

GIVE ME A LIFETIME

Part 14

Genesis 49

(The Last
Judgement of Jacob)



ANALYSIS OF CHAPTER

Jacob calls
his sons to
bless them.
(1,2)

Reuben,
Simeon,
Levi. (3-7)

Judah. (8-
12)

Zebulun,
Issachar,
Dan. (13-
18)

Gad, Asher,
Naphtali.
(19-21)

Joseph and
Benjamin.
(22-27)

Jacob's
charge
about his
burial, his
death. (28-
33)

KEY VERSE

Verse 1: "And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days."

KEYWORD

Verse 26, "blessings."

KEY THOUGHT

In fulfillment of his dreams, Joseph is referred to as "the prince among his brothers," verse 26.

KEY THING TO LOOK OUT FOR

God does not bestow the same blessings on everyone.

The expression "the last days" is used here for the first of fourteen occurrences in the Old Testament. The expression has always been taken by the rabbis to be Messianic. It is an eschatological expression referring, generally, to "the end time" of Daniel 12:4, 9. In its ultimate fulfillment, Jacob's prophecy focuses on the climax of the ages, on that terminal point in time to which all history leads.

So we see Jacob's sons gathered about his bed. We view the scene as the judgment seat of Jacob, and it prefigures the judgment seat of Christ. Lives are brought up for review and rebukes and rewards are meted out. What has been sowed must be reaped. Hidden things are exposed and judged; open things are praised or punished. There is a place in a Kingdom at stake for each one, and each one is weighed in the light of that.

Genesis 49 – The Blessing Of Jacob

- These last words of the patriarch, Israel, are uttered to his offspring concerning the generations that shall follow. The statements are prophetic, poetic, and explanatory concerning the nation of Israel's future. The prophecy ranges from their dwelling in Canaan to the appearance and time of the Messiah. Accomplishing this, in instances, involves a dual effort. At times the utterance concerns Israel as a nation at the end days while in "distress" (Deuteronomy 4:30; Ezekiel 38:16). These statements can involve the progression and succession of Gentile nations (Daniel 2:28). They can refer to and include the church age (Hebrews 1:2; II Timothy 3:1). Coupled with the patriarch's viewing of things that should be, blessings were bestowed on his children, just as Isaac blessed his children (Chapter 27).

Rashness and Volatility are disqualifying

49:3-7 Jacob's three oldest sons—Reuben, Simeon, and Levi (35:23)—all forfeited their status by rash acts.

Reuben violated Bilhah, (35:22; 49:4).

Simeon and Levi led the deadly slaughter at Shechem (vv. 5-7; 34:25).

Rashness and Volatility are disqualifying. (See Footnote 1 On Controlling Anger)

REUBEN: Reuben had once been his father's pride and joy. As he heard his father's opening words his heart expanded and his face glowed.

- ❑ "My firstborn!" - He was going to get the double portion of the property;
- ❑ "The excellency of dignity and the excellence of power." That must mean he was to get the priesthood. The possessions, the pre-eminence, the priesthood.
- ❑ "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."
- ❑ Like water that always seeks its own level no matter how low that might be,
- ❑ Like water that when spilled upon the ground cannot be gathered again.
- ❑ "Thou shalt not excel." He never did excel. His tribe never rose to prominence in Israel. None of the tribe ever ruled. The Reubenites excelled in nothing.

JUDAH: 49:8-12- Apparently because of his willingness to accept responsibility for his earlier sin and for Benjamin's safety, Judah, Jacob's fourth-born son (35:23), is graced to become the progenitor of the Messiah (49:10). This forms the basis (v. 9) for Christ's being called "the Lion from the tribe of Judah" (Rv 5:5).

Looking yet at Judah, Jacob saw the Lord (49:10). "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." In Jacob's prophecy it refers not to a place but a person, and points to that true Prince of Peace into whose almighty hand the sceptre of absolute and universal dominion is yet to be placed. He would come from Judah's line.

(FOOTNOTE 1)

• ESSAY: ON CONTROLLING ANGER

49.7 Cursed be their anger so fierce,
And their wrath so relentless.

Anger is directly related to both good and evil. The difference is the answer to five questions:

What am I angry about?

Is the anger justified?

Is the anger proportionate to the offense?

What behavior will my anger lead me to do?

Do I control my anger, or does my anger control me?

Jacob condemned Simeon and Levi because they allowed justified anger to lead them to unjustifiable behavior—mass killing. Whether people get angry is not what reveals their character; it is what they get angry about and how they express it.

A Talmudic saying states we can judge a person by how he acts with regard to "his pocket; his anger; and his cup."¹

"Pocket" refers to monetary matters, and "cup" refers to alcohol. The Hebrew is a play on these three words which sound almost identical—"kiso" (his pocket"), ka'aso ("his anger"), and koso ("his cup").

Telushkin makes a compelling argument that people with bad tempers who tell themselves they cannot control their anger are usually deceiving themselves: Mugging victims, for example, feel intense anger at their mugger, but virtually all of them—even those with bad tempers—politely hand over their money rather than curse or fight the attacker. They control their behavior, proving they can do so—when they want to.

Telushkin offers a second example: If people with anger issues were offered a million dollars to significantly reduce the number of times they expressed excessive anger over a six-month period, most would become adept at controlling their temper. But in the absence of million-dollar incentives, people destroy marriages, family relationships, and friendships—things worth far more than a million dollars. This was Jacob's message to Simeon and Levi: They chose not to control their rage. Therefore, "Cursed be their anger so fierce."

(FOOTNOTE 2)

- COMMENTS ON CONDEMNING EVIL (49:6)

As Genesis 34 relates, Simeon and Levi avenged the rape of their sister Dinah by killing not only Dinah's rapist but all the male inhabitants of Shechem as well. Although Jacob did not condemn them on moral grounds at the time (Genesis 34:30), he did so now. This condemnation is important and impressive. It is another example of the Torah's preoccupation with good and evil—not Jew and non-Jew, believer and non-believer, rich and poor, family and non-family, or any other non-morality-based division of humanity.

Jacob's harsh censure of Levi in particular provides another example of the historicity of the Torah. The Levites became the most elite tribe in Israel, among whom were the priests (kohanim), God's elect who enjoyed a privileged status because of their role in the Temple service. Given this exalted status, had the Torah been written in a later period, it is unlikely to have depicted Levi in such a negative light.