

Midweek Study

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TRUSTING GOD IN THE DARKNESS

Genesis 37-50

The God of Surprises

(Genesis 48:1-49:28)

1. The Solemn Assurance (Genesis 47:27-31)

v.28 – Jacob/Israel is 147 years old and does not want to be buried in Egypt.

v.29 – “put your hand under my thigh” - “Since striking one’s thigh was possibly understood as a sign of remorse and submission (see Jer. 31:19; Ezek. 21:12), the placing of one’s hand under the thigh of another may have indicated **submission to that person’s strength and authority.**”¹

v.31 – “Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed” – The Hebrew expresses that he turned himself over in the bed and knelt upon it in the attitude of prayer. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew) expresses that Israel “worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff.”

2. The Sonship Adoption (Genesis 48:1-7)

This probably would have been a surprise to Ephraim and Manasseh. All of their identity would have been in Egypt, and Egyptians do not regard highly the Hebrew shepherds. Jacob tells them that they are as his own sons, not grandsons.

v.7 (NASB, NIV, NLT, ISV, ESV) - Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, **to my sorrow**, in the land of Canaan on the journey,

Ultimately, Rachel would be represented by three tribes (Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh) instead of two.

3. The Surprising Action (Genesis 48:8-22)

The surprises continue as Jacob’s eyesight is dim, but he is still able to cross his arms and bless the younger above the older. This was yet another time God would reverse the birth order blessing: “God had chosen Abel, not Cain; Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau; and Joseph, not Reuben; and now He would choose Ephraim over Manasseh.”²

¹ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 90.

² Warren Wiersbe, *Be Authentic*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1997), 142.

“Ephraim became the greater tribe by far. The ten northern tribes of Israel are called Israel—but they’re also referred to as Ephraim because Ephraim was the predominant of the ten northern tribes.”³ See [Hosea 4:17](#).

4. The Sovereign Affirmations ([Genesis 49:1-28](#))⁴

1. **Reuben** ([49:3-4](#)): He is as unruly as the stormy sea and is demoted because of his immorality.
2. **Simeon and Levi** ([49:5-7](#)): They are violent men given to anger and cruelty, so their descendants will be scattered throughout Israel.
3. **Judah** ([49:8-12](#)): He will be praised by his brothers and will defeat his enemies. The scepter (royal line) will not depart from him “until the coming of the one to whom it belongs.”
4. **Zebulun** ([49:13](#)): He will live by the seashore and become a harbor for ships.
5. **Issachar** ([49:14-15](#)): He will work with animals and till the land.
6. **Dan** ([49:16-18](#)): He will be like a snake beside the road.
7. **Gad** ([49:19](#)): He will defend himself against all enemies.
8. **Asher** ([49:20](#)): He will produce rich food fit for kings.
9. **Naphtali** ([49:21](#)): He will be as free as a deer.
10. **Joseph** ([49:22-26](#)): He will be like a fruitful tree beside a fountain, blessing others. He has been persecuted, but he has been strengthened by God. He will be blessed by God and will be a prince among his brothers.
11. **Benjamin** ([49:27](#)): He will devour his enemies like a hungry wolf.

[v.16-18](#) – Describes Dan as a serpent. The tribe of Dan was ultimately given over to idolatry. Interestingly, [Revelation 7:5-8](#) lists the 12 tribes of Israel who are sealed during the Great Tribulation, but Dan is not listed. However, [Ezekiel 48:2](#) lists the tribe of Dan in the New Millennium, which will occur after the Great Tribulation.

Applications for Today:

- 1) **Help your children depend upon God more than on you.** [Gen. 48:21](#) says, “Then Israel said to Joseph, ‘Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers.’” Jacob was reassuring Joseph that the same God Who had helped him throughout his pilgrimage would also do the same for him. Our children need to look to God because we will not always be here.
- 2) **Express your gratitude for God’s shepherding care in your life.** [Gen. 48:15](#) says, “...God Who has fed me all my life long to this day...” That word “fed” means “shepherd.” Read and reflect on [Psalm 23](#). Worship God that He has taken care of you this far. Our God is the faithful Shepherd.
- 3) **Learn to bless your children** (or someone whom you influence). **John Trent** and **Gary Smalley** wrote *The Blessing*, in which they described 5 aspects to blessing one’s children (from [Gen. 27](#)):
 - a. Meaningful and Appropriate Touch (see [Genesis 27:26](#))
 - b. A Spoken or Written Message
 - c. Attaching High Value ([Gen. 27:27, 29](#))
 - d. Picturing a Special Future ([Gen. 27:28-29](#))
 - e. An Active Commitment⁵

³ Jon Courson, *Jon Courson’s Application Commentary: Volume One: Genesis–Job* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 208.

⁴ This list, in full, taken from H. L. Willmington, *The Outline Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Ge 48:1–49:27.

⁵ <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/how-to-bless-your-child/>.