

THE EPHRAIM-SCEPTER HERESY, #4

This is the fourth in a series on this subject. We are going to start this paper quoting excerpts of a letter from a Mr. Buddy Johnson, P.O. Box 2284, New Tazewell, TN, 37824, to William Finck. William had sent lengthy letters to both Russell Walker, 11055 Jefferson Highway, Madisonville, VA, 23958, and Mr. Johnson, dated 25th March, 03 and 22nd April, 03. In these two letters, William Finck challenged Johnson and Walker on many aspects of their flawed premise concerning the *Ephraim-Scepter Heresy*. Mr. Johnson started his letter thusly: "The first issue is that of Birthright. Frankly after this issue there [sic. are] no others of the same magnitude." I cannot answer for Finck, but I would have replied: "Is not the Scepter of equal 'magnitude' to the birthright?"

Mr. Johnson proceeds to quote three different dictionaries on the word "birthright", and completely ignores any definition of the word "Scepter"! Mr. Buddy Johnson seems to have a one-track mind headed for nowhere. Then at paragraph 5 on page 1, Johnson makes an arrogant, unqualified statement: "The simple undisputed fact is that both Joseph and later Ephraim had the birthright. It is undisputed that Yahshuah [sic] was given the birthright and that he not only owns the earth but the fullness thereof. Yashuah [sic] would have had to have descended from Joseph and Ephraim to be given the birthright. This argument is simultaneously so simple and so comprehensive in its depth that it is not even be [sic] up for discussion."

Then Johnson, in his mad frenzy, makes the snide remark, "... we will assume that Tamar was an Israelite." In a letter to myself from Walker dated March 11, 2003, he said of Tamar: "You seem to be offended at Scott's [Vaught's] alleged description of Tamar. The only question about Tamar is whether she was an Israelite whore or a Canaanite whore. If she were not a whore, then how would you describe her and what would you call her children as a result of being involved with Judah? Do you have any record of Judah even being espoused to Tamar even after Pharez and Zereh [sic] were born? Tamar dressed as a harlot and Tamar acted as a harlot. The conclusion is that Tamar was a harlot and her two children were bastards." Thus, the Ephraim-Scepter people bastardize Yahweh in His flesh!

To show that the Ephraim-Scepter advocates haven't done their homework on the subject of Tamar, *The Book Of Jasher*, 45:23 clearly states: "23. And in those days Judah went to the house of Shem and took Tamar the daughter of Elam; the son of Shem, for a wife for his first born Er." Tamar and her children Pharez and Zerah were not "bastards."

Then Mr. Johnson, in his letter to Finck, states [with unneeded caps] on page 2, paragraph 6: "You State That Ephrath Is Bethlehem In Verse 60 of Joshua 15 (we have a problem here as the verse is different)." One must understand that Johnson is attempting to insist that Ephrath is in Ephraim's territory. If Mr. Johnson would have checked the *LXX*, it is spelled "Baethleem" (in Brenton's translation), and it is there! Not only that but Joshua 18:23, 25 in the *LXX*, unlike the KJV, place Ephratha and Ramah in the territory of Benjamin. Now reading verses 20-28 from the *LXX*: **"20 And the Jordan was to be the eastern boundary. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, and these their borders round about, according to their communities. 21 And the cities of the Benjaminites according to their communities were Jericho, and Bethegaio, and Amekasis, 22 and Baithabara, and Sara, and Besana, 23 and Aiein, and Phara, and Ephratha, 24 and Karapha, and Kephira, and Moni, and Gabaa, twelve cities with their villages; 25 Gabaon, and Rama, and Beerotha, 26 and Massema, and Miron, and Amoke, 27 and Phira, and Kaphan, and Nakan, and Selekan, and Thareela, 28 and Jebus (this is Jerusalem), and Gabaoth-Jarim, thirteen cities with their villages. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, according to their communities."** Thus, Ephrath, Rama and Jerusalem were all in

close proximity. Either the LXX is wrong or Buddy Johnson and company are wrong! You see, unless one's premise is correct, his conclusion will be defective. Johnson and company build their flawed premise by taking 1 Samuel 17:12 out of context, which says in part: **“Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-judah, whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons ...”** Here “Ephrathite” is geographic, not genetic!

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* (published about 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.

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, volume 5, page 252, under the heading SAMUEL: “... The parents of Samuel were Elkanah and Hannah. By lineage Elkanah was a Levite, a descendant of Kohath but not of the Aaronic line (1 Chron 6:26, 33). Geographically Elkanah was identified as an Ephraimite, since he lived in the mountainous territory of Ephraim in the city of Ramah [one of six areas in Palestine by that name], more specifically identified as Ramathaim or Ramathaim-zophim.”

The Westminster Dictionary Of The Bible by John Davis, ©1944, under the heading SAMUEL: “... His father, Elkanah, was a Levite, family of Kohath, house of Izhar ... he was a Zophite, because descended through Zophai or Zuph (1 Sam. 1:1; 1 Chron. 6:26, 35): and he was a man of the hill country of Ephraim or an Ephraimite, because the family had been assigned residence in that tribe (Josh. 21:5; 1 Chron. 6:66) ...”

Mr. Johnson also attempts to make this Samuel the Levite an “Ephrathite” on page 6, paragraph 5, where Johnson says: “SAMUEL WAS AN EPHRATHITE Samuel 1 ... 1 Sam 1:1 Now there was a certain man of Ramathaimzophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite ...” As you can once again see, it pertains to a geographic location. If such were true, then both David and Samuel were of the same tribe! As you can plainly see, the term is only applied because Samuel's father was assigned to the Tribe of Ephraim. The Levites were apportioned to all the tribes.

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 Ephraim-Scepter people clench their fist and demand that “Ephrathite” is a member of the Tribe of Ephraim! But Genesis 48:7 clearly states that it is a geographical location: **“And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when**

yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem.” Note it says here in unmistakable words, “the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem.” How do the Ephraim-Scepter people get “Tribe of Ephraim” out of that? Just when did the word “**way**” start to mean a person, family or tribe? The word “**way**” is used two times in verse 7, and in both instances it is speaking of a geographical location! – “Canaan in the **way**” and “in the **way** of Ephrath”! Only a fool would insist that the locality of “Ephrath” was a person, family or tribe! Actually, the word “way” is #1870 in the Hebrew in *Strong’s*, and means “a road” or “figuratively a way of life”, and “a way of life” could include animals, birds, reptiles or fish as well as people. There is absolutely no way to connect “Ephrathite” with people, except one who might happen to live in a location named “Ephrath.” And you will notice that Bethlehem was named Ephrath long before Jacob buried Rachel “by the way” there, and has nothing to do with “the Tribe of Ephraim.”

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 following:

Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament, page 73: “... [Ephrathah], Genesis 35:16, 19; Ruth 4:11 (land, region) ... (1) pronoun of a town in the tribe of Judah, elsewhere called *Bethlehem* (Genesis 48:7); more fully *Bethlehem Ephratah* (Micah 5:1).”

The *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of The Bible*, Hebrew #672: “... ‘Ephrâth, ... or ... ‘Ephrâthâh, ... ; from 6509; *fruitfulness*; *Ephrath*, another name for Bethlehem; once (Psalm 132:6) perhaps for *Ephraim*; also of an Israelitish woman: — Ephrath, Ephratah.”

Topical Bible by Orville J. Nave, page 344: “EPHRATAH. 1. Called also EPHRATH. The ancient name of Bethlehem-judah, Genesis 35:16, 19; 48:7; Ruth 4:11; Psalm 132:6; Micah 5:2.”

The Popular And Critical Bible Encyclopædia and Scriptural Dictionary, edited by Rt. Rev. Samuel Fallows, volume 1, page 605: “EPHRATAH or EPHRATH (eph´ra-tah or eph´rath), (1) The ancient name for Bethlehem.”

New International Bible Dictionary, editors J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, page 318: “EPHRATAH, EPHRATH, EPHRATHAH ... 1. The place where Rachel was buried (Gen. 35:16) ... 3. The ancient name of Bethlehem or the district around it. This name is attached to that of Bethlehem in the great prophecy of the place of the birth of Christ. (Micah 5:2).”

A Dictionary of the Bible by William Smith, LL.D., page 178: “Eph´ratah or Eph´rath ... 2. The ancient name of Bethlehem-judah, Genesis 35:16, 19; 48:7.”

Peloubet’s Bible Dictionary, edited by F. N. Peloubet, D.D., page 183: “Eph´ratah or Eph´rath ... 2. The ancient name of Bethlehem-judah. Genesis 35:16, 19; 48:7.”

The Westminster Dictionary of The Bible by John D. Davis, page 169: “Eph´ra-thah ... 1. The original name of Bethlehem in Judea. (Genesis 35:19; 48:7; Ruth 4:11) It is sometimes called Bethlehem Ephrathah. (Micah 5:2).”

New Concise Bible Dictionary, editor Derek Williams, page 150: “Ephrath, Ephratah. The ancient name for Bethlehem Judah. Rachel was buried near there (Genesis 35:19); it was the home of Naomi’s family (Ruth 4:11) and of David (1 Samuel 17:12), and was the Messiah’s birthplace. (Micah 5:2).”

Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, edited by R. F. Youngblood et al., page 408-409: “EPHRATAH ... 2. The ancient name of Bethlehem of Judah. (Genesis 48:7; Ephrath, NIV) The prophet Micah refers to the town as Bethlehem Ephrathah. (Micah 5:2) His prophecy that the Messiah would be born here was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. (Matthew 2:6; Ephratah, KJV).”

Insight on the Scriptures, volume 1, page 755: “EPHRATHAH... 2. Evidently the earlier name of Bethlehem or a name applied to the area around it. The names of Bethlehem and Ephrathah are used jointly in several texts. The account of Rachel’s death relates that she was buried ‘on the way to Ephrath [Ephrathah], that is to say, Bethlehem.’ (Genesis 35:16, 19; 48:7) ...

In view of this it appears that the reference to Ephrathah in Psalm 132:6 which deals with David's concern for the ark of the covenant, also applies to this hometown of David ..."

Unger's Bible Dictionary, by Merrill F. Unger, page 318: "Eph'ratah... 2. The ancient name of Bethlehem in Judah (Genesis 35:16, 19; 48:7) both of which passages distinctly prove that it was called Ephrath or Ephratah in Jacob's time. The meaning of the passage, "Lo, we heard of it at Ephrath" (Psalm 132:6), is much disputed. The most obvious reference is to *Bethlehem*, which is elsewhere known by that name."

Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, editor Herbert Lockyer, Sr., page 347: "EPHRATHAH ... 2. The ancient name of Bethlehem of Judah. (Genesis 48:7) The prophet Micah refers to the town as Bethlehem Ephrathah. (Micah 5:2) His prophecy that the Messiah would be born here was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. (Matthew 2:6; Ephratah, KJV)."

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, volume 5, pages 25-26 has a good write-up on Rachel's Tomb. Paragraph three in the article, while not perfect, handles the perceived discrepancy in the tomb's location much better than most:

"However, the three verses cited supporting a location north of Jerusalem do not contradict the clear statements in Genesis 35:19 and 48:7. Genesis 35:16 reads literally 'there was still a stretch of land to go to Ephrath,' a statement that implies a site south of Jerusalem. First Samuel 10:2 says that it was located on the border (Heb. *gebul*) of Benjamin. This could refer to Benjamin's south border just south of Jerusalem (Josh 15:8; 18:15-17) because the city of 1 Samuel 9, presumably close to the border, is not identified. Furthermore, the expression 'by Rachel's tomb' (1 Sam 10:2) need not be pressed since otherwise the further definition 'at Zelzah' (unidentified) would be superfluous. On the other hand, the traditional site may not be authentic because it appears to be too far south of Benjamin's border. Finally, the statement in Jeremiah 31:15 furnishes no evidence that Rachel's tomb was in Ramah, five miles north of Jerusalem. The prophet may have evoked in sublime prosopopeia Rachel bewailing her children at Ramah either because he foresaw that the captives of Judah and Benjamin would be brought to Ramah after the fall of Jerusalem before being led into exile (Jer 40:1), or because Ramah was a height in the territory of Benjamin where the desolation of the land was visible."

Both Joshua 15:8 and 18:16 cited above speak of the "valley of Hinnom." At Jeremiah 19:1-2, the east gate is identified in relation to "the valley of the son of Hinnom", and is evidently the "dung gate" where broken potsherds could be found. The "valley of Hinnom" had an evil reputation in Old Testament times because it was the site of Tophet. Anyone with common sense can plainly see that there is no possible way "the valley of Hinnom" could be located anywhere close to Ephraim's territory.

To nail down the location of Ramah even closer, I will quote a portion from *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, volume 4, page 8, under the heading "Ramah": "... At the close of the Captivity, Ramah was one of the villages reoccupied by returning Benjaminites (Ezra 2:26; Neh. 7:30; 11:33). Near this town was the traditional site of the tomb of Rachel [their mother] (I Sam. 10:2; Jer. 31:15; Matt. 2:18). Ramah is found in frequent association with certain well-known towns to the north of Jerusalem. In Josh. 18:25 it is listed between Gibeon and Beeroth; the palm tree of Deborah is located between Ramah and Bethel (Judg. 4:5); a Levite journeying northward past Jerusalem came at nightfall to Gibeah, not yet having reached Ramah (Judg. 19:13-14); the Assyrian army is envisioned by Isaiah as making a southward march on Jerusalem, passing in succession through Geba, Ramah, and Gibeah (Isa. 10:29); Hosea mentions Ramah in close association with Gibeah (Hos. 5:8); and in the lists of those who returned from Exile, the sons of Ramah and Geba are enumerated as but a single contingent (Ezra 2:26; Neh. 7:30).

"The references cited above so circumscribe the ancient site as to make practically certain its identity with modern er-Ram, ca. five miles north of Jerusalem, two miles north of Gibeah,

three miles east of Gibeon, and two miles west of Geba. With such an identification both Eusebius (*Onomasticon*) and Josephus (*Antiq.* VIII. xii. 3) would agree.”

We will next look at that excerpt in *Josephus' Antiquities* 8:12:3: “... for thus did Baasha, when the prophet foretold to him what would come to pass, grow worse, as if what were threatened, the perdition of his family and the destruction of his house, (which are really among the greatest of evils,) were good things; and, as if he were a combatant for wickedness, he every day took more and more pains for it; and at last he took his army, and assaulted a certain considerable city called Ramah, which was forty furlongs distant from Jerusalem ; and when he had taken it, he fortified it, having determined beforehand to leave a garrison in it, that they might thence make excursions, and do mischief to the kingdom of Asa.”

Josephus at *Antiquities* 1:21:3 makes it clear that “Ephrata” is a geographic location by stating: “And when he was gone thence, and was come over against Ephrata, he there buried Rachel, who died in child-bed; she was the only one of Jacob’s kindred that had not the honor of burial at Hebron; and when he had mourned for her a great while, he called the son that was born of her Benjamin, because of the sorrow the mother had with him. These are all the children of Jacob, twelve males and one female; — of them eight were legitimate, viz., six of Lea, and two of Rachel; and four were of the handmaids, two of each; all whose names have been set down already.” If “Ephrata” represented the Tribe of Ephraim, as the Ephraim-Scepter people insist, how could the historian Josephus say, “was come over against Ephrata”? Besides, the land of Ephrata existed long before Joseph’s Ephraim was ever born!

From *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, volume 5, pages 29-30: “**Ramah. Rama ... 3. In Benjamin.** A town assigned to the tribe of Benjamin (*Josh* 18:25; LXX Ῥαμα, as in most references cited here except for insignificant variations in some MSS). The evidence for its identification is some of the most conclusive for any site in Israel. It is clearly to be located close to Bethel (*Judg* 4:5), the modern Beitin, on the ancient trunk road leading north from Bethlehem and passing to the west of Jerusalem (19:13). Josephus (*Jos. Antiq.* 8:12:3) in discussing the events of 1 Kings 15:16, 17, places the town, which he calls Aramathon (Ἄραμαθῶνι), forty stades (c. five Rom. miles, four and six tenths Eng.) from Jerusalem; whereas Eusebius and Jerome put it at six Rom. miles north of the Holy City (*Onomasticon*, ed. Klostermann, 144:15, 16 145:13, 14). Robinson noted that the name is preserved at the modern village of er-Ram and Jerusalem is just about five and a half miles south.

“The prophetess Deborah (q.v.) exercised her authority as a judge in Israel at a place between Bethel and Ramah (*Judg* 4:5). Instead of turning in to spend the night at Gibeah, the Levite from the hill country of Ephraim could have gone on a little way further to Ramah (*Judg* 19:13). In addition to standing on the north-south highway, er-Ram is also within striking distance of the east-west road from Jerusalem via Gibeon and the descent of Bethhoron to Gezer. The hostile act of Baasha (q.v.) consisted in the establishment of a strong point at Ramah that could effectively block traffic to and from Jerusalem along this vital route (1 Kings 15:17; 2 Chron 16:1). In retaliation, Asa (q.v.) persuaded the Syrians to attack Israel from the north; by thus relieving pressure on the front with Judah, he was able to dismantle the fortification at Ramah and to use the building blocks for constructing two new forts of his own at Geba (q.v.) and Mizpah (q.v.). Thus the boundary between Judah and Israel was fixed at a line dissecting the former tribal inheritance of Benjamin in half (1 Kings 15:17-22; 2 Chron 16:2-6). The partition of Benjamin in this manner is reminiscent of the division reflected in Joshua 18:21-28 where Ramah belongs to the southernmost district. A brief oracle by Hosea against Gibeah, Ramah, and Bethaven (q.v.) is apparently directed at Benjamin, perhaps with particular reference to this ‘Judahite’ half of the tribe (*Hos* 5:8). When one column of Sennacherib’s army was evidently storming southward from Samaria toward Jerusalem, Ramah stood in the direct line of the Assyrian advance (*Isaiah* 10:29). Jeremiah describes Ramah as the scene of Rachel’s weeping for her children (*Jer* 31:15;

cf. Matt 2:18). Some of Ramah's former residents were among the postexilic returnees (Ezra 2:26; Neh 7:30); the town is also mentioned in the list of settlements (11:33), which largely pertained to places outside of the Yehud province; therefore, it might be supposed that Ramah was one of those towns in which some portion of the population had maintained a foothold during the time when the main body of Judeans were in exile."

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, volume 2, page 335: "EPHRATH, EPHRATHAH ... 1. A city or area in Judaea which is connected with Bethlehem. Possibly it was originally independent but was absorbed into Bethlehem at a later date. Elimelech and his family were 'Ephrathites from Bethlehem.' (Ruth 1:2; cf. 1 Samuel 17:12). The two places are identified in the compound form (Micah 5:2) and as the burial place of Rachel. (Genesis 35:19; 48:7) ..."

On page 3, paragraph 7, Mr. Johnson makes evident his incorrect conclusion: "Fact; The Bethel Bethlehem referred To in [Gen. 35; 16] is In the Northern House of Israel [Not] The Southern] Nothing Can Be Added To Change This Fact." Notice how Mr. Johnson's erratic typing in the last sentence matches his inconsistency in Biblical interpretation!

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