>ii</sup> This covenant was as follows: **“And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name [is] Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I [am] God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, [even] a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel.”** (Gen.35:9-15)

<sup>iii</sup> *“Birthright is the right which naturally belonged to the firstborn son. Where there were more wives than one, the firstborn was the son who in point of time was born before the others, apparently whether his mother was a wife or a concubine. Sarah protests against Ishmael being with Isaac heir along, but it is possible that the bestowal of the rights of the firstborn on Isaac was not due to any law, but rather to the influence of a favorite wife (Gen\_21:10). The birthright of the firstborn consisted in the first place of a double portion of what his father had to leave. This probably means that he had a double share of such property as could be divided. We have no certain knowledge of the manner in which property was inherited in the patriarchal age, but it seems probable that the lands and flocks which were the possession of the family as a whole, remained so after the death of the father. The firstborn became head of the family and thus succeeded to the charge of the family property, becoming responsible for the maintenance of the younger sons, the widow or widows, the unmarried and daughters. He also, as head, succeeded to a considerable amount of authority over the other members. Further, he generally received the blessing, which placed him in close and favored covenant-relationship with Yahweh. According to the accounts which have come down to us, all these gifts and privileges could be diverted from the firstborn son. This could happen with his own consent, as in the case of Esau, who sold his birthright to Jacob (Gen\_25:29-34), or by the decision of the father, as in the case of Reuben (Gen\_48:22; Gen\_49:3, Gen\_49:4; 1Ch\_5:1, 1Ch\_5:2) and of Shimri (1Ch\_26:10). In the Deuteronomic version of the law, a provision is made, prohibiting the father from making the younger son the possessor of the birthright, just because his mother was specially beloved (Deu\_21:15-17). The blessing also could be diverted from the eldest son. This was done when Jacob blessed the children of Joseph, and deliberately put the younger before the elder (Gen\_48:13, Gen\_48:14, Gen\_48:17-19); even when the blessing was obtained by the younger son in a fraudulent manner, it could not be recalled (Gen 27). Jacob does not appear to have inherited any of the property of his father, although he had obtained both the birthright and the blessing. In the New Testament “birthright,” prototokia, is mentioned only once (Heb\_12:16), where the reference is to Esau. In various passages where our Lord is spoken of as the firstborn, as in Col\_1:15-19; Heb\_1:2, the association of ideas with the Old Testament conception of birthright is easy to trace.”* (The International Bible Encyclopedia)

<sup>iv</sup> In considering the act of blessing or to bless, Merrill Unger in his Bible Dictionary wonderfully states, *“...Acts of blessing may be considered: (1) When God is said to bless men (Gen. 1:28; 22:17). God’s blessing is accompanied with that virtue that renders His blessing effectual and which is expressed by it. Because God is eternal and omnipresent, His omniscience and omnipotence cause His blessings to avail in the present life in respect to all things and also in the life to come. (2) When men bless God (Psa. 103:1-2; 145:1-3; etc.). This is when they ascribe to Him those characteristics that are His, acknowledge His sovereignty, express gratitude for His mercies, etc. (3) Men bless their fellowmen when, as in ancient times under the spirit of prophecy, they predict blessings to come upon them. Thus Jacob blessed his sons (Gen. 49:1-28; Heb. 11:21), and Moses the children of Israel (Deu.33:1-29). It was the duty and privilege of the priests to bless the people in the name of the Lord. Further, men bless their fellowmen when they express good wishes and pray to God in their behalf.”*

<sup>v</sup> Although Reuben was Jacob’s first born and the rights of this first born were passed through Joseph and his two sons; I think it needful to remember that God referred to Israel not only as His Son but also as His **“firstborn”**. Thus, He has a nation called the **“firstborn”**. His Word teaches that the nation of Israel was, and still is, the only nation God ever called to carry and deliver His redemptive message. With this setting aside, His original directive will was made very clear to them: **“And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are**

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**the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel”** (Ex.19:6). Because of their rejection, God finally turned to **“whosoever will”** (both Jew and Gentile) to redeem and spread the redemptive message. Yet, God’s plan for them is not finished. Paul reminds us, **“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy”** (Rom.11:11) From Genesis chapter three until today sin has certainly blinded the minds of the unredeemed. One day God will once again work with them as a nation. The devil is knowledgeable of this and down through history he has done everything possible to eradicate all Jews. As always, the more their enemies persecuted them the more they grew and the more their attackers crumbled under the hand of God. Genesis forever records what God told Abram, **“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed”** (Gen.12:3) Someday the last part of this will be fulfilled to the fullest. God and His redeemed have something this world desperately need. The scriptures bring great comfort in assuring us that just as God sees Jesus as the first born through Mary and the first born from the dead, He sees us as a member of the **“...church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven...”** (Heb.12:23)

<sup>vi</sup> For an interesting study one needs to look straight down at the camping layout of the tribes around the tabernacle in Nu.2:1-32. Secondly, replace the names of those tribes with their respective standards. Finally, compare this description of the cherub in Ezek. 1:10. The description and position of the creature’s faces, when compared to the central tribal standard on each of the camp’s four sides, will be most amazing!

<sup>vii</sup> \_Frankel, Ellen and Teutsch, Platkin, Betsy The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols. Jason Aronson Inc.: 230 Livingston Street, Northvale, New Jersey 07647 1992. p.84