

DEATH AND BLESSING OF ISRAEL: PART 1
GENESIS 47.27–48.22

- A Israel prepares for death (47.27-31)
 - B Israel blesses the sons of Joseph (48.1-22)
 - B' Israel blesses his sons (49.1-27)
- A' Israel dies (49.28-33)

Summary: *Israel, at the time of his death, makes preparations for the continuation of God's covenant blessing in the world through (a) causing Joseph to swear that he will bury him in the land of Canaan and (b) adopting Ephraim and Manasseh as his sons.*

A ISRAEL PREPARES FOR DEATH (47.27-31)

Settled temporarily (27): "dwelt" is literally "sat." It has the idea of coming to a rest. Israel found rest in the land of Egypt. This was temporary rest, but rest nonetheless.

"fruitful and multiplied exceedingly" - God is making Israel a great nation in the land of Egypt. Cp. Jacob in Laban's house.

"fruitful and multiply" also clues us into a theme in Genesis and who Israel is. The blessing/command given to the first man and woman. Also given to Noah and Abraham. Israel is the new man (i.e., the new human race) in seed form.

Seventeen years (28): Cp. to Joseph in 37.2. The connection here seems to me to be the fact that it was at 17 years of age when Joseph was in the land of Canaan in his father's house that he was both exalted and then (symbolic) death followed. That is, he was exiled from the land.

Israel has gained great possessions and been fruitful and multiplied exceedingly in the land of Egypt. He has been exalted. Now he is preparing for death. This death leads to blessing just like the "death" of Joseph.

Looking toward the future inheritance (29-31): They have been blessed, but they have not been brought into the fullness. Israel recognizes this and in faith prepares for the reality of death.

The oath. Cp. Gen 24. Israel calls Joseph to put his hand under his "thigh." This refers to his private parts. In this the person is committing his life to the one who is taking the oath. He is committing his seed/future to the hands of the one taking the oath.

The oath = Joseph will not bury him in the land of Egypt but in the land of Canaan with his fathers. Israel is saying to Joseph that his life, his future, is tied up in being buried in the Promised Land. This is based upon God's promises.

Israel knows that he must be 'planted' in the land as it were in death. He knows that God will one day raise him up to inherit the promises. He is being buried in hope of the resurrection.

Israel bows himself on the head of his bed. Hebrews 11.21 interprets this as an act of worship. Israel was exercising *faith* when he required Joseph to bury him in the Promised Land.

B ISRAEL BLESSES THE SONS OF JOSEPH (48.1-22)

Two sons, two names (1-2): Note the order of the names of the sons: Manasseh and Ephraim. Cp. v. 20

Note also the switching between the names "Jacob" and "Israel." Indicates the sense of tension in which we live between what has already been accomplished and what is yet to be done.

Israel or Jacob lives in that tension between his two names (as does his household). "You are promised to be this and, in some ways, you have realized these promises. But you have not received the fullness of everything promised."

Jacob is the man who wrestles with people in a foreign land. But then "Israel strengthens himself" and sits up in bed. Israel is the one who has been blessed after wrestling and is in a position to bless others.

Recollection of the blessing at Luz (3-4): cf. chs. 28 & 35. Luz is the place Jacob stayed when he was fleeing from Esau initially. He was going to Laban's house as a temporary dwelling with the promise that he would return to the Promised Land. So here.

Luz was the name that the people of Canaan had given to it. Jacob at that time was living in a land that had already become the house of God, but was still known to the rest of the world by its pagan name. The fullness of what it meant to be the house of God would one day be realized; but not yet.

He promised him to give him a land and a seed to possess the land, not just as a temporary possession—as with their present condition in Egypt—but as an “everlasting possession” (i.e., not just temporary).

A new father (5-6): Joseph is the seed, the younger son who replaced the firstborn. He is now in line to receive a double portion. This is realized in his sons being two tribes.

“Reuben and Simeon.” These are the first two sons born to Jacob. Ephraim and Manasseh, being the expression of Joseph, will be replacing the firstborn. They will be “firstborn” sons of Israel.

A new mother (7): Rachel is “the woman,” the one who would bear the seed (cf. Gen 3.15).

Rachel bears fruit in Joseph and anticipates having more children (Joseph means “he adds”). Rachel dies bearing Benjamin.

Note Jacob’s words: she died and was buried on the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem (“house of bread”). She didn’t arrive. Jacob will also die before he arrives into the promise of God in its fullness.

The initiation of the adoption (8-9): “Who are these?” The beginning of the formal adoption process. The boys must be identified in their present status.

Joseph identifies them and Israel calls for the boys to come near. They are drawn into his presence in order to be blessed by him.

Preparing to pass judgment (10-11): “dim eyes” - cp. Isaac, but also a contrast. Isaac had lost proper judgment and tried to give the blessing to the wrong son.

In contrast, the true seed is in the presence of Israel. Joseph, embodied in his two sons, is becoming the “eyes” of Israel. The right to judge as the faithful son is being passed on just as it was earlier in Joseph’s life when Israel exalted him over his brothers.

Kissed and embraced by Israel. This is a sign of peace. As such it represents a unity between them. This type of kissing and embracing reveals a “oneness” between the two; appropriate for adoption.

Knees and hands (12-14): “on the knees” = a sign of adoption (cp. Gen 30.3; Ruth 4.16).

“Hands” - right hand = the hand of prominence and power. Joseph positions Manasseh to be blessed above Ephraim.

The blessing of Joseph (15-16): Joseph is the one being blessed with the double portion.

God had been Israel’s shepherd all of his life up until this day. (He was not ‘converted’ at Peniel.)

Angel = the Angel with whom Jacob wrestled at the ford of the Jabbok; renamed him Israel.

“Name” - cp. 12.1-3; people of Babel sought to make a name for themselves. God gives his people “a name;” i.e., authority, privilege, and vocation.

Purposeful replacement of the firstborn (17-19):

The second blessing (20): Ephraim is explicitly set before Manasseh.

Promises: Immanuel and future dominion (21-22): Israel has given Joseph a “portion/shoulder” above his brothers. He has also taken initial dominion in the land of Canaan over the Amorites (cf. Gen 15).

- (1) Faith looks forward to and makes preparations for the future.
- (2) Present situations are only a temporary state of affairs.
- (3) We have been adopted in the true Joseph.