

**WAITING FOR SHILOH**  
**A Devotional Meditation from**  
Genesis 47:28-50:26; 1 Kings 2:1-12; 2 Samuel 7:8-17  
Luke 12:13-15; Romans 11:25-27  
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Once I heard of a couple who wanted to make sure their children did not fight over the inheritance after they had died. This couple put a provision in their will that any of their children who contested the will would lose all their inheritance and instead receive a single dollar. I do not know if that story is true, but I do know several true stories of siblings fighting over the legacy left by their parents. Sometimes the struggle occurs after a misunderstanding that might have been resolved with a little straightforward communication. Such was the case in another story I heard about an elderly woman whose inheritance had been tied up in legal action for decades. It took a compassionate and attentive attorney only a short time to resolve the matter. By talking to each party – something neither had done for years – he was able to propose a mutually agreeable solution that met everyone’s needs and desires, preserved each party’s dignity, and reestablished a measure of peace in a family long divided.



Jacob Blesses His Sons,  
*Cornelis Huyberts, after  
Gerard Hoet, 1720-1728,  
[Rijksmuseum Amsterdam](https://rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/SK-A-1234).*

Sibling rivalry over inheritance has plagued us from the beginning. Even Messiah Yeshua had to address it:

Then someone from the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

But *Yeshua* said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or arbitrator over you?” Then He said to them, “Watch out! Be on guard against all kinds of greed, because one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the material goods he possesses.”

Luke 12:13-15 TLV

Contested inheritances are a manifestation of jealousies and other issues hidden deep within the human heart. We see that in the feud that developed between Esau and Jacob as they contended over the family legacy. That feud probably inspired Jacob to take extraordinary steps to ensure peace among his sons after his death.

Jacob suffered tremendous anguish over the way his sons fought constantly with one another. Their selfish actions moved him to bypass his older boys and designate Joseph as the next leader of the family. He could trust Joseph, and was encouraged to see him take responsibility for managing the family business at a young age. Thus, when Joseph was reported dead, Jacob’s grief was not only that of a father mourning his beloved son, but of a patriarch distressed over the destruction of the family. The stakes were even higher since this was not just any family, but the Covenant Family – the one God had chosen to carry out His plan of redemption for the entire earth.

Happily, Judah proved himself to be exactly the kind of leader Jacob sought. It was Judah who took charge of the family fortunes during the years of famine, and who directed efforts to seek relief in Egypt. Having learned his own lessons in righteousness, humility, and wisdom, he earned Jacob's trust. Moreover, he was willing to lay down his own life and freedom for his youngest brother, Benjamin. That is what proved to the great ruler of Egypt that the time had come to reveal himself as Judah's long-lost brother Joseph.

As happy as Jacob was to learn that his missing son was alive and well, he had a new problem: now he had not just one, but two sons qualified to receive the firstborn blessing and leadership of the family. Should he keep Judah as the heir apparent, or reinstate Joseph? Either action would aggravate old wounds and possibly reignite the sibling rivalry that threatened to tear the family apart. But what about dividing the inheritance in a way that would acknowledge the abilities of both men, preserve their honor, and promote peace within the family?

That is exactly what Jacob did. Since Judah was the son who remained at home and kept the family together, he became the acknowledged leader. Jacob made that official on his deathbed, when he said:

The scepter will not pass from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until [Shiloh] he to whom it belongs will come. To him will be the obedience of the peoples.

Genesis 49:10 TLV

This is a Messianic prophecy, indicating that the Anointed Redeemer of the world would come through Judah's line. Centuries later, God ratified that word by promising Judah's descendent, King David, that the Messiah would come through his family.

But what of Joseph? He was already ruler of Egypt, and thus revered by the nations of the earth, and he had provided for the family during the great famine and afterward. That is why Jacob bestowed on him the firstborn blessing, and with it a double portion of the inheritance, indicating his prosperity through the ages. Having a double portion meant more than just a larger amount of money and other assets. In Jacob's family, it meant having two parts in the tribes to be established through his sons. That is why Jacob adopted Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, making them equal to their uncles and patriarchs of tribes of their own:

Then Jacob said to Joseph, "*El Shaddai* appeared to me in Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me. He said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and multiply you and turn you into an assembly of peoples, and I will give this land to your seed after you as an everlasting possession.' So now, your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, they are mine. Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just like Reuben and Simeon."

Genesis 48:3-5 TLV

This might be simply an encouraging Bible story had Jacob not continued to speak another prophetic word that applies to us from the nations. He knowingly placed Ephraim, the younger of the boys, ahead of his brother Manasseh. When Joseph questioned him about it, Jacob said,

I know, my son, I know. He also will become a people, and he also will become great. But his younger brother will become greater than he and his seed will be the fullness of the nations.

Genesis 48:19 TLV

That phrase, “fullness of the nations,” is also translated, “fullness of the Gentiles.” Jacob’s words are translated from the Hebrew, but Paul’s use of that phrase in Greek is translated in the same way. In English it says:

For I do not want you, brothers and sisters, to be ignorant of this mystery—lest you be wise in your own eyes—that a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,

“The Deliverer shall come out of Zion.  
He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.  
And this is My covenant with them,  
when I take away their sins.”

Romans 11:25-27 TLV

We from the Christian side of the family understand Paul to mean a hardness or blindness of our Jewish kin to the identity of the Messiah, but what we seldom consider is that we have a blindness as well: a blindness to our identity as part of Jacob’s family. Thanks to the redeeming work of the Messiah of Israel who came through Judah’s line, we from the nations now have a place in the Covenant Family. How our Eternal Father will work this out in the end is still a mystery, but if we prayerfully consider what He has done through the ages, we see how He has used the two parts of the family to preserve a witness of Himself, and to reach out to the nations of the earth who would otherwise have no hope.

Now we can say with confidence that our father Israel wisely preserved peace in the family. We have a calling to walk in that peace as we wait for Shiloh to come.