



GENESIS 46-50 JACOB'S FAMILY SETTLE IN EGYPT; PROPHETIC BLESSINGS

In the last study, we read of Jacob receiving the wonderful news that Joseph was alive and had become the second ruler in Egypt. Yet, he still had strong doubts about settling down in Egypt. He knew Canaan was still the Promised Land and God told his father Isaac not to go down to Egypt (Genesis 26:2). He also had told Abraham that his descendants would be *afflicted* in Egypt (Genesis 15:13). So, arriving at Beersheba, Jacob offered a sacrifice and asked God for guidance. God answered him in a vision saying, "I am God, the God of your father; *do not fear to go down to Egypt*, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and *I will surely bring you up again*; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes [i.e. he will be there to close your eyes at death]" (Genesis 46:3-4).

"The life of Jacob," says *Thru the Bible Commentary*, "can be divided into three geographical locations: the land of Haran, the land of Canaan, and the land of Egypt. These are not only geographical areas, but denote three spiritual levels. Jacob fled the land with just a staff. When he came into Haran, he was God's man *living in the flesh*. He came out of Haran running away from his father-in-law and was afraid to meet his own brother Esau. Then in the land of Canaan, Jacob had his wrestling match, but he was God's man fighting by his own strength. Now he is going down to Egypt and is not walking in his own strength. He is not running away anymore for now he is walking *by faith*."

Genesis 46:27 mentions there were *seventy* in Jacob's family, plus his many servants, that settled in the verdant land of Goshen. In Acts 7:14, Stephen said they were *seventy-five*, but probably because he included in the count *the five sons* of Ephraim and Manasseh (1 Chr. 7:14-20) born in Egypt but were part of the family.

The land of Goshen was a lush grassland, but the sophisticated Egyptians preferred the cities and looked down on rural shepherds, yet not so much on cattlemen. So Joseph told them, "So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' that you shall say, 'Your servants' occupation has been *with livestock* from our youth even till now, both we and also our fathers,' that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians" (46:33-34). The Pharaoh was so impressed with Jacob and the rest that he put them over his own livestock. As *The Bible Commentary, Revised* mentions, "Goshen was an Egyptian region in the eastern Delta area and thus not far from the court at Memphis. Yet as a place highly suitable for cattle [and sheep], disdained by Egyptians, it afforded relative seclusion. It thus had advantages for

the immediate emergency, since Joseph could conveniently provide for Israel there, and for the long-term sojourn that would ensue. The isolation would make possible the preservation of Israel's distinctive covenant-culture under conditions *favorable* to their unity and growth" (p. 111).

Pharaoh was able to recognize Jacob's special relationship with God, as he had Joseph's, and allowed Jacob to bless him as his superior (47:10). So begins another sojourn for God's people. *The Archaeology of the Old Testament* mentions, "Genesis 47:7 records Jacob's introduction to the pharaoh. This encounter marks *the end of the patriarchal period* (which had begun 215 years earlier with Abraham's departure from Haran) and the *beginning* of the Egyptian sojourn" (p. 156).

The seven years of famine had not ended yet, and people kept coming from all the surrounding areas to buy wheat. Eventually, their money ran out, including the Egyptians', for the grain belonged to the pharaoh. Joseph set up a system where they could now barter their livestock for grain. When they ran of livestock, they traded their land. The Bible says, "Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh's. And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from one end of the borders of Egypt to the other end. Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had rations allotted to them by Pharaoh" (47:20-22). Once the famine ended, Joseph allowed them to rent their land and cattle back for 20% of their annual earnings.

Meanwhile, the Israelites were protected and supplied by God through Joseph. "So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen, and they had possessions there and *grew and multiplied exceedingly*. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years" (47:27-28).

Before he died, Jacob received some final instructions from God. First, he was to adopt Joseph's two sons, and thus would each become *a tribe*. "Then Jacob said to Joseph: "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.' And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, *they shall be mine*" (48:3-5). Then Jacob

blessed them, but Ephraim, the youngest of the boys, was blessed as if he was the firstborn.

Joseph sought to correct what he thought was an oversight of his nearly blind father. He said, "Not so my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." But his father refused and said, I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become *a multitude of nations*" (48:18-19). Jacob was being instructed by God in this regard, and we read in Hebrews 11:21, "By faith Jacob, when he was dying, *blessed each of the sons of Joseph*, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff." Great things were happening. Ephraim did inherit a part of the territory of Israel, but never became a multitude of nations there--for this prophecy would be fulfilled *in the distant future*.

So the prophetic blessings of the twelve tribes would eventually be fulfilled at a specific time. Notice what the Bible says, "And Jacob called his sons and said, 'Gather together that I may tell you *what shall befall you in the last days*' (49:1). *The Bible Reading Program* mentions, "Some commentaries look for the fulfillment of these prophecies for each tribe by looking at the history recorded in books of the Old Testament. Of course, some of the characteristics and destinies outlined by Jacob were fulfilled *in small measure* during those times. However, *note when* Jacob said these prophecies would come to pass: "*in the last days*" (verse 1). The phrases 'in the last days' and 'in the latter days' appear *around 20 times in the Bible*. They refer to the period of time *at the end of the age* leading into the establishment of God's Kingdom on Earth (e.g., Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:1; 2 Peter 3:3). So, rather than foretelling the condition of the tribes at the times recorded in the books of Kings and Chronicles, Jacob describes the circumstances of the tribes *at the end of the age*. This tells us something very interesting: *All of the tribes of Israel will exist as distinct peoples at the time of the end*, shortly before the return of Jesus Christ—except for Simeon and Levi, of course, who will exist as peoples, but will be scattered throughout the other tribes."

There are two main sources that cover the subject of these prophecies that would be fulfilled about the twelve tribes--Herbert W. Armstrong's booklet, "United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy," and our booklet, "United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy." Yet there is *a third source* most don't have access to and I would like to use it since it is an *independent witness* by a Jewish historian, Yair Davidy, that came to *the same conclusions* as Mr. Armstrong, by studying Jewish, Greek and Roman history, and wrote the book on this subject called *The Tribes*.

Jacob said to **Reuben**, "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength. The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch" (49:3-4).

Davidy comments, "The French descend mainly from Reuben...and possess a dignity and finesse appropriate for a firstborn son and the very name means "See-I-have-a-son" suggesting a mother's announcement full of pride and joy (Genesis 29:32)" (p. 440).

The French, true to Reuben's weakness, are well known for their sexual escapades and envy Great Britain and the U.S., the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, who received what should have been their firstborn blessings. As 1 Chr. 5:1 says, "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, *his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph*..."

Davidy continues, "English, French, and Jewish thinkers beginning from the 1600's began to consider the establishment anew of a *Jewish state* in the land of Israel...On the whole it may be said that since the eighteenth century (and to an extent well before) most countries of the world were anti-Jewish, while the U.S., Britain and France, and related nations in western Europe and overseas were ambivalent, with a favorable attitude prevailing more often than not. This book brings proof that part of the reason for this "ambivalence" was *heredity*" (p. 8, 13).

Jacob continues, "**Simeon and Levi** are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. Let not my soul enter their council, let not my honor be united to their assembly, for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel" (49:5-7).

These two tribes were scattered within the other tribes, with Simeon becoming largely absorbed within the confines of Judah, but the tribe of Levi redeemed itself by later showing it was very zealous for God's laws. After the Israelites made the golden calf, Moses said, "Whoever is on the Lord's side—come to me! And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him" (Exodus 32:26). This shows just because mistakes and sins are made, it does not permanently condemn one if there is repentance, faith, and obedience to God's laws. Thus, *Levi* was afforded an honorable dispersion because it became the priestly tribe (Josh. 21:1-42).

Davidy mentions, "Simeon and Levi were brothers, destined to be divided in Jacob, scattered in Israel, and therefore were not to be concentrated in one specific area...Many Levites fled to Judah before the Ten Tribes

were exiled. Likewise *a good portion of Simeon was to be absorbed by Judah* both before the Assyrian Exile and afterwards...Therefore, what applies to Judah in prophecy also has significance concerning the tribe of Simeon...and most Levites appear today to be found among the Jewish people” (p. 225-226).

Jacob said about **Judah**, “Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s children shall bow down before you [this happened when David became king and all the tribes submitted to him]. Judah is a lion’s whelp, from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who shall rouse him? [the lion is the symbol of Great Britain]. The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until *Shiloh* comes, and to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey’s *colt* to the choice vine. He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the *blood* of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk” [this is a prophecy about Christ’s entering Jerusalem riding a colt, then dying by shedding his blood and “washing his garments in wine—what kind of wine?—Blood (see Rev. 19:13), (49:9-12).

The commentary, *Thru the Bible*, says, “This is one of the more remarkable prophecies in all the Word of God. Already we have been told that there will be a seed of the woman. That was the first prophecy of Christ: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). The “seed” of the woman is the One who will do the bruising of the serpent’s head. He will be the One to get the victory. This first prophecy was in Genesis; then that Seed was confirmed to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Now it is confirmed to Judah--out of Judah’s line He is coming. Also, the word *shiloh* means “rest and tranquility.” Christ is the One who will bring rest. Remember that when the Lord Jesus walked here on earth, He turned from those who had rejected Him, and He said to the populace, ‘Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will rest you.’ (Matt. 11:28). That is Shiloh--Shiloh had come. Not only is Christ *Shiloh*, but also He is the One who will hold the scepter. The scepter of this universe will be held in His nail-pierced hands.”

Jacob continues, “**Zebulun** shall dwell by the haven of the sea, he shall become a haven for ships and his border shall adjoin Sidon” (49:13).

Davidy says about Zebulun, “Holland is an inheritance of Zebulun who dwells on the seashore. Zebulun, in Talmudic literature, was pictured as a *merchant seafarer*, which description fits the Dutch. Rotterdam in Holland is the world’s busiest port. Moses blessed Zebulun, saying that he should ‘suck of the

abundance of the seas and of treasures hid in the sands’ (Dt. 33:19). Today South Africa and Holland are on the seashore and a good portion of the earlier *diamond* wealth of South Africa was found in the ‘sands.’ The Dutch have on the whole *treated the Jews well* and have a knack of identifying with biblical concepts” (p. 318).

Jacob goes on, “**Issachar** is a strong donkey, lying down between two burdens. He saw that rest was good, and that the land was pleasant, he bowed his shoulder to bear a burden and became a band of slaves” (49:14-15).

Davidy mentions, “The Hebrew word for ‘two burdens’ may also be translated as meaning ‘between two walls or boundaries’, and may imply a land-locked mountainous area such as *Switzerland*. The characteristics and clan-names of Issachar are apparent among the Swiss. The name “Issachar” is derived from a root *scr* denoting ‘hire’ or ‘reward’ and the name may be understood to mean, ‘he who will hire himself for reward.’ The Swiss earn much of their foreign income by adding value to imported produce in addition to their banking and tourist enterprises which are based on a similar principle of selling service and adding value...precision is a necessary trait of Issachar...Isaac Abarbanel, a Jewish medieval commentator said Issachar loves rest. He is unwarlike and prefers to pay others to fight for him. He is a merchant by nature and lacks the ‘monarchic’ touch (i.e. he is a republican)...In addition, says Abarbanel, from out of the sons of Issachar would emerge wise men with an aptitude for intellectual and philosophical pursuits. The above description fits Switzerland, as it has traditionally been a republic and neutral, using its financial influence to ward off enemies and somehow making it worthwhile for others to respect its neutrality...(p. 315). Another part of Issachar also settled in Finland.

Jacob said about **Dan**, “Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse’s heels, so that its rider shall fall backward” (49:16-17).

Davidy comments, “In Ireland, the same peoples settled who reached other parts of the British Isles, though in different proportions: Danites from the tribe of Dana in pre-Celtic times and Danes from Denmark in the Viking era. There are about 60 million people in the world today of Irish descent, though only around three million live in Ireland itself. Most people of Irish origin live in the U.S. as well as many in Australia and the United Kingdom...The Irish of today in Ireland and America have characteristics applicable both to Dan and to Simeon. In the U.S., the Irish dominate much of the police force and are officious and inclined to violence. The Irish are usually not liberal but conservative, tend to be religious, and even superstitious. They can be poetic and mystical, can be hardy, tough, very brave and good

fighters who enjoy sparring. They are known to drink alcohol, sometimes too much. They are also often generous, fair-minded, and seekers of justice” (p. 432).

Jacob said about **Gad**, “Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him, but he shall triumph at last” (49:19).

The *Swedes* on occasions have been trampled down by other nations, but they manage to end up at the top. Davidy says, “The tribe of Gad dominated Sweden, whose major regions bear names reminiscent of Gad and the sons of Gad. The very name of the ‘Goths’ from whom the Swedes descend is an acceptable ancient Israelite pronunciation of the name Gad. The prophecy about Gad was perhaps best exemplified when the Huns’ hordes overcame the Goths and forced them to participate in the western invasions. On Attila’s death, a revolt the Goths and their Gepid kin destroyed the Hun domination. Abarnanel concluded that Gad would be numerous and divided into many groups, which, nevertheless, would maintain some form of contact and be capable of concerted action” (p. 150, 438).

Regarding **Asher**, Jacob said, “Bread from Asher shall be rich, and he shall yield royal dainties” (49:20).

Davidy mentions about Asher, “The Anglo-Saxon invaders actually consisted of numerous Scandinavian and northern tribes among whom the Vandals were quite important. Their names are similar to those of the sons of Asher and several factors serve to equate Asher with the Vandals as well as with other entities” (p. 276).

Next came **Naphtali**. “Naphtali is a deer let loose, he uses beautiful words” (49:21).

Davidy comments, “Naphtali was to reemerge as the Naphtalites in Scythia who were described by the Chinese as of Gothic stock...and were known as the White or Naphtalite Huns...They became the Vikings of Scandinavia, especially in Norway” (p. 200).

Then Jacob mentions about **Joseph**, “Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well, his branches run over the wall. The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel). By the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors. Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers” (49:23-26).

Davidy notes, “The tribes of Joseph--Ephraim and Manasseh produced peoples most of whom were to be found in West Celtic and Anglo-Saxon tribes that mostly settled in Britain. Descendants of Manasseh are found

among the Celts and Mercians in the west of Britain, whereas Ephraim was concentrated in the east and south. From the Manasseh-dominated areas in Britain came a predominant proportion of the early settlers of the U.S. who determined that nation’s guiding characteristics. Prophecies and traditions concerning Manasseh were to become applicable to the U.S. On the other hand, Britain would remain the province of Ephraim...From the west of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, the U.S. received 87% of its British immigrants in its formative period. In other words, early American society was formed largely by groups associated with the tribe of Manasseh. Even today, more than half of the white population in the U.S. may trace its ancestry back to Britain and Ireland...These people, descendants of Manasseh, still remain the determining factor in North America” (p. 393).

Finally, Jacob mentions about **Benjamin**: “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil” (49:27).

Davidy states, “The tribes of *Judah and Benjamin* together were to compose the main stock of the modern Jewish people. Benjamin also seems to have been represented among the Normans” (p. 232).

After Jacob gave these prophetic blessings, he died and was buried with a great procession back in Hebron, in the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham and his father Isaac had been interred. He had lived 17 years in Egypt.

Now that Jacob was dead, Joseph’s brothers thought he would punish them. But Joseph said these famous words, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (50:19). Paul would later apply this to Christian life (Romans 8:28).

Genesis ends with the death of Joseph when he was 110 years old. He probably continued as a ruler in Egypt for 80 years and cared for all the Israelites. He was embalmed as were all Egyptian dignitaries. But, walking in faith, and looked forward to being *resurrected* in the Promised Land. So, he said to them, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here” (50:25). Hebrews 11:22 adds, “By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.” Yes, here was a true man of faith!