



## The Prophetic Call of Manasseh

Jacob's adoption and blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, as recounted in Torah Portion Vayechi, reveals something amazing about YHWH's covenant and our part in it. At this point in the story, Jacob is in Goshen, close to death but surrounded by his family, having had an absolutely incredible life filled with excitement, wonder, passion and never without drama. Although Goshen is a place of abundance, Jacob insists that he must be buried in his hometown, laid to rest with his fathers in the place where his covenant with YHWH began. Before his children receive their grandfather's blessing, Joseph is placed under an oath to honor this request, symbolized with his hand placed 'under his father's thigh'.

Amidst all of the luxury afforded to his kin by Goshen, Jacob never wanted to lose sight of the origins of his own life and blessing, returning to where he had received the promises from Elohim in the first place. This is a powerful reminder to us, that even when we're in Egypt, surrounded by gentiles, even when we are lost and not sure if where we are is where we are supposed to be, we should always go *back to the beginning* of our covenant with God. At the beginning was where we felt the power of God for the first time, having known nothing like it before, His promises and His grace moving us more profoundly than anything else ever could. God's presence and power isn't diminished in our lives, He will **never** leave us, **forsake** us or **retract** His promises, nor will He ever break His covenant with us. Although we may find ourselves in Egypt, it is our choice to teshuva to our Father, turn back, repent and go back to the beginning of the covenant, where He can always be found.

Joseph being asked to place his hand under his father's thigh to swear his oath is something that has appeared once before in Genesis, between Abraham and Eliezar, his manservant, when he was commissioned to seek out a bride for Isaac. This is a highly symbolic act and an important one for the cultures of that time, as it emphasized the importance of the oath being sworn. The thigh is

one of the largest muscles of the body and was seen to represent strength and authority. To have your hand placed under someone's thigh is to be submitted to their strength and authority, emphasized by the fact that this position is physically restrictive to the person submitting themselves. Further to this, it is also believed that the expression is in reference not just to the thigh itself, but the loins, meaning that the act of swearing an oath in this manner is, in effect, swearing on the generations that had been promised to Abraham when he made his covenant with YHWH. This is not completely unbelievable as it is known that the ancient Hebrews would swear on circumcision, the physical sign of the Covenant, as we would swear on a Bible; even in the English language, the etymology of the word 'testify' is directly related to 'testicles'. Jacob's request was to do with returning to the origins of his covenant with God and the promises of that covenant were to be passed on through his descendants, so it was important that the one who would ensure that this request was honored understood the authority behind it and the fact that it would affect the future generations of his family.

Being at the end of his life, Jacob is considering the future, knowing that the time to leave his children with his prophetic blessing had come. In his wisdom, Jacob chooses to do something quite different than what was expected, delivering a powerful prophetic message, not only to his family and their descendants, but ultimately to all of God's people throughout time. Although by



then he had many grandchildren, he shows an uncommon favor towards Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob not only blesses them but goes further and adopts them as his own sons, stating that they would essentially take the places of Reuben and Simeon in blessing and inheritance, his actual first and second-born sons. This was not just unprecedented, it would have been

scandalous. Not only is that inheritance now being split fourteen ways, rather than twelve, not only are *grandsons* being given the place in inheritance and blessing as *sons*, but the whole hierarchy of the blessing has been shifted.

Physically, Ephraim and Manasseh were not Jacob's sons, nor were they even fully Israelite; they were half Egyptian and brought up surrounded by the gods of Egypt, their mother being the daughter of a high-priest of Ra, the Egyptian sun-god. Joseph, in marrying Asenath had entered

into a contract with Egypt and through family ties, connected to the Egyptian pantheon of gods. This marriage had been a blessing to everyone because, in certifying Joseph's position of esteem in Egyptian society, it ensured that the Egyptian people would take his edicts seriously and so fulfil a plan that would literally save the lives of millions. This put Ephraim and Manasseh in a very comfortable position in their Egyptian family, but posed something of a challenge as to their place in the Israelite family. Being adopted by Jacob certainly simplified any debates as to their place in the family, but was unprecedented in terms of what institutions that move unsettled. Regardless of how this upset the traditions of inheritance however, it was this very act that sowed the seeds of opening the gospel of YHWH's Covenant to all families of the world. It would be through Ephraim and Manasseh that the *multitude of nations* could become part of God's Kingdom (Genesis 48:19). Jacob's adoption had broken the boys' covenant with Egypt and its false gods, and brought them in completely to the Covenant of El Shaddai, God of Abraham and Isaac, the one true God.

Even the manner in which Jacob blessed his grandchildren was an incredible break from the norm. As in many cultures, including Egypt, the first-born son in the Hebrew culture was considered the most important of the children, the recipient of a special blessing and double portion of inheritance. Manasseh, as first-born to an Egyptian family, was symbolically tied to Egypt, but in being adopted, should still technically have received the blessing of first-born from his Hebrew grandfather. Jacob, however, crosses his hands, placing his *left* hand (instead of the right) on the head of Manasseh, the first-born of Joseph, and his *right* hand on the head of Ephraim, second-born. Interestingly, in forming a cross, Jacob had essentially made the sign of a 'tav' (𐤀), the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which in the ancient pictographic Hebrew (⓪) and Paleo-Hebrew (X) alphabets resembled a cross. Amazingly, the associated meaning of this letter is actually 'mark', 'sign' and 'covenant'. Jacob had made the very sign that literally meant 'covenant' in his language, and the sign that, through Messiah, would later come to signify the covenant for the whole world. These crossed arms, the hands on the heads of two half-Hebrew, half-Egyptian boys, created the **bridge** for the rest of the world to **cross** the river Jordan with Abraham's descendants and enter into Israel to be part of the covenant with God.

The crossing of hands was also an echo of the promise given to Isaac and Rebekah that the 'older would serve the younger' (Genesis 25:23), itself a trend seen throughout the generations of the Hebrews: Isaac and Ishmael, Esau and Jacob, now Manasseh and Ephraim. This found further fulfilment in the division of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms. The Southern Kingdom was comprised of just the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (and also known as The House

of Judah), and the Northern Kingdom (also known as the House of Ephraim), made up of the other ten. As the name suggests, the tribe of Ephraim was elevated into a position of leadership over the other nine tribes that formed the Northern Kingdom (Asher, Dan, Gad, Issachar, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun).

Before Israel crossed the Jordan and entered Canaan, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh requested to be able to settle on that side of the river, due to the suitability of the land for their agricultural needs and were given permission to permanently settle there, on the condition that they still helped the others in the fight to reclaim the Promised Land from the heathen tribes (Numbers 32). Joshua 22:9-10 tells us that when the tribes began to return to their places towards the end of the conquest of Canaan, the three tribes that had settled outside on the other side of the Jordan built an altar to YHWH in Gilgal (referred to in the passage as Geliloth). Hundreds of years earlier, Gilgal had been the first place that Abraham made camp after relocating to Canaan and coming into covenant with God, and was where Joshua had set up the twelve stones as a monument (Joshua 4:19-20) and later circumcised the Israelites, before laying waste to Jericho (Joshua 5:2-12). Of course, this sparked a panic amongst the other tribes, who thought that this was the beginnings of idolatry and set out ready to make war over this altar, however matters were resolved between the tribes when the truth was revealed (Joshua 22:11-34). By building this altar, and especially in such a significant location, they were memorializing their place in Israel, so that their location outside of the land of Israel, on the other side of the Jordan, wouldn't also mean that they were forgotten by future generations, that they would never lose their place in the covenant.

These things and the impact they have had on successive generations of God's people are all connected back to the covenant that Jacob had made with Ephraim and Manasseh as young boys, and the double-blessings of the first-born. Ephraim, the **spiritual** first-born and future leader of the Northern Kingdom, and Manasseh, the **physical** first-born, (divided into two and split between Israel and the land of the gentiles), together creating a bridge for the people of 'Egypt', *the world*, to enter into the holy Kingdom of Israel and into covenant with YHWH. This is what is being illustrated by the building of the memorial altar in Gilgal. It was a reminder to those on the other side of the Jordan that they too have the right to come into the Promised Land, just as we have been given that right, whether of Abraham's physical seed or not, through our Messiah, Yeshua. Many believers are starting to feel the call to cross the Jordan, feeling the pull of Gilgal, feeling the invitation to become a part of Israel, even if they don't yet understand this calling.

We are like the children of Manasseh half Egyptian, half Israelite, but drawn into the commonwealth of Israel, grafted in and gifted with the right to come into the spiritual promises when we were saved by the grace of God, through Yeshua (Romans 11:23-24, Ephesians 2:12). Wherever you came from, if you love Israel and feel connected to the Covenant, then this is why it is your identity, you are part of God's people as the children of Joseph. Joseph was second-in-command in Egypt, minister to Pharaoh, king of the known world, and became the one who provided the bread to the world in a time of famine. As children of Joseph, we are called to be those who provide the bread of life to a world in a spiritual famine, ministers to Yeshua, King of kings, who Himself came as manna from heaven to feed us with the Word of God (the name of His birthplace, Bethlehem, literally means 'House of Bread' in Hebrew).



We live in a hugely significant time; we are seeing biblical prophecy manifesting before our eyes and one of the most amazing is the reawakening of God's people. **The children of Joseph are waking up, the bones are coming together, the sticks are being brought together ready to be held in the hands of our King (Ezekiel 37).** To fulfil our roles as priests of the Most-High and claim our inheritance, we must first take up the invitation to cross the river Jordan and become circumcised in heart and spirit (Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4). The physical circumcision was the sign of the Covenant in flesh, just as our spiritual circumcision is the sign of our part in the Covenant of Israel through Yeshua (Romans:2-29, Colossians 2:11, Philippians 3:3), but there is no middle ground. Jeremiah 31:31 tells us that there is a new covenant with the Houses of Israel and Judah, but there has never been a covenant with the Gentiles. You are either *in covenant* and part of Israel, God's Kingdom, or you are *out of covenant* and therefore a gentile. If you claim to be Messiah's and a part of God's people, then you are part of Israel; you are one who wrestles (not fights) with God, one who strives and rules *with* our Father in heaven.



After the centuries of lies and distortions of the truth, the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit of the Living God, is moving and we are being brought back from the deserts, the wilderness of the world, back to the Promised Land. We are being invited to cross the Jordan, called to remember our inheritance like the altar at Gilgal, and when we cross, Yeshua circumcises us just as Joshua circumcised the Israelites when they finally crossed the Jordan (and remember that Yeshua and Joshua are the same name in Hebrew). No longer does Egypt have any place in our lives; we have been washed in the waters of Baptism as we crossed the river and circumcised by our Savior on the other side. It's **time** to take our place in the Covenant of Israel, **time** to claim our inheritance, **time** to remember our place in the family of God.

