

Genesis

Chapter 48



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Jewish Study Bible Introduction: Jacob’s deathbed adoption of Joseph’s sons. As befits a deathbed scene, this passage look both to the past and to the future. Jacob gives a retrospective of his experience of the patriarchal promise and his loss of his favored wife, Rachel (48:3-7), but he also makes Joseph promise to bury him I the promised land (37:29-30), thus reiterating and deepening familial devotion to the patrimony of which they have yet to take possession. Similarly, Jacob’s blessing of Joseph’s two sons, in the reverse of the birth order (48:8-20), looks back to his own supplanting of his older brother early in life (25:22-33; 27:1-45), but it also authorizes the establishment of Ephraim and Manasseh in the twelve tribe league that was to be biblical Israel.¹

McGee Introduction: This tells us of Jacob’s last sickness and his blessing of the two sons of Joseph. We are told in Hebrews 11:21 that “by faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.”

This chapter gives us another occasion to see further evidences of the spiritual growth of Jacob. He has come a long, long way since his early days. We may feel that it is unfortunate that these traits which appear in the last days of Jacob were not present in his early life. But isn’t it wonderful to be able to observe in this that spiritual life is a growth and a development! It is not some sensational experience which takes place in a moment of time, but it is described scripturally as a walk in the Spirit. There was too much of the old nature in Jacob when he was a young man, and the new nature is not discerned until he is an old man.

A fine-looking young couple in Memphis, Tennessee, had come forward after a service. I asked them what they came forward for. They said they wanted all that God had for them. I found out they came forward every Sunday. They thought they would have some sensational, momentous experience that would all of a sudden make them fully grown Christians. Scripture tells us we are to “... *grow* in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). We see in Jacob that we must wait for the fruit of the Spirit to develop. But thank God for the possibility of growth in our lives and for the patience of God which permits it. Also, we can thank Him that He doesn’t move in, as we would, and try to force growth. God very patiently dealt with Jacob, and He will deal very patiently with you and me.²

Genesis 48:1

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.

[after these things] After the charge of Genesis 47:29-31.

One told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick—He was ill before, and Joseph knew it; but it appears that a messenger had been now dispatched to inform Joseph that his father was apparently at the point of death.

¹ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

² McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:188). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick—Joseph was hastily sent for, and on this occasion he took with him his two sons.

The individual blessings which Jacob pronounced upon his children not only have significance for the historical development of the people into a nation, but they also have prophetic significance.

Torah Class: Joseph received an urgent message that his aged father was very ill; so this ruler of Egypt took his 2 children, born to his Egyptian wife Asenath, and went to see Jacob, Israel. As Jacob, with great effort, props himself up in bed (out of respect for the office his son, Joseph, held as Vizier of Egypt), he recites the Abrahamic covenant (in paraphrase) to Joseph; the terms of this covenant having been taught to him by HIS father Isaac, just as Isaac was taught by HIS father Abraham. And, it is this: the Hebrews will become very numerous; and they will become a “kahal ammim”, a holy convocation of fellow countrymen. And, they will be given the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession.³

Genesis 48:2

And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed

[**sat upon the bed**] This is neither leaning on a bed as in Genesis 47:31, nor upon a staff as in Hebrews 11:21.

Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed—He had been confined to his bed before, (see Genesis 47:31), and now, hearing that Joseph was come to see him, he made what efforts his little remaining strength would admit, to sit up in bed to receive his son. This verse shows that a bed, not a staff, is intended in the preceding chapter, Genesis 47:31.⁴

Genesis 48:3

And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,

God Almighty—אל שדי *El Shaddai* the all-sufficient God, the Outpourer and Dispenser of mercies, (see Genesis 17:1), appeared to me at Luz, afterwards called Beth-El; see Genesis 28:13; 35:6, 9. ¹

³ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

⁴ Adam Clarke's Commentary

McGee: Can you imagine the thrill that fills the heart of this old man? Here comes Joseph, his favorite son, with his two young boys. Jacob never dreamed he would see Joseph again because he thought he had been killed. Yet he sees Joseph elevated to this important position in Egypt, and he can trace the way God had worked out the affairs of his life. Jacob had been in Egypt for seventeen years now. He is an old man and is dying, but he musters his strength to sit at the edge of his bed. Notice that his thinking goes back to the time God appeared to him at Luz, and he says to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me.” Jacob has come a long way. We see now the *faith* of Jacob. He is now trusting God. He is not bragging about himself. As a young man he was clever and could get what he wanted—or so he thought—and he would use any kind of method to get it. But now, as he looks back over his life, he remembers when God appeared to him at Bethel, both when he was leaving the land of Canaan and when he was returning. He says, “God appeared to me there, and God blessed me.”⁵

Torah Class: Verse 3 is the beginning of the recitation of the covenant, and Jacob recounts an earlier part of his life when he speaks of meeting El Shaddai (God) at Luz. Luz is an alternate name for Beth-el.....they are one in the same place. Jacob did not call God by the name YHWH.....Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh.....because as we find out much later, in Exodus, at Mt. Sinai, God had not yet REVEALED His personal name.

Let’s talk about the name God went by BEFORE the age of Moses.....El Shaddai. First of all, the meaning of this name has only recently come into better focus. I was taught all my life, as probably most of you were as well, that El Shaddai meant “God Almighty”. Let me emphasize the word TRADITION. There is absolutely no linguistic basis whatsoever to translate El Shaddai as God Almighty. In fact, the OLDER traditions for exactly what that mysterious name might have meant was generally based on the era and the particular language it was translated into. For instance, the earliest Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, called the Septuagint, variously translates El Shaddai as “God”, “All-powerful”, “Heavenly One”, even “Lord”. The first Latin translation makes it to be “Omnipotent”. The Syriac version uses “The Highest” and “the Strong One”.

So, it’s pretty obvious that all of these were primarily guesses. However, more recent scholarship in the field of paleo-linguistics.....the study of ancient and/or extinct languages.....has started to give us a much more accurate picture of the meaning of some of these obscure words. And, since Hebrew is an offshoot of the Akkadian language, we find that by studying language cognates, we can zero in on some of these definitions.

Shaddai is almost certainly a language cognate of the Akkadian word Shaddu. And, Shaddu means “mountain”. So, El Shaddai likely means “God of the Mountain”. This, of course, fits hand in glove with both the general mindset of men in that ancient era, by which gods generally lived high up in mountains; and with the understanding of the early Hebrews that God did indeed live on a mountain top.....Mt. Sinai to be precise.⁶

⁵McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:188). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

Genesis 48:4

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.

God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz—The object of Jacob, in thus reverting to the memorable vision at Beth-el [Genesis 28:10-15] —one of the great landmarks in his history—was to point out the splendid promises in reserve for his posterity—to engage Joseph's interest and preserve his continued connection with the people of God, rather than with the Egyptians.⁷

Behold, I will make thee fruitful—This is a repetition of the covenant (Genesis 28:13-15; Genesis 35:12). Whether these words are to be viewed in a limited sense, as pointing to the many centuries during which the Jews were occupiers of the Holy Land, or whether the words bear a wider meaning and intimate that the scattered tribes of Israel are to be reinstated in the land of promise, as their "everlasting possession," are points that have not yet been satisfactorily determined.

McGee: Let's pay special attention to God's promise that Jacob mentions, which runs through the Old and New Testaments. He made the promise to the line of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There are three specific points to the covenant: (1) the *nation*, (2) the *land*, and (3) the *blessing*. But the two important things for Jacob right here are these: (1) "I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people"; (2) "and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession."

The third part of the covenant is important for you and me. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

The reason that you and I are sitting down with the Bible right now is because God has made two-thirds of this promise which He covenanted thousands of years ago. The one-third is still not fulfilled. The Jews do not have the land of Israel yet. Oh, they have a little border of it, but it is certainly a bone of contention. When they get the land from the hand of God, they will live there in peace. Every man will be under his vine and his fig tree. They will own property and pay no taxes. That sounds like the Millennium, doesn't it? Well, that is what it will be.⁸

Genesis 48:5

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

⁷ JFB Commentary

⁸ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:189). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh—are mine—I now adopt them into my own family, and they shall have their place among my twelve sons, and be treated in every respect as those, and have an equal interest in all the spiritual and temporal blessings of the covenant.

Ephraim and Manasseh

Jacob claimed them as part of the great nation that God had promised him. They became the heads of two of the twelve tribes of Israel. One took the place of Joseph and the other the place of Levi whose tribe became the priestly line and was not reckoned as one of the twelve tribes during the organization of the nation. See Numbers 1:1-15,20-43; Numbers 2; Numbers 7; Numbers 10:14-28; Numbers 13:1-15; Numbers 26; Numbers 34:1-20; Joshua 13:7-33; Judges 5:14-18. In eight of these lists of tribes Levi is not mentioned because of having no inheritance in Israel with the twelve tribes (Joshua 13:33; Numbers 18:20). In seven other lists of the tribes Levi is mentioned (Deut. 27:12-14; Deut. 33; 1 Chron. 2:1-8; 1 Chron. 12:8-40; 1 Chron. 27:1-22; Ezekiel 48; Rev. 7:1-8). In Genesis 29 and Genesis 35 Levi is mentioned. In Genesis 46 and Genesis 49; Exodus 1; Numbers 34; Deut. 33; Judges 5; 1 Chron. 2; Rev. 7 and other places some of the other tribes are not mentioned. The twenty-four lists vary to suit the purpose of each writer, whether making a record according to birth, blessing, encampment, numeration, or division.⁹

Genesis 48:6

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

Jacob gave the birthright to Joseph by “adopting” Ephraim and Manasseh to the rank of his firstborn sons, thus giving a double portion to Joseph. They thus replaced Reuben and Simeon, Jacob’s first two sons, born to Leah (cf. 1 Chr 5:1-2). The recognition of Joseph’s sons would have an effect on the apportioning of the land of promise years later in the days of Joshua (Josh 16-17). [This provides for a total of 13 to choose from and permits various listings to omit one (for various reasons) and still have a list of “Twelve” Tribes.]¹⁰

Ephraim and Manasseh as firstborn. While Jacob does not disinherit Reuben and Simeon, he adopts Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and gives them prioritized standing in inheritance. The adoption practice and formula here are very similar to those attested in the Code of Hammurabi. Additionally, one Ugaritic text features a grandfather adopting his grandson. In one sense this adoption could be seen as the means by which Joseph is given the double portion of the inheritance due to the firstborn, since two of his sons receive shares from Jacob’s inheritance.¹¹

⁹ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

¹⁰ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

¹¹ Bible Background Commentary

Jacob gave the birthright to Joseph by elevating Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's sons (41:51-52), to the rank of firstborn sons, thus giving a double portion to Joseph. They thus replaced Reuben and Simeon, Jacob's first two sons, born to Leah (cf. 1 Chron. 5:1-2). The recognition of Joseph's sons would have an effect on the apportioning of the land of promise years later in the days of Joshua (Josh. 16-17). Jacob's elevation of the sons of Joseph was prompted by his recollection of Rachel, his favorite wife, who died in the land of Canaan (cf. Gen. 35:16-20).¹²

McGee: These two grandsons, the two sons of Joseph, will each become a tribe. One would conclude that there are thirteen tribes of Israel, since there are twelve sons, and now the two sons of Joseph are each to become a tribe. There was no tribe of Joseph, but there were the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, and that makes thirteen in any man's mathematics. Yet the Bible counts twelve tribes. You see, the tribe of Levi was not counted as a tribe. They became the high priestly tribe and were not given any land or territory but were scattered as priests throughout the other tribes. So they were not counted as a tribe. You may consider that to be a rather devious way of counting, but I didn't do it; the Word of God counts it that way. That is the way God wanted it to be, and so that is the way God made it.

Ephraim and Manasseh are over seventeen years old because they were born before Jacob came to Egypt. They each become a tribe.

Notice now that Jacob's mind goes back to Rachel, his beloved, the mother of Joseph.¹³

Genesis 48:7

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.

[Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan] Rachel was mentioned in his dying hour showing his undying love for his first love (Genesis 48:7; Genesis 29:18-20,30).

Rachel died by me, etc.—Rachel was the wife of Jacob's choice, and the object of his unvarying affection; he loved her in life—he loves her in death: many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. A match of a man's own making when guided by reason and religion, will necessarily be a happy one. When fathers and mothers make matches for their children, which are dictated by motives, not of affection, but merely of convenience, worldly gain, etc., etc., such matches are generally wretched; it is Leah in the place of Rachel to the end of life's pilgrimage.¹⁴

¹² Bible Knowledge Commentary

¹³ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:189). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁴ Adam Clarke's Commentary

Jacob adopts his two grandsons born in Egypt, explaining this by reference to his affection for their departed grandmother, Rachel. This promotes them to the status of tribal founders and makes his favored wife their mother in place of the Egyptian priest's daughter Asenath (41:50-52). Moreover, the end of v. 5 seems to mean that Ephraim and Manasseh will become the senior tribes, replacing Reuben and Simeon, both of whom earn their father's censure (34:30; 35:22; 49:3-7, cf. 1 Chron. 5:1). V. 6 stipulates that any other children that Joseph has or will have (the Tanakh lists no others) shall be classified under Ephraim and Manasseh and not hold the status of the sons of Jacob. Note that whereas some lists of the twelve include Joseph and clerical tribe Levi, (e.g., Deut. 27:12-13), others omit Levi and divide Joseph into Ephraim and Manasseh (e.g., Num. 1:5-15).¹⁵

The **two sons** of Joseph were Manasseh and Ephraim (41:50–52). Jacob reversed their birth order. He also said that they were as much his sons as were **Reuben and Simeon**, his first and second sons (29:32, 33). Because of the outrageous acts of Reuben (35:22) and Simeon (34:25), both of them had fallen from favor. Levi was also implicated in the outrage of Simeon (34:25). Therefore the rights and privileges of the firstborn son were passed down to two other sons, Judah (49:8–12) and Joseph (49:22–26). Reuben as the firstborn could have received a double portion of the father's inheritance. But Jacob gave the double share to Joseph (v. 22). Joseph's two sons are then counted with their uncles as founders of the tribes of Israel.¹⁶

Genesis 48:8

And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these?

[**Who are these?**] Jacob had met the sons before but now he was nearly blind and unable to tell who was with Joseph (Genesis 48:10). They were now about twenty-two and twenty-four years old (Genesis 41:46,53-54; Genesis 45:6; Genesis 47:9,28).¹⁷

Who are these?—At Genesis 48:10 it is said, that Jacob's eyes were dim for age, that he could not see—could not discern any object unless it were near him; therefore, though he saw Ephraim and Manasseh, yet he could not distinguish them till they were brought nigh unto him.⁴

Israel's question is odd, since he has just spoken about Ephraim and Manasseh in considerable detail and with no deficit of clarity. The problem disappears if V. 8 is seen as the continuation of v. 2 and vv. 3-7 (which amply classic P language) are understood as an interpretation. In the text as it comes to us, however, the effect of V. 8 is to suggest that the aged Israel is confused and forgetful, somewhat like his own father in ch 27. If so, this time the suggestion proves wrong (vv. 17-20)!¹⁸

¹⁵ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

¹⁶ The Nelson Study Bible

¹⁷ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

¹⁸ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Genesis 48:9

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.

Genesis 48:10

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.

Genesis 48:11

And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath showed me also thy seed.

I had not thought to see thy face—There is much delicacy and much tenderness in these expressions. He feels himself now amply recompensed for his long grief and trouble on account of the supposed death of Joseph, in seeing not only himself but his two sons, whom God, by a special act of favor, is about to add to the number of his own. Thus we find that as Reuben and Simeon were heads of two distinct tribes in Israel, so were Ephraim and Manasseh; because Jacob, in a sort of sacramental way, had adopted them with equal privileges to those of his own sons.

When Joseph became a slave, Jacob thought he was dead and wept in despair (Genesis 37:30). But eventually God's plan allowed Jacob to regain not only his son, but his grandchildren as well. Circumstances are never so bad that they are beyond God's help. Jacob regained his son. Job got a new family (Job 42:10-17). Mary regained her brother Lazarus (John 11:1-44). We need never despair because we belong to a loving God. We never know what good he will bring out of a seemingly hopeless situation.¹⁹

Genesis 48:12

And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

[bowed himself with his face to the earth] In worship to God and reverence to his father for the honor shown him and his sons.

Genesis 48:13

And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought *them* near unto him.

¹⁹ Life Application Notes

Genesis 48:14

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.

[wittingly] Knowingly, being led by the Holy Spirit.

Israel stretched out his right hand, etc.—Laying hands on the head was always used among the Jews in giving blessings, designating men to any office, and in the consecration of solemn sacrifices. This is the first time we find it mentioned; but we often read of it afterwards. See Numbers 27:18, 23; Deuteronomy 34:9; Matthew 19:13, 15; Acts 6:6; 1 Timothy 4:14. Jacob laid his right hand on the head of the younger, which we are told he did wittingly—well knowing what he was about, for (or although) Manasseh was the first-born, knowing by the Spirit of prophecy that Ephraim's posterity would be more powerful than that of Manasseh. It is observable how God from the beginning has preferred the younger to the elder, as Abel before Cain; Shem before Japheth; Isaac before Ishmael; Jacob before Esau; Judah and Joseph before Reuben; Ephraim before Manasseh; Moses before Aaron; and David before his brethren. “This is to be resolved entirely into the wise and secret counsel of God, so far as it regards temporal blessings and national privileges, as the apostle tells us, Romans 9:11; See Clarke on Genesis 25:23 (note). But this preference has no concern with God's conferring a greater measure of his love and approbation on one person more than another; compare Genesis 4:7, with Hebrews 11:4, and you will see that a difference in moral character was the sole cause why God preferred Abel to Cain.”—Dodd. The grace that converts the soul certainly comes from the mere mercy of God, without any merit on man's part; and a sufficiency of this is offered to every man, Titus 2:11, 12. But it is not less certain that God loves those best who are most faithful to this grace.²⁰

McGee: Ephraim is to become the leader above Manasseh. Later on we will see that the tribe of Manasseh marched under the banner of the tribe of Ephraim in the wilderness march, as described in Numbers. Joshua came out of the tribe of Ephraim, by the way, and there were many great men from that tribe. It became the tribe with priority—there is no question about that.

Do you see what happened here? Even though Jacob couldn't see too well, he could tell what Joseph was doing. Joseph was pushing the older son to the position of Jacob's right hand and the younger son toward the left hand. So what did old Jacob do? Well, he just switched hands. He crossed his hands and put his right hand on the younger son.

Why did he do this? There is no doubt that he had tender affection for both boys. They were the sons of his favorite son Joseph. He knowingly gives the blessing to the younger, and I think one reason may have been that he was the younger and he had received the blessing. So he passes the blessing on to the younger son here.

This is an interesting principle that runs all the way through the Scriptures. For instance, in the choice of David, David was the youngest of the sons of Jesse. Why did God choose him? God is illustrating for you and me a great spiritual truth. God does not

²⁰ Adam Clarke's Commentary

accept primogeniture—that is, natural birth. Never will He accept it. There must be the new birth. Therefore, God does not pay attention to our customs. We say that the oldest boy has the responsibility in a family. Well, the oldest boy is not the one whom God always chooses. That is, God does not choose the natural man—He chooses no man because of his natural ability. How don't misunderstand me. God can use talent, but it must be dedicated to Him! If it took talent alone to bring about revival, we would have had revival in California years ago. We have Christian talent all around, but we don't have revival. Why not? Because the talent is not dedicated to God. I tell you, my friend, it must be *yielded* to Him to be used of Him.

And old Jacob crossed his hands as he laid them on the heads of his grandsons so that he gave the younger boy the priority.²¹

Genesis 48:15

And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

He blessed Joseph—The father first, and then the sons afterwards. And this is an additional proof to what has been adduced under Genesis 48:12, of Jacob's superiority; for the less is always blessed of the greater.

The God which fed me all my life long—Jacob is now standing on the verge of eternity, with his faith strong in God. He sees his life to be a series of mercies; and as he had been affectionately attentive, provident, and kind to his most helpless child, so has God been unto him; he has fed him all his life long; he plainly perceives that he owes every morsel of food which he has received to the mere mercy and kindness of God.

Genesis 48:16

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.

Out of Jacob's long career, the Book of Hebrews selects this blessing of Joseph's sons by the patriarch as his great act of faith (Heb 11:21). It was his reaching out for the continuation of God's promise in the face of death. Ironically *this is the very thing he had once accomplished by deception* (Gen 27). Once more the blessing would be given to the younger, but this time there was not scheming or bitterness. It was an act of faith.²²

²¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:190). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²²Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

[The Angel which redeemed me from all evil] This Angel was God who had blessed him at Bethel, provided for and protected him all the days of his life, and wrestled with him (Genesis 31:11-13; Genesis 32:24-32; Hosea 12:4-5).²³

The Angel which redeemed me from all evil—הַמַּלְאֵךְ הַגּוֹעַל hammalac haggoe1. The Messenger, the Redeemer or Kinsman; for so גּוֹעַל goel signifies; for this term, in the law of Moses, is applied to that person whose right it is, from his being nearest akin, to redeem or purchase back a forfeited inheritance. But of whom does Jacob speak? We have often seen, in the preceding chapters, an angel of God appearing to the patriarchs; (see particularly Genesis 16:7 (note)) and we have full proof that this was no created angel, but the Messenger of the Divine Council, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who then was the angel that redeemed Jacob, and whom he invoked to bless Ephraim and Manasseh? Is it not JESUS? He alone can be called Goel, the redeeming Kinsman; for he alone took part of our flesh and blood that the right of redemption might be his; and that the forfeited possession of the favor and image of God might be redeemed, brought back, and restored to all those who believe in his name. To have invoked any other angel or messenger in such a business would have been impiety. Angels bless not; to GOD alone this prerogative belongs. With what confidence may a truly religious father use these words in behalf of his children: “JESUS, the CHRIST, who hath redeemed me, bless the lads, redeem them also, and save them unto eternal life!”²⁴

Let my name be named on them—“Let them be ever accounted as a part of my own family; let them be true Israelites—persons who shall prevail with God as I have done; and the name of Abraham—being partakers of his faith; and the name of Isaac—let them be as remarkable for submissive obedience as he was. Let the virtues of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be accumulated in them, and invariably displayed by them!” These are the very words of adoption; and by the imposition of hands, the invocation of the Redeemer, and the solemn blessing pronounced, the adoption was completed. From this moment Ephraim and Manasseh had the same rights and privileges as Jacob’s sons, which as the sons of Joseph they could never have possessed.⁹

And let them grow into a multitude—וַיִּדְגּוּ לָרֹב veyidgu larob; Let them increase like fishes into a multitude. FISH are the most prolific of all animals; see the instances produced on Genesis 1:20 (note). This prophetic blessing was verified in a most remarkable manner; see Numbers 26:34, 37; Deuteronomy 33:17; Joshua 17:17. At one time the tribe of Ephraim amounted to 40,500 effective men, and that of Manasseh to 52,700, amounting in the whole to 93,200.⁹

As Jacob blessed the lads, he expressed gratitude to God, who had acted as his sustaining Shepherd all the days of his life (v. 15). The Christian recognizes in the “Angel who has redeemed me” a reference to Christ and His redemptive work.

²³ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

²⁴ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

Genesis 48:17

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.

[**laid his right hand upon the head**] Laying on hands was a Hebrew custom. It wasn't started by divine authority, but was authorized later both in Israel (Exodus 29:10-15; Leviticus 4:15; Leviticus 8:14,22; Leviticus 16:21; Leviticus 24:14; Deut. 34:9) and the church (Matthew 8:3,15; Matthew 9:18; Matthew 19:15; Mark 6:2,5; Mark 16:17-18; Luke 4:40; Luke 13:13; Acts 5:12; Acts 8:14-22; Acts 9:17; Acts 13:3; Acts 14:3; Acts 19:1-6,11; Acts 28:8; Hebrews 6:2).

Genesis 48:18

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

Joseph said—Not so, my father—Joseph supposed that his father had made a mistake in laying his right hand on the head of the youngest, because the right hand was considered as the most noble, and the instrument of conveying the highest dignities, and thus it has ever been considered among all nations, though the reason of it is not particularly obvious. Even in the heavens the right hand of God is the place of the most exalted dignity. It has been observed that Joseph spoke here as he was moved by natural affection, and that Jacob acted as he was influenced by the Holy Spirit.

Genesis 48:19

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.

Israel predicted that Ephraim, the younger, would be greater than Manasseh, the firstborn, and that God would bring Israel to the promised land again.

Twelve Examples of Choosing the Younger

1. Abel (Genesis 4:1-7)
2. Seth (Genesis 4:25)
3. Shem (Genesis 9:24-27)
4. Abraham (Genesis 11:26)
5. Isaac (Genesis 17:15-19)
6. Jacob (Genesis 25:23; Malachi 1:12; Romans 9:9-13)
7. Joseph (Genesis 37:5-11; Genesis 45:8; Genesis 50:20)
8. Ephraim (Genesis 48:20)

9. Moses (Exodus 7:7)
10. Gideon (Judges 6:15)
11. David (1 Samuel 16:1-13)
12. Solomon (1 Kings 1-2)

Joseph, acting in accordance with tradition, wished to correct the mistake which he thought his failing father had made. The refusal of Jacob to acquiesce reflected sensitivity to Joseph's concerns, but, even more, diligent obedience to God's will. He reminded Joseph that God is sovereign and that He had chosen a course of action from which they did not dare deviate.²⁵

Genesis 48:20

And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh

For *four consecutive generations* this reversed pattern was followed: Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben, and Ephraim over Manasseh. Years later Ephraim became a leading tribe in the Northern Kingdom, much superior to the tribe of Manasseh, as Jacob had predicted.

In thee shall Israel bless—That is, in future generations the Israelites shall take their form of wishing prosperity to any nation or family from the circumstance of the good which it shall be known that God has done to Ephraim and Manasseh: May God make thee as fruitful as Ephraim, and multiply thee as Manasseh! So, to their daughters when married, the Jewish women are accustomed to say, God make thee as Sarah and Rebekah! The forms are still in use.

Both tribes became important, though it is from Ephraim that Moses' successor Joshua, the prophet Samuel, and Jeroboam I, the founder of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) all hailed (Num. 13:8; 1 Sam 1:1; 1 Kings 11:26). In fact, "Ephraim" eventually became another name for the Northern Kingdom itself (e.g., Hos 5:3; Isa 7:1-17).

Jacob's words are used in the blessing that a Jewish father traditionally bestows upon his sons just before the first Sabbath meal (Friday night). In the case of daughters, the tradition devised a functional equivalent that does not actually appear in the Tanakh: "God make you like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah." In both cases, the Aaronic blessing follows (Num. 6:24-26).²⁶

²⁵ Believers Study Bible

²⁶ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Genesis 48:21

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

[God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers] Fulfilled in Joseph as part of Israel that God led out of Egypt (Exodus 12:51). Also fulfilled in Joseph's bones being taken to Canaan (Genesis 50:25; Exodus 13:19).

Behold, I die—With what composure is this most awful word expressed! Surely of Jacob it might be now said, “He turns his sight undaunted on the tomb;” for though it is not said that he was full of days, as were Abraham and Isaac, yet he is perfectly willing to bid adieu to earthly things, and lay his body in the grave. Could any person act as the patriarchs did in their last moments, who had no hopes of eternal life, no belief in the immortality of the soul? Impossible! With such a conviction of the being of God, with such proofs of his tenderness and regard, with such experience of his providential and miraculous interference in their behalf, could they suppose that they were only creatures of a day, and that God had wasted so much care, attention, providence, grace, and goodness, on creatures who were to be ultimately like the beasts that perish? The supposition that they could have no correct notion of the immortality of the soul is as dishonorable to God as to themselves. But what shall we think of Christians who have formed this hypothesis into a system to prove what? Why, that the patriarchs lived and died in the dark! That either the soul has no immortality, or that God has not thought proper to reveal it. Away with such an opinion! It cannot be said to merit serious refutation.²⁷

Genesis 48:22

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.

[one portion above thy brethren] Referring to Joseph inheriting the birthright as the firstborn, instead of it being given to Reuben who actually was the firstborn and who was disinherited because of his sin (Genesis 49:3-4; 1 Chron. 5:1-2).

the land of the Amorites. It appears that *Amorite* is being used here as a generic term for all of the peoples of presettlement Canaan (see Genesis 15:19-21) and specifically those in the vicinity of Shechem where Jacob had purchased a piece of land (Genesis 33:18-19). Although this does not detail the ethnic diversity of that region, certainly the Amorites, whose primary area of influence was in northern Mesopotamia and Syria, had a profound effect on the customs and religious practices of Canaan.²⁸

²⁷ Adam Clarke's Commentary

²⁸ Bible Background Commentary

moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren—This was near Shechem (Genesis 33:18; John 4:5; also Joshua 16:1; Joshua 20:7). And it is probable that the Amorites, having seized upon it during one of his frequent absences, the patriarch, with the united forces of his tribe, recovered it from them by his sword and his bow.²⁹

One portion more than to your brothers probably refers to the “double portion” that the first-born sons inherits (Deut. 21:17). The word for portion (“*Shechim*”) in this difficult verse puns on the name of (the city) Shechem. Note that Shechem appears as a Manassite clan in Josh. 17:2 but as Ephraimite city in Josh 20:7.³⁰

Jacob gave Ephraim, instead of his older brother Manasseh, the greater blessing. When Joseph objected, Jacob refused to listen because God had told him that Ephraim would become greater. God often works in unexpected ways. When he chooses people to fulfill his plans, he always goes deeper than appearance, tradition, or position. He sometimes surprises us by choosing the less obvious person, at least by human reasoning. God can use you to carry out his plans, even if you don’t think you have all the qualifications.³¹

Jacob was giving these young boys land occupied by the Philistines and Canaanites. His gift became reality when the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh occupied the east and west sides of the Jordan River (Joshua 16).

McGee: That is, Joseph, through his *two* sons, would have a greater inheritance than the other brothers would have.

This apparently was a personal gift made by Jacob to Joseph (see John 4:5). It was a ridge near Sychar where Joseph was buried. It compensated for the fact that two tribes came from Joseph and they needed more territory. It was a parcel of land which Jacob first bought from the Amorite, then later they retook it by force. Jacob returned the compliment, and by force he reclaimed it. It has been an area of controversy up to the present time. It is here that modern Israel wants to build on the west bank.³²

Moreover I have given to thee one portion—שכם אחד *shechem achad*, one *shechem* or one shoulder. We have already seen the transactions between Jacob and his family on one part, and Shechem and the sons of Hamor on the other. See Genesis 33:18, 19, and Genesis 24. As he uses the word *shechem* here, I think it likely that he alludes to the purchase of the field or parcel of ground mentioned Genesis 33:18, 19. It has been supposed that this parcel of ground, which Jacob bought from Shechem, had been taken from him by the Amorites, and that he afterwards had recovered it by his sword and by his bow, i. e., by force of arms. Shechem appears to have fallen to the lot of Joseph’s

²⁹ JFB Commentary

³⁰ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

³¹ Life Application Notes

³² McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:191). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

sons; (see Joshua 17:1, and Joshua 20:7); and in our Lord's time there was a parcel of ground near to Sychar or Shechem which was still considered as that portion which Jacob gave to his son Joseph, John 4:5; and on the whole it was probably the same that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of money, Genesis 33:18, 19. But how it could be said that he took this out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and his bow, we cannot tell. Many attempts have been made to explain this abstruse verse, but they have all hitherto been fruitless. Jacob's words were no doubt perfectly well understood by Joseph, and probably alluded to some transaction that is not now on record; and it is much safer for us to confess our ignorance, than to hazard conjecture after conjecture on a subject of which we can know nothing certainly.

1. ON filial respect to aged and destitute parents we have already had occasion to speak; see Genesis 48:11. The duty of children to their parents only ceases when the parents are laid in their graves, and this duty is the next in order and importance to the duty we owe to God. No circumstances can alter its nature or lessen its importance; Honor thy father and thy mother is the sovereign, everlasting command of God. While the relations of parent and child exist, this commandment will be in full force.
2. The Redeeming Angel, the Messenger of the covenant, in his preserving and saving influence, is invoked by dying Jacob to be the protector and Savior of Ephraim and Manasseh, Genesis 48:16. With what advantage and effect can a dying parent recommend the Lord Jesus to his children, who can testify with his last breath that this Jesus has redeemed him from all evil! Reader, canst thou call Christ thy Redeemer? Hast thou, through him, recovered the forfeited inheritance? Or dost thou expect redemption from all evil by any other means? Through him, and him alone, God will redeem thee from all thy sins; and as thou knowest not what a moment may bring forth, thou hast not a moment to lose. Thou hast sinned, and there is no name given under heaven among men whereby thou canst be saved but Jesus Christ. Acquaint thyself now with him, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee.
3. We find that the patriarchs ever held the promised land in the most sacred point of view. It was God's gift to them; it was confirmed by a covenant that spoke of and referred to better things. We believe that this land typified the rest which remains for the people of God, and can we be indifferent to the excellence of this rest! A patriarch could not die in peace, however distant from this land, without an assurance that his bones should be laid in it. How can we live, how can we die comfortably, without the assurance that our lives are hid with Christ in God, and that we shall dwell in his presence for ever? There remains a rest for the people of God, and only for the people of God; for those alone who love, serve, reverence, and obey him, in his Son Jesus Christ, shall ever enjoy it.³³

³³ Adam Clarke's Commentary

The Twenty-four Lists of the Tribes in Scripture

1. The tribal heads by birth (Genesis 29:32-30:24).
2. The list of tribal heads according to the wives of Jacob (Genesis 35:23-26).
3. The list of tribal heads according to the wives, giving the number of children of each head (Genesis 46:8-24).
4. The first list by prophecy (Genesis 49:3-28).
5. The list of those who went into Egypt with Jacob (Exodus 1:1-6). Joseph is omitted because he was already in Egypt. Levi is mentioned in these first five lists because his tribe did not yet serve as ministers of the twelve. The tribe of Levi is not mentioned in the next four lists because they served in the priesthood by that time.
6. The list naming census takers and heads of the twelve tribes making up the nation of Israel (Numbers 1:4-16).
7. The list by the numbering of the tribes (Numbers 1:20-46).
8. The list by encampment around the tabernacle (Numbers 2:2-32).
9. The list by offerings of the tribes at the dedication of the altar (Numbers 7:12-84).
10. The list by order of march on the journeys (Numbers 10:14-28). Levi is included and given a place in the march.
11. The list by spies chosen to spy out Canaan (Numbers 13:3-17). Levi is not included here.
12. The list by numbering of the tribes in the plain of Moab (Numbers 26:4-56). Levi is again numbered here, after the twelve tribes, as in the first numbering (cp. Numbers 26:57-65 with Numbers 3:1-4:49).
13. The list by dividers of the land of Canaan (Numbers 34:16-29). Levi is not included because they did not inherit any of the land.
14. The list by order of position on Mount Gerizim and Ebal (Deut. 27:12-14). The original twelve sons of Jacob are listed here—including Levi and Joseph (who stands in the place of Ephraim and Manasseh)—because they represent the fathers of all the tribes, as before Levi was chosen to the priesthood.
15. The second list by prophecy and blessing of the tribes. Levi is included but Simeon is omitted for some unknown reason (Deut. 33:6-29).
16. The list by actual division of the land of promise (Joshua 13:1-21:45). Levi is included, not as receiving a portion to compare with the twelve tribes, but as being given certain places among them.
17. The list by failure to inherit all the land of promise (Judges 1:1-36).
18. The list by cooperation with Deborah and Barak (Judges 5:14-18). Judah and Simeon are not mentioned because they were not in the war with the other tribes. Levi is not mentioned because they were ministers, not soldiers.
19. The list of original sons of Jacob before Manasseh and Ephraim (1 Chron. 2:1-2).
20. The list of the tribes and their descendants from Jacob to David, including Levi (1 Chron. 2:3-9:44). Zebulun and Dan are omitted for some unknown reason.
21. The list by tribes of those who were numbered to help David (1 Chron. 12:1-40). Levites are included because they also helped him.
22. The list by heads of tribes under David, king of Israel (1 Chron. 27:16-22). Levi is represented; Gad and Asher are omitted; and Manasseh is listed as having two heads to the tribe—East and West Manasseh.

23. The list by choice of God in future and eternal restoration, and by division of the land of promise as it will be in eternity (Ezekiel 48). Levi is included here to show his portion of the eternal land under the Messiah. This makes thirteen tribes recognized by God in the end.
24. The list by sealing of God in the foreheads of all that are servants of God at the time when 144,000 are protected through the trumpet judgments and are caught up to heaven as the man-child of Rev. 12:5 (Rev. 7:1-8; Rev. 14:1-5). Dan is excluded because they won't be servants of God at the time, and Levi is included.

The above lists are different in order and purpose, and should be studied and compared. Reuben, the firstborn, heads most of them but Judah heads others, being the kingly and leading tribe (Numbers 2:3; Numbers 10:14; Numbers 34:19; 1 Chron. 2:3; Rev. 7:5). Simeon and Reuben head a divided list (Deut. 27:12-13). Dan heads the list in Ezekiel 48, because his division of land in the Millennium will be the farthest to the north, the place where most of the tribe of Dan eventually settled. Ezekiel 48 deals with the eternal division of the land of the thirteen tribes of Israel under their Messiah.

Torah Class: In Depth Study: Then Jacob does something rather astounding; he takes possession of Joseph's two sons. Israel adopts Joseph's children. Now, I've heard some Christian speakers argue that Jacob adopting these children was nothing unusual; he was simply officially making these Egyptian children into Israelites, by accepting them into the tribe of Israel. That this sort of thing happened among tribes of this time is true; a declaration was usually all that was needed to change the nationality or tribal affiliation of a person. But, the difference is this: Jacob didn't just make these children Israelites; he didn't simply make these boys as equals to the other of his many grandchildren, he put them on par with his 12 sons. Jacob made Ephraim and Manasseh sons, as he says in V5, "...and now your two sons....are mine...as Reuben and Simeon are". He made these two Egyptian children not adopted GRANDchildren; he made them as his own children. If we wanted to get technical, starting at this moment, and for a time, it would be fair to say that there were now 14 tribes of Israel: the original 12 plus, now, Ephraim and Manasseh. But, things aren't always as they appear.

Today, we are going to start a challenging study that will make some of you a little uncomfortable. For others of you, this study will bring you a new understanding that you have been searching for, but maybe didn't know it. It's going to be fairly deep. It's going to be fairly difficult. It may go against some things your denomination taught as proper Church doctrine. If you question the things I'm going to be telling you, that's OK... just ask God to show you the truth. He will.

At the least, our study of Genesis 48, which is centered on Ephraim, is going to help answer for many of you, the question of why you have this growing interest, if not downright passion, for Israel and for Torah.

You see, for almost 1900 years, the Church has done its level best to ignore, even disavow, God's plainly stated plan that in order for the gentile world....most of us in this room.... to be saved, we must be grafted into the spiritual heritage of Israel. Ever since I was a child, I can remember my pastor telling the congregation that when we accept Christ we are adopted, or grafted, into the family of god. True enough, I suppose, but that

statement is like describing a piece of artwork as “interesting”. It is so commonly bandied about, that it really has no meaning other than to be gracious. The issue, however, is that the Church has forgotten that “the family of God” is **Israel**; and that is certainly NOT the inference that is intended by most traditional church leaders.

What, you say? Isn't the real family of God the Church? Yes, but what **makes** the Church, the Church, is that as disciples of Yeshua, we gentile Believers have been grafted into the covenants of Israel....not INSTEAD of Israel....not as replacement for Israel... but alongside Israel. But, here's the rub.....it's NOT about physical Israel, per se, rather it's about a **spiritual** ideal of Israel.

The thing is this: both the Older Covenants and the Newest Covenant were given to Israel. Let's remember that the promise of another covenant.....AFTER the covenant of Moses on Mt. Sinai.....was prophesied in a number of places in the Hebrew Bible, but probably most directly in Jeremiah 31.

NAS Jeremiah 31:31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Now, pay close attention to me: just exactly WHOM is this new covenant going to be made with? As Jeremiah 31:31 states: “...when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...”. There is utterly no mention of this being some universal covenant or of this covenant being made between God and gentiles. And, NOWHERE in Holy Scripture will you find such a suggestion. Are you with me? Gentiles...of which I am one.....we have no part of this New Covenant, UNLESS we are somehow seen by God.....declared by Yehoveh..... as part of either the House of Israel or the House of Judah.

Now, I doubt we have anyone in here that believes that the Church has replaced Israel; but, if we do, or at least you're not sure if that is the case, then let me continue with Jeremiah 31 which ought to make matters crystal clear for you.

NAS Jeremiah 31:35 Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day, And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: 36 "If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease From being a nation before Me forever." 37 Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.

Plainly, if the sun stops giving off light, and waves cease to occur in the oceans, and the stars disappear and the moon stops shining, THEN and only then will God cease to consider Israel AND THEIR OFFSPRING as His people.....which is what “a nation before Me” means.

There is simply no way around all this. Replacement theology is error of the worst sort; because it is not a mistake, it is intentional deceit. Replacement theology.....whereby the Church has replaced Israel as God’s people, and it is the Church that has received the New Covenant, is not the result of innocent error or ignorance. Rather, it was a premeditated attempt to dishonor God’s chosen, Israel, to steal from them their inheritance (the covenants God made with them), and to answer a burning question that Believers had begun to ask as the decades rolled on after Yeshua’s death and the destruction of Jerusalem: if Israel was coming back as a nation, where were they? But, gentiles, we do have hope. We CAN be included in this newest covenant of Israel and Judah, and hundreds of millions....perhaps billions....of us have been included. But, not just because we’re a warm body, or we’re “good”.

You see, from the time of Abraham forward, God made provision that any gentile (usually called a foreigner or stranger) that wished to give up their allegiance to their pagan gods and become joined to Israel, was not only allowed to do so.....they were welcomed to do so. And, they were to be considered first class citizens of Israel. No distinction was to be made between those natural born as Israelites, Hebrews, versus those who were born outside of Israel (gentiles) but had chosen to become part of Israel. Those who joined Israel had just as much right to partake in the inheritance of the covenants of God as a natural born Israelite.

However, I plead with you to hear God on this matter: outside of becoming part of Israel, there was, and there remains, absolutely no way to partake in God. Let me say one more time: not physical Israel, per se, but the spiritual element and ideal that is Israel. Now, perhaps you’re thinking, that sounds like so much mumbo-jumbo.....making a distinction between physical Israel and spiritual Israel; a rationalization to suit my purposes. Well, if that’s true, don’t blame me. Blame God, who, through Paul and others, certainly made the distinction between spiritual Israel and physical Israel.

What we’re going to find as we put the pieces of Scripture together, is that God has created and implemented a plan that is, in essence, a circle. He created physical Israel....human beings called Hebrews..... as His chosen people to bring the knowledge of the One True God, by means of the Laws and Commands of God, to the world. He brought the Word forth from Israel, specifically from the Jews. Then because most Jews rejected the incarnate Word of God, Christ, He gave the duty of spreading the Gospel to the gentiles. Then after a long time, when the gentiles have spread the Word of God to the entire world, He has the gentiles take the Word back to the Jews. The Jews accept the Word, who is Christ, and they are saved. And, in this way ALL Israel is saved. It’s a big circle.

We’re going to take a look at several Bible passages that makes this plan of God perfectly clear. Let’s dive right in; go to Romans 2.

READ Romans 2:26-29

Now, even though I have been using the word Israel.....that we must be a part of Israel...Paul is using the word Jew in place of Israel. Why? Because, as far as anyone knew in Paul’s era, the Jews were all that remained of Israel; in their minds, they

represented Israel. So to Paul, as with most Jews, Jew and Israel were one in the same. And, Paul says that in order to be a true Jew, a true Israelite, you must be a spiritual Jew, a spiritual Israelite.....being a physical Jew is the not the issue. In fact he says that it doesn't matter whether a person is circumcised....meaning that person has identified himself as a Jew.....or whether he's uncircumcised.....meaning he's a non-Jew, a gentile.....because God's definition of being a true Jew is the condition of one's heart, not his flesh. It's his spiritual standing with Yehoveh, not his genealogy that matters. But, his spiritual standing based on what? Based on the provisions of the covenants made with Israel.....from which faith that Yeshua is who He says He is, and that He is God, and that He is able to declare you clean and holy, is the means to salvation.

And, just to really nail down that Paul is most definitely talking about Jews and gentiles when he speaks of the circumcised and the uncircumcised, and not just, perhaps, various Jewish people who now live in cultures scattered throughout the Roman Empire, or speaking of differences between various Jewish sects, we simply need to read what he says next in Romans 3:1.

READ Romans 3:1-3

Because Paul makes such an emphatic point of saying that there is *no* spiritual distinction between people who trust the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he must now answer the logical question that any Jew who heard him speak those words would have asked him: *then what's the point of being born as one of God's chosen people, a Jew, at all?* And, Paul says that being a physical Jew has many advantages, because it was to physical Israel that God entrusted the word of God. And, let's remember, that the Word of God is not just the Bible.....because Jesus is also called the "Word become flesh". Jesus was a physical Jew. But, He was also the ultimate spiritual Jew...the ultimate spiritual Israelite.

So, while there is a definite distinction, of course, between being a physical Jew versus a physical **gentile**, there is NO distinction as to who is a spiritual Jew (Israelite) EXCEPT as to the condition of the heart. Those who trust Yehoveh, whether Jew or gentile, **are spiritual Jews** (spiritual Israel); those who don't trust God, aren't. My friends, even those among us who are by any means we have to identify ourselves, PHYSICAL gentiles, we are NOW spiritual Jews IF we have placed our faith in Messiah Yeshua.

Let me give you another way to think about this, by defining just what the "Kingdom of God" is. The Kingdom of God is people who have given themselves, willingly, over to the Lord. People who acknowledge the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the one and only true God. But, more, it is those who acknowledge this truth by means of having faith in the Messiah God sent to be our substitute. Because, it is this faith that God counts as the sole identifying factor as to who His people are, and are not. Yet, the entire legal reason that this is even possible is contained within the covenants that God made with Israel, and no where else. Spiritual Israelites are the sole residents of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is Spiritual Israelites. Spiritual Israelites are Jews and gentiles who trust Yeshua as Savior. Spiritual Israelites are NOT Jews who have taken on a physical gentile identity in order to worship Christ, and Spiritual Israelites are also NOT gentiles who have taken a physical Jewish identity to worship Christ. Jews remain Jewish, and gentiles remain gentile-ish; the common point is union in Yeshua.....a spiritual union.

Now, what I have said to you may well be more irritating to the Jews among us than to the gentiles. So, I need you to listen VERY closely to what I am saying: I am in no way asserting that I can take your heritage from you. I am in no way saying that something mystical happens to my body, which makes me physically Jewish when I come to believe in the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua. What I am saying is that LONG before there WAS an Israel, God's principles and laws and commands existed. By definition these laws and principles and commands were spiritual in nature, right? They existed only in Heaven. And, it was the Lord Himself who BROUGHT these spiritual laws and commands and principles from Heaven and gave them to Israel, and made them physical. By giving these spiritual laws and commands to Israel, they took on a physical aspect. Do's and don'ts. In other words, before any physical creature was given God's laws, the laws were just divine ideals. Now, as they were given to a physical people at Mt. Sinai...the Israelites.....and literally written onto a physical piece of stone, these laws and commands and principles donned a physical form to them. BUT.....their spiritual aspect didn't cease to exist.

It is like Yeshua; He is the Word. He existed as a purely spiritual entity UNTIL He was born a baby from Mary's womb. The Word donned a physical form when He entered the world to save it.

The whole point of being an Israelite....being a Jew to Paul's way of thinking.....was to be a physical creature who embodied and trusted these spiritual ideals of God; these spiritual ideals that became physical and tangible laws and commands and principles. Therefore, God sees ANY person who embodies these ideals as the truest form of an Israelite. Again, not in a physical way.....but in a spiritual sense. And, the just as the physical symbol of being an Israelite was circumcision, so the spiritual symbol of being a Spiritual Israelite is circumcision of the heart..... trusting Yeshua.

Turn your Bibles to Ephesians 2. Let's read 11-13.

READ EPHESIANS 2:11-13

Pretty explicit. Gentiles by birth (meaning PHYSICAL gentiles) are foreigners (outsiders) to the family of God....the family of God being defined as Israel. But, now, these outsiders are brought near....DECLARED citizens of Israel, members of the family of God, by the work of Christ. Once again, NOT physical Israel, per se, but the spiritual ideal of Israel.

The irony in all this, is that while, today, gentile Believers generally deny that when we are saved, we become citizens of spiritual Israel.....back in Paul's day, Jews were trying to require that when gentiles were saved, they **had** to become part of PHYSICAL Israel.....that they had to become Jews by having a physical sign put into their physical flesh. And, this physical sign was circumcision.

Now, let's put a little more meat on these bones. Turn a couple of pages to Romans 9.

READ Romans 9:6-9

And, here it says it in another way: every Israelite is not necessarily a part of TRUE Israel. And, as none of us would argue, not every gentile will be part of the Kingdom of God. Right? Of course, what did Paul just finish explaining true Israel, a true Jew, is? It's in the spiritual context of the ideal of Israel, not the physical in the sense of simply having a Jewish mother.

And, he repeats this in V8: its not the physical children, it's the children that the promise refers to who are the true children.....those who TRUST God in their hearts.

Let's wrap up this part of the lesson up, with going to Galatians 3.

READ Galatians 3:26-29

If you belong to Yeshua, Jew or gentile, then you are of WHO's SEED? Abraham's. And, heirs according to WHAT promise? The promise God gave to ABRAHAM. And, where is that promise to Abraham contained? Within the covenant God made with Abraham..... the first Hebrew. Is ABRAHAM the forefather of the Israelites, or is he the forefather of the gentiles? Of course, he's the forefather of the Israelites. All of our hope, as gentiles, is wrapped up in becoming spiritual Israelites....which we do by trusting Christ.... so that we might become partakers in the promises.....or better, covenants....made between God and THEM. And, it's the Israelite, Messiah Yeshua, who leads us to that, and makes it possible by His sacrifice on the Cross. But, that's not all there is to it. Christ was but a part of God's plan. Most certainly the most important part, but He was not the entire plan.

Let's return now to Genesis 48, where we meet another part of the plan. One of the effects of this adoption and blessing by Jacob is that the first-born blessing was finally assigned.....and it was to Joseph. Now, it may not seem so at first glance, but this is the case. One of the inherent attributes of the first-born blessing, is that the one who receives it gets a double-portion....in fact, another name for the first-born blessing, is the "double-portion" blessing. The two terms traditionally mean the same thing. That is, the son who receives the first-born blessing gets double (or more) of the clan's wealth, twice as much as any one else. Joseph's double-portion was manifested in that Joseph was to get two full portions of "Israel" itself. How can that occur? By making Joseph's 2 boys Jacob's own sons, each of Joseph's sons were entitled to a full share of all the wealth and authority and heritage equal with their new brothers, the other 12 tribes of Israel. Think of it this way: all the other sons of Israel, from Reuben right down to Benjamin, since there were 12 of them, each were entitled to an inheritance of 1/12th of all that Israel possessed. But, since Joseph's 2 sons were now considered as Jacob's sons, then each of them also received an equal share. So, Joseph's family, Joseph's tribe, got the double-portion blessing in that it received 2 shares of Israel (one each for Ephraim and Manasseh) where as all the other sons got but one.

Now, you may be saying to yourself, yeah, but I thought with the additions of Ephraim and Manasseh, there were now 14 sons, 14 tribes of Israel. So, why are we dividing by 12th's, and not 14th's? First, as I'm going to show you in scripture, Joseph did NOT receive a 12th, in addition to each of his sons receiving shares. The idea was that by giving Joseph's two sons each a portion of Israel, 1/12th each, the effect was the SAME as giving Joseph 2/12th's.....double. So, as we'll soon see, Joseph would be, right on up until today, replaced (or, more accurately, represented) as a tribe of Israel by his two sons.....EACH given their own tribe.the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

But, there's still a problem. Even with removing, so to speak, Joseph as one of the tribes of Israel, and replacing him with his 2 sons, you still have 13 tribes of Israel and not 12. Right? The original 12, minus Joseph, equals 11. Add in the 2 sons of Joseph, and we get 13. Well, the answer lies in what occurs some 450 years after this Cross-Handed Blessing, and I'm going to take you there next time we meet. Up to this point in our study, I've given you bits and pieces concerning certain prophecies about the Israelites, and we've briefly discussed Ephraim. But, having reached this important point in Genesis, it is now time to flesh out the impact of Jacob's Cross-Handed Blessing upon

Joseph's two Egyptian sons. Or better, how this Cross-Handed Blessing would affect the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh far into the future. So, let's stop here for this week, and next time we'll take a walk through several Bible passages to help explain the significance of what has just occurred here in Genesis 48.

I spent a lot of time trying to establish just what Paul meant when he spoke of a "true" Israelite (or Jew), and that I have decided to describe that true Israelite as a "Spiritual" Israelite. That is, one who has the spirit of the Living God in Him, and who by means of faith in the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua, now embodies the ideals of Israel, which are expressed primarily in Torah. These ideals were originally only existent in Heaven, and were essentially contained in an attribute or essence of God who is called the Word (in Hebrew, Memra.....and in Greek, Logos). These Heavenly ideals were introduced in physical form at Mt. Sinai, and given to Moses as the Constitution of Israel.....what we call The Law, or the Torah. Later, the Word Himself donned flesh and blood, and visited us in the form of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now, what has this all to do with Genesis 48? Well, we're closing in on that. Recall that the central theme of Genesis 48 is this Cross-Handled Blessing of the last Patriarch, Jacob (called Israel) upon Joseph's two Egyptian born sons. And the effect of the blessing was that those two sons of Joseph were adopted by Jacob and placed on par with his other 12 sons.....those sons who we today call the 12 Tribes of Israel. Further, Jacob (called Israel) blessed the two boys with an especially important blessing upon Ephraim, who was the younger of the two. And, that blessing indicated that Ephraim was in some undisclosed manner going to be a blessing to all the nations of the world.....which by definition means GENTILE nations. Let's recall that at this point in history, and in Scripture, that God saw the world as composed of two basic groups: Israel, and the nations. Or, in another way of saying it, Israel and gentiles.

Let's continue with our study.

READ Numbers 34:13-28

Here's the context of this passage: after 4 centuries in Egypt, the Israelites are free and being led by Moses. They had approached the promised land some years earlier, but when spies were sent out to reconnoiter the land, the majority of them said that although the promised land was just as wonderful as God said it was, the inhabitants were too many, too fierce, too powerful, for the Israelites to conquer. So, due to this lack of faith and an essentially rebellious attitude, God drove those 3 million Israelites back into the desert wilderness to wander for 38 more years.

Fast forward. Now with 40 years having passed since Israel left Egypt, and with the extremely elderly Moses still leading, at God's direction the Hebrew tribes are again ready to move upon Canaan and take the land. The time at which God gives the land to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has arrived. Up until this time, God always spoke about giving the land to the Hebrews in the "future" tense: that is "I **will** give it you". But, many things had to happen first. Now, the time has come and He gives it to them. Look at Numbers 34:1 "Adonai told Moshe to give this order to the people of Israel: 'when you enter the land of Ken'an, it will become your land to pass on as an inheritance.....' That is, the answer to the question "WHEN will the land become the property of Abraham's descendants?" has been answered: it occurs the moment this enormous throng of Israelites crosses over the Jordan, and sets foot on the land of Canaan. At **that** moment in history, Canaan became the property of the Israelites.....in

God's eyes..... and is to remain so.....forever.

Let me pause for a moment to let that sink in and to make a point. As we are Believers of the God of Israel, we have a decision to make. Do we believe His Word, or not? If we do, then right here in Numbers we understand that from the ONLY viewpoint that really matters.....Yehoveh's..... that land in the Middle East that is today called Israel was transferred to all those folks Moses was leading, and it would remain so in perpetuity. If anyone ever asks you where it says that the Promised Land was actually given to Israel...when ownership and possession was transferred..... it is here in Numbers 34. Even more, do you ever once see in Scripture the issue raised (as regards Canaan) of "who was there first", or "what is fair" from a man's point of view as a factor in who owns the land? Or do we ever find God directing Israel to take whatever action *avoids* war and brings peace raised in the Scripture concerning the land of Canaan? None of these issues has any bearing whatsoever upon God giving that land to Israel as a permanent possession. Therefore, as we can see by the various books and articles and debates about Israel.....whether it belongs to the Jews, whether parts of it should be given to the Palestinians out of someone's sense of "fairness", whether it just makes sense for Israel to have less land for their people in exchange for peace..... that in the end, none of this should matter one whit for a Believer of the God of Israel. The one and only issue that overrides all others is this: did God give the land to Israel, or not? And, that question is answered right here in Numbers 34. Not only did He give it to them, but also they took possession of it around 1300 BC.

Hear me: don't EVER all into the trap of debating someone on the issue of Israel's legitimacy on the basis of its historical or modern day geo-political realities. Because from that standpoint.....which is, by definition, merely men's various points of view and ideas of morality or fairness..... there are indeed reasonable sounding arguments as to whether Israel ought to have all that land or not. God is not the least bit impressed by those arguments. What matters is that God declared that land to belong to His people, Israel, and that is that. In fact, the Genesis 15 warning to all mankind that whoever curses Abraham's Hebrew descendants will themselves be cursed, and whoever blesses them will be blessed, revolves around only two matters: the land of Israel and the people of Israel. Not one OR the other, but both. Do you stand with the Israelites as the apple of God's eye, or do you see them as the source of many of the world's problems and as rejected and replaced? Do you stand with the land of Israel as belonging exclusively to the Israelites...without compromise... or do you see this as simply a matter international political intrigue, strategic borders, obtaining oil, and making nice with the Muslims so they don't keep blowing us up?

Let's look a little more at Numbers 34. And, as a point of reference, Numbers 34 occurs about 450 years AFTER the happenings of Genesis 48. So, between Jacob giving his Cross-handed Blessing, and the dividing up of the land of Canaan in Numbers 34, almost 5 centuries have elapsed. The gist of what we read in Numbers 34:13-28 is this: 2 of the tribes of Israel, and part of another tribe (the Bible says 1/2 of that tribe), made a decision NOT to enter into Canaan, but instead to make their homes on the EAST side of the Jordan River. These tribes were Rueben (remember, he was Jacob's actual biological first-born, but Rueben was passed over for the first-born inheritance), and Gad (Gad was one of the 3 tribes that made of the division if Israel that Rueben led), and apparently

about half of the people who made up the tribe of Manasseh (one of the two Egyptian born sons of Joseph).

The remaining 9 tribes (of which Ephraim is one), plus the other half of the tribe of Manasseh that decided it wanted to go on into the promised land, would be given territories inside the land of Canaan. Now, just to remind us, 9 ½ tribes plus 2 ½ tribes equals 12. But, in fact, there were 13 named tribes, weren't there? What happened to that 13th tribe? As we look at the list of tribes in Numbers 34 we see that, as was ordained 450 years earlier in the Cross-Handed Blessing of Genesis 48, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh replaced the tribe of Joseph. So, we don't see Joseph in this listing of Numbers 34.....we don't see a "tribe of Joseph", but we DO see the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. They, in essence, REPRESENT Joseph's tribe. But, there's another important name missing in this tribal listing: Levi. Moses' own tribe, the priestly tribe, the tribe of Aaron, Moses' brother, the first High Priest of Israel, Levi, is not mentioned. Why? Lets read now Numbers 35:1-5. Remember, these chapter and verse marks are simply modern additions to the Bible, only put there for the purpose of making it more convenient for us to find, and reference, certain scriptures. When this scripture was originally written, it all ran together....it didn't start and stop in sections or chapters. Modern scholars, using their best efforts, decided where to say one chapter or verse ended and the next began. So, we need to read Numbers 35:1-5 as though it was just attached to, and a continuation of Numbers 34. It all regards the same subject, which is the dividing of the land into separate territories for the tribes of Israel.

READ NUMBERS 35:1-5

Here we see what God's plan is as regards land and territory for the tribe of Levi. In the first couple of chapters of Numbers (we'll not read that tonight, you can read it on your own), we discover that there was a census taken of Israel, early on after leaving Egypt. And, what we find is that there were actually two censuses taken: one ONLY for the tribe of Levi, and another for the other 12 Israelite tribes. Later we find that the reason for this is that God is effectively removing Levi from Israel, and making them a special group of people whose sole job is to be in service to Yehoveh, for the SAKE of Israel. Just so you get the picture: the tribe of Levi at that moment is no longer seen as a part of Israel. They are now a special tribe set apart for a special divine purpose.

Therefore, the Levites will NOT receive a named territory of their own like the other 12 tribes, partly because Canaan was exclusively for Israel and Levi was no longer part of regular Israel. Rather, the Levites are to be given cities, and some small amount of open land surrounding these cities to be used as pasture land, as their portion. And, these cities of the Levites are to be within each of the territories legally ascribed to each of the 12 tribes of Israel. In fact, the Levites were to be given a total of 48 cities and the land surrounding each; and these cities and land would be for a special purpose, and would be controlled by the Levites.

So, from that moment forward, even though we can count 13 tribes emanating from Israel, only 12 are to be considered as "Israel", for only 12 have been given territory; one tribe, Levi, has (effectively) been removed from Israel. Just as Jacob had adopted away Ephraim and Manasseh from Joseph, to be his own, God, in essence, adopted away from Israel the tribe of Levi to be HIS own; His own tribe of priests unto Him. Even though the Levites came from Israel, they are now in a special category.

So, with the removal of the tribe of Levi, we're back to 12 tribes of Israel, with the names of Ephraim and Manasseh essentially taking the place of Levi and Joseph in the list of Israelite tribes. Two tribes are dropped (Levi and Joseph), two tribes are added (Ephraim and Manasseh, so it's a zero sum game.

Wow; complicated and a lot of information, isn't it? But, if we have any hope of understanding the prophetic happenings that follow.....as well as the prophetic happenings of the End-Times (many of which we are now witnessing), we need to get a handle of the tribal structure of Israel, and how it evolved, and how it WILL evolve further. Well, we've just scratched the surface. In order that I can explain it further, we need to add another important piece of information: and that is that even though there are 12 tribes of Israel, plus the set apart priest tribe of Levi, Israel will eventually be divided into two distinct groups that the Scriptures call *houses*. Each of the 12 tribes will eventually belong to one or the other of the Two Houses of Israel. The Bible speaks often of the "Two Houses of Israel", and of the "Whole House of Israel". Well, the Two Houses, when combined, make-up the whole house of Israel. It's important for us to not only see the difference between the two houses versus the whole house, but also which tribes belong to which house.

Let's examine some scripture.

READ Isaiah 8:11-16

Here we see in V14 the mention of "both".....obviously referring to *two*.....houses of Israel. While that is the point most germane to our topic, I picked this passage because it also points out something that is happening today, in our time that is significant. Israel, modern Israel, believes that the source of all their trouble is a conspiracy of men, of nations, of terrorist groups, all against them. And, Israel negotiates and deals and argues and fights with these nations, and with these men.....the UN, the US, the EU, the Palestinians, the terrorists.....because Israelis believe that THESE are the ones to be feared, the ones that Israel must pay attention to, and therefore the ones to which they must turn to gain peace. But, in fact, they are wrong; and that is what God is instructing Isaiah to tell the Israelites, and to tell us.

Isaiah is told NOT to believe as Israel believes, nor to fear as Israel fears; nor is he to fear WHO Israel fears, nor to react as they react. Rather, it is God with whom Israel should sue for peace. It is God who has the might to defeat their enemies. And, once Israel realizes this, and gives up their stiff-necked ways of self-dependence, secular humanism, and apostasy, and they turn back to God, THEN He shall become their sanctuary and settle this long running dispute once and for all time.

But, beloved, since as Christians we have an obligation to follow and believe the truth of God, we need to realize that the Roadmap to Peace, the Oslo Accords, various UN resolutions, treaties and agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, and all the other plans and conspiracies of men that will come and go..... these are NOT what will decide the future of Israel. These are NOT the avenues that we, as the Church, should seek or embrace or accept, as the way to peace. And, for us to debate the Palestinian/Israeli problem over issues of rights of return, fairness, economic policies, humanitarian concerns, etc., is to do EXACTLY as God commanded us NOT to do, here in Isaiah. There is one reason and one reason ONLY that Israel can lay full claim to that land.... and it is the ONLY reason we, as believers, should declare: God gave it to them. And, there is one person and only one person who is going to solve the dilemma of the

Middle East: Yeshua of Nazareth. Neither the consensus nor the compromises of men is going to make for a lasting peace. So, let us resolve first to stand up for Israel, and second, when asked **why** we stand up for Israel, tell all who will hear that it's because God gave them that land, as a covenant between He and them, forever. No other reason has any bearing at all.

Let's read a little more Scripture.

READ Jeremiah 33:23-26

Now, I chose this particular scripture to demonstrate a couple of things. First, notice in V24, that God refers to the "two families" which the Lord chose. What people did the Lord "choose"? Israel. This "two families" reference is just a synonym for 2 houses; the 2 houses of Israel.

But, I also want you to notice the gist of what God is saying here through His prophet Jeremiah: God says, look, the world in general, even including some of the Israelites themselves that have fallen away from the principles and ideals of Israel, are saying that God has rejected these two families, these two houses of Israel. That is, people are saying God has rejected Israel, He's through with him, He's transferring His blessings to other people, and some are even saying that Israel is no longer the Father's special people.

And, God answers this false assertion emphatically, by saying..... NOT on your best day, Satan! Israel will ALWAYS be My chosen. And, very colorfully Abba says....if you want to know what it will take for me to reject Israel, here it is: if day and night no longer exist, if all the stars and planets and galaxies no longer exist, if their fixed movements in the heavens and the physics of the Universe that control those movements, no longer exist, THEN I would reject my people.

Rather, God says at the end of V26 concerning the 2 families, the 2 houses, of Israel: "...I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them". In other words, while because of Israel's mistrust, sin, and rebellion they will pay dear consequences.....their fortunes will rise and fall.....God's mercy upon them will endure. That He chastises them, and disciplines them, in no way indicates that He rejects them.

Hopefully this settles the matter once and for all, whether or not Israel is still God's chosen people, and whether He is through with them or not, and whether the Church has replaced Israel as God's chosen. The last time I looked up at the heavens, day and night still existed, and the sky was full of stars. And, therefore, Israel is still, and will remain, God's chosen people and He has decided that NOTHING they can do, no amount of sin and rebellion, no amount of their rejection of Him, is going to change that. Even if there is nothing left but a handful of Hebrews, the remnant of Israel, He will keep His promise to them.

Let's put some more meat on these bones.

READ Ezekiel 37:15-22

Here we get further understanding and definition of the "two houses of Israel". The heads of the two houses are identified as 1) Judah, and 2) Ephraim. We also see that from the time of Joseph, all the way to the time of the return of Israel in the latter days, Ephraim remains as the chief representative of the tribe of Joseph. Next we see in Ezekiel 37 that God is going to take these two families, these two houses, also at times called two Kingdoms, of Israel, and make them into ONE united family. Never again to be divided. This is often referred to in the Bible as "the Whole House of Israel". And, the catalyst and source of that coming unity will be Jesus the Christ. Well, a good question

might be, when and how did Israel go from being one united family, to a divided family of two houses, two groups?

Back to the Scriptures to find out!

READ Hosea 6 all

In the book of Hosea, God has decided to judge Ephraim because their behavior has become such an abomination to Him. At this point in history, the tribe of Ephraim has brought every tribe of Israel under its control, EXCEPT for Judah, Benjamin, and most of the Levites. In fact, historians would say that Ephraim has, to a degree, ABSORBED several of the other Israelite tribes. So, when we see Ephraim referred to here, it is speaking of a conglomerate of 10 tribes....all of which have been gobbled up by Ephraim.....and together these 10 tribes form one huge super-tribe, which the Bible calls the House of Ephraim. Again, why is this 10-tribe entity called Ephraim? Because the powerful tribe of Ephraim came to rule over those 9 other tribes. And, we see, as it says in V9, that “Their conduct is an outrage” to the Lord.

Let’s read a little more in Hosea.

READ Hosea 7 all

Now, when this prophetic Scripture was written, Ephraim and Judah had become two separate nations. These nations are also referred to in the Bible as houses and families. In this context, the two nations, two kingdoms, two houses, two families of Israel all mean exactly the same thing. The tribes had been split; the tribes of Judah and Benjamin essentially formed the Kingdom of Judah, and all the other tribes essentially formed the Kingdom of Ephraim.....or as our Bibles often call it, Israel. Remember, the Levites are in a special category, and are not counted as among the 12 tribes, and therefore they are NOT part of the Two Houses of Israel.

How did this split of Israel into two kingdoms, two houses, occur? You see what happened was that after King Solomon died (about 925 B.C.), the nation of Israel split in a horrible Civil War. As a result of the split, although the people of both kingdoms still thought of themselves as Israelites, only one Kingdom continued calling itself Israel, and that was the kingdom that came to be known as Ephraim. The Kingdom of Judah, not long after that Civil War, stopped calling itself Israel, and called itself simply Judah. Just like in our American Civil War, where our nation was temporarily divided, though the people of both sides still called themselves Americans, one side called WHERE they lived the Union, and the other the Confederacy. Same principle as what happened in Israel.

Soon though, the northern kingdom dominated by Ephraim even stopped calling itself Israel, and instead began to call itself Ephraim. So, just like we have to understand that Jacob is eventually called Israel, and we’ll see the Bible switch back and forth between those two names, it is the same idea when the Bible speaks of the house or kingdom of Ephraim, and the house or kingdom of Israel.....it is speaking of the same place. But, this applies only to the time AFTER the death of Solomon and AFTER the civil war, which split the nation into two kingdoms.

So when we get into that time period, post civil war and post Solomon, we have to watch the context of the prophets’ writings very carefully.....because they’ll switch back and forth from calling the northern kingdom Ephraim, and at other times Israel. But, when they refer to the kingdom of Ephraim and the kingdom of Israel (after the Civil

War) they are NOT including in their meaning the Kingdom of Judah, which is now seen as a separate entity. In fact, the Kingdom of Judah is dealt with quite separately by God. Next week we'll look a little closer into just what eventually happened to the Kingdom of Ephraim, and why it's so relevant to our time.

We are beginning to flesh out just who Ephraim, Joseph's son, would become, and what his destiny would be as a result of Jacob's Cross Handed Blessing of Genesis 48. And, we ended by looking in the book of Hosea which has much to say about God's judgment upon the now apostate Kingdom of Ephraim.

Now look at Hosea 8:7-9.

READ HOSEA 8:7-9

We're told something very important in Hosea 8, foreigners will *swallow up* Ephraim-Israel. That now these 10 tribes are among the Goyim, the GENTILE nations, and are being assimilated by the gentiles.

Back in Hosea 7:8, we're told "Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples". What peoples does Ephraim mix himself with? The only other people there are on planet Earth apart from Hebrews..... the gentiles. Around 725 BC Assyria (also identified at times in the Bible as Ashur) conquered the northern kingdom of Ephraim-Israel, and scattered the Israelites of the 10 tribes who lived there like so much chaff in a strong wind. This didn't happen overnight. It took about 10 years or so of military battles between Assyria and Ephraim, each time Ephraim losing more land and more people to the Assyrian Empire. The Ephraim-Israelites were eventually spread all over the 120 conquered nations that made up the vast Assyrian Empire. And, we even see Egypt mentioned prominently in Hosea. That's because Assyria also conquered Egypt for a time, and so many of the Ephraim-Israelites were exiled southward, to Egypt.

Now, for sure not every last individual Ephraim-Israelite family was deported from their land. There would have been a handful left behind. But, assuredly, not more than perhaps 5 % of its total population would have remained. All the others were scattered, assimilated, and for the most part, intermarried with the scores of different gentile races and cultures that made up the Assyrian Empire, until the vast majority of Ephraim-Israelites just became part of the gentile world. This assimilation was not forced upon the Ephraim-Israelites.....they sought after it. They wanted it. They wanted to take on the ways of the gentiles. They wanted to be free from the strict restrictions and requirements of the Torah, the Law of Moses. And, so God accommodated them. And, within a few generations, most of the Ephraim-Israelites had no idea that at one time, their ancestors were Hebrews.

Now, its important to note that not EVERY Israelite that was deported became assimilated. It is now becoming evident, today in our time, that groups from each of those 10 tribes of Ephraim-Israel managed to stay together (maintaining their tribal affiliation and loyalty), and they retained a distant memory of their Hebrew history. About a month ago, I showed you all an excellent Documentary film entitled "The Quest for the Lost Tribes", which clearly identified all but a couple of those 10 Ephramite tribes (often called the 10 lost tribes of Israel), living in various places in Asia, and in groups sometimes topping a million people, and maintaining their tribal names and many Hebrew worship rituals.

But, for the sake of clarity, it is also fair to say that for the most part the members of the various tribes forming the kingdom of Ephraim-Israel simply became part of the

gentile world, and no one knows who or where these people are.....except for God himself. Almost certainly, many of us in this room today are walking around with Hebrew blood from one or more of the 10 lost tribes of Ephraim- Israel. But, physically, we have absolutely no way of knowing it.

Now that we've followed what eventually happened to the descendants of Ephraim, let's take a moment to understand what happened to the southern kingdom (the Kingdom of Judah), that other house or family of Israel. Judah was NOT attacked by Assyria. They made a treaty with Assyria, instead, and paid tribute to Assyria in exchange for remaining a separate nation. But, a little after 600 BC, some 130 years after the northern kingdom of Ephraim-Israel ceased to exist, Babylon became the new world power, and led by Nebuchadnezzar they did attack and conquered Judah.

Unlike what Assyria did to Ephraim-Israel, the Babylonians did NOT *scatter* the inhabitants of Judah. They did deport a large group of Jews up to Babylon, but they were NOT assimilated nor separated. They were generally allowed to stay together as a group and (this is key) maintain a separate culture. Not only were the people of Judah allowed to stay separate, most WANTED to stay separate.....another significant difference between them and Ephraim-Israel. Ephraim Israel was turned over to the gentiles because they WANTED to be like the gentiles, so God granted it. Judah did NOT desire to be like their gentile neighbors. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of Jews taken off to Babylon, thousands more were left in Judah as caretakers of the land (these were peasants primarily), and simply because they had so little value to the Babylonians, it wasn't worth the trouble to deport them to Babylon.

By the time of the Babylonian invasion of Judah, Judah consisted primarily of the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah. Most certainly we should include the Levites as well, and without doubt, tiny groups of other Israelite tribes also lived in Judah. But, the presence of these other tribes was insignificant because their numbers were so small and their influence non-existent. It's also important that we understand that not long after Judah was hauled off to Babylon, when Persian and then Greek influence would begin to spread after Babylon lost it's grip on the Middle East, the people of Judah would start to be called Jews. Jews, as we know them today, are ONLY people who are from the former nation of Judah. But, after Babylon, they view themselves as the remnant of all Israel, because to their view, the tribes forming Ephraim Israel were long gone.

Now, armed with the knowledge that much of Ephraim had been scattered and assimilated into the gene pool of gentiles, while Judah had remained a separate and identifiable Hebrew culture and race, let's go back to Gen.48 and look at V17-19 again. It says at the end of V19 that Ephraim is going to become "a multitude of nations". Some Bibles say Ephraim will grow "into many nations"; still others say he will become a group of nations. Here's where looking at the original Hebrew words comes in handy. By the time Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the world had been starkly divided, by God, into two divisions of people: Israelites and everybody else. The "everybody else" is what the Bible calls gentiles. Gentile is the English translation of the Hebrew word "goy". To this day, the **physical** world remains, in God's eyes, two groups: Israelites and gentiles. The common terminology we use today is Jews and gentiles. For the purpose of conversation, Jew, Hebrew, and Israelite are all the same things. But, technically, and for those who want to better understand the Scriptures, those 3 terms all mean something different, and I hope you're beginning to grasp that difference.

Now, before we examine those Hebrew words of Genesis 48, let me emphasize something: when mistakes are made trying to interpret, to understand the meaning, of Biblical prophecy, it is usually because the words of those prophecies are not taken literally enough. So, let's take a look at the Hebrew words that make up the last few critical words of the prophetic blessing Jacob pronounced upon Ephraim, at the end of V19. Where our Bibles say group of nations, or some such, the original Hebrew is: melo ha goyim. And, those words, in their most literal sense, means.....a fullness of gentiles. Or more to the exact context of the era when it was written, *a fullness of gentile nations*. So, Ephraim is going to become the fullness of the gentile nations. Of course, the \$64000 question is, so what exactly does *that* mean?

Well, though the clouds are lifting, the window is still fogged somewhat. What we now can see is that Ephraim is identified with the gentile peoples of the world. But, we also know that large populations of the various 10 tribes that formed Ephraim have been rediscovered. And, they are saying, "We are Israel, but we are not Jews". And, right they are. They are from the Kingdom of Ephraim, not from the Kingdom of Judah.

Some believe that the result of Ephraim being absorbed into the gentile world is that through the miraculous ways of God; every gentile believer in Christ has literal physical genealogical ties to Ephraim. Some will say that they can even tell you WHICH tribe of Israel they are descended from. There is a group called the Brit-Am Association, which takes it a step further and says that Britain and America ARE two of the 10 lost tribes of Israel.

Others say that Ephraim is purely symbolic.....symbolic of gentile believers. Still others say that spiritually, but NOT physically, gentile believers are EphraimSpiritual Ephraim. Nonetheless, the bottom line is, Ephraim was prophesied by Jacob to "become a fullness of the gentiles".....that is, Ephraim was going to be some special and important type of blessing to non-Hebrews.....gentiles. And 1200 years after the prophetic Cross Handed Blessing by Jacob upon Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh, Ephraim was indeed scattered and large segments of the population absorbed by the gentiles of the world. So, at least some of the prophecy is clear, and it has happened. Other parts of the prophecy, such as those parts of Ephraim, which were exiled but maintained tribal affiliation as well as a memory of their Hebrew Roots, are also starting to play another, and different, prophetic role. And, it is happening right before our eyes. Let's go back to Ezekiel, and look at Ezekiel 37.

Now, to understand the context, the book of Ezekiel was written by a man, Ezekiel, who was living in Babylon at the time he wrote this down. He was among the exiles of Judah..that is, he was a Jew..... who had been hauled off to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Ephraim-Israel had ceased to exist for well more than a century before this time.

READ Ezekiel 37 all

For our purposes, the key verses are 15-19. And, what is happening is that Judah and Ephraim, after being brought to life again, are brought back to the re-established land of Israel, and are being rejoined into one unified people. This is an end-times prophecy. This has never happened. And, it happens only after Israel is re-born as a nation.

The thing is, we know who Judah is.....it's the Jews. But, what of Ephraim? How can Ephraim rejoin Judah, if Ephraim is the lost and scattered 10 lost tribes, almost all of whom have become gentiles and have no idea who they are?

What is inescapable, is that there is going to be a joining of the Jewish people with whoever it is that somehow finds out they are Ephraim. And, we know from Jacob's prophecy concerning Ephraim, and from all the other prophecies we've studied, that at least part of Ephraim is most definitely connected with the gentiles.

But, we also now know with a certainty, that the identifiable Israelite tribes that formed Ephraim, 2700 years ago, are alive and well. In fact, they have stepped forward, asserted their Israelite heritage, and have petitioned the State of Israel to migrate to Israel. Even more, in March of 2005, barely one year ago, the government of Israel and the religious hierarch of Israel agreed that these Ephraimite tribes have been found, that indeed they are Israel, and so a law was passed allowing these Ephraimites to return home and be reunited with their Israelite brothers, the Jews.

And, here we gentiles sit, gathered together today.....we Christian gentiles.....with this growing love and concern for Israel in our hearts. And, by the way, we see this same phenomena happening all over the world....this is by no means an American movement. And, we don't know where it came from, this love. But, we know, in our Spirits that we do have some sort of connection with the Jewish people. And, without a doubt in my mind, that connection has its source in Ephraim. I think it is much more of a spiritually based connection, but indeed some physical element may well also be involved.

So, you that are real Bible students, if you are fortunate enough to have a computer based Bible search program, or even a good concordance, sit down some evening, and go to all the places where Ephraim is mentioned. It will put a chill down your spine when you see where it leads you. But..... let me also show you a place where Ephraim is NOT mentioned, when one might expect that it should be, and that should also indicate something important to us.

READ REV. 7:1-8

Now, the context of this passage is that it is occurring in the Tribulation period... the period that is known to the Jewish people as the Time of Jacob's Troubles. The Time of Jacob's Trouble and the Tribulation indicate basically the same thing. It's just two different cultural expressions for the same event.

And, here we have this great event we have heard about for years.... the sealing of the 144,000 witnesses. But, notice, these witnesses are all from the tribes of Israel; and these witnesses are listed tribe by tribe, 12,000 per tribe times 12 tribes equals 144,000. But, look carefully: oddly, there are two names missing from this list, and an old one added back in: Ephraim and Dan are missing, and Joseph and Levi are added back in. Why?

Well, as we get ready starting in Chapter 49 to study the blessings of Jacob upon his 12 sons, we'll see that Dan is apparently going to have a serious on-going problem with idolatry. Some even think that the Anti-Christ will arise out of a connection to the tribe of Dan (by the way, I don't subscribe to that belief, but neither do I say it is entirely impossible). So, that may be the reason Dan is left out. Yet, the next logical question is: where is Ephraim? Because in Ezekiel, we see in the end times that Ephraim and Judah are reunited. Next we see that in place of Ephraim, Joseph is added back in. I told you earlier that we will see the make-up of the tribes of Israel evolve, beginning from the time of their inception, and eventually here in Revelation. We must understand that this is significant. To suddenly see Ephraim deleted and Joseph added back in says something dramatic has happened. But, what?

Well, let's look at the next couple of verses in Rev.7:

READ Gen 7:9-14

First, let's remember that Ephraim and Judah coming back together occurs BEFORE the Great Tribulation, also called the Time of Jacob's Troubles. It happens in the latter days, but before the world enters that terrible period.

We have another group of people, in Revelation 7, being described as from every nation, tribe, and tongue. Of course, these are the Believers who have been removed from the Tribulation. Some say these are those who were martyred during the Tribulation; others (as do I) say that these are those who have been raptured. But, the point is, whoever these people are, and however it is they wound up before God's throne, it is clear these are Believers.

Now, I told you when I would be speculating, and this is one of those times. Who are these people dressed in the white robes? Could this be a portion of Ephraim, who is suddenly missing from the listing of the 12 tribes? For John asks the angel in verse 13..... "who are they and where are they from?" We know from an earlier verse that they are from EVERY nation, tribe, and tongue. EVERY means EVERY. And, we know that Ephraim was not only scattered among the gentiles, but a few Ephraimites joined with the tribe of Judah.....the Jews. And, we know that "nations" by definition means entiles.

To close out this lesson, I would like to tell you my best estimation of what this means to us, and then read to you a couple more scriptures.

First, I believe that the tribes of Israel called out in Rev. 7, those who had been called "lost", but are certainly lost no more; those who are called part of Ephraim, are those that did NOT assimilate into the gentile world, but through God's providential hand, managed to stay together and stay identified to their original tribes. And, notice, it is from these "Ephraimite" tribes that will come the bulk of that 144,000. In other words, Most of the tribes in that listing in Revelation 7 are what came to be known as Ephraim Israel as completely apart from Judah and Benjamin and Levi.

Why are the Levites being un-set apart; included back in as a tribe of Israel? Because there is no more need for a special priestly tribe to officiate Temple services. The only men who will survive the Tribulation in one form or another are Believers. And all men will be as priests. All sacrifice is over. All Temple worship is over. And, all redemption is over. It's finished. So, no more need for the Levites to be set apart as the ransom for Israel's firstborn. The Levites role is completed, and so they are returned to their heritage, Israel.

I believe that Ephraim, at the very least is all those remaining remnants of the 10 northern tribes of Ephraim-Israel who have maintained that identity over the centuries. Those 10 tribes who have been rediscovered and invited to return for a joyful reunion with their Jewish brothers and sisters, in their homeland, Israel.

But, I leave room for the possibility that Ephraim in some way also represents the gentile portion of the Church....probably on a spiritual level more than on a physical level. However, a physical connection is certainly possible. As with all prophesy, one only gets the full picture AFTER it has all come to pass. When one is in the midst of its fulfillment, as we are today in regards to the reuniting of Ephraim and Judah, not all is clear. There is much about all this that is mysterious, and so we need to be careful not to be rigid and dogmatic about what the path to the final outcome is going to look like.

When Ezekiel says that the two sticks, Ephraim and Judah are coming back together, I believe that we may be hearing of a reunion on two levels: spiritually and physically. I have spoken to you often about what I call The Reality of Duality; this mysterious way that God operates in which everything to do with His plan has a spiritual element and a physical element that works in parallel.

On a physical level, I see the reuniting spoken of in Ezekiel 37, as the return of the “lost” tribes of Ephraim to Israel, joining their brothers from the tribe of Judah.....the Jews....who came a few years before them to establish the State of Israel. I don’t have to guess about this, because it is happening and we are witnesses to it. And, on an earthly and physical level, we have the 2 houses of Israel.....Ephraim and Judah.....coming back together to form one nation of God, as they were at their inception, Israel. The 12 tribes, together again. Physically present and living together in Israel. Something that has not been so for almost 3000 years.

Yet.....following my model of the Reality of Duality..... on a spiritual level, I also see another aspect of the reunion of Ezekiel 37 as ultimately about the gentile believers in Christ, possibly represented in some way by Ephraim, who are going to come together with the Jewish believers in Christ, represented by Judah. Together, these are SPIRITUAL ISRAEL, or the TRUE Israel that Paul speaks of. And, that is beginning to happen, right now, as gentile believers are reaching out in love to the Jewish people as never before in history. The number of Jewish people coming to faith in Yeshua is growing at a breakneck rate, and as those of you who have been to Israel recently discovered, there is a bond of love growing being gentile and Jew, and especially between Messianic Jew and gentile Christian. And, this was all prophesied as to how it would happen, in what order it would happen, where it would happen, and who would be involved.

Turn to Psalm 102.

READ PSALM 102:1-19

Notice that it says in verse 14 (perhaps verse 15 depending on your Bible version) that “your servants” will love Israel’s very stones. NOT just His chosen people....His servants. All those who love Him, Jew or gentile, are His servants. Jews and gentiles will simply fall in love with Israel.

Also, look at the last few words I read to you; it says that what is spoken in this Psalm is for *a future* generation (from David’s time). This is for a people who hadn’t even yet been created that will praise God. Well, all of Israel had certainly already been created, lived in Egypt, left Egypt, and at the time of this Psalm were living in their own sovereign nation with one king over all 12 tribes....David.

This mention of a mysterious “people not yet created” is talking about nothing less than the body of gentile believers.....the Church....who will become part of Spiritual..... true....Israel. And, we will all be loving Israel, and praising God, according to this prophesy.

Now, let’s take what we’ve learned and look at Romans 11. Here’s the question: why is it that God gave His Torah to 12 tribes of Israel, then through the House of Judah, the Jewish part of Israel, gave us our Savior, only to have the torch of the gospel to be passed on from the Jews to the Gentiles, and then for the Jews and the gentiles to be at odds with each other for centuries? Let’s read V11-26, because this question is explicitly addressed and answered. Also, let’s look once again at the Circle of Salvation chart.

READ Romans 11:11-26

God's plan was to give His covenants to Israel; covenants that would lead to a restoration of the relationship between mankind and God. In due time, the gentile world was to be joined to Israel's covenants.....Old and New. When Israel, for the most part, rejected the

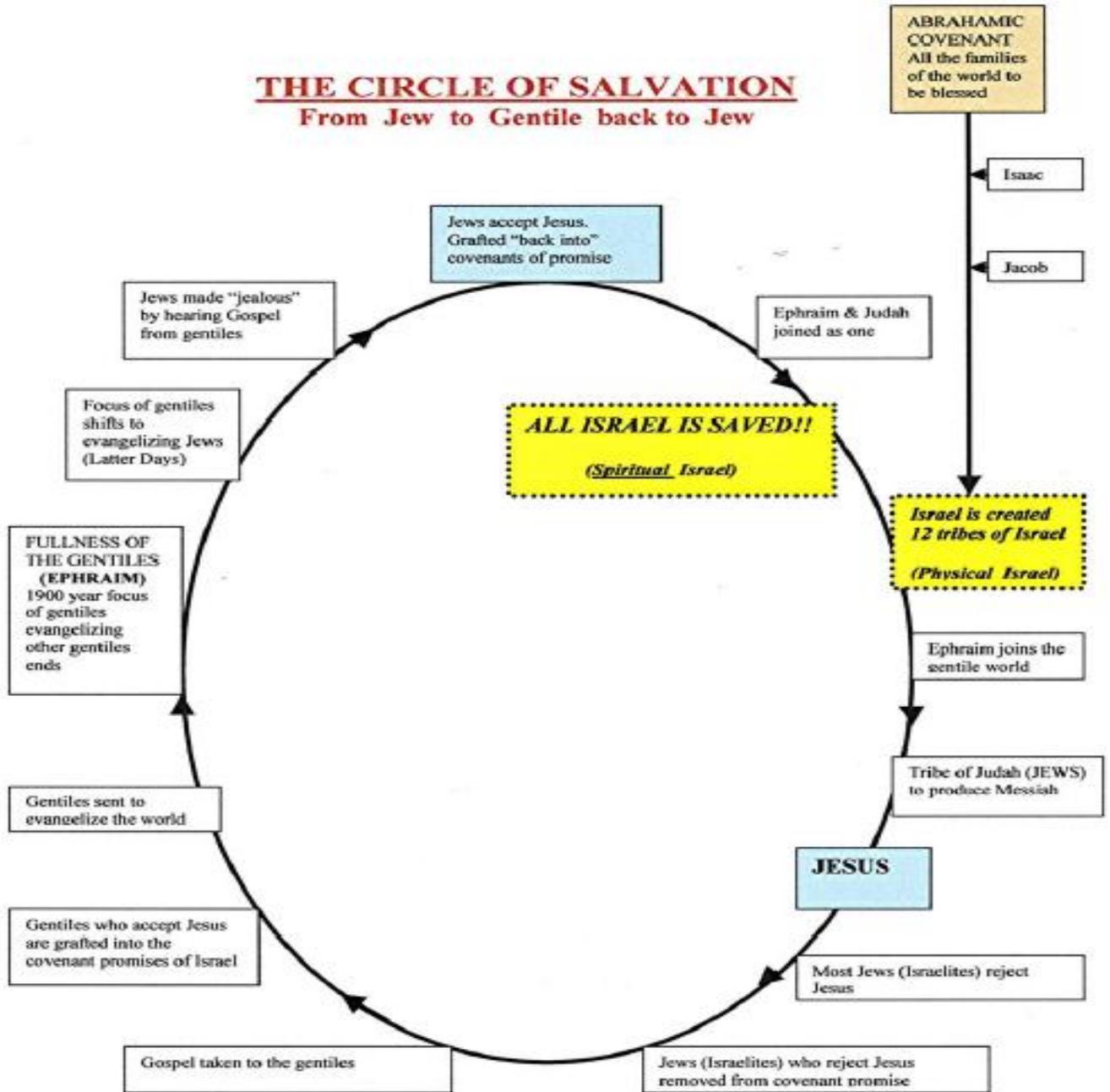
New Covenant, which is the blood of Christ, gentile believers were grafted into Israel, with the twin purposes of partaking of Israel's covenants, and of carrying forth the gospel to the whole gentile world. But, at the appointed time, the Jews would wake up, and see that the gentiles had what had always been intended for Israel; and they become jealous, and want what the gentile believers have. And, then, Paul says the Jews will learn the gospel from the gentiles, who originally learned the gospel from the Jews, and in this way ALL Israel will be saved. Both houses. Who is ALL Israel, spiritually? Believers..... gentile and Jew. Ephraim, the house of Israel that became part of the gentile world, and Judah, who remained Jewish. Both houses. Saved. And, we are seeing this happen, with our own eyes.

Next week, we'll begin to look at another blessing of Jacob, as contained in Genesis 49, and see how it ties in with the Cross Handed Blessing of Genesis 48.

We have finished examining the Cross-Handed Blessing of Jacob, as told in Genesis 48; this was a prophetic blessing made upon Ephraim and Manasseh, but the primary target of this blessing was Ephraim. We discovered that Ephraim would in some way, not yet fully clear, be a blessing to the gentile world. And, as we looked yet again at Ezekiel 37, learned why the prophecy that Ephraim and Judah would be reunited in the Land of Israel, never to be removed, had everything to do with what we are witnessing today, in our time.³⁴

³⁴ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

THE CIRCLE OF SALVATION From Jew to Gentile back to Jew



Jewish Studies
Torah 6/20/03
Tom Bradford