

The Prophetic Blessing Of Israel Genesis 49:1-27

I. The Announcement Of Prophetic Blessing (1-2)

- A. Pronouncement based on their human characteristics
- B. Pronouncement based on prophetic foresight
 - 1. Notice v. 28 – The blessings and cursings are indicative of the tribes each son will become

II. Reuben (3-4)

- A. Reuben is the first born (3)
 - 1. Jacob's might – preeminent
 - 2. As the first born, he was to have the might and power over brothers
- B. Reuben's status is revoked (4)
 - 1. He is unstable – undisciplined –
 - a. Turbulent water can be destructive
 - 2. His preeminence is revoked
 - a. No king, prophet, or leader comes from Reuben's tribe
 - the only "leaders" from Reuben were Dathan and Abiram who led in the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16:1)
 - b. The tribe diminishes in number between Exodus and entry into the promised land (Num. 1:20–21; 2:11; 26:7)
 - c. The army of Reuben didn't heed the call of Deborah and Barak when they fought the Canaanites (Jud. 5:15–16).
 - 3. He defiled his father's bed in attempt to take over leadership of the family

III. Simeon And Levi (5-7)

- A. They are men of anger (5-6)
 - 1. He calls them brothers – because they are just alike
 - 2. They are men of violence
- B. A curse is upon their anger (7)
 - 1. Jacob refuses any blessing upon them
 - 2. Jacob declares they will be divided and scattered
 - a. The tribe of Simeon was eventually absorbed into the tribe of Judah (Josh. 19:1, 9), and the tribe of Levi was given forty-eight towns to live in, scattered throughout the land (chap. 21). - Weirsbe

IV. Judah (6-12)

NOTE: Judah was as much a sinner as his three older brothers – but Judah's heart was changed, demonstrated most by his offering himself as sacrifice in Benjamin's place as a slave. Jacob says nothing of Judah's sin with Tamar or his role in selling Joseph.

- A. Judah is first among his brothers (8)
 - 1. Judah is given preeminence among the brothers
 - 2. Judah took leadership during the events leading up to the family's trek to Egypt
- B. Judah will be powerful (9)
- C. Judah will rule (10)
 - 1. Judah's tribe would give Israel their greatest kings

2. Judah's tribe would bring forth the Messiah – the promise of God

3. "until Shiloh comes" – most likely the messiah

a. NIV - until he to whom it belongs shall come

b. HCSB - until He whose right it is comes

D. Judah will have abundance (11-12) – (Messianic prophecy)

- Nobody in Old Testament times would use a choice vine for a hitching post for his donkey, because such an act would certainly ruin the vine and probably cause the loss of the animal. Nor would the man's wife waste their precious wine by washing clothes in it! This is the language of hyperbole. It describes a land so wealthy and a people so prosperous that they can do these outrageous things and not have to worry about the consequences. - Weirsbe

V. Zebulun (13)

A. A haven for ships – nothing said about his character

1. Hard to know what he means

2. Tribal allotment was landlocked

a. Some maintain that their land was on a route that made access to the seas easy

b. Deut. 33:19 – 18 And of Zebulun he said, "Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and Issachar, in your tents. 19 They shall call peoples to their mountain; there they offer right sacrifices; for they draw from the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand."

c. None of the Jews were sea-faring people but Zebulun is thought to have done business with the Phoenicians who were.

3. Industrious? Making most of limited opportunity?

VI. Issachar (14-15)

A. He is strong but lazy

1. strong donkey = "raw boned beast"

2. powerful but not very attractive – beast of burden

3. He is made for working but refuses to do so – he lays down

a. "crouching" = "lying down"

b. This may mean he is lazy – no ambition

B. He will become slave

1. He willingly bows his shoulder to be slaves

2. He is taken by the rest and comfort he believes it provides

VII. Dan (16-18)

A. He will be judge

1. The word Dan means judge

a. His tribe produced the most famous judge - Samson

2. Dan will become a significant tribe

B. He is cunning and effective in battle

1. Described as effective in battle but not as a lion like Judah

2. Described as cunning, sneaky like a snake

3. King Jeroboam would set up one of his idolatrous golden calves in Dan (1 Kings 12:28–30), which caused many Israelites to sin

C. Jacob declares his waiting for God's salvation (*yeshua*)

1. Varying interpretations:

- a. Salvation won't come from Dan schemes or ability
- b. Jacob is calling for God to take him home
- c. Jacob is calling for God to give him strength to finish his oracle

2. Salvation will come from the Lord (Messiah from Judah?)

D. Dan is left out of the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 2-10 and the tribal listings in Revelation

VIII. Gad (19)

A. Known for Striking Back

1. Settling east of the Jordan Gad had to fight constantly against Ammonite and desert raiders (See Judges 11:1-12:7) as well as Moabites from the south.

B. Jacob uses a clever wordplay here

1. Gad means "troop" or "raiders" (it can also mean good fortune)
2. "Gad, a gad will gad upon him, but he will gad on their heels."
3. Moses compared them to a brave lion that could rend the arms and heads of its enemies (Deut. 33:20).

VIV. Asher (20)

A. Given the North Coastline of Israel – lush fertile area

B. Described as yielder of food

1. Does this mean provider of food for royalty – See 1 Kings 4:7ff
2. Does this mean provider of "royal food" – (i.e. of exquisite nature)

X. Naphtali (21)

A. Doe let loose

1. Could mean sure-footed, agile
2. The tribe was located in the hill country

B. Bears beautiful fawns – also translated "words"

XI. Joseph (22-26)

A. Joseph is fruitful (22) (Translation Issue)

1. His two sons will be large in Israel
2. "over the wall" – Sons born in Egypt will be fruitful in Israel

B. Joseph is strong in trial (23-24)

1. It was God who kept him strong throughout his trials
2. Joseph didn't retaliate or become vengeful
3. "by the name of the Shepherd" – God shepherded him through his trials

C. Joseph is blessed by God (24b-25)

1. God is his shepherd just as he was for Jacob
 - a. Came from personal faith in God – not just because son of Jacob
 - b. God demonstrated his strength through Joseph
2. Depth and breadth of blessing immense

D. Joseph is blessed more than the fathers (26)

XII. Benjamin (27)

A. "A wolf that tears" – warrior tribe

B. known for valiance and bravery

C. Known for ferocity as well –

1. Saul who tried to kill David was a Benjamite
2. Other Benjamites included Abner (2 Sam. 2:23), Sheba (chap. 20), and Shimei (16:5–14). Saul of Tarsus, (Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5)