

April 19, 2024

Looking Forward

[Genesis 48:8-19](#)

¹⁴ But Israel put out his right hand and placed it on the head of Ephraim, the younger one, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands because Manasseh was the oldest son. ¹⁵ He blessed them and said,

*“May the God before whom my fathers
Abraham and Isaac walked,
may the God who was my shepherd
from the beginning until this day,*

*¹⁶ may the divine messenger who protected me from all harm,
bless the young men.*

*Through them may my name be kept alive
and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac.*

*May they grow into a great multitude
throughout the land.”*

¹⁸ Joseph said to his father, “No, my father! This is the oldest son. Put your right hand on his head.”¹⁹ But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He'll become a people too, and he'll also be great. But his younger brother will be greater than he will, and his descendants will become many nations.” Genesis 48:14-16, 18-19 (CEB)

Israel (Jacob), the son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham, is nearing the end of his life. His son Joseph brings to him his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob provides a patriarchal blessing to both grandsons. Jacob, however, breaks with tradition and culture and places his right hand on the head of the youngest grandson Ephraim rather than the oldest grandson Manasseh.

How is this ancient story relevant today? Jacob provided his grandsons with a vision and blessing for the future. He broke with tradition and recognized that while both grandsons would be leaders, the younger, Ephraim, would be the greater leader.

Let's ponder this scripture with several questions. What is the vision for our church and its people going forward? How do we honor the past without getting stuck in the ways things used to be? Who are the leaders, including those who may seem unlikely, who can prayerfully guide us in achieving that vision?

Prayer: *Loving God. Guide us to honor, but not dwell in the past. Open our minds and hearts to optimistically look forward with vision to the future. Raise up leaders to guide that vision. Amen.*

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