

## Joseph's Unnamed Children (Vayechi)

*“If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead, either write things worth reading or do things worth writing.” -Benjamin Franklin*

Did Joseph have more than two sons? The Torah only lists Ephraim and Menashe as Joseph's sons and their names are noted repeatedly and prominently throughout the Bible. Grandfather Jacob elevated their status to equal that of his own sons, thereby making them full-fledged Tribes of Israel.

But did Joseph have any other children?

Before his death, Jacob blesses Joseph and his sons with a most unusual blessing:

*“And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Menashe, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine. And your children that you had after them shall be yours; they shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.” -Genesis 48:5-6*

These verses have consternated many commentators who've gone to great pains to explain what it means, as there are no other mention or names anywhere else of any other children of Joseph.

Ibn Ezra (on Genesis 48:4) in his typical no-nonsense style says that the verses are saying what they seem to be saying, namely that Joseph did have other children, but only the two older ones were elevated, and received honor and unique status within the Israelite hierarchy. The other children of Joseph (we don't even know how many others there were) were of less significance and therefore did not merit either mention or listing in the genealogical records. In the annals of the Torah, these unnamed children were subsumed into the nomenclature of their older, more famous brothers.

Perhaps the Torah is teaching that significance is not only measured by being named, but by being part of what endures.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben Tzion

*Dedication*

*To Israel's recognition of Somaliland.*