

Genesis Chapter Forty Nine

Genesis 49:1-4

Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, "Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what shall befall you in the days to come. Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob; and listen to Israel your father. Reuben, you are my first-born; my might and the beginning of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch.

- As you read—compare each of these with Deut 33
- All sons were called to the deathbed—Ishmael and Esau were not included at all when their father imparted the blessing.
- Days to come=end of days
- This last section contains final prophecies, blessings, curses, judgments, promises
- Jacob uses both names for himself
- First three sons are sternly reproved
- Reuben—thru sleeping with father's concubine—has disqualified himself the blessing of the first-born (double portion). Joseph sees this as unforgiveable. Similar to Esau—he traded the blessing for the sake of satisfying an appetite.
- Initial part of the exhortation speaks of his destiny—which he forfeited
- Shows the difference between calling and potential and stewardship
- Uncontrolled=unstable—it is from the root word that describes a lawless mob in Judges 9:4. It suggests wildness as much as weakness—likened to water (an undisciplined torrent)—ungoverned (Prov 17:14)
- Tribe of Reuben would fail in leadership: in Deborah's day (Judg 5:15-16), overshadowed by Gad, and overrun by Moab
- Nothing is said of Reuben's generous conduct in Gen 37:21 or Gen 42:37

Genesis 49:5-7

Simeon and Levi are brothers; their swords are implements of violence. Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; because in their anger they slew men, and in their self-will they lamed oxen. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

- No indication of why Levi fares better than Simeon later.
- They begin to diminish numbers in the census

- Another translation reads: "In their anger they killed men, at their whim they crippled oxen." (excessive)
- Both tribes are eventually scattered. Simeon disintegrated and dispersed among Judah (Josh 19:2-9) and partially among northern tribes (II Chron 34:6)
- Levi is awarded an honorable dispersion—priestly tribe (Ex 32:26,29; Num 18:20,23; 35:2-80)
- There is a distinction made between massacre based on divine sentence (Gen 15:16—predicts Joshua's invasion and warfare as an act of justice, not aggression—until it was right to invade—God's people wait) and a vendetta—which is what Simeon and Levi engaged in
- In chapter 34—story told without judgment—we find the result now
- Weapons are instruments of violence and anarchy
- My glory/my soul used interchangeably here
- Levi's name means 'joined'. Here Jacob is verbally detaching himself

Genesis 49:8-12

Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down to you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. He ties his foal to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, and his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are dull from wine, and his teeth white from milk.

- In length—this blessing is only matched by Joseph
- Predicts leadership for Judah—Num 2:9, 10:14, Jud 1:1-2
- Shiloh—no where else a title for Messiah. Could relate to Ezek 21:26
- Part of blessing includes the word 'until'—shows fierce dominance of the tribe—then with advent of the Promised One—Who will rule the nations—scene changes to earthly paradise.
- Praise is a play on his name—which means he shall be praised. Judah is considered the Lion of the tribes. Jesus—known as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah—transformed imagery—Lamb who was slain (Rev 5:6)
- Vs 11-12: speak of exuberant, intoxicating abundance—time of rule of the Coming One. Deliberate language of excess.

Genesis 49:13

Zebulun shall dwell at the seashore; and he shall be a haven for ships, and his flank shall be toward Sidon.

- He is allotted land in Josh 19:10-16. It did not reach the coast—nor did it approach Sidon—yet was near enough to benefit from their trade

Genesis 49:14-15

Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between the sheepfolds. When he saw that a resting place was good and that the land was pleasant, he bowed his shoulder to bear burdens, and became a slave at forced labor.

- A picture of a tribe willing to trade freedom for material possessions
- Content to rest—no will to fight—becomes subject to enemy's yoke

Genesis 49:16-18

Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a horned snake in the path, that bites the horse's heels, so that his rider falls backward. For Thy salvation I wait, O Lord.

- Seems to imply gulf between calling and achievement. His name and calling is to judge—but in choices—he was involved in violence and treachery (Judg 18)
- In list of tribes in Book of Revelation—Dan is not included
- His final words—a prayer for his son—perhaps remembering his own treachery and behavior
- Many have thought that the antichrist will spring from this tribe.

Genesis 49:19

As for Gad, raiders shall raid him, but he shall raid at their heels.

- Four of the six Hebrew words in this verse consist of Gad's name and word plays on it.
- Border raids would be his lot in Trans-jordan
- In all of his future trials—there is the promise that he will not be overcome
- Constantly exposed to Bedouin raids—unprotected, yet victorious

Genesis 49:20

As for Asher, his food shall be rich, and he shall yield royal dainties.

- His inheritance will be fertile plain and trade routes by the sea
- He will experience abundance—Deut 33:24—due to trade with Phoenicians

Genesis 49:21

Naphtali is a doe let loose, he gives beautiful words.

- This highland tribe would make a name for itself under Barak (Jud 4-5)
- Prophecies that tribe will keep its character
- All disciples but Judas are from Naphtali

Genesis 49:22-26

Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; its branches run over a wall. The archers bitterly attacked him, and shot at him and harassed him; but his bow remained firm, and his arms were agile, from the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), from the God of your father who helps you, and by the Almighty who blesses you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; may they be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.

- Prophecy takes both a backward and forward look at his life
- Well-watered, far spreading fruit tree speak of his character and influence
- Mighty One—used of God as champion of his cause
- Refers to God as Shepherd, Stone(Rock) of Israel
- Distinguished among his brothers=one singled out—not left out—used to describe the Nazarite (set apart for God)
- Indicates large population and fertility of land
- Joseph allowed pain and suffering to produce fruit

Genesis 49:27-28

Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, and in the evening he divides the spoil." All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him.

- Moses speaks of Benjamin tenderly (Deut 33:12) and Jacob speaks fiercely
- This is seen in Jud 5:14, Ps 68:27, Jud 19-21
- A small but important tribe in later times—gave nation its first king: Saul.
- Had reputation of war-like fierceness (I Chron 8:40, 12:1-2)

Genesis 49:29-33

Then he charged them and said to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site. "There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah—the field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth." When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

- Only place that Leah's death is mentioned

Genesis Chapter Forty Nine Workbook

Key Words:

Harmonize:

Read and compare with Deuteronomy 33

Dig:

- 1) Which brothers are reproached for previous behavior?
- 2) Whose behavior in the Book of Genesis most resembles Reuben?
- 3) Whose behavior in the Book of Genesis most resembles Simeon and Levi?
- 4) What words or phrases indicate Judah's role among the tribes?
- 5) Which qualities in the sons might Jacob see in himself?
- 6) Jacob always played favorites. Which of the sons would see their father's words as a blessing?
- 7) Who is gathered at Jacob's bedside? How is this different than previous patriarchs imparting their blessing?

Discuss:

- 1) Is there any experience in today's culture that resembles what takes place in chapter 49?
- 2) Is there any theme in the Book of Genesis that you are currently experiencing in your life? Explain.

Point of Prayer:

Pray Numbers 6:24-26 for someone at church this week.

Integrate:

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

Application:

- 1) What are three qualities that your family would use to describe you?

- 2) Have you been included in a will? Were there any surprises? Did you experience any emotion?

- 3) When it comes to the Lord's blessings in your life—do you experience His favor—or—feel as though others have been given greater benefit? Explain.

- 4) Which of your own character qualities do you see displayed in your children? Do you think it is genetic or environmental?

- 5) Do your life experiences match, in any way, with the meaning of your name?