I think God had woven one thread through Jacob, Rachel, Joseph, Benjamin, Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah, David, and finally Jesus. The more I follow it, the more Ephrath and Bethlehem look like one of those places where several different parts of Scripture quietly meet.

It starts at Bethel.

Long before Jacob returned there with his family, he had first come to that place alone, fleeing from Esau. There he dreamed:

"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it."
Genesis 28:12

When he woke:

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."
Genesis 28:16–17

Then:

"And he called the name of that place Bethel."
Genesis 28:19

Beth-El — House of God.

Years later God sends him back:

"And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother."
Genesis 35:1

Jacob goes **up** to the House of God.

And there God confirms his new name and speaks fruitfulness over him:

"And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land."
Genesis 35:9–12

Then Scripture says:

"And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him."
Genesis 35:13

There is a picture there that catches my attention.

Jacob goes up to the **House of God**.

God meets him there.

Then God goes up from him.

It reminds me of the pattern we noticed with Jesus coming down from the mountain while the leper comes toward Him:

"When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."
Matthew 8:1–3

Man comes toward God.

God comes toward man.

There is a meeting place.

And then John reaches all the way back to Jacob's Bethel vision.

Jesus tells Nathanael:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."
John 1:51

Jacob had seen heaven opened and angels ascending and descending, and he called the place **the House of God** and **the gate of heaven**.

Jesus places that imagery upon **Himself**.

Then only a chapter later:

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body."
John 2:19–21

So the meeting place between God and man is ultimately not just a geographical house.

It is a Person.

Then Jacob leaves Bethel.

And this is where the story turns from one of the greatest spiritual moments of his life into one of the deepest sorrows of his life.

God has just told Israel:

"Be fruitful and multiply."

The Hebrew word translated **"be fruitful"** is H6509, *parah*.

Then Scripture says:

"And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day."
Genesis 35:16–20

Ephrath, H672, belongs to that same fruitfulness word-family.

So just slow the scene down.

God has told Israel:

Be fruitful.

Israel leaves Bethel—the **House of God**—and travels toward **Ephrath, Fruitfulness**.

And there, at the place called Fruitfulness, the woman he loves dies giving birth.

Rachel names the child:

Ben-oni — son of my sorrow.

But Jacob refuses to let the sorrow give the boy his final name.

He calls him:

Benjamin — son of the right hand.

That has become one of the most moving parts of the whole thing to me.

Rachel is dying. She names what she can see in the moment:

sorrow.

Jacob does not deny the sorrow.

But he looks at the same child and gives him another name:

right hand.

So right there on the road from Bethel to Bethlehem we already have:

House of God → fruitfulness promised → Ephrath/Fruitfulness → travail → death → son of sorrow → son of the right hand → Bethlehem.

Rachel's own name carries sheep imagery—an ewe, a female sheep.

And Joseph is part of this family when all of this happens.

His baby brother is born.

His mother dies.

The place is Ephrath.

Fruitfulness.

Whatever Joseph understood at the time, this became part of the deepest history of his family.

And I think what happens later with Joseph's own sons may show us how deeply his father's way of seeing sorrow had influenced him.

Joseph goes through his own descent.

He is torn from his father's house.

He is sold.

He serves as a slave.

He is falsely accused.

He is imprisoned.

And then God raises him up in Egypt.

When sons are born to Joseph, he names them:

"And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."
Genesis 41:51–52

I used to read those names mostly as definitions.

Now I hear them as Joseph's testimony.

His father had once taken a child named out of sorrow and refused to let sorrow remain the child's final identity.

Ben-oni became Benjamin.

And years later Joseph does something remarkably similar with the names of his own sons.

He does not name his life according to what his brothers did to him.

He does not name it according to slavery.

He does not name it according to prison.

He names what **God did through all of it**.

His firstborn is **Manasseh**:

God has made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

His second is **Ephraim**:

God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

I cannot help seeing Jacob's influence in that.

Rachel had named the pain.

Jacob had looked beyond the pain.

And now Joseph seems to be carrying that same way of looking at life forward.

Do not let the sorrow give the final name.

Then Ephraim makes it even more personal.

Joseph's mother died at **Ephrath**.

Now Joseph says:

"God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction,"

and names his son **Ephraim**, a name from that same fruitfulness family.

I cannot prove Joseph consciously said, "I am thinking about Mother at Ephrath."

But I can hardly imagine Ephrath being an empty word to him.

His mother died there.

His brother Benjamin was born there.

His father changed Benjamin's name there.

And now Joseph has a son whose name says that affliction did not destroy fruitfulness.

Then Joseph's understanding of his entire vocation grows out of the same way of seeing.

When he finally reveals himself to his brothers he says:

"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."
Genesis 45:5–8

That sounds to me like the lesson of the names has become Joseph's way of interpreting his whole life.

His brothers could call it betrayal.

Egypt could call him a slave.

The prison could call him a prisoner.

Joseph eventually says:

God sent me before you to preserve life.

He does not deny what they did.

He sees what God did through it.

And Jacob had needed that same hope, because his own grief had piled up for years.

He lost Rachel.

Then he believed Joseph was dead.

And when it looked as though Benjamin might also be lost, Judah understood exactly what another loss would do to their father:

"Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave."
Genesis 44:30–31

His life was bound up in Benjamin's life.

Rachel.

Joseph.

Benjamin.

There was so much grief in Jacob's story.

And then the impossible happens.

Joseph is alive.

Not barely alive.

Not destroyed by Egypt.

Joseph has become a man who can look at everything that happened to him and see the hand of God.

And Joseph has sons.

Then near the end of Jacob's life, Joseph brings **Manasseh and Ephraim** to him.

I can hardly imagine that scene without emotion.

Jacob hears their names.

Manasseh.

Ephraim.

His son is standing in front of him, alive.

And the names of Joseph's boys tell him something about the man Joseph became.

His son had not been destroyed by sorrow.

His son had learned to see beyond sorrow.

His son had learned something Jacob himself had once demonstrated beside Rachel's deathbed.

Do not let the sorrow write the final name.

Then Jacob begins talking to Joseph by going all the way back to the promise at Luz—Bethel:

"And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine."
Genesis 48:3–5

That may be one of the most beautiful father-son moments in Genesis.

I picture Jacob looking at Joseph, understanding what those names mean, seeing something of his own influence reflected back at him, and then looking at these boys with a father's pride.

And Jacob does something enormous.

He adopts them.

"They are mine."

The son named because Joseph had been separated from **his father's house** is now standing in that father's house.

And Jacob brings him completely in.

Manasseh is not left outside.

Ephraim is not merely an Egyptian-born grandson.

Jacob says:

They are mine.

They will stand with Reuben and Simeon.

They will receive inheritance in Israel.

And then, almost immediately, Jacob remembers Rachel.

"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."
Genesis 48:7

That verse tugs at me now in a way it never did before.

Why does the old man suddenly speak about Rachel?

He has just been talking about fruitfulness.

He has just received Rachel's grandsons.

He has just heard the names **Manasseh** and **Ephraim**.

And suddenly his mind goes back to **Ephrath**.

Back to Rachel.

Back to the place where she travailed.

Back to the day Benjamin was born.

Back to the day she called the child **son of sorrow** and Jacob answered **son of the right hand**.

I picture the old man looking up and weeping.

Not only from grief anymore.

There has to be some fatherly pride in that moment.

Joseph is alive.

Joseph survived.

Joseph learned.

Joseph carried something forward.

The child Jacob once thought had been devoured by a beast had become a man who could say:

God made me forget the toil.

God made me fruitful in my affliction.

God sent me before you to preserve life.

And now Jacob has Joseph's sons in front of him and says:

They are mine.

Then Jacob says something astonishing:

"And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed."
Genesis 48:11

Jacob had given up hope of ever seeing Joseph's face.

God showed him Joseph's children too.

And then Jacob summarizes his entire life:

"God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."
Genesis 48:15–16

The word translated **"fed me"** is shepherd language.

At 147 years old Jacob looks backward over his entire life and says:

God shepherded me all my life long unto this day.

He could not see the whole thing while standing beside Rachel's grave.

He could not see it when Joseph's bloody coat was brought to him.

He could not see it when famine came.

But near the end he could look at Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim and see that the Shepherd had never stopped working.

And Scripture later puts Rachel's family together in an extraordinary way:

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us."
Psalm 80:1–2

There they are.

Joseph — God will add.

Ephraim — fruitfulness.

Benjamin — son of the right hand.

Manasseh — the testimony that the toil and separation did not have the final word.

And all of them stand before:

"the Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock."

Then the Psalm says:

"Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved."
Psalm 80:14–19

Now Benjamin's name becomes difficult not to hear:

son of the right hand

and then:

"the man of thy right hand"

and

"the son of man."

Then near the end of Jacob's life the fruitfulness language comes back yet again.

Jacob gathers his sons and says:

"Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days."
Genesis 49:1

And when he comes to Joseph:

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb."
Genesis 49:22–25

Look at that journey.

At Bethel:

"Be fruitful."

At Ephrath:

Fruitfulness seems to end at Rachel's grave.

In Egypt Joseph says:

"God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

And at the end Jacob looks at Joseph and says:

"Joseph is a fruitful bough… whose branches run over the wall."

The fruitfulness did not die at Rachel's grave.

It ran over the wall.

And then Jacob says again:

"from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel."

The Shepherd keeps appearing.

Then Jacob turns to Judah:

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."
Genesis 49:10

So Jacob dies seeing two great streams moving forward.

Through **Joseph**:

fruitfulness, multiplication, preservation, the Shepherd.

Through **Judah**:

the sceptre, the ruler, the gathering of the people.

And Scripture later lets these witness streams meet at **Ephrath/Bethlehem** without confusing the genealogies.

When Ruth comes into the family at Bethlehem, the people specifically invoke Rachel:

"The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem."
Ruth 4:11

That is amazing to me.

Rachel died at Ephrath in childbirth.

Now Rachel's name is spoken in a blessing of fruitfulness at **Ephratah/Bethlehem**.

Ruth and Boaz produce Obed.

Obed produces Jesse.

Jesse produces David.

And Scripture introduces David:

"Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehemjudah, whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons."
1 Samuel 17:12

Then Micah says:

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from

of old, from everlasting."
Micah 5:2

And Jesus is born there.

But before getting to Jesus, there is another pattern here that I find beautiful.

Jacob takes Joseph's sons—children born outside his immediate household in Egypt—and says:

"They are mine."

He brings them into his own house and inheritance.

That changes the future structure of Israel.

Then generations later, at the other end of the Bethlehem story, another man named **Joseph** receives a Son who is not biologically his.

Matthew traces Joseph's royal line through David and Solomon:

"And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."
Matthew 1:16

Then the angel says:

"Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."
Matthew 1:20

And Joseph obeys:

"Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."
Matthew 1:24–25

That pattern really touches me.

The first Joseph carried forward something his father had shown him:

sorrow does not get the final word over a son.

And Jacob does something to Joseph's sons that another Joseph will later do in Bethlehem.

Jacob receives sons into his house.

The later Joseph receives a Son into his house.

Jacob says:

“They are mine.”

Joseph receives the Child and:

“he called his name JESUS.”

And Matthew has already brought Joseph to us through the royal line of **David and Solomon**.

So the story that began with Jacob receiving Joseph’s sons into Israel eventually reaches another Joseph, another act of receiving a Son, another naming, another house, and Bethlehem.

Then even Rachel’s sorrow comes back into the Bethlehem story.

Matthew writes:

“Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”
Matthew 2:17–18

Rachel is still weeping in the Bethlehem story.

But sorrow still does not receive the final name.

Jesus comes from Bethlehem.

John sees Him and says:

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”
John 1:29

Rachel’s name carried the image of an ewe.

At Bethlehem comes **the Lamb of God**.

Isaiah says:

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”
Isaiah 53:3

At Ephrath Rachel named her son:

son of my sorrow.

Jacob answered:

son of the right hand.

Then David wrote:

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."
Psalm 110:1

Jesus becomes the true **Man of Sorrows**.

He suffers.

He dies.

But sorrow is not His final station either.

He rises.

He ascends.

He is enthroned at the **right hand**.

And then there is another piece that is easy to miss simply because Bethel and Bethlehem are such familiar names that we almost stop hearing what they mean.

Bethel — House of God.

Bethlehem — House of Bread.

The One born at the **House of Bread** later says:

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."
John 6:35

And:

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."
John 6:51

Now look back to Bethel.

Jacob saw heaven opened.

Jesus places Jacob's ascending-and-descending imagery upon Himself.

Then at Bethlehem—the **House of Bread**—the One is born who says:

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven."

Bethel gives us the **House of God**, heaven opened, and God meeting man.

Bethlehem gives us the **House of Bread**, and the Bread coming down from heaven.

Jesus gathers both pictures into Himself:

the meeting place between heaven and earth,

the true Temple,

and the Bread from heaven.

Then the bread opens another trail backward.

Long before Bethlehem:

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth."
Genesis 14:18–19

Bread.

Wine.

Blessing.

King.

Priest.

Then Psalm 110 connects the One at God's right hand with that priesthood:

"The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."
Psalm 110:4

That makes Benjamin—**son of the right hand**—being born on the road to Bethlehem especially interesting to me.

Then the offerings begin adding more pieces.

God says of the meal offering:

"And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt."
Leviticus 2:13

Numbers then places grain and wine beside sacrifices that include peace offerings:

"And when thou preparest a bullock for a burnt offering, or for a sacrifice in performing a vow, or peace offerings unto the LORD: Then shall he bring with a bullock a meat offering of three tenth deals of flour mingled with half an hin of oil. And thou shalt bring for a drink offering half an hin of wine, for an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD."
Numbers 15:8–10

And the thanksgiving peace offering includes bread and eating:

"And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he shall offer unto the LORD. If he offer it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, of fine flour, fried. Besides the cakes, he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offerings. And of it he shall offer one out of the whole oblation for an heave offering unto the LORD, and it shall be the priest's that sprinkleth the blood of the peace offerings. And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered; he shall not leave any of it until the morning."
Leviticus 7:11–15

The offerings remain distinct.

But placed beside one another they keep bringing us into a world of:

bread → wine → salt of covenant → sacrifice → thanksgiving → eating → fellowship → peace before God.

Then Paul writes:

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"
1 Corinthians 10:16

Bread.

Wine.

Blessing.

Communion.

Melchizedek brings bread and wine.

The offerings develop bread, wine, covenant, sacrifice, thanksgiving, fellowship, and peace.

Bethlehem becomes the **House of Bread**.

Jesus comes from Bethlehem and declares Himself the **Bread from heaven**.

His body is the Temple.

And in Him the Bethel picture of heaven and earth meeting becomes personal.

Then, after Jacob dies, Joseph gives what may be one of the greatest summaries of the whole family story:

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."
Genesis 50:20

That sounds like the lesson both Jacob and Joseph had learned.

The Shepherd did not prevent every grave.

He did not prevent betrayal.

He did not keep Joseph out of the pit.

He did not keep Rachel from dying at Ephrath.

He did not keep Jacob from spending years believing his son was dead.

But He kept carrying the promise through every one of those places.

Rachel could see enough in her dying moment to say:

Son of my sorrow.

Jacob looked beyond the sorrow and said:

Son of the right hand.

Joseph came through his own affliction and said:

God made me forget my toil.

Then:

God made me fruitful in my affliction.

Then:

God sent me before you to preserve life.

And old Jacob finally looked over his entire life and called God:

the God which shepherded me all my life long unto this day.

There is almost a progression there:

sorrow → right hand → forgetting the toil → fruitfulness → preservation → Shepherd.

And Jesus seems to gather all of these pictures together.

The Man of Sorrows.

The One at the right hand.

The Lamb.

The Shepherd.

The Bread from heaven.

The Temple where God and man meet.

The King.

The Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

And the place where so many of these threads cross is **Ephrath/Bethlehem**.

So I do not think the trail is simply:

“Bethel means House of God and Bethlehem means House of Bread.”

It is much bigger than that.

It is almost as though Scripture lets us walk the road with Jacob:

Bethel — House of God → heaven opened → God meets man → Israel → "be fruitful" → Ephrath/Fruitfulness → Rachel's travail → son of sorrow → son of the right hand → Joseph's affliction → Manasseh → Ephraim/fruitfulness → sons received into the father's house → Shepherd of Israel → fruitful bough → Judah's sceptre → Ephrath/Bethlehem → Rachel remembered → David → promised Ruler → another Joseph receives a Son → Lamb of God → Man of Sorrows → right hand of God → House of Bread → Bread from heaven → Melchizedek → bread and wine → covenant fellowship and peace.

None of those individual names has to carry the whole picture by itself.

But when the Scriptures are allowed to remain what they are and then placed beside one another, it becomes difficult not to see the family resemblance running through them.

And the part that probably moves me most is Jacob.

He probably could not understand any of this while standing beside Rachel's grave.

He could not see the end while holding Joseph's bloody coat.

But by the end of his life, the man who spent his younger years grasping for blessing is sitting surrounded by sons and grandsons **giving blessings**.

Joseph is alive.

Benjamin is alive.

Manasseh and Ephraim are standing before him.

The promise has multiplied before his eyes.

And he can finally say:

God shepherded me all my life long unto this day.

Jacob thought he had buried Rachel's future at Ephrath.

But God was still carrying Rachel's family, Joseph's faith, Benjamin's name, Manasseh's testimony, Ephraim's fruitfulness, Judah's sceptre, David's house, and eventually the Messiah through Bethlehem.

The fruitfulness promised at Bethel survived Rachel's grave.

It survived Joseph's pit.

It survived Egypt.

It ran over the wall.

And generations later, from the very place where Jacob buried the woman he loved came the promised Ruler, the Lamb, the Man of Sorrows, the Bread from heaven, the Shepherd, and the One who sits at the right hand.

That is a lot hidden around one little place called **Ephrath — Fruitfulness**.

But maybe that is exactly the point.

Sometimes the place that looks most like the death of the promise is the very place where God has already written **fruitfulness** into the name.