

Genesis 185  
The Lord is My Shepherd  
Genesis 48:8-20  
December 15, 2024  
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Let us take our Bibles this morning and open them to Genesis 48:8. The title of our message this morning is a designation everyone knows well: "The Lord is My Shepherd." Towards the end of Joseph's life, having completed his mission of being used as the instrument of God to relocate the Nation of Israel from Canaan to Egypt, Joseph is now in a position where a lot of prophecies are going to be given about him and the Nation of Israel as a whole, coming from his father, Jacob. That will become a dominant theme in our passage this morning—the rest of Genesis 48 and into Genesis 49.

We are in a section where Jacob is blessing Joseph's sons. This is an outline of the life of Joseph that we have been studying:

Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons (Genesis 48:1-22)

- I. Adoption (48:1-7)
- II. Blessing of Manasseh & Ephraim (48:8-20)
- III. Exodus prophecy (48:21-22)

We come to Genesis 48, where three things are happening: number one—an adoption (Genesis 48:1-7); number two—a blessing (Genesis 48:8-20); number three—there is going to be a prophecy given (Genesis 48:21-22), which we will most likely see next time.

As we take a look at this blessing—Jacob blessing Joseph's sons—here is an outline that we are going to try to follow:

- II. Blessing (Genesis 48:8-20)
  - A. Jacob's inquiry (8)
  - B. Joseph's answer (9a)
  - C. Jacob's command (9b)
  - D. Jacob's eyesight (10a)
  - E. Joseph's obedience (10b)
  - F. Jacob's response (11)
  - G. Joseph's presentation of 2 sons (12-13)
  - H. Opposite of Joseph's expectations (14)
  - I. Blessing's content (15-16)
  - J. Joseph's reaction (17-18)
  - K. Jacob's response (19)
  - L. Blessing (20)

This whole unit begins with Jacob's (that is Joseph's father) inquiry or his question. Genesis 48:8 says,

*"When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, 'Who are these?'"*

He may have asked, "Who are these?" because his eyesight is in a state of decline (as we will see in Genesis 48:10); but that is the question. Joseph gives an answer there, in the beginning on Genesis 48:9:

*"Joseph said to his father, 'They are my sons whom God has given me here.'"*

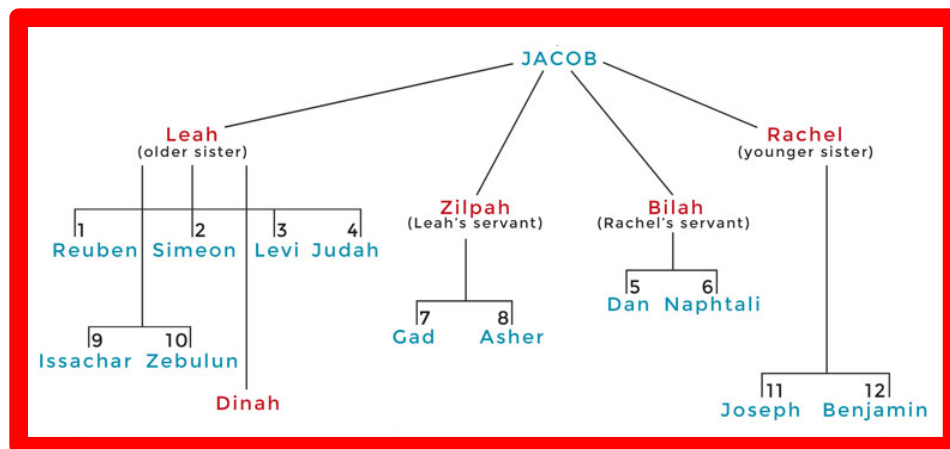
Where is here? "Here" is in the land of Egypt. This is a reference that goes back to Genesis 41:50-52. It says,

*"Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, priest of On, bore to him. Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, 'For,' he said, 'God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household.' He named the second Ephraim, 'For,' he said, 'God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.'"*

Joseph was given those prophecies that would come on Egypt—seven years of prosperity, followed by seven years of famine or adversity. Before the adversity hit, Joseph was married. He was married to someone that Pharaoh assigned to him—her name is Asenath, and her father was actually a priest in Egypt.

From this union to Asenath, he had two children. The first one born was Manasseh the older, and the second one born was Ephraim. Those are the two sons that Jacob adopted in the first part of Genesis 48, but for whatever reason, Jacob knew about these sons, but he had never seen them, and probably his declining eyesight as an older person inhibited him from seeing them clearly. This is really the first time where he sees these two. They are probably about 18 to 20 years old at the time, where Jacob is finally able to get a gander at them and see exactly who they are.

Here is the family tree:



You will notice from Jacob through Rachel, his favorite wife (because he had more than one; we are not saying that is good, by the way, that is just how it worked out with him),

came Joseph and Benjamin. Then through Joseph, during this Egyptian sojourn, came these two: Manasseh the older, and Ephraim the younger. That is where Manasseh and Ephraim came from.

At this point, and upon this recognition, you see Jacob giving a command to Joseph. In the middle of Genesis 48:9, he said,

*"Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them."*

He is about to impart the patriarchal blessing. It is a concept that is foreign to the Western mind, but in the ancient Near East it was practiced routinely, not just amongst the people of Israel, but other people groups as well. Jacob has this desire to bless these two, Manasseh and Ephraim, born to Joseph during this Egyptian sojourn. That is Jacob's command.

You have a statement there in Genesis 48:10 about Jacob's declining eyesight. It says,

*"Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age that he could not see..."*

Of course, this is a sad reality of living in a fallen world. The effects of sin in Eden are so profound that sin did not just affect our vertical relationship to God, it affected our horizontal relationships to each other, and it even affected our bodies. Paul, in Romans 8:23 tells us that our bodies are groaning. This is just the part and parcel of living in a fallen world.

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:16 says,

*"Therefore we do not lose heart..."*

Many people, as the aging process creeps in, become discouraged, particularly in a culture like ours that worships youth and beauty. It is very troubling for people to see their physical bodies deteriorating, but Paul is going through that aging process says,

*"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying..."*

All you have to do to validate that your outer man is decaying is just break out your high school yearbook picture and compare it to your modern day driver's license picture and you will see what I am talking about. Why not lose heart while everybody else loses heart? Paul continues,

*"...yet though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."*

It is a wonderful thing that can happen to somebody as they go through the aging process, which we are all subject to. Inwardly, we are being transformed as we are feeding the new nature and communicating to God via prayer and feeding on His word.

Jacob had this declining eyesight because of the aging process. I find that not everybody in the Bible that grows old loses their eyesight. You might be interested in this. This is what was said of Moses when he was 120. It says in Deuteronomy 34:7:

*"Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated."*

I say that to the Lord, "Lord, if I have got to go through the process when I get to be 120, let my eyes not be dim, nor my vigor abated."

It is interesting how God, even in the aging process itself, can give grace. Jacob was 147; he is about to die, and his eyesight was not as good as it once was.

Next you have Joseph's obedience to Jacob's command. It says in the second part of Genesis 48:10:

*"...Then Joseph brought [Manasseh and Ephraim] close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them."*

He has already adopted them. We saw that in Genesis 48:5, but now he is seeing them up close—understanding what they look like, perhaps for the very first time, because they are up close—and he is getting ready to bless them. Joseph obeys. "Bring those two over to me," and notice Jacob's response to all of this in Genesis 48:11. It says,

*"Israel said to Joseph, 'I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well.'"*

What Jacob is saying to Joseph is this: "I thought you were dead. Since this whole issue of you being betrayed by your brothers—that happened when you were 17—a bunch of time has passed. You were not even elevated to second-in-command in Egypt until age 30. More time passed for me. For me to learn that you were elevated into second-in-command, let alone alive is about all my old heart can take. I thought you were dead—you are not. You are actually alive. You are second-in-command in Egypt."

Jacob's heart, as a grandfather, is overjoyed by the fact that he has two other children that he wants to adopt. He has done that, and he wants to bless. He is at a point in his life where God has exceeded his expectations. Do not be shocked when the Lord does that in your life, because this is the nature of God.

Ephesians 3:20 says,

*"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us."*

Sometimes you pray for something, and God not only answers the prayer, but He comes in here and answers the prayer request way above what you thought. You are shocked by that. Do not be shocked by it, because that is the nature of God. This is what God did for Jacob in his older years.

Psalms 37:4 says,

*"Delight yourself in the Lord,  
And He will give you the desires of your heart."*

By the way, when you claim that promise, make sure you do the first part: "Delight yourself in the Lord." As you delight yourself in the Lord, what you will start to discover is that God's desires will become your desires. Now God is in a position to honor those desires, because they are really His desires that He planted in your heart.

God was honoring the desires of Jacob's heart. He wanted to see Joseph again; he did not know what happened to him; and God honored that. He put Joseph second-in-command in all of Egypt. Jacob is just beside himself that he also gets to see Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. They are coming now to Jacob to receive their patriarchal blessing.

You see now, Joseph, presenting these two sons born in Egypt to Jacob (Genesis 48:12-13). The first thing you see is Joseph's submission. It says,

*"Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed down with his face to the ground."*

That is a sign of submission to parental authority. The Bible, of course, is going to have a lot to say about parental authority when we get to Mount Sinai several centuries later. The fifth commandment will be to honor one's mother and father. Of course, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they were using something called Corban (Mark 7)—money and finances—to do something religious, but they were not using that money to help their parents in their old age. Jesus says, "You have a fine way of using the traditions of men to set aside the commandments of God." The Bible, if it teaches anything, teaches respect and honor for one's parents.

Of course, I am not dealing with the situation where someone is abused by their parents. We are not dealing with that particular subject here. It is that generally, this is the way things work. A person should honor the ones that brought them into this world—their mother and their father—and one of the signs of the last days, according to 2 Timothy 3:2, is that there will be a discarding of parental authority. Children will be in rebellion against their own parents. I think our culture is about there. What do you think?

Joseph is honoring his father to the point where he is bowing down. I do not know if bowing down is really the essential issue, it is just a heart of respect for one's parents. That is what Joseph is demonstrating as he brings these two, Manasseh and Ephraim, to Jacob to receive this patriarchal blessing. Joseph wants it done a particular way. The reason he wants it done a particular way is that this is how the ancient Near East functioned: the older is on the right, the younger is on the left.

Notice the positioning that takes place. It is in Genesis 48:13,

*"Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him."*

I hope you have picked up on, as we have moved through this, you see the switch in names from Jacob to Israel. You notice that all the way through this paragraph he is called Israel rather than Jacob. That is something that is going to take place all the way through

the Bible. Jacob and Israel's names are going to be used as synonyms interchangeably. In fact, the time of Tribulation that is coming upon the earth is called a *"time of Jacob's distress."*

Jeremiah 30:7 says,

*""Alas! for that day is great,  
There is none like it;  
And it is the time of Jacob's distress,  
But he will be saved from it.""*

This is how God is going to get Israel's attention in the last days, which is actually one of the proofs as to why we, as the church, cannot be in that time period—because you are not Jacob; we are not Israel. We are the Church which has been promised an exemption from divine wrath, which is very different from the Nation of Israel that goes into this time period and will become converted in and through it.

This switch between Israel and Jacob, using these two names synonymously, is common from this point on in the Bible. You would expect that explanation in the Book of Beginnings—the Book of Genesis. We have read in Genesis 32 and other places, where God took Jacob's name and changed it to Israel. That is why the two are used interchangeably from this point on in Scripture.

#### Beginning Themes

Universe	Religion
Life	Salvation
Man	Language
Marriage	Government
Evil	Nations
Clothing	Israel

Morris, *Genesis Record*, 18-20.

If you do not give yourself to the Book of Genesis, you would never understand that, because the Book of Genesis is the foundation upon which the rest of our belief system is built. The Book of Genesis gives us knowledge of the beginning of the universe, the beginning of life, the beginning of man, the beginning of marriage. We are living in a society that wants to redefine marriage, as if it is ours to redefine. It is God's institution, as revealed in Genesis. The beginning of evil, the beginning of clothing, religion, salvation, language, government, nations—our whole knowledge of these things comes from the Book of Genesis, including the interchangeability of the names Jacob and Israel.

At any rate, what you see happening here is the firstborn, Manasseh, by Joseph's design is put on Jacob's right. The second born, Ephraim, is put on Jacob's left. Why did Joseph set it up this way? Because the right hand is the place of honor. You will see this all the way through Scripture.

Psalms 110:1 says this:

*"The Lord said to my Lord:  
'Sit at My right hand  
Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'"*

Where is Jesus right now? He is not at the Father's left hand; He is at the Father's right hand the place of honor. In Joseph's mind, since Manasseh is the firstborn, that is where he belongs—he belongs in that place of preeminence. Joseph wants both of these kids to be blessed, but the top blessing in Joseph's mind is going to go to Manasseh rather than Ephraim.

About the Sheep and Goat Judgment at the end of the age, Matthew 25:33 says this:

*"And He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left."*

You have in your Bible Ecclesiastes 10:2, which says,

*"A wise man's heart directs him toward the right, but the foolish man's heart directs him toward the left."*

You see this place of honor at the right hand rather than the left hand. Joseph brings these two and he sets it up where the older, Manasseh, is next to Jacob's right hand. Then Jacob does something outside of Joseph's expectations: he changes hands. Now he is blessing the younger with his right hand and the older with his left hand. You read about this in Genesis 48:14:

*"But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn."*

His right hand is now on the second born, Ephraim, and his left hand is on the firstborn, Manasseh. Then he starts to give the blessing. The blessing is described in Genesis 48:15-16. It says,

*"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 to this day,  
The angel who has redeemed me from all evil,  
Bless the lads;  
And may my name live on in them,  
And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;  
And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.'"*

The first thing he does in Genesis 48:15, before he blesses Ephraim and Manasseh, he blesses Joseph. You might be reading this and say, "I wish I were blessed like that." The truth of the matter is that you are. Ephesians 1:3 says this of the Christian's status in Christ Jesus:

*"Blessed be the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."*

Notice the blessing of you already happened; you do not have to seek it out—it is already yours. When God blessed you, He did not hold anything back. He blessed you *"with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."* There is no need to go before God groveling and saying, "Lord bless me." The Lord is saying, "What else do you want? Your bank account is maxed out."

I bring this up because a lot of Christians give, in their minds, to get blessed, and that is a wrong motivation. We give as Christians because we are blessed, and we have been blessed *"with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."* Look at what Jesus said to the struggling church at Smyrna. He said in Revelation 2:9:

*"I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan."*

"I know about your tribulation. I know about your poverty in man's eyes. I know about the fact that you are being persecuted; but the reality is you are rich." It is just a matter of seeing oneself the way God sees us.

The first thing that Jacob does is he blesses Joseph, and then it says,

*"...and said, 'The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked...'"*

He makes a reference now to his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham. He makes the statement here that those two guys walked with God. What a great description that is for us in the Christian life. I want it to be said of me, like Noah and these sages of old, that I walked with God—I had a relationship with the God that made me and redeemed me.

Next Jacob makes a statement in Genesis 48:15, about God as his shepherd.

*"...The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day."*

Of course, this reminds us of what David would write centuries later in the Psalm 23:1. Many of you know it by heart:

*"The Lord is my shepherd,  
I shall not want."*

Then at the end of the psalm (which very short), in Psalm 23:6 it says,

*"Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,  
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*

This, to my knowledge, is the first reference to God as our shepherd in the entire Bible.

What does a shepherd do? He guides; he grazes; he guards. Those are the three primary functions of a shepherd. As we walk with the Lord, we start to see that all the days of our



life are just like that. He is constantly guiding; He is constantly grazing; and He is constantly guarding.

I was talking to my own mother on the phone, about a week ago. She is in her upper 80s, so she is in a place where she is looking back on her life and thinking about it, and she says, "God has been faithful to me my whole life." She quoted Psalm 23:6 after it calls God our Shepherd, it says, *"Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life."* What a great summation of our lives as we look back at what God has done.

Jacob, as he is blessing or getting ready to bless these two, does something very interesting there. In Genesis 48:16 he says,

*"The angel who has redeemed me from all evil..."*

Who is this angel? I believe that this angel is the Angel of the Lord. The Angel of the Lord is Jesus before the manger. It is a preincarnate appearance of Jesus prior to the virgin birth. I do not convert every angelic experience people have in the Old Testament to a preincarnate appearance of Jesus.

The theologians have a fancy name for these appearances. Sometimes it is called a theophany, other times it is called a christophany. I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that there are such appearances. To me, one of the clearest ones is in Joshua 5:13-15, where Joshua, as he is getting ready to move into the conquest of Canaan, encounters the Angel of the Lord.

We know it is not just an ordinary angel there because Joshua bows down to the angel, and the angel receives worship. An ordinary angel will never receive worship from a human being. John tried it in the Book of Revelation. He actually tried it twice. (I guess he never learned his lesson.) In Revelation 19:10, he was so enthralled with the vision that he had received, called the Book of Revelation, that he starts to worship the intermediary angel, and the angel says, "Knock it off. I am a fellow servant. What are you worshiping me for?" John does the exact same thing in Revelation 22. The angel again says, "Knock it off. What are you worshiping me for? I am just a fellow servant."

It is always interesting to me how John ends his epistle, 1 John, with this little expression, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21); yet, John himself became an idolater two times.

An idol is something that we worship above and beyond God. You are so blessed by a person or an instrument that God uses that we attach worship to the instrument rather than God Himself. By the way, God has a solution for that—He picks the least qualified people to do His work, because when God works through you, people are going to say, "There is no way it is you." So they worship God. How do you qualify to be used in the work of God? You just have to be unqualified. The problem with the person that is qualified is they end up deflecting the glory that belongs to the Lord (which He will not share).

Joshua worships this angel in Joshua 5:13-15. The angel never rebukes him like the angel in the Book of Revelation rebuked John. Why did the angel not rebuke him? Because that particular angel was Jesus Himself. That is a theophany—a christophany.

Jesus made this statement to the Pharisees as they were talking about Abraham. He said in John 8, "Abraham saw My day and was glad." They are saying, "What do you mean, you saw Abraham? You are not even 50 years old." That is because three angels showed up at Abraham's tent in Genesis 18. One of the three was the Angel of the Lord—one of the three was a theophany; a christophany.

This is why Jacob, recognizing this saying, says, *"The angel who has redeemed me from all evil..."* Did an angel ever die on the cross for us? This Angel would, because He is a preincarnate appearance of Jesus. I believe what Jacob is doing here is attracting attention to the source of his blessing to exactly who it is that shepherded him—the eternally existent second member of the Godhead.

There is a great book written on this that I will recommend to you, by Dr. Ron Rhodes of Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries. It has a great title—"Christ Before the Manger." He documents every single Old Testament case where you are not dealing with an ordinary angel, you are dealing with a theophany—a christophany—because Jesus did not have His beginning point at the point of the virgin conception.

I hope we understand that Jesus is the uncaused cause. He has always been. The Jehovah's Witnesses (not if, but when they come to your house), will try to confuse you on this and try to act like Jesus is a created being. No, He is not a created being. The only thing that happened at the virgin conception was humanity added to eternally existent deity. There was no subtraction; there was no exchange. There was an addition, so He could be qualified to pay our sin debt.

This is a great subject to think about during this Christmas season. Jesus has always been. He is the eternally existent second member of the Godhead. If so, is it a big shock that He would show up at strategic times in the pages of the Old Testament? Jacob simply acknowledges that.

In Genesis 48:16 he says,

*"The angel who has redeemed me..."*

The Book of Genesis is a book of firsts. This, to my knowledge, is the first time the word "Redeemer" appears in the Bible, other than the Book of Job.

The Hebrew for "Redeemer" is "ga'al." Job, in the oldest book of the Bible says,

*"As for me, I know that my ["ga'al"] Redeemer lives,  
And at the last He will take His stand on the earth"* (Job 19:25).

Here is that same Hebrew word, "ga'al," used by Jacob to describe a preincarnate appearance of Jesus. He is our Redeemer.

What does that even mean—Redeemer? You are going to see a big example of it when we get to the Book of Exodus, where God is going to purchase His people from Egyptian bondage through the work of the innocent Passover lamb, to release them from bondage through the sacrificial spilling of innocent blood. That is what "redeemed" means. "Redeemed," as the song says, "by the blood of the Lamb."

Notice that Jacob acknowledges that this coming redemption is not for some of his sins, but from "all evil"—past, present, and future—paid for by Jesus Christ. Once you get your mind wrapped around that, how can you not believe in eternal security? Salvation does not rest on my shoulders. If I go out and sin this afternoon (I am not recommending that, by the way), it is not as if my salvation is canceled, because Jesus paid for my past sins, my present sins, and yet future sins. I am completely and totally safe and secure in His hands and in His arms as my faithful Shepherd. Jacob is acknowledging that.

He blesses the lads—blesses the two—even though he does not bless them in the order that Joseph anticipated. Continuing on with Genesis 48:16 is part of the blessing. He says,

*"And may my name live on in them..."*

His name was changed to Israel. These two are part of Israel. They have been adopted like us, in a way. I do not belong in God's family; I do not belong in God's program; but God took me, at the point of salvation, and He adopted me as one of His own. I do not even have to eat at the kids' table. I can go right up to the adult table, not just as a beneficiary, but as a son.

What does Paul say in Galatians 4:7?

*"...and if a son, then an heir through God."*

It is an amazing thing that God has done for us, and it seems to me that it is prefigured with what Jacob is doing for these two that were not born in the right place. They were born here in Egypt, through someone whose father was an Egyptian priest. These two should not have been adopted any more than we should have been, but we were brought in because of the work of Jesus Christ.

*"And May my name live on in them..."*

He also mentions *"the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac."* These two are part of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which is what an Israeli is—a Jew, a Hebrew. They are part of God's special nation, a descendant not just of Abraham, but of Isaac, and also of Jacob.

He concludes this blessing by talking about their numerical growth. He says,

*"And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."*

That fits everything that God has promised to the Nation of Israel. God took Abraham outside in Genesis 15:5, and said,

*"Now look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them."*

At that point, God is chuckling, because He knows man cannot count the stars. Man, throughout history, thought he could count the stars; but now, with all of the technology we have, we know that there are so many stars, they are innumerable.

*"He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'"*

"Your descendants are going to be as the stars of heaven—innumerable; as the dust of the earth—innumerable. They are going to be as the sand of the seashore—innumerable." It is an amazing promise; but it does not stop there, because Paul, in Galatians 3:16, says,

*"Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is Christ."*

Seed is a collective singular. What does that mean? It is a noun that could be used in the singular or the plural. It is like the word "hair." "Hey, Pastor, did you get your hair cut?" "Yeah, I did." "Which one are you talking about?" "I got this strand cut." I can use "hair" as singular or plural, just like the word "sheep." Are you talking about a flock or one cute little cuddly animal individually? The word "seed" is the same way.

The word "seed" that Paul picks up on—this collective singular—is saying, "Through Abraham's innumerable seed is going to come a Seed." By the way, He is going to be born from a specific tribe, the Tribe of Judah, which we are going to learn about in Genesis 49. This Seed is going to redeem every single sin we have ever committed—past, present and future—through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. This time of the year, we are not just celebrating Israel's seed (plural), we are celebrating the individual Seed (Galatians 3:16), that comes to us because of God's work through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.

That is the blessing that is given to Manasseh and Ephraim. Joseph does not like it. Joseph's reaction is described in Genesis 48:17-18. Notice how he reacts to this:

*"When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him..."*

Translation: Joseph is not a happy camper, because Joseph's mind is working according to the way things normally worked in the ancient Near East. His father, Jacob, just did "crisscross applesauce", and that bothered him. "This is unconventional," is what Joseph is thinking.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum says this:

*"According to the 'Nuzi Tablets,'..."<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, 629.

I realize you probably have not done a lot of your devotional time lately in the "Nuzi Tablets." It is archeological material from around this same time period, and it documents many of the customs that we read about in the Bible. So many of the customs that you read about in the Bible were practiced throughout the ancient Near East, as evidenced by the "Nuzi Tablets."

This is why the Bible is not some kind of "Jack and the Beanstalk" thing that somebody thought up. This is actual history, documented by archeology. God wants you to understand that, because the PhDs in public education think they have a corner on history. "We have history. You people that are Christians are just religious."

The whole agenda is to drive a wedge between spiritual truth and historical truth. I am here to tell you that the Bible was not written that way. Yes, there are obviously great spiritual lessons here; but if you are looking at the Bible as some great teaching on spiritual truth and you are not seeing it as an actual history book, then you have missed one of the main features of God's revelation to man. God allowed His disclosure to mankind to take place in an atmosphere and an environment that can be documented, archaeologically, historically, and geographically.

I was within a millimeter of attending a seminary that did not believe this. They basically believe that the Bible is true when it comes to spiritual things, but it can have mistakes in it when it comes to physical things. This seminary was close to my house at the time, but they did not believe in full inerrancy of the Bible, so ultimately I decided that it was not the place for me.

If the Bible has mistakes in it related to archeology and geography and things that I can see, how in the world am I supposed to trust it on things I cannot see? How do I trust it on things like sin, Satan, heaven, hell, the rapture, and the coming Kingdom? How can I trust it if it has mistakes in it related to history and geography?

At Sugar Land Bible Church we embrace not only inerrancy, but plenary inerrancy. "Plenary" means "full"—full inerrancy. In other words, the Bible in its original manuscripts was completely and 100% without error; not just in things I cannot see, but in things I can see. Anyone who teaches something less than that has driven a wedge into the Word of God that does not belong there. They are opening the door to doubt, and ultimately liberalism and denying what the Scripture says.

Back to the "Nuzi Tablets." I know you are dying to hear this explanation.

"According to the 'Nuzi Tablets,' adoption in this manner was common, and such blessings were considered binding under Nuzi law."<sup>2</sup>

Right hand—oldest. But what did Jacob just do? He just did "crisscross applesauce," and Joseph is not happy about it.

Genesis 48:17:

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

*"...and he grasped his father's hand..."*

This is the guy he just bowed down to the ground to. He is grabbing his father's hands and trying to reverse what his father has done. Genesis 48:17:

*"and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head."*

That is a physical reaction, and it leads to a verbal protest in Genesis 48:18.

*"Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head.'"*

What did Joseph think? "The man's old. He is 147. He cannot see correctly. He obviously made a mistake." Here is Joseph, grabbing his father's hands, and trying to arrange things the way Joseph understands the way they should be arranged. Look at Jacob's response, at 147 years old. It says in Genesis 48:19:

*"But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will become great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he...'"*

That is not the way it is supposed to work in the ancient Near East. The blessing always went to the older, not the younger. Genesis 48:19 goes on to say,

*"However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."*

You will notice that Manasseh, the older, is still blessed. Just because you do not receive the prime blessing does not mean you are not blessed. Keep that in mind in our series on Calvinism that we are working through in Sunday School, because what they will say is, "Jacob, have I loved; Esau, have I hated. One is appointed to eternal life. The other is appointed to damnation." That is not how it works in biblical times. Just because you are not chosen for the primary blessing does not mean you are on your way to hell—you are double predestined to hell.

You see this prefigured here with Jacob. "Do not worry, Joseph. The older is still going to be blessed, but the primary blessing is going to go to the younger."

Go to Genesis 48:19 and see Jacob's response. The older is still going to be blessed—Manasseh is still going to be blessed. Just because you are not blessed, does not mean you are cursed, which is what Calvinism says.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes this:

*"Ephraim became a key tribe, eventually the name Ephraim also became a synonym for all Israel. Sometimes in the place of saying 'Israel,' the*

people would say 'Ephraim,' not referring only to the Tribe of Ephraim but referring to the entire nation of Israel, especially the Northern Kingdom."<sup>3</sup>

Did it happen in such a way that Ephraim the younger was blessed? Yes it did. In fact, as you go through the Bible, what you are going to discover is that Ephraim is going to become so prominent that Ephraim is going to be used as a synonym for the whole Northern Kingdom. Ephraim is going to be used as a symbol for the whole nation.

What was spoken of here happens in biblical history. The rest of the Bible is not going to come along and say, "The reason it is happening that Ephraim is prominent is because of the blessing and the crisscross applesauce." The Bible is not written that way. When you move on to later books of the Bible, the Bible expects you to have already read what came earlier.

You are spending this time in Genesis, and it is going to pay a big dividend when you get to other Old Testament books, because Little Old You has an explanation as to why Ephraim is prominent. The person who is doing Bible Bingo (which is, unfortunately, how a lot of Christians read the Bible) will not know this. They want their blessing for the day, so they pick a verse. "Oh, there is one in Genesis. Let us do some more Bible Bingo. Let us grab one in 1 Kings; let us grab one in Psalms." In their mind, they do not have a coherent picture of the Bible. The Bible is just a messy kaleidoscope.

When they get to the blessing of Ephraim later on in Scripture, they do not even know why it is happening; but you know why it is happening, because you have given yourself to a systematic, chronological approach to the Bible. I do not know everything there is to know about the Bible. I wish I did, but I know this much: the Bible is set up in a way that it will not re-explain itself to you for stuff you were already supposed to have learned by reading earlier portions of it.

It is like going into a movie, and you are five minutes late, or you are at the popcorn stand and you miss some critical piece of information at the beginning of the movie. Because you do not have that critical piece of information, you are confused throughout the whole movie. That is what happens to your average Christian who is not diligent in Bible study. They miss a piece of information—"Why is Ephraim being blessed?"—and the rest of the Bible is confusing to him.

I bring this up because a lot of people say, "Pastor, we have been in the Book of Genesis a long time. You should be moving a little faster." Maybe I should, but I want you to understand that there is a method behind the madness, because what we are doing is setting you up to understand the rest of the Word of God. A Christian who will not discipline themselves like this is confused. Things do not make sense to them. It is like coming into the movie late, when you miss a key piece of information. Would you not expect this in the Book of Genesis as to why Ephraim becomes prominent? It is the Book of Beginnings. It would spell this out for us.

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<sup>3</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, 630.

Exactly what God said—the blessing on Ephraim—happened. I recommend this book to you by Dr. John Walvoord, "Every Prophecy of the Bible." When you read it, you will discover that the prophecies that have been fulfilled are exactly what God said would happen, which gives me confidence in the prophecies yet to come. Every single jot and tittle of the prophetic word will be fulfilled, because the Bible has staked its reputation upon its ability to predict the future in the short-run.

No other book does this. The Quran certainly could not do it, because it is written by one guy at a specific point in time. The Book of Mormon cannot do this, but the Bible can. It has a track record of prophetic accuracy. When you read about the prophecies yet to come, you have confidence in them because everything God says happens. How could it not when God cannot lie? Fulfilled prophecy demonstrates that.

Do you see a pattern here, where God puts aside man's ways of doing things? Man's way of doing things is that the older gets the blessing, not the younger; but do you see a pattern here? This is the Messianic line through Abel, contrary to Eve's false expectation. It begins a selection of the younger over the older. That is a pattern that you see with Abel over Cain; Seth over Cain; Shem over Japheth; Isaac over Ishamel; Jacob over Esau; Judah and Joseph over their brothers. This is the final example of it in the Book of Genesis: Ephraim over Manasseh.

God is saying, "I do not care what the 'Nuzi Tablets' say. I am in charge. I am in control. I am unconventional. I do not work according to the way man works. I do my own thing." After all, the prophet Isaiah says,

*"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways..." (Isaiah 55:9).*

Do not put God in your box. If you put Him in your box, He is coming right out. He is the God of the unexpected. The God of the scriptural, yes, but the God of the unexpected. Humans have a terrible tendency of wanting God to do things their way rather than God's way. This is why, all over this city, you have Christ rejectors. They say, "It cannot be that easy to be right with God. I just have to trust in Jesus to be right with Him? It cannot be that easy. I have my system of religion that I am embracing." They are trying to fit spirituality into their own understanding. This is what Joseph is doing here.

As a point of application, do not ask God to bless your plans. I had a youth pastor that put it this way, many years ago. He said, "If you want to make God laugh, show Him your plans for your life." Boy, that will get a good chuckle out of heaven. God does things differently than man does. God does not see the way man does. Clearly He reversed what is ordinary here in Genesis 48. If you have been paying attention, He has been doing it all the way through the Book of Genesis.

Genesis 48:20 says:

*"He blessed them that day, saying,  
'By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying,  
'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'  
Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh."*



For Jacob to do this, he had to step out in faith. You know about the Hall of Faith—the record of those who trusted God against all odds. Noah is in there. A lot of people are in there. You know who else is in there? Jacob. You know why Jacob is in there? Because he did this right here in Genesis 48.

Hebrews 11:21 says,

*"By faith, Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff."*

He did not just bless them, he blessed them the way God said to bless them. He put aside the way the world works; and he completely depended upon where God was leading him, not upon how man typically does things. Because he did it, he earns a place there in the Hall of Faith. May we be like Jacob and step out in faith and do things God's way. Amen.