

## Genesis 49

1. We have talked of this before, but let us revisit the idea of a blessing. What does it mean to you to bless someone?

What does it mean to you to receive a blessing?

From our study of *Genesis*, what is the main purpose of a father's blessing on his sons?

Look back at *Genesis* 27:27-29, which contains Isaac's blessing over Jacob. Even though Isaac believed he was speaking to Esau, the blessing belonged to Jacob. What were the important parts of that blessing?

Look carefully at what Isaac says in verse 29. How many brothers did Jacob have?

Considering this, how do you explain Isaac's words that Jacob is to be lord over his brothers and that the sons of his mother will bow down to him?

What does this blessing have to do with Jacob's sons?

2. After blessing Joseph's sons, what does Jacob tell his other sons?

These blessings are also part prophecy. What does this mean to you?

How would you describe the relationship between a blessing and a prophecy?

3. Jacob speaks first to Reuben. What does he say to Reuben in verse 3?

Based upon this part of the blessing only, how would you be feeling if you were Reuben?

However, things change in verse 4. To what does Israel compare Reuben?

What does it mean to you that Israel compared Reuben to turbulent or uncontrolled water? How would you describe such a person?

What does Reuben's future hold for his family?

What does it mean to you that Reuben will no longer excel?

What is the reason for this prophecy over Reuben?

What does this tell you about the effect of our actions on future generations?

4. Israel speaks next to Simeon and Levi. What do you remember about them?

Israel says that they are brothers, which they are. What do you think is Israel's deeper meaning?

What does Israel say about his two sons in verse 5? Why does he say this?

What does Israel say about them in verse 6?

Why would he not want to be in their council?

What can we learn about seeking advice from Israel's words?

What specific details do we learn about these two brothers in verse 6?

Who is speaking in verse 7? How do we know this?

What does God say He is going to do to these two tribes?

Why would this be a curse?

5. Looking at the blessings so far, what affects have past actions had on the present blessings?

Now, Jacob turns to Judah. What do you remember about Judah?

Based upon Judah's past, what type of blessing would you expect Judah to receive?

However, what is the very first thing Jacob says to Judah?

What does it mean to you that Judah's hand will be on the neck of its enemies?

Look at the last part of verse 8. What else does Jacob say to Judah?

In verse 9, we have a series of metaphors. To what three things does Jacob compare Judah?

What does each of these images mean to you?

Looking at all these images, what conclusions can we draw about Judah?

6. First, Jacob prophesies that Judah will be praised. Next, that Judah will be warlike as a lion. How do explain these seemingly two opposite qualities residing in the same blessing?

Can you think of a descendent of Judah that will be known for both praise and warring?

7. What is a scepter and what does it symbolize?

Some versions read "nor the ruler's staff from between his feet," and others "nor a lawgiver from between his feet." What do these phrases mean to you?

Judah and his brothers would understand that these words would be referring to a future king. If you were Judah, how would such a blessing affect you?

How do you interpret the last two lines of verse 10? (Note, you might want to look at different versions.)

8. Jacob is still not finished. What does verse 11 tell us about Judah?

How would you explain the washing of garments in wine?

How would you explain Jacob's final words in verse 12?

9. Judah's blessing is the first blessing that contains nothing negative. Was this Jacob's doing? Please explain.

10. Following Judah's lengthy blessing, Jacob addresses Zebulun. What does Jacob say about Zebulun?

What is a haven? What is the significance of Zebulun's being a haven for ships?

If you were Zebulun, would you be disappointed with such a blessing? Please explain.

11. Issachar is next. To what does Jacob compare his son Issachar?

What type of donkey or ass is used to describe Issachar?

What positive traits does a donkey have?

What are donkeys most known for? Is this a good thing?

What is the most common use for a donkey?

12. Jacob paints us a picture in verse 14. We have a strong donkey with a heavy burden on each side. What does this donkey do?

To some this may seem like laziness, but to some it signifies patience. Which do you think is the more appropriate interpretation?

Read verse 15. What does this tell us about Issachar?

"Bend his shoulder to the burden" can also be interpreted as being under a yoke. Do you see this as a positive trait? Please explain.

Summarize what this blessing tells us about Issachar.

13. What does the name "Dan" mean?

What does Jacob say about Dan in verse 16?

What would it mean to you if someone said you would provide justice for your people?

The next part of this blessing states that Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path. The viper was the color of the sand and could camouflage itself easily. This made the viper, which had a very poisonous bite, very dangerous. What do you believe this is saying about Dan?

What is Dan capable of doing?

Can you think of a positive application for a dangerous bite causing a rider to tumble backwards?

How do you reconcile Dan's being both a judge and a viper?

The last part of Dan's blessing is in the form of a quote. What does it say?

Samson was from the tribe of Dan. In what ways does Samson reflect this blessing?

14. Gad's blessing is much shorter than others. Does this mean Gad is not as important? Please explain.

What does verse 19 say about Gad?

What does it mean to you that Gad will attack his attackers at their heels?

15. Verse 20 contains Asher's blessing. What does Israel say over this son?

How would you feel receiving this blessing? Please explain.

16. To what is Naphtali compared in verse 21?

The word for "doe" also means gazelle. What does this image tell us about Naphtali?

What does the phrase "doe set free" tell us about this tribe?

The second part of this verse reads differently in some versions. The NIV reads as follows: that bears beautiful fawns. What does this mean to you?

The ASV and KJV read as follows: He giveth goodly words. What does this mean to you?

What can we learn about Naphtali from these two different readings?

17. Now, it is Joseph's turn. To what is Joseph compared in verse 22?

This is a beautiful image. What is contained in the image of a fruitful vine near a spring? What does this tell us about Joseph?

What does the last part of verse 22 mean to you?

18. Verse 23 tells us that archers will attack Joseph. Why will they do this?

In what way has Joseph already seen this truth in his life?

Why might "archers" attack him out of bitterness or envy?

Yet, despite the attacks, what is Joseph able to do in verse 24?

Why is Joseph able to fend off these attackers?

What are the four "names" of God Jacob uses when he blesses his son Joseph?

Why do you think Jacob chose these names?

19. According to verse 25, what type of blessings is Joseph going to receive?

What do these blessings mean to you?

Jacob is not through. How does he finish blessing Joseph in verse 26?

How can these blessings be greater than the blessings of ancient mountains?

What can you tell about Jacob and Joseph's relationship from the language used in verse 26?

20. Look again at Joseph's blessing. How would you summarize what his father spoke over him?

In what way or ways will we see this blessing come true?

Joshua, Deborah, and Samuel all come from the tribe of Joseph. How are they a fulfillment of this blessing?

21. Finally, Jacob gets to Benjamin. To what does he compare Benjamin?

What does this ravenous wolf do?

What does this image tell us about Benjamin?



What would it mean to you to have a brother who was a "ravenous wolf"?

Look at Judges 19 & 20. What do we learn about Benjamin from these chapters? Is Benjamin like a "ravenous wolf"? Please explain.

22. Verse 28 tells us that each of the blessings was appropriate to each brother. What does that mean?

After the blessings, what instructions does Jacob give to his sons?

Why does Jacob want to be buried there?

This "field" near Mamre is considered a very holy site. Who is buried there?

With these blessings, Jacob's life ends, and Joseph, because of his position, is over this family. If you were among the remaining brothers, would you have any reservations? Please explain.