

GENESIS

Lesson 40 - Chapter 48

We are about to embark on a study that is full of ramifications for our day and time. A study that is going to explore some areas of Scripture that many of you have never before heard, let alone considered prophetic. And, it is contained within the final 3 chapters of Genesis.

I will tell you honestly that from the first time I did this study, several years ago, until today, I have changed my thinking on some of my conclusions. Further, what caused that change were some very recent events that added new information and clarity to the mix. So, I will do my best to separate what seems to be concrete fact that you can rely on, from speculation that is necessary to even approach this important area of prophecy. Oh, I will speculate; but as a good friend of mine often says to me, I reserve the right to be wrong.

READ GEN. 48 all

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.

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.

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 Rueben 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.