

Jacob Gathers His Sons (Gen. 49:1-2)

1 And Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days: 2 Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father.”

- Many people in the ancient world believed that the dying could prophesy. There is no such teaching in Scripture, but this is prophecy that God allowed.
- Notice that he calls them sons of *Jacob*, and tells them to listen to *Israel*.

The First Three Sons (Gen. 49:3-7)

3 “Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. 4 Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father’s bed; Then you defiled it —he went up to my couch.

5 “Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. 6 Let not my soul enter their council; let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstringed an ox. 7 Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.

Reuben

- What is the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power?
- Jacob says he will NOT excel.

- One of the all-time most awkward prayer meetings...
- Historically, Reuben always seemed to be on the verge of trouble!

Simeon & Levi

- These two are treated together as if one person.
- They acted together in the killing of the Shechemites, and their father considers them to be cruel. He refuses their leadership as well.
- Significantly, he says he will divide them in Israel. Simeon was the smallest tribe when Moses counts them up, and it has been said they were not given a separate piece of land, but they were placed inside the territory of Judah.
- Levi likewise had no inheritance like the others, only being given some cities.
- God was merciful to them by allowing them to have the priesthood.

Prophecy For Judah (Gen. 49:8-12)

8 “Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s children shall bow down before you. 9 Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him?

10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people. [Or “An assemblage of peoples?”]

11 Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. 12 His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.

Judah

- The brothers will praise him, not anyone else. “Praise” is a pun on Judah’s name.
- He has been a lion since he was a pup. He has always had that nature.
- He also goes up from the prey. It makes him stronger: Judah would continue to grow and become stronger so that for much of recorded history.

Shiloh

- The mysterious word Shiloh seems to be related to the Hebrew word for rest or tranquility. It has been traditionally believed that Jacob thinks of the Messiah or the Seed as the man of tranquility.
- And Jacob here says that Judah will continue to have the scepter until Shiloh comes. What does this mean?
 - The right of capital punishment was taken from the Sanhedrin around 6 A.D. King Herod’s son was dethroned. The Romans installed a procurator, and took away from the Jews “the right of the sword.”
 - This was actually recognized by the people living at the time as being the fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy.
 - Luke 3:15 says, “...*the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not...*”
- Significantly, the people will be gathered or assembled to this Shiloh person, or obey Him. Either way, this speaks to us of the Gentiles coming to Messiah.

Judah and the figures of wine

- Judah's land would be full of pastures and vines, and that speaks of prosperity.

- He also washes his garments in wine, which is also an exaggerated picture of wealth, but could also speak of judgment: *Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all my robes."* (Is 63:2–3)
- The rest of the picture is about his physical beauty. People associated with the kingship of Judah are good-looking people. David was handsome. Messiah was not attractive because of his sorrows and how He was abused, and yet we know that spiritually speaking the Bible says He is "altogether lovely."

Northern And Transjordan Tribes (Gen. 49:13-21)

13 *"Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships, and his border shall adjoin Sidon.*

14 *"Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between two burdens; 15 He saw that rest was good, and that the land was pleasant; he bowed his shoulder to bear a burden, and became a band of slaves.*

16 *"Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. 17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider shall fall backward. 18 I have waited for your salvation, O LORD!*

19 *"Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him, but he shall triumph at last.*

20 *"Bread from Asher shall be rich, and he shall yield royal dainties.*

21 *"Naphtali is a deer let loose; he uses beautiful words.*

Zebulon

- His land doesn't touch the Mediterranean Sea, but he does touch what we call the Sea of Galilee. Isaiah and the Gospels would talk about Jesus' ministry there.

Issachar

- This doesn't seem very promising! Does he become a servant through laziness?

Dan

- Dan will not be slighted or have a lesser position as the son of a concubine.
- Dan would judge Israel in the person of Samson, probably the most famous judge, and they were also crafty like the serpent.
- People are very suspicious of Dan, because of the dark references.
 - Left out of the Tribes in the Book of Revelation.
 - Called by Moses a lion's whelp, just as Judah was.
 - Often connected to idolatry in the Scriptures.
 - Many people have suggested that the Antichrist would be Jewish and that he would come from the Tribe of Dan. Does this hold water?

Gad

- This is another play on words. Gad's name means a troop or a raid. He was a skilled and powerful defender of Israel.

Asher

- Asher was going to have good food. He would receive a rich agricultural area.

Naphtali

- He has a picture of beauty and grace, and of beautiful speech as well.

Sons Of Rachel (Gen. 49:22-28)

22 “Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall. 23 The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him. 24 But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),

25 By the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb.

26 The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.

27 “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.”

28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father spoke to them. And he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing.

Joseph

- Jacob literally calls him the son of a fruit-tree.
- The reference to archers is fairly obvious.
- There are many blessings of fertility and agriculture here.

Benjamin

- Benjamin was warlike and powerful, despite his small size.
- Benjamin also had many famous people who did great things for Israel, such as King Saul, Mordecai and Esther, and the Apostle Paul.
- It was said that Paul lived up to Benjamin’s wolf prophecy.
- Benjamin, like the Gentile Church, comes from Jacob, but he comes last. He was considered a type of the Gentile Church in many ways.
- Benjamin has one of the most beautiful blessings given to him by Moses in Deuteronomy 33; he says, *“The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him, Who shelters him all the day long; and he shall dwell between His shoulders.”*
(Dt 33:12)

Jacob blessed each one according to his own blessing, appropriate to each one!

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