

Genesis Chapter 48 - Commentary By Mike Wells

Overview of Genesis 48:

Chapter 48 can be divided into two parts: (1) Joseph visits his dying father in verses 1-7. And, (2) Jacob blesses Joseph's sons in verses 8-22.

Genesis 48 : 1-7 - 1 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. 2 And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. 3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, 4 And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. 5 And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. 6 And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. 7 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.

- In Jacob's had become ill, so Joseph took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to see their grandfather.
- Jacob sat up when he saw them and began to bless his two grandsons.
- He told the story of how God had appeared to him in the past and blessed him.
- It is interesting that he noted that Joseph's two sons would be unto him "***as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.***"
- The comparison is made because Reuben lost his birthright because of his flagrant sin against his father.
- ***I Chronicles 5:1 - Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright.***
- Simeon was his second born, but Jacob was also disappointed in Simeon's cruelty in the matter of Joseph and of Dinah. Remember Genesis Chapter 34 (Gen. 34 tells of how Schechem, a Hivite, took Dinah; Simeon's and Levi's sister, and defiled her, and wanted her to make her his wife. Simeon and Levi told him that they would consent to this, and other marriages between them, if all the males of the city would be circumcised. Circumcision was a required for the Jews by God, but Simeon and Levi used it as a weapon against those Hivites. The men consented to this, and then on the third day afterwards when the men were unable to fight, Simeon and Levi walked into the city and slew all the men and took all they had – riches, cattle, wives, and children. Thus Jacob refers to this heinous act of his two sons.
- So instead of his own first two sons, Jacob made Joseph's two sons as his first and second born.
- Jacob also made clear that even his two grandsons (Manasseh and Ephraim though born in Egypt) would in the future be called by his name Israel.

Genesis 48 : 8-12 - *8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? 9 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. 10 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. 11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed. 12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.*

- Though Manasseh and Ephraim were before their grandfather, he was so aged that his eyesight had largely failed him and he had trouble seeing them
- He requested for Joseph to bring them near that he might bless them.
- Then, Jacob kissed them and embraced them.
- Jacob discussed that he for many years thought he would never see Joseph and now he had Joseph's sons before him – God had indeed blessed him once more.
- Joseph then delivered his sons from between his knees and he himself bowed himself to the ground before his dying father.

Genesis 48 : 13-20 - *13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. 14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. 15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, 16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. 17 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. 18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. 19 And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. 20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.*

- As Jacob prepared to bless his grandsons, he placed his right hand upon Ephraim the younger and his left on Manasseh.
- His blessing was as eloquent: “*God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, 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.*”
- Jacob clearly understood how God not only had guided and blessed his forefathers, but him as well.
- He also acknowledged that God had provided for him throughout his life.
- The same God who had redeemed him, he prayed to bless his two grandsons before him.

- He basically placed the blessing of the birthright of the firstborn upon them (Rueben's blessing)
- He made clear in their hearing that they were to assume his name (**Israel**) upon them, even though they had grown up their entire life in Egypt.
- Finally, he asked God to make them grow into a multitude.
- Joseph through his sons received a double blessing from his father.
- Joseph quickly picked up on how his father had placed his right hand upon the younger of the two, Ephraim.
- The middle eastern custom was that the right hand symbolized the greater blessing.
- Joseph sought to intervene and change his father's hands.
- He assumed Jacob did not realize who the older was.
- Yet, Jacob refused and replied, "***I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.***"
- Indeed, the tribe of Ephraim had 8,300 more than Manasseh when coming out of Egypt (**Numbers 13:33,35**).

Genesis 48 : 21-22 - 21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. 22 Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

- Jacob concluded his blessing to Joseph by prophetically revealing how that after his death, God would eventually bring them again into the land of their fathers.
- He also acknowledged that he in fact had given him a double portion of blessing above his brethren.
- He justified it by his disappointment in how the taking of the Amorite city (Shechem in the matter of Dinah by Levi and Simeon) had deeply disappointed him.