

The Mystery of Ephraim and Manasseh

Every Friday evening all over the world in Jewish homes, blessings are spoken over the children, both boys and girls. As hands are laid on the heads of the boys, the words, "May you be like Ephraim and Manasseh" are spoken. This blessing is extremely significant for many reasons, however, I am only going to discuss one of those reasons. As we look at the blessing over the boys, we must ask the question, "Why do we say 'may you be like Ephraim and Manasseh' rather than 'may you be like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?'"

I believe the reason is both profound and prophetic. First of all, Ephraim and Manasseh are adopted by Israel. They are both the sons of Joseph and his Egyptian wife Asenath. They are the product of an Israel who was sold into slavery in Egypt and married an Egyptian. There may not be a better example of the Olive Tree of Romans 11:17-21:

"But if some of the branches were broken off and you—being a wild olive—were grafted in among them and became a partaker of the root of the olive tree with its richness, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, it is not you who support the root but the root supports you. You will say then, 'Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.' True enough. They were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but fear— for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you."

Joseph, like the natural branch in the verse above, was removed from the tree of Israel and replanted in Egypt. G-D prospered Joseph in Egypt, and Joseph married and had children. Then G-D, through His divine plan, brought Joseph back to the Olive Tree and he was regrafted into his family, Israel. His wife and sons were also grafted into the tree.

However, Ephraim and Manasseh were not grafted into Joseph's branch; they were grafted directly into Israel. Today, we still see this happening as both Jews like myself (a natural olive branch) come to faith in the Messiah and are regrafted into the Olive Tree of Israel; and non-Jewish people who come to faith are also grafted into the same tree. Notice that non-Jewish believers (wild olive branches) are not grafted onto/into the Jewish branches (Joseph); they are grafted directly into Israel herself.

So our sons are blessed that they will be as Ephraim and Manasseh, remembering that Ephraim and Manasseh were adopted or grafted into Israel after Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and after the family is restored. It was after the revelation of who Joseph was and the restoration of Israel that Ephraim and Manasseh were adopted, or grafted, into Israel. If we remember that Joseph is a type and shadow of Yeshua, then we see the symbolism of Joseph and Yeshua who were hidden from their families and then revealed to their families as the deliverer. This revelation brought about the opportunity for them to be restored as a family and, ultimately, this restoration makes it possible for Jew and non-Jew to become one family through adoption into Israel, as we read in Ephesians 2:12-14:

“At that time you were separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Messiah Yeshua, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah. For He is our shalom, the One who made the two into one and broke down the middle wall of separation. Within His flesh He made powerless the hostility—”

If the body of Messiah could only grasp this revelation that Yeshua was revealed so we could become One as Yeshua and the Father are One, together we would have the power to change our world. {eoa}

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