

# CCLEB SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY MAY 10, 2026  
GENESIS 49:1-33

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## TO WHOM DOES THE SCEPTER BELONG?



I am really excited about today's chapter—**Genesis 49**. This is Jacob's final words... his prophetic blessing over his sons. And it's mostly poetry—about 75%!!

And I love Hebrew poetry... it's almost as awesome as Hebrew genealogies, just doesn't come with chocolate. I didn't always love Hebrew poetry, but I do now. I find it to be very powerful... and sometimes confusing.

In this poetry you are going to see:

- royal imagery
- animals
- strong metaphors
- and moments where you just go... "what does that mean?"

But more than anything...this chapter pushes one question into our minds: To whom does the scepter belong? Or simply: Who is the rightful King? Here's my encouragement to you regarding this Hebrew Poetry:



In the legend of The Sword in the Stone, England is trapped in uncertainty. The king has died, the throne sits empty, and no one knows who truly the right must rule. Then appears a mysterious sign: a sword embedded in a stone with an inscription declaring that whoever can pull it out is the rightful king.



Strong men come. Noblemen come. Valiant warriors and knights come. One by one, they put their hand on the sword, they strain and struggle—but the sword will not move. Why? The sword does not belong to them.

Until one day, a boy named Arthur—unknown, unassuming, overlooked—approaches. He is not seeking a crown. He is not proving a point. He simply reaches out... and the sword comes free. Effortlessly. Not because of his strength, but because of his identity.

The sword yields to “the one to whom it belongs”.

That story echoes an ancient promise found in **Genesis 49**. Listen to **verse 10**.

**Genesis 49:10 NASB** “The scepter shall not depart from Judah.... until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”

The word “Shiloh” carries the profound meaning:



Like the sword in the stone, authority—true, lasting authority—does not belong to the strongest, the loudest, or the most ambitious, or the most likely. It belongs only to the rightful king, the chosen one. True authority goes to the one “to whom it belongs.”

History is full of candidates who grasp for power, but scripture points us to a single figure for whom power is not seized—it is rightful. The scepter will rest in His hand not because He forces it there, but because it has always been His!

So, the question for us today is not simply who is strong enough to rule, but to whom does the rule belong?

And **Genesis 49** tells us: there is One coming—the true King—before whom all nations gather... because the kingdom is His by right. So, to whom does the scepter belong? This poem of blessings to Jacob's sons offers us some clues, and strongly hints at his name.

To add a little more intrigue, there was a much earlier prophetic poem in Genesis that also points to the same future ruler. We find this poem in **Genesis 3:14-15**. So, when you combine these two poems you have: a royal seed who can both crush the head of the serpent and rightfully hold the scepter and rule.

The setting for this poem in **verse 1** is Jacob's death bed. That is significant. Frail and dying Jacob had recently sat up in bed and pronounced a blessing on Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh.

And after that we see that Jacob then summon his twelve sons to his death bed. And he proceeds to give them his farewell discourse in the form of a prophetic poem. Key word "prophetic". Jacob says to his boys, in **verses 1-2** "...I will tell you what will happen to each of you in the days to come."

Now if someone on their death bed said to me "I will tell you what will happen to you in the days to come" I would probably suspect old age craziness or pain meds and not take it seriously. (no offense)

However, that is not the case here with Jacob's words. We have the history of the bible that shows us that the words he said come true. Jacob is not just a patriarch waxing poetically from his death bed. He is a God inspired prophet - foretelling what is to come of the twelve tribes. And what is to come centers around "Shiloh" of **verse 10** - the one to whom the scepter belongs".

So, let's look at these blessings. Jacob starts with Reuben the firstborn in **verses 3-4**. And Jacob emphasizes that even though Reuben is the first "seed", and the one people expect, he is disqualified.

What disqualified Reuben from his position - was his attempt at usurping his father's headship by sleeping with one of his father's concubines in (**Genesis 35:22**) God had put an order in place, Jacob the head of his family, not Reuben, and Reuben attempted to overthrow that God given order.

There is no recorded response by Jacob to Reuben's treacherous evil actions - until now in **chapter 49**. This prophetic blessing is Jacob's response.

In **verse 4** Jacob called Reuben "unruly as a flood". In Hebrew that is an allusion to the disordered waters of chaos in **Genesis 1:2**, and an allusion to the destructive flood waters in Noah's day.

If you recall from earlier Genesis studies,



Reuben was, in Jacob's eyes, "evil". That's the evil, the disordered, the destruction that Reuben brought into Jacob's house. And because of that evil - Jacob disqualifies Reuben from leading his descendants and gives Reuben's birthright to the sons of Joseph - Ephraim and Manasseh. **1 Chronicles 5:1**

What that means for us today is that Reuben and his descendants are not "the one to whom the scepter belongs".



In **verses 5-7** Jacob goes on to disqualify the next two sons, Simeon and Levi. Here is why they were disqualified.

In response to their sister Tamar being raped, Simeon and Levi deceived the Shechemites and slaughtered all the males, and seized all their wives, children, animals and possessions. In their anger they bring destruction - God's way is to bring justice.

So consequently, in **verse 7** Jacob pronounces a curse on Simeon and Levi. A curse is huge. The only curses given in Genesis, were to the serpent, to the ground, to Cain, and to Canaan, the son of Ham - Ham who defiled his drunk father Noah. This is not a good list for Simeon and Levi to be associated with.

Part of their curse was that their tribes would be scattered among the other tribes. Jacob's prophetic curse happens. We learn in **Joshua 19** that the descendants of Simeon are assimilated into the tribe of Judah over time. And we also learn that Levites as priests are scattered among the twelve tribes.


This brings up a question, if the Levites were cursed, how did they become priests? Some argue that the curse on the Levites was lifted at Mount Sinai when the Levites in righteous anger defended the holiness of God with their swords by killing those who had worshipped the Golden Calf. **Exodus 32:26-29**. Note the "blessing" they receive from God in **verse 29**. Consequently, the Levites were then blessed by God, and God uses their "scattering" to serve as priests to all the tribes. What a beautiful picture of redemption.

But what this means for both Simeon and Levi are that they also are not "the one to whom the scepter belongs".



Let's look at the next son Judah. **Verses 8-12**. Now before we go too far in this, let me point out an awesome thing about this poem. Some of the blessings are a wordplay on the son's name. A couple of those wordplays translate well into English, the others not so much. But Judah's does. Isn't that cool?

# Wordplay



Judah means "*praise*".  
So, verse 8 is literally  
"*Praise, your brothers  
will praise you*".

In **verse 8** related to Judah, we see language we are familiar with connected to Joseph's dreams - "brother's praising him, relatives bowing down to him". The poem's use of Joseph's dream language in Judah's blessing seems to be telling us that the time of Joseph's reign over his brothers in Egypt ends, and the tribe of Judah rises. This prophecy comes true through King David and later the Messiah.

Let's look at the middle line of **verse 8** - this is military conquest language. To put your hand or foot on the neck of your enemies demonstrates that you have defeated them and are in complete control over whether they live or die.

The psalmist makes this image of hand or feet on the neck of your enemies about the future Messiah in **Psalms 110:1**.

Paul applies this language to Jesus in **1 Corinthians 15:25**. (see also **Hebrews 10:13**) That all began back in **Genesis 49:8**.

In **Genesis 49:9** Jacob speaks of Judah as "lion". I'm not certain what all these lines mean. I can offer a suggestion, A lion doesn't have known natural enemies, and so when it lays down, it lies down in peace, and who would dare to rouse it?

And it's from this lion imagery pertaining to Judah that we get the phrase, "The Lion of Judah".

To understand **verse 10** the scepter is simple.

A scepter symbolized authority:  
the right to rule - Isaiah 10:15  
the right to judge - Isaiah 19:4  
the right to lead - Psalm 23:4.





A “*ruler’s staff*” or “*lawgiver’s staff*” was a symbol of legislative authority.

It literally was carried by the person who carved decrees in stone.

So, Jacob is **verse 10** is saying poetically that the one who brings justice and judgement and legislative authority will never depart from Judah - until “Shiloh comes” - “the coming of the one to whom it belongs”.

Notice that this is one person, not multiples. The coming of the “one”

And when that one comes, look what happens in **verse 10**. “Whom all the nations will honor” - most translations say, “the obedience of all the nations will be his”. Imagine all the nations of the world being obedient to one person!! The Anti-Christ tries to mimic this, bring about worldwide obedience to himself. But from this **Genesis 49** prophecy we know he won’t be successful - you know why? He is not “The One to whom the scepter belongs”.

**Verse 11** paints a scene of abundance. There will be so much harvest after The One comes, that it won’t matter if you tie a rambunctious donkey’s colt to your choice vine. A donkey’s colt would trample and eat the choice vine there is so much fruitfulness and multiplying, that even doing something as ridiculous as tying a colt to your vine won’t matter.



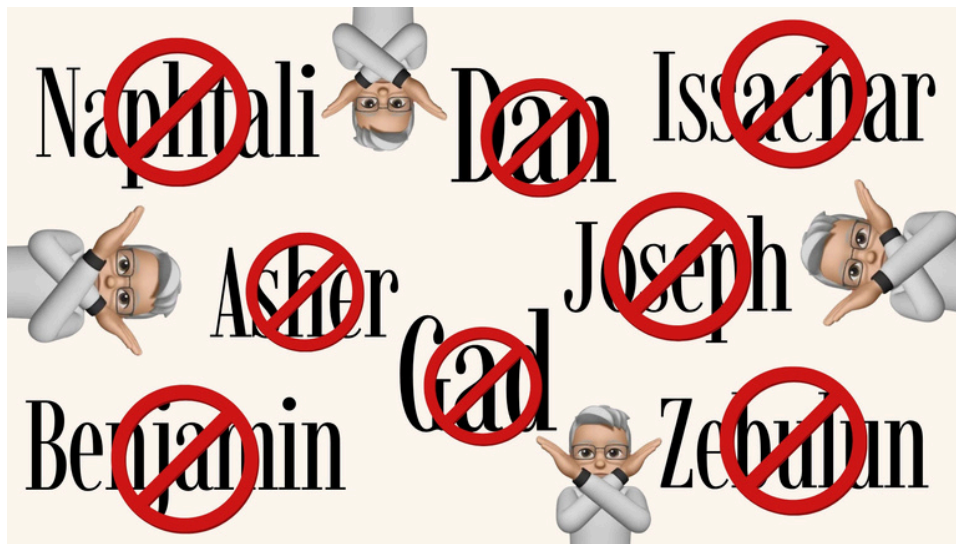
The end of **verse 11** continues to paint the scene of abundance but adds joy. There is so much wine that it is used for washing clothes. Of course, the clothing would be stained red or purple, but it makes the point of abundance. And because wine is a cultural symbol of joy and celebration, it also paints colorful picture of abundant joy.



**Verse 12** is one of those that make you go “what does that mean?”. I don’t know, and the scholars don’t either. So, we will skip it.

So going back to our original question, “to whom does the scepter belong?” Although we don’t yet know the name - that’s coming, we know that he comes from the tribe of Judah.

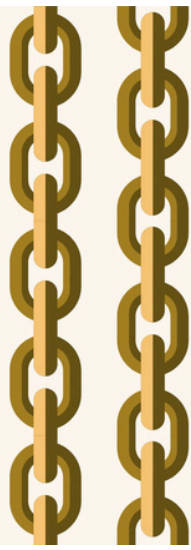
Since The One comes from the tribe of Judah, we already then know the one doesn’t come from the eight remaining tribes.



So, let’s look at the rest of the blessings. **Verse 13**. This is the picture of strong industry, trade and economy. Zebulon’s name means “lofty abode” and indicates the wealthy promised land stretches well into the region of Sidon on the north coast.

**Verses 14-15** about Issachar - whose name means “wages”. Notice the words “see” and “good” - Those are the same as in **Genesis 1**, “and God saw that it was good”. But “see” and “good” are also the same in **Genesis 3:6** that says Eve, “saw that (the forbidden fruit) was good”.

If Issachar’s prophecy is linked to the Eve account, then it describes Issachar seeing good land and taking it but compromising - and consequently becoming a slave of the Canaanites. (**Ju 1:27-35**) Here is what we can learn from that.



Compromising on  
God's ways always  
leads to slavery.

I suggest though **verse 18** points not just to Samson, but also to the Messiah, the Savior, and strongly hints at his name.

The words “salvation” Yeshua יְשׁוּעָה  
and “LORD” Yehova יְהוָה  
make up the name “Yehoshua” or the  
contraction we know as “Yeshua”,  
which is translated as “Jesus”.

But it's not just the those names that point to Jesus.

When you think of Samson spreading his arms between the two pillars of the pagan temple then sacrificing his life to bring down their temple which destroy the enemies of God and delivers his people, that is a picture of Jesus. That's Yeshua. “I trust in you for salvation LORD”. Jesus stretched his arms out, sacrificed himself, and delivered his people!!



“I trust in you for salvation LORD”.

After that prophecy, the rest are not as exciting. In **verse 19-21** Gad, Asher and Naphtali present a poetic picture of final victory, abundance and prosperity.

The blessing on Joseph is in **verses 22-26**. This paints a picture of tremendous fruitfulness from God, despite deadly persecution from his brothers.

And the final blessing is on Benjamin. **Verse 27**. The tribe of Benjamin is known for its fierce warriors – left-handed stone slingers – or, as the poem says “ravenous wolves”. The line about “dividing his plunder” is often linked to King Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, who disobediently kept the plunder of battle. **Verses 28-33**.

### Thoughts for your meditation and application

First, re: biblical poetry...



Our original question is still before us. To whom does the scepter belong?

We’ve walked through the lives of Jacob’s sons. Reuben lost privilege through sin and evil. Simeon and Levi were undone by unchecked anger. Issachar went into slavery because of compromise. Those three all speak loud warnings to us.

Other brothers found blessing, but not the throne. One by one, every human candidate falls short except for one.

And then we arrive at Judah, to Shiloh – “the One to whom it belongs.” This is not about the strongest, not the loudest, not the most likely. But the rightful King.

And Scripture doesn’t leave that identity unclear. The Lion of Judah...The One before whom the nations will bow, the one to whom the scepter belongs... That One is Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the One who did not seize authority – He is authority. He did not grasp for the crown –He was born King. He did not prove Himself by fighting for the throne – He proved Himself by defeating the sin as the sinless lamb of God, who was resurrected on the third day.

In all of history, only Jesus can do what **Genesis 3** and **49** prophesized: Crush the serpent, which brings salvation, and rule the nations. Only Jesus is both Savior and King. Only Jesus is Shiloh – “the One to whom it belongs”.

So now this question “to whom does the scepter belong?” is no longer just an exercise of discovery.

It’s personal. Is Jesus your Saviour and King? That is his rightful place in your life!

In the future we know that “every knee will bow” (**Philippians 2:10**) Jesus doesn’t struggle to take His place. He simply steps forward and everything and everyone yields to Him.

So today, don’t resist Him. Don’t compete with Him. Don’t try to hold what was never yours to carry.

Instead... surrender to the One. Because peace, joy, and life are found in this truth:

The scepter belongs to Jesus. The kingdom belongs to Jesus. And when we belong to Him – we are exactly where we are meant to be.

# BONUS

## CONTENT:

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**Translator's admission:** Translators humbly admit to making educated guesses on some portions of this poem.

**Parallel poetry:** Moses also pronounces "blessings" on the twelve tribes in **Deuteronomy 33**.

**Wordplay on names:** All but Joseph's blessing is a play on their names in Hebrew. Most don't translate well into English.

**Genesis 49:1** Jacob's farewell discourse. Hebrew scholars refer to this as a "testament" - the last words of a patriarch. They also refer to it as a "poetic blessing". And they refer to it as a "Tribal Oracle Poem". I imagine it being sung.

**Genesis 49:1** Jacob's "farewell discourse" to his twelve sons must then be a historically parallel story to Jesus' "farewell discourse" to his twelve disciples in **John 13-17**. I'm sure there are many parallels... I need to think more on this. If you think of any let me know.

**Genesis 49:3-4** Reuben loses his birthright. The firstborn was given a double portion of inheritance as the firstborn was expected to take care of their family, including their father's widows, and lead the clan. In Reuben's case, the double (two) blessings are taken from him and given to Joseph's two sons - one blessing each. **1 Chronicles 5:1**.

**Genesis 49:5** Simeon was the one that Joseph chose to put in prison in **Genesis 42:24**. I wonder what the connection is?

**Genesis 49:7 Curse.** Was the curse on Simeon and Levi connected to the curse of Cain (**Genesis 4:11**) who likewise in violence killed his brother? These needs explored.

The curse on Simeon and Levi may also be linked to Noah's curse on Ham's son Canaan. Ham was the one who was sexually inappropriate with his drunk father. Maybe the link there is that Simeon and Levi are likewise cursed, meaning no better than the despised Canaanites (descendants of Canaan) who they just killed for raping their sister Tamar?

**Genesis 49:10 Fits Abrahamic covenant?** Verse 10 certainly would fit in with the Abrahamic covenant that tells us the seed of Abraham will bring blessing to all the families of the earth.

**Genesis 49:10 Rulers staff carved decrees in stone.** This of course is a picture of the LORD/YHWH carving the stone tablets on Mount Sinai.

**Genesis 49:10 between his feet?** This is a euphemism for reproductive organs that generate "seed" - as in descendants. Meaning Judah's descendants will have an eternal reign.

**Genesis 49:11.** Clothes in wine? Some have connected this verse to **Isaiah 63:1**, and to **Revelation 19:11, 13, 15**. Perhaps, but does it match the context of abundance from the beginning of the verse?

**Genesis 49:26c NASB** "...And on the head of the one distinguished among his brothers". Some scholars see this as both Joseph in the literal sense and pointing toward the Lion of Judah as well.

**Genesis 49:27** another ravenous wolf? I would suggest that another "ravenous wolf" from the tribe of Benjamin was Saul of Tarsus before he met Jesus!

# BONUS

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# CONTENT:

## **Sources:**

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9. Bema Discipleship Podcast - Season 1. Marty Solomon.
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11. eSword app- Wow!