

THE EPHRAIM-SCEPTER HERESY, #2

This is the second in a series on this subject, and it's simply amazing what some people dream up on what they presume the Bible is saying. This subject is no exception. Evidently, they are endeavoring to find some new revelation so they can set themselves up, wittingly or unwittingly, on a pedestal and lord it over everyone else as some kind of pompous, grandiose, overblown demagogue. This is the image they make of themselves when peddling this off-the-wall, counterproductive, recycled hogwash, and that is probably overrating it. For those who don't know what the Ephraim-Scepter heresy is all about, it's a sorry, reprehensible attempt to remove the Scepter from Judah and place it in Ephraim's hands. In order to fully understand, you will need to read *The Ephraim-Scepter Heresy, #1*. The reason for such outlandish, preposterous conclusions is because they haven't the slightest idea why Judah was chosen by Jacob for the Scepter in the first place.

We are told at Genesis 35:23 that Jacob, by his first wife Leah, had six male children: (1) Reuben, (2) Simeon, (3) Levi, (4) Judah, (5) Issachar, and, (6) Zebulun. Ancient Law demanded that the firstborn son receive both the birthright and Scepter. But in this case, Reuben was disqualified for both the birthright and Scepter because he had violated another of Jacob's wives Bilhah, Genesis 35:22. After this disqualification, the birthright and Scepter were divided between the children of Jacob by Leah and Rachel; Leah's line receiving the Scepter and Rachel's line the birthright. Since Reuben was disqualified, the next in turn for the Scepter in Leah's line would be Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun in that order. But Jacob had a problem with both Simeon and Levi and bypassed them in favor of Judah for the Scepter. The story on Simeon and Levi is told in Genesis chapter 34, where the Hivite Shechem, son of Hamor, raped Dinah, full sister of Simeon and Levi. Upon this, Simeon and Levi dealt deceitfully with them requiring all the men of their city to be circumcised so Shechem might have Dinah to wife. (This Shechem shouldn't be confused with the city of Shechem or two other people by that name.) Reportedly, while the men were sore from the circumcision, Simeon and Levi "dugged down a wall"; slew all the male inhabitants; spoiled the city and rescued Dinah. Jacob reminded Simeon and Levi of this when he passed on the birthright and Scepter in Genesis 49:5-6. It wasn't that these Hivites didn't deserve what they got, but Jacob understood that Simeon and Levi didn't have the qualities required for leadership. Therefore, Jacob designated the coolheaded Judah for that position. Had Simeon and Levi waited for Jacob's guidance, the same outcome would have resulted without putting the whole family at risk. Should one check *Josephus' Antiquities* 1:21;1-3, he will find that Dinah had gone on a shopping excursion at a festival where women's "finery" was for sale. Knowing the wiles of the Hivites, perhaps when Dinah stepped into the women's private clothing booth, Shechem entered and forced himself on her and raped her. (The Canaanite-kikes were in the clothing business in those days too!) Oddly enough, *Josephus* says nothing about any circumcision, but that the men of the city got drunk at the festival, and that was when Simeon and Levi killed them. In any case, this is the reason Jacob bypassed Simeon and Levi, and chose Judah. Therefore, Judah's line got the Scepter and Joseph's line got the birthright. Again, Joseph was bypassed in favor of his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Had Jacob given the birthright directly to Joseph, it would have been only a single portion, whereas giving it to his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, it became a double blessing. The promoters of the Ephraim-Scepter heresy are totally ignorant of these facts, for they are unable to differentiate between the birthright and the Scepter. Again, the

birthright is not the Scepter and the Scepter is not the birthright. Once more, they ignorantly leave Manasseh entirely out of that birthright, and all they can think about is Ephraim. It's simply amazing how people read these passages concerning Reuben, Simeon and Levi and have no idea what they are talking about!

FROM PADDAN ARAM TO BETHLEHEM JUDAEA

Although the territory of Judah hadn't been established yet in the book of Genesis, nevertheless it was called at that time Ephrath, when Jacob returned to his father's family after 20 years in Paddan Aram. This is an important element, as the Ephraim-Scepter people vainly attempt to place Ephrath in the territory of Ephraim, which also hadn't yet been established. Actually, Jacob had left Beersheba to journey to Paddan Aram, and when leaving Laban his father-in-law, was returning to that same general location, which was about 40 miles south of Ephrath. Beersheba is the same location that Israel (Jacob) stopped at before going into Egypt during the great famine — it is where he grew up, so we shouldn't be surprised that he journeyed as far south as Ephrath in the account of Genesis 35:26. I cite this period of time between Paddan Aram to Ephrath (Bethlehem Judah), for it represents closely the time period contemporaneous with the birth of the last two of Jacob's children.

In Genesis chapter 31, we are told there was friction between Laban's sons and Jacob, with Laban upholding his sons. Upon that development, the Almighty instructed Jacob to return to the land of his father's kindred. Then Jacob gathered together his family and all the possessions that he had acquired at Paddan Aram and left quietly, without informing Laban, and made Gilead his first destination. After three days Laban, being informed of Jacob's departure, pursued him seven days and found him at Mount Gilead, a mountainous region east of the Jordan river and midway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea (a chase of about 350 miles). After chiding Jacob for not giving him the opportunity of properly seeing his daughters and grandchildren off, and after much harangue about their former business relations, Laban and Jacob made a mutual non-aggression pact between them.

No sooner had this agreement been finalized, than in Genesis chapter 32, Jacob was faced with the dilemma of having to confront his brother, Esau, who had vowed to kill him. After leaving Mount Gilead, Jacob met some angels of Elohim at a place he named Mahanaim; an ancient town in Gilead, east of the Jordan River in the vicinity of the River Jabbok, which later became the border between the tribes of Manasseh and Gad (Joshua 13:26, 30). Then, skipping the story of Jacob's encounter with the Angel, we will dwell on the meeting with Esau, for we are interested in the narrative concerning the members of Jacob's family at Genesis 33:1-2 of that confrontation: **"1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he [Jacob] divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. 2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost."** Noticeably, all the children are accounted for except Benjamin, and thus importantly narrows the time frame with which we are working. The question arises: when did Rachel conceive Benjamin? Might she have already been pregnant at the meeting with Esau? Anyway, Jacob wisely paid off Esau in the form of a large "gift" and parted with him never to fraternize again. To avoid Esau altogether and throw him completely off his track, Jacob (now named Israel) headed temporarily west to Shechem while Esau headed east to Seir. The RSV on Genesis 33:18 says: **"And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram; and he**

camped before the city.” (Evidently, the reference in verse 17 to “Succoth” simply means a place for Jacob to build booths for his cattle.) *LXX* has it, “to Salem a city.”

Genesis chapter 34 is the incident with Dinah, which we have already discussed. Then in chapter 35:1, Elohim instructs Jacob to go south to Bethel and dwell there. That verse reads: **“And Elohim said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto El, that appeareth unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.”** The words “go up” has nothing to do with a direction like some might wrongly interpret to mean to go north. It is #5927 in the Hebrew, and simply means to go to a place which is higher in altitude which, depending on the topography, could be almost any direction. We will skip over the importance for the trip to Bethel, and go to verse 16 where Jacob then leaves Bethel with an intended destination for Ephrath, which was later called “Bethlehem of Judah.” That verse reads: **“And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.”** We have now traced Jacob step by step from Paddan Aram to Ephrath (Bethlehem Judah). A so-called mythical place in the territory Ephraim named “Bethlehem Ephrath” positively never existed as the Ephraim-Scepter advocates so vociferously proclaim!

SOME MORE OF THEIR HOCUS-POCUS

Their next devious ploy is to jump from unrelated passage to unrelated passage and time-period to time-period. All one need do is refer to some maps of the various great empires such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome at different stages of their development, at different time periods, and the borders are all over the place. The territory of what we now call Palestine was no different. This next maneuver by the Ephraim-Scepter people is to cite the borders at different stages of development in an attempt to prove that Bethlehem Ephrath was in Ephraim rather than in Judah. As we very carefully tiptoe through their subterfuge, their motives will become exposed to the light of day. We will counter their erroneous assumptions with Scripture!

First, they start by quoting Genesis 35:6-20, leaving out verses 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17 and 18: **“6 So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him ... 14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. 15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel. 16 And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour ... 19 And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. 20 And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel’s grave unto this day.”**

Next, they say: *“Now let us see where Samuel the Ephratite prophet says Rachel’s grave is ... 1st Sam. 10:2: ‘When thou art departed from me to day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel’s sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah ...’ So the tomb of Rachel is not in Judah but in the territory of Benjamin! Why then are we told she is buried in Judah?” [Their spelling, not mine]*

The answer to that one is quite simple! Before answering that though, their statement that Samuel was an “Ephratite (sic)” is incorrect, for he was a Levite. (a la the clown, Bozo.) In order to understand the topography of that area, the town of Bethlehem is about 2½ miles south of Jerusalem. The southern border of Jerusalem is the shared border of Judah and Benjamin. As

Ephratah was also a district, it is not improper to imagine that the district reached to the border of Jebus, later Jerusalem, and hence Benjamin (much like the border of Lucas County, Ohio reaches Michigan). Now standing in Judah, we would refer to the border between Judah and Benjamin not as the “border of Ephratah”, nor the “border of Judah”, but as the “border of Benjamin” to avoid confusion. Surely the A.V.’s “in the border” may better be rendered “by” or “at the border.” Bethlehem was called Bethlehem-Judah” long before Benjamin and Judah became what would be better labeled “Judaea”, and is clearly in Judah, being 2½ miles south of the border of Benjamin.

IN SPITE OF ALL THE EVIDENCE, THEY NEVER STOP!

Shamelessly, they continue with their faulty diatribe. Continuing, they quote Joshua 15:1, 8 in a futile attempt to authenticate their false premise! ***“This then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families; even to the border of Edom the wilderness of Zin southward was the uttermost part of the south coast ... 8 And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the south side of the Jebusite; the same is Jerusalem: and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lieth before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants northward.”*** Then they ask an inadequate question: *“Do you see the territory of Judah never included Jerusalem? It stopped south of Jerusalem! Now look at where the territory of Joseph Ephraim the birthright territory was located!”* Persistently, in an effort to somehow prove their contention they quote Joshua 16:1-2: ***“1 And the lot of the children of Joseph fell from Jordan by Jericho on the east, to the wilderness that goeth up from Jericho throughout mount Bethel, 2 And goeth out from Bethel to Luz, and passeth along unto the borders of Archi to Ataroth ...”*** After quoting this passage, they ask a foolish question thusly: *“Do you see how it was impossible for Christ to be born south below Jerusalem in Bethlehem Judah?”* This passage has nothing to do with the geographic place of the birth of our Messiah. As I stated before: Bethel is not Bethlehem and Bethlehem is not Bethel. This passage only describes the lot that fell to Joseph which would include both Ephraim and Manasseh (check verse 4). To use this passage so as to prove the birthplace of our Savior is ridiculous. And again, they completely brush Manasseh aside as if he never existed.

But these Ephraim-Scepter people never cease their lunacies by making the statement: *“Christ was born in Bethlehem Ephrata north of Jerusalem in the city of David who was himself a Ephraimite! 1st Samuel 17:12: ‘Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-Judah, whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons: [i.e. all Ephraimites].’”* Their brackets, not mine! Again they refer to Genesis 49:24, stating *“... and had the promise of the shepherd and stone of Israel, noted in 49:24 that Christ would birth into the house of Joseph ...”* The “shepherd” and “stone of Israel” has everything to do with Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) and nothing to do with Judah’s inheritance in the person of “Christ.” In my *Watchman’s Teaching Letter #50* for June, 2002, I addressed this false doctrine as follows:

Another such false teaching being promoted in some circles of Israel Identity is built on 1 Samuel 17:12 which says in part: ***“Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-Judah, whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons ...”*** They incorrectly conclude from this that our Messiah was from the Tribe of Ephraim rather than Judah. Here again, it is speaking geographically instead of genetically. This can be corroborated by the *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pages 408-409: ***“EPHRATHAH ... 2. The ancient name of Bethlehem of Judah***

(Gen. 48:7; Ephrath, NIV) ... **EPHRATHITE** ... 1. A native or inhabitant of Ephrathah, or Bethlehem (Ruth 1:2; 1 Sam. 17:12) ..." This can also be authenticated by *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, page 318; *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. D-G, page 335; *The Interpreter's Dictionary Of The Bible*, vol. E-J, page 122; *The Popular And Critical Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, page 605; *Insight On The Scriptures*, vol. 1, page 755; *New Concise Bible Dictionary*, page 150; *The Westminster Dictionary Of The Bible*, page 169; *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*, page 183; *New International Bible Dictionary*, page 318; *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible* (1890), page 181; *Nave's Topical Bible*, page 344; *Gesenius' Hebrew And Chaldee Lexicon* under #673, page 73, and *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* under Hebrew #673.

My undated *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, which has "Miss Lilly Summerskile, St. Mark's S. S., Christmas 1890" written on the front flyleaf, says this on page 85: "**Bethlehem. 1. One of the oldest towns in Palestine, already in existence at the time of Jacob's return to the country. Its earliest name was EPHRATH of EPHRATAH (see Gen. 35:16, 19; 48:7), and it is not till long after the occupation of the country by the Israelites that we meet with it under its new name of Bethlehem. After the conquest Bethlehem appears under its own name Bethlehem-Judah (Judg. 17:7; 1 Sam. 17:12; Ruth 1:1, 2). The book of Ruth is a page from the domestic history of Bethlehem: the names, almost the very persons, of the Bethlehemites are there brought before us ... In the New Testament Bethlehem retains its distinctive title of Bethlehem-Judah (Matt. 2:1, 5), and once, in the announcement of the Angels, 'city of David' (Luke 2:4; comp. John 7:42) ... 2 A town in the portion of Zebulun named nowhere but in Josh. 19:15."**

The next thing these proponents do is point to Genesis 49:24 where it says in part concerning Jacob's blessing on Joseph: "... (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel) ..." They will imply by this that the "shepherd" or "stone" is Yahshua the "rock", and that He descended from Joseph rather than Judah. The *Believer's Bible Commentary* by William MacDonald makes that same error. Some of these proponents go so far as to claim there was never a David nor a Bethlehem-Judah; only Bethlehem of Ephraim. They might have gotten by with this, but in 1993, Seymore Gitin, digging for The W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeology, unearthed a piece of stone at Tel Dan inscribed in Aramaic "King of Israel" and "House of David." These proponents will also point to the 15th chapter of Joshua, claiming Bethlehem is not mentioned among Judah's cities. They should check the LXX on Joshua, for it is listed at 15:60. The reason 1 Samuel 17:12 designates Bethlehem as "Bethlehem-Judah" is to distinguish it from Bethlehem-Zebulun. Had there been only one Bethlehem, it wouldn't have been necessary to make that distinction. Judges 17:7 speaks of "a Levite" of "Bethlehem-Judah." Are we also to make him of the Tribe of Ephraim? It seems that if a Scripture can be taken wrongly, there is always going to be someone out there to do it. Again, "Ephrathite" in 1 Samuel 17:12 is not speaking of the Tribe of Ephraim, but of a city. (end of *Watchman's Teaching Letter* reference)

Next, the Ephraim-Scepter people point to Genesis 43:33 and 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 and make a big thing out of Joseph being in line for the birthright. There is no problem with that as Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) are the birthright tribes, and Judah is the Scepter tribe (the Scepter is not the birthright, and the birthright is not the Scepter). But then they proceed to make the ignorant statement: "*The birthright was Joseph's passed on to Christ the Kinsmen Redeemer.*" I have a Franklin electronic KJV Bible. In the word-search program, I entered the word "birthright" and searched the entire Bible, and there was not a single place in the entire Bible where it speaks of the Christ, Jesus or Emmanuel in the context of a birthright. It is obvious

that this statement concerning “Christ receiving the birthright” is a figment of their imagination, and is not based on any Scripture in Holy Writ. The word “birthright” is used only 10 times in all Scripture. Why don’t you check your *Strong’s* and see if you can find a place where “Christ the Kinsmen Redeemer” will receive the “birthright”? If there is any question about the Scepter, we only need to look to Genesis 38:18, where Tamar demanded a pledge from Judah thusly: **“And he [Judah] said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she [Tamar] said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he [Judah] gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him.”** The staff was the symbol of rulership showing that Judah had the Scepter. The word “staff” in Hebrew is #4294 in *Strong’s*, and anyone can check it out for themselves, where it can mean “rod” or “sceptre.” I am sure that Judah, from his abilities in this case, didn’t need a walking stick.

Some may argue that there were others not of the Tribe of Judah who used the staff as a sign of authority, which is true, but one must take into consideration **“Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff.”** Put all three of these together, the signet, bracelets and staff, and it is a sign of royalty. Actually, the word “bracelets” as translated here means twisted thread, and the signet was a ring which was strung on a ribbon and usually worn around the neck, and was used to make an impression or seal on legal documents. From the record, we can be confident that Judah’s ribbon was of a royal-scarlet color. We can be certain of this because at the birth of Pharez and Zerah, Tamar’s midwife tied a scarlet twisted thread around the hand of Zerah prematurely, believing he would be Judah’s firstborn by the Shemite, Tamar. Not only that, but the name Zerah means “brightness” or “redness” (check *The International Bible Commentary* by F. F. Bruce on Genesis 38:27-30, page 139). Again, in Joshua 2:18, 21 we come face to face with the royal “scarlet thread” indicating that Rahab (translated the harlot) was of Judah’s royal line, though some incorrectly suggest Ephraim. We meet with the color scarlet again in Matthew 27:28 where a “scarlet robe”, the color of royalty, was put on Yahshua (the Lion of the Tribe of Judah) in mockery. It is noteworthy that the color “scarlet” is not always used in a good sense, so we must understand the context in which it is used.

To show that David and Jesse were not Ephraimites, as the Ephraim-Scepter heretical advocates claim, there is one passage of Scripture that is so striking and outstanding that no one should ever have any doubt of the origin of the Royal Line of the Tribe of Judah and its major role in being the Line of the promised Messiah. Shame on anyone who would say otherwise! That passage is 1 Kings 12:16, and it is simply astounding: **“So when all [the 10 northern tribes of] Israel saw that the king [Rehoboam] hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.”**

Here are ten witnesses (all the ten northern tribes of the House of Israel) saying with a certainty that David and Jesse are not part of their inheritance. One of those ten tribes was Ephraim, and another was Manasseh! Here Ephraim and Manasseh are literally shouting at the top of their voices that Jesse and David are not part of them. Therefore, anyone who claims Jesse and David were of the Tribe of Ephraim, wittingly or unwittingly, make liars of themselves! Again, shades of Bozo the clown!

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