

GENESIS
Week 42, Chapter 48 Pt. 3

Last week we were beginning to flesh out just who Ephraim, Joseph's son, would become, and what his destiny would be as a result of Jacob's Cross Handed Blessing of Genesis 48. And, we ended by looking in the book of Hosea which has much to say about God's judgment upon the now apostate Kingdom of Ephraim.

Now look at Hosea 8:7-9.

READ HOSEA 8:7-9

We're told something very important in Hosea 8, foreigners will *swallow up* Ephraim-Israel. That now these 10 tribes are among the Goyim, the GENTILE nations, and are being assimilated by the gentiles.

Back in Hosea 7:8, we're told "Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples". What peoples does Ephraim mix himself with? The only other people there are on planet Earth apart from Hebrews..... the gentiles. Around 725 BC Assyria (also identified at times in the Bible as Ashur) conquered the northern kingdom of Ephraim-Israel, and scattered the Israelites of the 10 tribes who lived there like so much chaff in a strong wind. This didn't happen overnight. It took about 10 years or so of military battles between Assyria and Ephraim, each time Ephraim losing more land and more people to the Assyrian Empire. The Ephraim-Israelites were eventually spread all over the 120 conquered nations that made up the vast Assyrian Empire. And, we even see Egypt mentioned prominently in Hosea. That's because Assyria also conquered Egypt for a time, and so many of the Ephraim-Israelites were exiled southward, to Egypt.

Now, for sure not every last individual Ephraim-Israelite family was deported from their land. There would have been a handful left behind. But, assuredly, not more than perhaps 5 % of its total population would have remained. All the others were scattered, assimilated, and for the most part, intermarried with the scores of different gentile races and cultures that made up the Assyrian Empire, until the vast majority of Ephraim-Israelites just became part of the gentile world. This assimilation was not forced upon the Ephraim-Israelites.....they sought after it. They wanted it. They wanted to take on the ways of the gentiles. They wanted to be free from the strict restrictions and requirements of the Torah, the Law of Moses. And, so God accommodated them. And, within a few generations, most of the Ephraim-Israelites had no idea that at one time, their ancestors were Hebrews.

Now, its important to note that not EVERY Israelite that was deported became assimilated. It is now becoming evident, today in our time, that groups from each of those 10 tribes of Ephraim-Israel managed to stay together (maintaining their tribal affiliation and loyalty), and they retained a distant memory of their Hebrew history. About a month ago, I showed you all an excellent Documentary film entitled "The Quest for the Lost

Tribes”, which clearly identified all but a couple of those 10 Ephraimite tribes (often called the 10 lost tribes of Israel), living in various places in Asia, and in groups sometimes topping a million people, and maintaining their tribal names and many Hebrew worship rituals.

But, for the sake of clarity, it is also fair to say that for the most part the members of the various tribes forming the kingdom of Ephraim-Israel simply became part of the gentile world, and no one knows who or where these people are.....except for God himself. Almost certainly, many of us in this room today are walking around with Hebrew blood from one or more of the 10 lost tribes of Ephraim- Israel. But, physically, we have absolutely no way of knowing it.

Now that we’ve followed what eventually happened to the descendants of Ephraim, let’s take a moment to understand what happened to the southern kingdom (the Kingdom of Judah), that other house or family of Israel. Judah was NOT attacked by Assyria. They made a treaty with Assyria, instead, and paid tribute to Assyria in exchange for remaining a separate nation. But, a little after 600 BC, some 130 years after the northern kingdom of Ephraim-Israel ceased to exist, Babylon became the new world power, and led by Nebuchadnezzar they did attack and conquered Judah.

Unlike what Assyria did to Ephraim-Israel, the Babylonians did NOT *scatter* the inhabitants of Judah. They did deport a large group of Jews up to Babylon, but they were NOT assimilated nor separated. They were generally allowed to stay together as a group and (this is key) maintain a separate culture. Not only were the people of Judah allowed to stay separate, most WANTED to stay separate.....another significant difference between them and Ephraim-Israel. Ephraim Israel was turned over to the gentiles because they WANTED to be like the gentiles, so God granted it. Judah did NOT desire to be like their gentile neighbors. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of Jews taken off to Babylon, thousands more were left in Judah as caretakers of the land (these were peasants primarily), and simply because they had so little value to the Babylonians, it wasn’t worth the trouble to deport them to Babylon.

By the time of the Babylonian invasion of Judah, Judah consisted primarily of the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah. Most certainly we should include the Levites as well, and without doubt, tiny groups of other Israelite tribes also lived in Judah. But, the presence of these other tribes was insignificant because their numbers were so small and their influence non-existent. It’s also important that we understand that not long after Judah was hauled off to Babylon, when Persian and then Greek influence would begin to spread after Babylon lost it’s grip on the Middle East, the people of Judah would start to be called Jews. Jews, as we know them today, are ONLY people who are from the former nation of Judah. But, after Babylon, they view themselves as the remnant of all Israel, because to their view, the tribes forming Ephraim Israel were long gone.

Now, armed with the knowledge that much of Ephraim had been scattered and assimilated into the gene pool of gentiles, while Judah had remained a separate and identifiable Hebrew culture and race, let’s go back to Gen.48 and look at V17-19 again.

It says at the end of V19 that Ephraim is going to become “a multitude of nations”. Some Bibles say Ephraim will grow “into many nations”; still others say he will become a group of nations. Here’s where looking at the original Hebrew words comes in handy.

By the time Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the world had been starkly divided, by God, into two divisions of people: Israelites and everybody else. The “everybody else” is what the Bible calls gentiles. Gentile is the English translation of the Hebrew word “goy”. To this day, the **physical** world remains, in God’s eyes, two groups: Israelites and gentiles. The common terminology we use today is Jews and gentiles. For the purpose of conversation, Jew, Hebrew, and Israelite are all the same things. But, technically, and for those who want to better understand the Scriptures, those 3 terms all mean something different, and I hope you’re beginning to grasp that difference.

Now, before we examine those Hebrew words of Genesis 48, let me emphasize something: when mistakes are made trying to interpret, to understand the meaning, of Biblical prophesy, it is usually because the words of those prophesies are not taken literally enough. So, lets take a look at the Hebrew words that make up the last few critical words of the prophetic blessing Jacob pronounced upon Ephraim, at the end of V19. Where our Bibles say group of nations, or some such, the original Hebrew is: melo ha goyim. And, those words, in their most literal sense, means.....a fullness of gentiles. Or more to the exact context of the era when it was written, **a fullness of gentile nations**.

So, Ephraim is going to become the fullness of the gentile nations. Of course, the \$64000 question is, so what exactly does **that** mean?

Well, though the clouds are lifting, the window is still fogged somewhat. What we now can see is that Ephraim is identified with the gentile peoples of the world. But, we also know that large populations of the various 10 tribes that formed Ephraim have been rediscovered. And, they are saying, “We are Israel, but we are not Jews”. And, right they are. They are from the Kingdom of Ephraim, not from the Kingdom of Judah.

Some believe that the result of Ephraim being absorbed into the gentile world is that through the miraculous ways of God; every gentile believer in Christ has literal physical genealogical ties to Ephraim. Some will say that they can even tell you WHICH tribe of Israel they are descended from. There is a group called the Brit-Am Association, which takes it a step further and says that Britain and America ARE two of the 10 lost tribes of Israel.

Others say that Ephraim is purely symbolic.....symbolic of gentile believers. Still others say that spiritually, but NOT physically, gentile believers are EphraimSpiritual Ephraim.

Nonetheless, the bottom line is, Ephraim was prophesied by Jacob to “become a fullness of the gentiles”.....that is, Ephraim was going to be some special and important type of blessing to non-Hebrews.....gentiles. And 1200 years after the prophetic Cross Handed

Blessing by Jacob upon Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh, Ephraim was indeed scattered and large segments of the population absorbed by the gentiles of the world. So, at least some of the prophecy is clear, and it has happened. Other parts of the prophecy, such as those parts of Ephraim, which were exiled but maintained tribal affiliation as well as a memory of their Hebrew Roots, are also starting to play another, and different, prophetic role. And, it is happening right before our eyes.

Let's go back to Ezekiel, and look at Ezekiel 37.

Now, to understand the context, the book of Ezekiel was written by a man, Ezekiel, who was living in Babylon at the time he wrote this down. He was among the exiles of Judah..that is, he was a Jew..... who had been hauled off to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Ephraim-Israel had ceased to exist for well more than a century before this time.

READ Ezekiel 37 all

For our purposes, the key verses are 15-19. And, what is happening is that Judah and Ephraim, after being brought to life again, are brought back to the re-established land of Israel, and are being rejoined into one unified people. This is an end-times prophecy. This has never happened. And, it happens only after Israel is re-born as a nation.

The thing is, we know who Judah is.....it's the Jews. But, what of Ephraim? How can Ephraim rejoin Judah, if Ephraim is the lost and scattered 10 lost tribes, almost all of whom have become gentiles and have no idea who they are?

What is inescapable, is that there is going to be a joining of the Jewish people with whoever it is that somehow finds out they are Ephraim. And, we know from Jacob's prophecy concerning Ephraim, and from all the other prophecies we've studied, that at least part of Ephraim is most definitely connected with the gentiles.

But, we also now know with a certainty, that the identifiable Israelite tribes that formed Ephraim, 2700 years ago, are alive and well. In fact, they have stepped forward, asserted their Israelite heritage, and have petitioned the State of Israel to migrate to Israel. Even more, in March of 2005, barely one year ago, the government of Israel and the religious hierarch of Israel agreed that these Ephraimite tribes have been found, that indeed they are Israel, and so a law was passed allowing these Ephraimites to return home and be reunited with their Israelite brothers, the Jews.

And, here we gentiles sit, gathered together today.....we Christian gentiles.....with this growing love and concern for Israel in our hearts. And, by the way, we see this same phenomena happening all over the world....this is by no means an American movement. And, we don't know where it came from, this love. But, we know, in our Spirits that we do have some sort of connection with the Jewish people. And, without a doubt in my mind, that connection has its source in Ephraim. I think it is much more of a spiritually based connection, but indeed some physical element may well also be involved.

So, you that are real Bible students, if you are fortunate enough to have a computer based Bible search program, or even a good concordance, sit down some evening, and go to all the places where Ephraim is mentioned. It will put a chill down your spine when you see where it leads you. But..... let me also show you a place where Ephraim is NOT mentioned, when one might expect that it should be, and that should also indicate something important to us.

READ REV. 7:1-8

Now, the context of this passage is that it is occurring in the Tribulation period... the period that is known to the Jewish people as the Time of Jacob's Troubles. The Time of Jacob's Trouble and the Tribulation indicate basically the same thing. It's just two different cultural expressions for the same event.

And, here we have this great event we have heard about for years.... the sealing of the 144,000 witnesses. But, notice, these witnesses are all from the tribes of Israel; and these witnesses are listed tribe by tribe, 12,000 per tribe times 12 tribes equals 144,000.

But, look carefully: oddly, there are two names missing from this list, and an old one added back in: Ephraim and Dan are missing, and Joseph and Levi are added back in. Why?

Well, as we get ready starting in Chapter 49 to study the blessings of Jacob upon his 12 sons, we'll see that Dan is apparently going to have a serious on-going problem with idolatry. Some even think that the Anti-Christ will arise out of a connection to the tribe of Dan (by the way, I don't subscribe to that belief, but neither do I say it is entirely impossible). So, that may be the reason Dan is left out. Yet, the next logical question is: where is Ephraim? Because in Ezekiel, we see in the end times that Ephraim and Judah are reunited. Next we see that in place of Ephraim, Joseph is added back in. I told you earlier that we will see the make-up of the tribes of Israel evolve, beginning from the time of their inception, and eventually here in Revelation. We must understand that this is significant. To suddenly see Ephraim deleted and Joseph added back in says something dramatic has happened. But, what?

Well, let's look at the next couple of verses in Rev.7:

READ Gen 7:9-14

First, let's remember that Ephraim and Judah coming back together occurs BEFORE the Great Tribulation, also called the Time of Jacob's Troubles. It happens in the latter days, but before the world enters that terrible period.

We have another group of people, in Revelation 7, being described as from every nation, tribe, and tongue. Of course, these are the Believers who have been removed from the Tribulation. Some say these are those who were martyred during the Tribulation; others (as do I) say that these are those who have been raptured. But, the point is, whoever these

people are, and however it is they wound up before God's throne, it is clear these are Believers.

Now, I told you when I would be speculating, and this is one of those times. Who are these people dressed in the white robes? Could this be a portion of Ephraim, who is suddenly missing from the listing of the 12 tribes? For John asks the angel in verse 13..... "**who** are they and **where** are they from?" We know from an earlier verse that they are from EVERY nation, tribe, and tongue. EVERY means EVERY. And, we know that Ephraim was not only scattered among the gentiles, but a few Ephraimites joined with the tribe of Judah.....the Jews. And, we know that "nations" by definition means gentiles.

To close out this lesson, I would like to tell you my best estimation of what this means to us, and then read to you a couple more scriptures.

First, I believe that the tribes of Israel called out in Rev. 7, those who had been called "lost", but are certainly lost no more; those who are called part of Ephraim, are those that did NOT assimilate into the gentile world, but through God's providential hand, managed to stay together and stay identified to their original tribes. And, notice, it is from these "Ephraimite" tribes that will come the bulk of that 144,000. In other words, Most of the tribes in that listing in Revelation 7 are what came to be known as Ephraim Israel as completely apart from Judah and Benjamin and Levi.

Why are the Levites being un-set apart; included back in as a tribe of Israel? Because there is no more need for a special priestly tribe to officiate Temple services. The only men who will survive the Tribulation in one form or another are Believers. And all men will be as priests. All sacrifice is over. All Temple worship is over. And, all redemption is over. It's finished. So, no more need for the Levites to be set apart as the ransom for Israel's firstborn. The Levites role is completed, and so they are returned to their heritage, Israel.

I believe that Ephraim, at the very least is all those remaining remnants of the 10 northern tribes of Ephraim-Israel who have maintained that identity over the centuries. Those 10 tribes who have been rediscovered and invited to return for a joyful reunion with their Jewish brothers and sisters, in their homeland, Israel.

But, I leave room for the possibility that Ephraim in some way also represents the gentile portion of the Church....probably on a spiritual level more than on a physical level. However, a physical connection is certainly possible. As with all prophesy, one only gets the full picture AFTER it has all come to pass. When one is in the midst of its fulfillment, as we are today in regards to the reuniting of Ephraim and Judah, not all is clear. There is much about all this that is mysterious, and so we need to be careful not to be rigid and dogmatic about what the path to the final outcome is going to look like.

When Ezekiel says that the two sticks, Ephraim and Judah are coming back together, I believe that we may be hearing of a reunion on two levels: spiritually and physically. I have spoken to you often about what I call The Reality of Duality; this mysterious way that God operates in which everything to do with His plan has a spiritual element and a physical element that works in parallel.

On a physical level, I see the reuniting spoken of in Ezekiel 37, as the return of the “lost” tribes of Ephraim to Israel, joining their brothers from the tribe of Judah....the Jews....who came a few years before them to establish the State of Israel. I don’t have to guess about this, because it is happening and we are witnesses to it. And, on an earthly and physical level, we have the 2 houses of Israel.....Ephraim and Judah.....coming back together to form one nation of God, as they were at their inception, Israel. The 12 tribes, together again. Physically present and living together in Israel. Something that has not been so for almost 3000 years.

Yet.....following my model of the Reality of Duality..... on a spiritual level, I also see another aspect of the reunion of Ezekiel 37 as ultimately about the gentile believers in Christ, possibly represented in some way by Ephraim, who are going to come together with the Jewish believers in Christ, represented by Judah. Together, these are SPIRITUAL ISRAEL, or the TRUE Israel that Paul speaks of. And, that is beginning to happen, right now, as gentile believers are reaching out in love to the Jewish people as never before in history. The number of Jewish people coming to faith in Yeshua is growing at a breakneck rate, and as those of you who have been to Israel recently discovered, there is a bond of love growing being gentile and Jew, and especially between Messianic Jew and gentile Christian. And, this was all prophesied as to how it would happen, in what order it would happen, where it would happen, and who would be involved.

Turn to Psalm 102.

READ PSALM 102:1-19

Notice that it says in verse 14 (perhaps verse 15 depending on your Bible version) that “your servants” will love Israel’s very stones. NOT just His chosen people.....His servants. All those who love Him, Jew or gentile, are His servants. Jews and gentiles will simply fall in love with Israel.

Also, look at the last few words I read to you; it says that what is spoken in this Psalm is for *a future* generation (from David’s time). This is for a people who hadn’t even yet been created that will praise God. Well, all of Israel had certainly already been created, lived in Egypt, left Egypt, and at the time of this Psalm were living in their own sovereign nation with one king over all 12 tribes....David.

This mention of a mysterious “people not yet created” is talking about nothing less than the body of gentile believers.....the Church....who will become part of

spiritual.....true....Israel. And, we will all be loving Israel, and praising God, according to this prophesy.

Now, let's take what we've learned and look at Romans 11. Here's the question: why is it that God gave His Torah to 12 tribes of Israel, then through the House of Judah, the Jewish part of Israel, gave us our Savior, only to have the torch of the gospel to be passed on from the Jews to the Gentiles, and then for the Jews and the gentiles to be at odds with each other for centuries? Let's read V11-26, because this question is explicitly addressed and answered. Also, let's look once again at the Circle of Salvation chart.

READ Romans 11:11-26

God's plan was to give His covenants to Israel; covenants that would lead to a restoration of the relationship between mankind and God. In due time, the gentile world was to be joined to Israel's covenants.....Old and New. When Israel, for the most part, rejected the New Covenant, which is the blood of Christ, gentile believers were grafted into Israel, with the twin purposes of partaking of Israel's covenants, and of carrying forth the gospel to the whole gentile world. But, at the appointed time, the Jews would wake up, and see that the gentiles had what had always been intended for Israel; and they become jealous, and want what the gentile believers have. And, then, Paul says the Jews will learn the gospel from the gentiles, who originally learned the gospel from the Jews, and in this way ALL Israel will be saved. Both houses. Who is ALL Israel, spiritually? Believers..... gentile and Jew. Ephraim, the house of Israel that became part of the gentile world, and Judah, who remained Jewish. Both houses. Saved. And, we are seeing this happen, with our own eyes.

Next week, we'll begin to look at another blessing of Jacob, as contained in Genesis 49, and see how it ties in with the Cross Handed Blessing of Genesis 48.