

# Jacob Adopted Joseph's Two Sons Ephraim and Manasseh

48: 1-7

**DIG:** Why did Jacob choose to adopt Manasseh and Ephraim? What, if anything, does Rachel have to do with this adoption?

**REFLECT:** Do you know for sure that you are adopted into God's family (Ephesians 1:4-5; John 1:12; Galatians 3:26-29)?

Joseph knew that his bedridden father was old and ready to die when he was compelled to agree to bury him in the Promised Land (47:28-31); when news came that his father was ill and close to death, this came as no surprise. So Yosef responded by taking his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim along with him as Jacob's life drew to a close (48:1). **Jacob would now adopt his two grandsons as his own children.** This was such an important occasion that Joseph's silence, and the fact that he only brought his two sons and not his brothers seems to indicate that Ya'akov, after much prayer, had discussed his adoption of Manasseh and Ephraim previously with Joseph. They were about eighteen to twenty years old at that time, having been born before Jacob had returned to Egypt. Yosef had married when he was about thirty years old, and he would have been about fifty-six at this time.

When Ya'akov was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," Isra'el rallied his strength and sat up on the bed with his feet upon the ground. When his son arrived, Jacob reminded him of perhaps the most important event of his entire life, the appearance of El Shaddai, *the strong and powerful God*, who appeared to him in a dream at Bethel (28:10-22).<sup>743</sup> Ya'akov said to Yosef, "El Shaddai appeared to me at Bethel, in the land of Canaan, and there He blessed me. And He said to me, "I am going to make you fruitful and will increase your numbers. I will make you the head of twelve tribes, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you" (48:2-4). Egypt was only his temporary home because his true inheritance would be Canaan.

Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine (48:5). Ya'akov replaced Reuben and Simeon, who were the first sons born by Leah, with Ephraim and Manasseh. It is obvious that Joseph had brought up his sons to fear God. For although they were highly favored because of their father's position, when Jacob adopted them, they made the same decision as Moses did, to give up the riches of Egypt for the people of God.

*There are only two spiritual families in the world. There is the family of **God** and the family of **Satan**. No one is born into the family of **God**; the only way you can get into His family is to be adopted. When did this adoption take place? On **God's** part it took place in all eternity past: **For God the Father chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love, God predestined us to be adopted as His sons and daughters through Yeshua the Messiah (Ephesians 1:4-5a).** However, on our part, it took place at the moment of faith in **Christ: Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God (John 1:12-13).***

*When parents adopt a child today, they **choose** a boy or a girl that they want to adopt into their family. It takes a great deal of planning and preparation. This child, apart from his or her adoption, may have an extremely bleak future. The child might spend most of his or her life without siblings or parents. But when adopted, everything that is true of the parents is true of the adopted child. In other words, the adopted child has all the rights and privileges of the family. And although the parents might be disappointed or even angry with the child for a time, he or she is still their child. No one is unadopted. This is also true of **God's** family. When we are adopted, we are transformed from slavery to children of the King, from being completely cursed, to utter consolation.*

As we saw in the case of Esau and **Jacob**, it was customary that the oldest **son** receive a double portion of the inheritance, but the **father**, as head of the family, could alter this arrangement if the situation, in **his** opinion, needed to be changed. **Jacob**, therefore, was perfectly within **his** rights to transfer the birthright from **Reuben** to **Joseph**. **Reuben** was the first born, but when he defiled his father's marriage bed with **Bilhah**, his rights as firstborn were given to the sons of **Joseph**, the son of **Isra'el** (**First Chronicles 5:1**). **Ya'akov** decided that the easiest way to do this was to give the double inheritance directly to **Joseph's two sons**, rather than to **Yosef** himself. This he would do by adopting them as his own children, so that each would have equal status to **Reuben and Simeon**.<sup>744</sup>

**Jacob** explained to **Yosef**, "Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers" (**48:6**). Legally, at that point, **Ephraim and Manasseh** were **Jacob's** sons. If **Joseph** had any more sons, their inheritance would be from **him**, not **Ya'akov**. These other sons of **Yosef** are not mentioned anywhere in the Bible, but their descendants are included in the families of **Ephraim and Manasseh** in **Numbers 26:28-37** and **First Chronicles 7:14-29**.<sup>745</sup>

In receiving the double portion and the birthright, **Joseph** was silent. There is no sense of appreciation here because **he** had probably already expressed **his** gratitude to **his father** earlier. More than likely, **they** had discussed this many times before. Whether **Manasseh and Ephraim** were also told, we do not know. But unlike **Ya'akov**, who had deceived **his father** to get the blessing, **Yosef** had left the future with **ADONAI**. **He** was very wise, for **he** did not have to manipulate or deceive **his father** to get the blessing.<sup>746</sup>

As **Jacob** was reminiscing on his deathbed, **he** remembered **his** first love **Rachel** and the place where **he** buried her. **He** said: As **I** was returning from Paddan Aram, to my sorrow **Rachel** died in the land of Canaan while we were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath at Ramah (see Ij - **The Birth of Benjamin and the Death of Rachel**). So **I** buried her there beside the road to Ephrath (48:7). **Rachel** died too soon, so there would be no more sons by her. But **Ya'akov** wanted to honor **Rachel's** memory by placing **Manasseh and Ephraim** before Leah's **Reuben and Simeon**. **She** would always be the love of **his** life, and **he** always knew that if it weren't for the scheming of Laban, **she** would have been **his** only wife.