

THE YOUNGER SUPPLANTS THE OLDER

At our church our pastor has led us through the book of Genesis for the past year. I know, that sounds like a long time to go through just one of the books, but it was well worth it. Our pastor, Kelly Graham doesn't believe in rushing through things and possibly missing out on what might be a crucial verse or scripture lesson. It's been an awesome study. I was just thinking that if we took a year for each book, we would finish our first run through the Bible in 65 years. Well, I'm willing to sit and study for that long if Yahweh allows me to live to 121 years old. Imagine being called to live that long in this sick and dying world. It would be more like a prison sentence than a long life.

One of the factoids that can be seen in the Book of Genesis is that there are a few instances where Yahweh uses the lesser rather than the greater; or should I say he used the younger rather than the older, the one who is supposed to have all of the blessing.

The first such case would be when Yahweh chooses Yitzhak over Yishmael. Any way that you look at it, the birth of Ishmael was a big blunder, first because it showed a lack of faith on Abraham's part, second because he listened to his wife instead of waiting on Yahweh, and third because the birth of Yishmael brought about the people who are causing most of the strife in this world today, namely the Arabs and other descendants of Yishmael. Yahweh knew that the promise would come through Yitzhak.

The second case where we see the younger supplanting the older is with the births of Esau and Ya'akov. Remember that Rebecca received a promise from Yahweh that Ya'akov would become great and that Yahweh would choose the him. There was contention even while the babies were in Rebecca's womb; scripture telling us that the children wrestled within the womb. We may never know if perhaps Ya'akov was supposed to be born first and Esau supplanted him in birth, but we know that Yahweh knew the outcome because He told Rebecca that the older would serve the younger. In all situations, Yahweh prevails as victor. We know the rest of the account, how Esau sold his birthright to Ya'akov for a bowl of stew and later how Ya'akov, at the urging of his mother, tricked his father Yitzhak into giving him the family blessing instead of Esau. This caused Ya'akov problems throughout his lifetime, but it accomplished Yahweh's will throughout all subsequent generations.

At the end of Genesis, we see how the younger again received the double portion of blessing. Yehuda received the Messianic blessing; thus, we know Yeshua as The Lion of The Tribe of Yehuda, but something very interesting happened when it came to Yosef's sons. Remember that Yosef was two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, both born to their Egyptian mother. At the end of his life, when Yisrael (AKA Ya'akov) was handing out blessings, Yosef brought his two sons to Yisrael to receive their blessings. Manasseh was the oldest and Ephraim the youngest. We're also told that Yisrael adopted the two boys as his own sons. That seems strange, until you realize that they were born to an Egyptian mother, outside of the promise line and had to be redeemed by Yisrael so that they could receive a promise. Apart from the adoption, they would have been bastard children in the lineage of Yisrael and could not be afforded any promise or any other blessings. Later in the history there would be a split in the Children of Yisrael to where one kingdom would be called Yehuda and the other Ephraim. We see that the youngest son of the next to youngest son received a blessing.

As far as I can tell, through the research that I've done for quite a long time, it has always been the custom of most of the world to bestow blessings and/or money and power to the oldest child. And for the most part, the one receiving the blessing would be a male.

As many of you know, I am a Heinz 57 when it comes to my lineage. My knowledge is that I am German, Italian, Danish, Polish, Austrian and of course my paternal great-grandmother was Jewish. From what I can ascertain, the blessing of the oldest son was paramount in all of the cultures that I descended from. My surname is Italian, meaning that most associate me with having southern European heritage. Italians are notorious for the blessing of the oldest son. My grandfather was no exception. The first to be born was my uncle Warren, then my uncle John and then my dad, James Ruffino. Although it was not blatantly practiced, it was easy to see how my grandfather favored my Uncle Warren and his descendants. Warren was the image of perfection to my grandparents, as were his offspring. My cousins were always offered the best first and what was left over fell to my Uncle John's son Larry and finally to my dad's offspring. I'm not jealous about this, and never have been because I knew my dad's heart and how he loved my sister and me. I saw the favoritism of my grandfather toward the older brothers and how my dad seemed to be a burden to my grandfather. I also saw how Yahweh was with us all the time.

What do I mean when I say that I saw how Yahweh was with us all the time? Well, our family was different than all other families in our neighborhood. Our neighborhood consisted mostly of people from European descent, meaning that it consisted of Italians, Germans, Poles with a few Irish and Spanish thrown in. If you're adept at knowing such populations, you know

that for the most part, these ethnicities tend to be Roman Catholic where religion is concerned. My grandfather was the exception. When he was a young man, he decided that he was tired of the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church and converted to become a Lutheran. I think that this partly had to do with my grandmother whose people were Lutheran, but the fact is that grandpa left Catholicism, something that Italians rarely do because when they do they are usually spurned by those that still remain Catholic. Personally, as my grandfather confirmed to me, he also felt led to leave his former religion, as though it was a calling, he felt compelled to follow.

Another thing that always made me feel proud was that my grandfather was probably the only man of Italian descent that didn't take bribes, graft and he didn't bow to the pressure to break the law like many other Italians did. We always heard how grandpa was "into politics" when he was younger. I later found out that this consisted of him being the city health inspector, a position that was given out by the elected officials of our town. He was often asked to look the other way or take money so as to falsify reports, which he never did, much to the chagrin of those above him. Consequently, those same people tried to defame my grandfather and falsely accuse him of many things, all of those false reports falling by the wayside, I think, because my grandfather had Yahweh's favor. So, if our family did have special favor with Yahweh, it was because my grandfather wanted to be righteous and act righteous and Yahweh rewarded him by showing grace and prosperity to not only grandpa, but his sons and his son's sons.

My dad was a construction worker, a plumber by trade when he was young and later a pipefitter. My dad wasn't one to play politics either, which isn't a good thing when you belong to a Union. Dad would quit jobs when he found out that certain nefarious people were running the job or if he knew that something crooked was going on. Frankly, dad was out of work a lot. Even though unemployment often hinders people and causes them to bend to the pressures that dad was put under, he never budged from his convictions. And, although he was out of work a lot, we always had money from one source or another. We never starved and we always had clean clothes on our backs and we always had a roof over our heads. I'm not trying to paint a picture that things were totally easy for us, but things could have been much worse. However bad it may have seemed at times; we always had our needs met and Yahweh's provision was always for us and to us.

When my dad was an older man and he was born again we would talk a lot. Dad always gave Yahweh the credit for the times when Yahweh fed us, housed us and clothed us and dad knew that there was some sort of special calling on us. My uncles on the other hand always had provision through work. They had the big cars, the nice homes and all of the things that they

could provide for themselves. My older uncle and his wife were known to be skinflints. They saved every dollar that they made and when they were older, they never lacked for anything. The memory that their kids have of their parents are memories of always getting the cheapest clothing and such. One of my cousins told me that when she was old enough to work, she was responsible for providing her own feminine products. Her brother never had a new pair of Levi's Jeans until he was able to work and buy them for himself. This sort of paints a picture of how their parents were when it came to providing for family. Where my dad and mom bought things for us sometimes in their poverty and prayed for the provision, my older uncle could provide for their kids and aside from the basic necessities, then never provided anything else.

I'm like my grandfather in so many ways. When I was a young child my mother used to take me to her church; the little Episcopal Church down the street. The Reverend was a nice man and my sister and I were friends with their two younger children. Irregardless, being a child in an Episcopal church is like being a child attending meetings at the Elks Club or some other sort of fraternity that caters mostly to adults. After a while I hated going and fought tooth and nail to stay home with my dad on Sundays. Even at that early age I knew that there really was nothing at the Episcopal Church for anyone that wanted to know Yahweh in any intimate sort of manner. I went for the next few years trying to find fulfillment; drugs, alcohol and a variety of other religions that seemed to be "fun" and not the boring old stuff shirted religion that mainstream Christianity offered.

A few years later I felt yoked to things that weren't fulfilling and I started to forage around for the meaning of life; the real meaning of life. Without going through the story again (which can be found on numerous places on my website), I came to faith in Yeshua on July 21, 1979. Right away I knew that this was the destiny that Yahweh had for me; Yeshua was without a doubt, the answer.

It's almost odd how Yahweh works in saved people. You have to understand that my dad and I had what could only be termed a sarcastic relationship. He liked to rub me the wrong way and I did the same to him and it caused us to fight a lot. Looking back, I think that the whole thing stemmed from the fact that I liked to disrespect my dad and before my conversion, I excelled at it. However, just a couple of months after I came to faith in Yeshua dad pulled me aside to ask me a few questions. He said that he noticed that I had become sort of withdrawn and didn't go out a lot. He asked me why and with the same breath asked me why I had stopped giving him a hard time. I simply told him that I had become a believer in Yeshua and that the Bible said that I had to respect him. I kid you not, within two weeks my dad was in church giving

his life to Yeshua, followed by my mom and my sister and, my grandmother who dedicated her life to Yeshua. Within one-year Yahweh had saved most of my family and it was glorious; we fell like domino's and it was glorious.

While in our family it seemed that we came to faith quite easily it isn't always the case with other families. We all know family's where only a couple of people come to the saving grace of Yeshua and they're always known as the family oddities that are belittled and defamed throughout their lives by not so well-meaning family members. However, I do think that if a family comes to faith in the simplicity and quick timing that our family did, there had to be some sort of promise that was being fulfilled. It wasn't coincidence and it wasn't good fortune that things happened the way that they did, there was a calling, a predestination if you will, to the calling of our line, from my grandfather, to my dad and to my siblings.

As I mentioned earlier, there are many parallels in what happened with the Patriarchs of Israel, in the choosing of the younger over the older and the subsequent blessings that come with a calling I feel that has been placed on my family. My dad was never the favorite of my grandfather, in fact, they bumped head quite often and many times it seemed that my grandfather loved my dad because it was his duty to love him simply because it was a family obligation. Although my grandfather fell into the trap of following a deeply ingrained tradition of honoring the oldest child, Yahweh had other plans and they played out fine and well.

I know that there are many Christians that choose not to believe in predestination because they see it as a Calvinist idea and they hate some of the steps of Calvinism. However, when you see predestination play out in your own family and you see how the things that happened in the line of Abraham tend to play out in your own family it pretty well erases any doubt that there are simply those who Yahweh chooses in families and some that he does not choose. You can have people born to the same mother and father and who are raised basically the same (with some idiosyncrasies like in my family) and yet some seem to get the Gospel Message while other fail to see it.

Now in all fairness to my uncles, I do have to make qualifying statements. My oldest uncle, who went the Jehovah's Witness way seemed to come to the truth toward the end of his life. When I talked to him, he assured me that he knew Yeshua as His way, truth and life and that he believed in Yeshua's deity. That gave me great comfort for sure. My middle uncle I'm not so sure about. He didn't really want to talk much about religion and changed the subject when it was brought up. I did write him a letter, telling him about the Love of Yeshua, Yeshua's purpose,

and the Good News of the Gospel. I asked him to consider all of those things and told him about my dad and my grandfather whom I'm sure are in Heaven with Yeshua. I told him that I would be sad if he wasn't there, seeing that he was my favorite uncle and I was so much like him in many ways. I know he read the letter because he thanked me for it. I can only hope that he made a decision for Yeshua before he drew his last breath.

So, to say that the long Bible study was boring is so untrue. I got to see for the first time how much our family paralleled that of the Patriarchs of Genesis, and how when a line of people is called to Righteousness, there is no one and no situation that will stop it. Like my dad told me many years ago, it seems that there is a special purpose for our family and he knew, even before he knew Yeshua personally, that Yahweh was watching out for us and he knew that we were somehow called to something other than the simple circle of life that so many people live out in their day to day existence.

So, am I bragging about what I have asserted? Well, yes and no. No, we're not any more special than any other believer in Yeshua, at least from my estimation. And then you have to consider the scripture that says "to whom much is given, much is required," which is a scary notion. I would be remiss if I stated that I am the sort of person that steps up and volunteers for things. The flesh would rather that others do the work and toil for things. That is just common human nature. However, knowing that there is a special purpose in our calling makes me want to step up for such things. I mean after all, Yahweh is standing at the end of time and He's seen everything that has happened, is currently happening and will happen in the future. It is much easier to step up for tasks than it is to avoid them, knowing that you are probably destined for such things and knowing that being destined for things Yahweh's going to work in you whether you like it or not. I'm reminded of Jonah who was told to preach to Nineveh but decided to head the other way instead, only to have to live in the belly of a great fish until Yahweh knew that He would comply with Yahweh's wishes. It's easier to go with Yahweh flow than it is to swim against His current; which is a stupid decision that never comes to any good.

Again, am I bragging? Well, definitely yes. Yes, I brag in Yahweh, whom, out of the almost eight billion people on earth, chose me and my family, and other families and individuals like me for special purposes. He knows that in my flesh I'm really a worthless good-for-nothing, but through His Ruach and through obedience to His Commandments, can be more than a conqueror through His Son Yeshua. From before the foundation of the world He knew that He would call me and all others like me; good for nothing people on our own accord, who were,

through the Blood of Yeshua, destined for great exploits and bringing glory to the Name of Yahweh; Yeshua Ha Mashiach.

I know that there are others who know, feel or sense the same calling. I've met some of you already. I hope to meet many more before our time on this Earth is finished. And, if I don't meet you before His return, I know I'll meet you at that return, or sometime soon afterward.