



Genesis – 49:1-28
Jacob’s Last Words Concerning His Sons
(Lesson #60)

To access missed lessons, lesson guides, and additional materials please visit our class website:
<https://truth-seekers.net>

Joseph’s Timeline

Event	Joseph’s Age	Genesis
Joseph’s father moves family from Haran	6	31:17-21
Joseph is sold into slavery	<u>17</u> / Jac 108	37:12-36
Joseph interprets the dreams of cupbearer and baker while in prison	28	41:1
Joseph’s grandfather Isaac dies	<u>29</u> / Jac 120	35:28-29
Joseph interprets Pharaoh’s dreams and is released from prison	30	41:46
Seven years of plenty, Manasseh and Ephraim born during this time	30-37	41:47-52
Seven years of famine	37-44	41:47-52
Joseph and Jacob reunite (2 years into famine), and family moves family to Egypt	<u>39</u> / Jac 130	45:6, 47:9, 28
Jacob dies	<u>56</u> / Jac 147	47:28
Joseph dies	110	50:22-26

Outline of chapter 49:

1. Jacob calls his twelve sons together (49:1-2).
2. Jacob provides a prophetic utterance over Reuben (49:3-4).
3. Jacob provides a prophetic utterance over Simeon and Levi (49:5-7).
4. Jacob provides a prophetic utterance over Judah (49:8-12).
5. Jacob provides a prophetic utterance over Zebulun (49:13).
6. Jacob provides a prophetic utterance over Issachar (49:14-15).
7. Jacob provides a prophetic utterance over Dan (49:16-18).
8. Jacob a prophetic utterance over Gad (49:19).
9. Jacob provides a prophetic utterance over Asher (49:20).
10. Jacob provides a prophetic utterance over Naphtali (49:21).
11. Jacob provides a prophetic utterance over Joseph (49:22-26)
12. Jacob provides a prophetic utterance over Benjamin (49:27).
13. Following the utterances, Jacob charges his sons to bury him with his fathers in the cave that Abraham purchased (49:28-32).
14. When Jacob finished charging his sons, he yielded up the ghost and was gathered to his people (49:33).

49:1 Then Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come. 2 "Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, listen to Israel your father.

Vs 49:1 - Then Jacob called his sons. It seems that the sons have been trickling in while Jacob was blessing Joseph and more significantly Ephraim and Manasseh.

It seems likely that many if not all of the brothers heard what Jacob said about the two sons of Joseph.

PLEASE NOTICE: Having finished blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, Jacob calls for all of his sons to gather themselves together around him that he may tell them: **“what shall happen to you in the days to come.”**

This clearly is using the **singular you and** turning it into a **plural you** to speak of what is to happen to **each of the tribes**. As an example, this prophecy is not so much about **Reuben the man**, but **Reuben the tribe**.

The Hebrew translated days to come is two Hebrew words: אחרית ('achariyth) – End, latter, or last and יום (yowm) – days or times.

SO YOU KNOW: This Hebrew term “**latter days**” is used a total of 13 times in the Old Testament (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 4:30, 31:29; Is 2:2; Jer 23:20, 30:24, 48:47, 49:39; Eze 38:16; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1; Dan 10:14) and is consistently used to describe a **distant prophecy**.

General Observations on these Prophetic Utterances:

- 1) The thrust of what Jacob has to say about each son is prophetic, it is about: “**what shall happen to them in the days to come.**”
- 2) You will see in many cases the prophetic utterance connects to or **references their past actions or behavior**. Stated differently, each son’s **future outgrowth is a product of their past character**.
- 3) It seems the **character of the tribes**, has its **genesis in the original son’s character**.
- 4) You will see that the **amount of ink spilt on Judah and Joseph is significantly greater than the other 10**. Here we can see both Judah and Joseph will outshine their brothers in **significance and importance**.
- 5) Some of **these prophetic utterances** use **poetic language and imagery** and these can, at least at times, make the pronouncements difficult to find a sure interpretation.
- 6) Some of the prophetic utterances use word play, and this too can, at least at times, make the pronouncements difficult to interpret.
- 7) The order does not follow their **birthright order**, it begins with the first four and then jumps to the 10th born son.
- 8) Two sons receive their prophetic utterance together.
- 9) With most sons there is no reference to location, but that is not true for all.
- 10) They all **hear one another’s prophetic utterances**.
- 11) Within many of the blessings within these tribes you will find pictures and reminders of the Messiah.
- 12) Within many of the blessings you will find reminders of blessings New Covenant believers enjoy because of the Messiah.

Vs 2 - This is a Hebrew parallelism that plays on Jacob’s name:

- 1) Assemble and listen **sons of Jacob**
- 2) Listen to **Israel your father**

Jacob is calling his sons to gather around him and listen to Israel their father.

Not to beat a dead horse, but here again we see Moses use Jacob and Israel interchangeably.

3 *“Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. 4 Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father’s bed; then you defiled it — he went up to my couch!”*

So Jacob will walk through his twelve sons, starting with the firstborn, and working his way through his sons pronouncing future prophetic utterances upon each of them.

Vs 3 - Reuben is the firstborn of Leah and the firstborn of Jacob.

He is the **firstfruits** of Jacob’s strength. His birth order made him **preeminent in dignity**. His birth order made him **preeminent in power**. Reuben, as the **literal firstborn** was given a **massive place of honor** and with that **place of honor came responsibility**.

This language is all first-born terminology (Deut 21:15-17; Ps 78:51; Ps 105:36).

Vs 4 - Reuben’s past behavior has proven that he was **unstable as water, unstable as boiling water may be the idea**. He **failed to lead** and instead was **led by his own lusts and sinful passions**.

He went up to his father's bed. He defiled it. He had **sex with Bilhah**, the **handmade of Rachel** who had fathered two children to Jacob (Gen 35:22).

In doing this Reuben **showed disregard** and **dishonor towards his father**. Because he was so **unstable, unpredictable, unreliable** and he went up to his father's bed, **he will not have preeminence!**

APPLICATION: It has been said that one of the things God is looking for is a **stable character** and **stable Christian conduct** over the long haul (II Tim 4:7-8).

As we learned last week, Reuben's birthright **was stripped from him (I Ch 5:1)**.

SO YOU KNOW: As far as I can tell the tribe of Reuben never produced anyone of significance, no judges came from Reuben, no prophets came from Reuben, no significant leaders ever came from Reuben. Reuben would go on to play a very minor role in the nation of Israel.

5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. 6 Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company. For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstringed oxen. 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.

Vs 5 - Next Jacob provides the **prophetic utterances over Simeon and Levi** together. This is the **only pair of brothers where he does this**.

Notice how he describes them, they are brothers and **weapons of violence** are the weapons they carry!

As **Reuben had manifested weakness and lust**, these two brothers manifested **anger and cruelty!**

They initiated the slaughter in Shechem in retaliation for rape of their sister Dinah, and Jacob holds them accountable for what happened as recorded in (Genesis 34:25-26).

These two brothers killed all the men of the city. For what one man had done. It is not that this was just **cruel**, it was, but it also **endangered the small family of Israel** and had not God stepped in and protected them, they would have **likely been annihilated** by the surrounding Canaanites.

Vs 6 - Here, the character of these two brothers is lumped together, and it is based on what they did at Shechem and likely represents how they behaved.

In **their unbridled anger they killed the men**, and then in their unbridled anger, they hamstrung the animals. They did not take them as spoil, but instead injured them, making them helpless and useless.

APPLICATION: 20 *for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God (Jam 1:20, ESV).*

Vs 7 - Then we have what sounds more like a **curse than a blessing**. **Cursed be their anger**, for it is **fierce**. Their **wrath is cruel**. I will **divide them** in Jacob, I will **scatter them** in Israel. It is interesting to note that both Simeon and Levi received territory that was inside the territory of other tribes.

Thus, as prophesied, Simeon's inheritance was inside the inheritance of another tribe (Judah) and the tribe of Levi was scattered in **48 different Levitical cities (Josh 21:1-3, 41)**.

One important point, the **tribe of Levi did recover of sorts at Mt Sinai**, as recorded in (Ex 32).

So, the prophecy held, but they redeemed themselves. This is very interesting and reminds us that if people will repent, God will relent. He has no joy in the death of the wicked.

Levi redeemed itself and although it was still scattered in Israel. Its scattering was a blessing to the other tribes! Oh yes, remember Moses was a Levite.

8 "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. 9 Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?"

Here as we come to Judah, we see how different this prophetic utterance is and how it highlights **Judah's preeminence in the family.**

Vs 8 - I would remind you Judah had a very rough start. He was the one who recommended selling Joseph into slavery (Gen 37:26-27). He is the one who married a Canaanite woman (Gen 38:1-2), he is the one who married his son Er to Canaanite women (Gen 38:6), he is the one who unknowingly had sex with his daughter-in law (Gen 38:14-18).

But he is also the one who turned his life around. **He like Levi had a rough start and a great ending. Here we see the grace of God and his willingness to forgive us of our sins!**

Here the Prophetic utterances over Judah, sounds much more like promised blessings. No, in fact like a **string of promised blessings.** To Judah the fourth born of Leah and the fourth born overall we open with **three prophetic utterances:**

- 1) **Your brothers shall praise you!** In the Hebrew this is actually a wordplay for **Judah's name means praise.** It reads, **"Praise, your brothers shall praise you!"**
- 2) You hand shall be on the **neck of your enemies.** Did God do that? See (Ps 18:39-40). **But ultimately all will be judged by king Jesus!**
- 3) Your father's sons, **shall bow down to you** (sound familiar)? It is not just the father's sons! **Ultimately, it is King Jesus who all will bow down to!**

Vs 9 - Here we see Judah's power described in four poetic phrases:

- 1) Judah is like the **cub of a lion.** Judah had the power of a young lion.
- 2) From the **prey you have gone up,** which means you succeeded in killing the prey. When the fight ended, Judah is the one who went up!
- 3) You stoop down, you crouch, ready to pounce like a lion.
- 4) Who dare rouse you! Like a mature lion no one would dare meddle with you (Rev 5:5).

You may wonder, why is Jesus called the Lion of the tribe of Judah? It's genesis (pun intended) is right here.

This is **no doubt poetic,** but I hope you see the **power and might** that he is ascribing to Judah and **why John would call Jesus, the lion of the tribe of Judah.**

10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. 11 Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes. 12 His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.

Vs 10 - Here in verse 10 Jacob deals with the Messianic line, here he provides four poetic statements about the line of the Messiah:

- 1) The **scepter shall not depart from Judah.** The scepter is the **symbol of kingship** it is the symbol of authority and rule.

As you consider this prophecy, consider with me that David would become King around 1011 BC. This prophecy is being given 1876 BC. It would be over 850 years before the first Judean King would arise.

But once risen, the promise would go into effect, that the scepter would not depart from Judah.

- 2) The ruler's staff will remain with Judah (between his feet). This points to Messiah as the **lawgiver and administrator.** It points to the **administration of King Jesus.**
- 3) Until the **one who receives tribute comes.** This is the promised Messiah. The ruler's staff will not leave Judah and indeed will be passed to the **one whose right it is to receive tribute!**

- 4) To this coming one, **shall have the obedience of the peoples**. Do not read over that too fast. **For his obedience is to come from peoples (plural) from nations (plural)**. This is the messianic reign of the **Messiah over all peoples!**

Vs 11 - Here in verse 11, it seems Jacob describes Judah's material prosperity in **two poetic phrases**:

- 1) He will **bind his foal to the vine** and his donkey's colt to the choice vine. Normally you would not do this **because vines are not strong enough**, but in this case Messiah, his vine will be strong enough.
- 2) He has **washed his garments in wine**. This is a **little tough** to understand, but we will give it a shot. His vestiture is washed in the blood of grapes. This of course would be very costly and would leave the garments the color of the grape. **This is the prosperity of Judah.**

Vs 12 – 3) In language that **seems like it comes from the Song of Solomon**, we are told his eyes are darker than wine, it seems to be pointing to abundance of both wine and milk. So much so that it would darken the eyes and whiten the teeth (from consumption). **But this is tough poetic language.**

Overview: Judah is to be praised, Judah will rule, and through Judah will come the Messiah. Judah will have preeminence over his brothers, his brothers will acknowledge that preeminence, he will have victory over his enemies, he will have royal authority, finally from the line of Judah will come an administrator who will administer his Kingdom.

13 "Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships, and his border shall be at Sidon.

Vs 13 - You will notice Jacob was going in order, now he skips to Zebulun. Scholars are not sure why. Could just be the order they were standing in around his bed.

Three things are declared of Zebulun:

- 1) Zebulun shall dwell **looking towards or near the shore of the sea**. It is **interesting**, that it seems Jacob has in view that Zebulun will be back in the Promised Land and they will dwell near the shore of the sea.
- 2) Zebulun shall become a haven for ships.
- 3) Zebulun's border shall be at Sidon

First, based on the land assignments in the book of Joshua, it appears that Zebulun is a landlocked tribe. But it does look towards both the **Mediterranean Sea** and the **Sea of Galilee**.

Zebulun was also near enough to the Phoenician city of Sidon to be enriched from sea-borne trade. Also see (Mat 4:12-13).

SO YOU KNOW: Elon the judge came from Zebulun (Jud 12:11), Jonah the prophet was from Zebulun (Josh 19:10-13), the territory of Zebulun was a major area of Messiah's ministry (Mat 4:15-16).

14 "Issachar is a strong donkey, crouching between the sheepfolds. 15 He saw that a resting place was good, and that the land was pleasant, so he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant at forced labor.

Vs 14 - Issachar is pictured or described by two prophetic predictions:

- 1) A **strong donkey**. In the Numbers 26 census, it was the third largest tribe.
- 2) One who crouches between the sheepfolds
 - a. This seems to point to the idea of **choosing a life of ease over hard work**. It seems to be saying the Issachar is strong and powerful, but chooses to hide out and to avoid hard work.

Vs 15 - Here in verse 15 Issachar's activities are described in four phases:

- 1) He found a **good resting place**.
- 2) The land that he **found was pleasant**.
- 3) He bowed his shoulder to bear, so given pleasant land, we are then told but he bows his shoulder, this makes no sense until you read the final one.
- 4) He bowed his shoulder and **became a servant to forced labor**.

It seems Issachar was unwilling to fight for the land they were given.

SO YOU KNOW: One of the judges of Israel (Tola) came from Issachar (Ich 12:32).

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

Vs 16 - Here in verse 16 we are told that: Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. **This is a wordplay for the name Dan means to judge.**

From Dan descends one of the most famous, if not the most famous of the judges: **Samson (Jud 13-16).**

Vs 17 - Here in verse 17, we are provided with two additional details prophetically about Dan:

- 1) **Dan will be a serpent on the way**
- 2) **A viper that bites the horses' heels so that the rider falls backward.** It appears that Dan will be a warrior who specializes in sneaky attacks, like guerrilla warfare.

This description fits well with **Sampson** as well as the Danite attack on the city of Laish (Jud 18:1-31).

Vs 18 - This is very interesting for two reasons:

- 1) This is the **first use of salvation** in the OT. The Hebrew word here is **יְשׁוּעָה (yeshu'ah)**. It is where we get the Hebrew name: **יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (Yehoshu'a)**. **Which is a form of Joshua or Jesus.**
- 2) Dan's history was **littered with idolatry and became a center of idol worship in Israel** (Jud 18:1-31; I Ki 12:28-30; II Kin 10:29)

But Jacob seems to be saying salvation will come for Dan!

SO YOU KNOW: The tribe of Dan is not listed in the tribes listed in **Rev 7**.

19 "Raiders shall raid Gad, but he shall raid at their heels.

First **Gad** means **troop**. In the Hebrew the prophetic utterance over Gad contain **only six words** and a **wordplay at that!** **NKJV** seems to catch it best: "*Gad, a troop shall tramp (troop) upon him.*"

Vs 19 - Raiders shall raid Gad. Gad was located on the east side of the Jordan and was consistently attacked and harassed by hostile troops (Jer 49:1).

- 1) But he shall **raid at their heels**. Gad will return fire if you will and be successful, he will raid upon their heels chasing them and overcoming them in the end. Gad's fighting ability is mentioned in I Chr 5:18-22.

What is said of Gad could be said of Jesus, and it can be said of believers! We too will triumph in the end!

20 "Asher's food shall be rich, and he shall yield royal delicacies.

Vs 20 - Two statements are made about Asher:

- 1) Asher's **food shall be rich**
- 2) He shall **yield royal delicacies**.

It seems to be pointing to material abundance and material prosperity that will befall Asher. The area that Asher was assigned along the Mediterranean Sea is an area rich in agriculture and to this day it produces a number of different crops including a large number of olives.

21 "Naphtali is a doe let loose that bears beautiful fawns.

Vs 21 - Here two things are said about Naphtali:

- 1) Naphtali is a doe, let loose. It pictures a doe that is free to run and free to roam.
- 2) Naphtali bears beautiful fawns.

The inheritance of Naphtali is a mountainous region that provided the tribe great freedom to roam (Jud 4).

Equally, it is in the region of Naphtali would be the place would God would show a great light (Mat 4:12-16).

Second, Naphtali bears beautiful fawns. This is very touch to come to a clear conclusion. The New King James translates this difficult passage: “*“Naphtali is a deer let loose; He uses beautiful words.” (Ge 49:21 NKJV)*. It may be that the nation was known for their sophistication of speech, it is really hard to be sure.

22 "Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall. 23 The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him severely, 24 yet his bow remained unmoved; his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),

Vs 22 - Here in verse 22 we come to **three prophetic utterances** over Joseph. Remember what we learned last week. **Joseph is a single son, the 11th born**, but he is likely representing two tribes **Ephraim and Manasseh**. Keep that in mind:

- 1) Joseph is a **fruitful bough**
 - a. The word “**fruitful**” has the same root as the name **Ephraim**, which if you remember I told you meant **double fruit**.
- 2) He is a fruitful **branch by a spring**. He is not just a fruitful tree; he is a **fruitful tree planted** by a spring **that provides constant water**.

As I thought on this point, I was reminded of Psalm 1.

APPLICATION: In Christ, you and I are this blessed man that brings forth fruit, that is planted by streams of water (no doubt a picture of the Holy Spirit)!

- 3) His **branches run up over the wall**. The spread of Joseph’s fruitfulness is pictured as a vine that runs up over the wall that it was placed against.

Vs 23 - Here we see the persecution of Joseph in three phases:

- 1) The **archers bitterly attacked him**,
- 2) The **archers shot at him**.
- 3) The **archers harassed him severely!**

This all likely pointing to what he suffered as his brothers sold him into slavery, what he suffered under in Potiphar’s house, what he suffered in the prison.

Vs 24 - Here in verse 24, Joseph’s survival is discussed in four phases:

- 1) Yet his **bow remained unmoved**, the idea is his bow stayed taunt. In spite of the attacks, Joseph bow remained untouched.
- 2) His arms **were made agile**. Literally, his arms remained strong, he was attacked but retained his strength.
- 3) Joseph **prevailed by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob**. It was God in Joseph that led to Joseph’s survival. It was God that caused his bow to remain unmoved. It was all because of the **Mighty ONE!**

APPLICATION: Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world! **Our strength, even when we do not sense it, comes from God.**

- 4) From there is the **Shepherd, the Stone of Israel**. This is tough in the Hebrew, but what Jacob seems to be saying is that the **same God will produce the Shepherd of Israel (John 10:11)**.

The same God will produce the **stone of Israel (Is 28:16)**. Thus Joseph’s ultimate survival is tied to the Shepherd and the stone.

25 by the God of your father who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. 26 The blessings

of your father are mighty beyond the blessings of my parents, up to the bounties of the everlasting hills. May they be on the head of Joseph, and on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers.

Vs 25 - Here Jacob clearly outlines the sources of Joseph's blessings in two headings:

- 1) The God of your **father (Jacob) will help you**. The God of Jacob, the God of Isaac, the God of Abraham, he is the one who has and who will help Joseph!
- 2) By the **almighty who will bless you**, the Hebrew word translated almighty is a word we have seen a few times now. **שַׁדַּי (Shadday). The almighty shall bless you.**

Then we see the blessings under three heads or three banners:

- A) You will be **blessed with the blessings of the heavens above**
- B) You will be **blessed with the blessings of the deep** (likely fountains)
- C) You will be blessed with the **blessings of the breast and the womb. The tribe of Joseph would become the largest tribe (Num 26 census)!**

Vs 26 - Jacob now begins to reflect on the blessing that he has enjoyed, notice what he says: What I (Jacob) received by way of blessings **went beyond the blessings of Isaac and Abraham.**

Abraham gave the **blessings to one son. Isaac** gave the **blessings to one son. But Jacob** gave the **blessings to 12 sons and 2 grandsons.** Blessings up to the blessings of the eternal mountains.

In verses 25-26 Moses has used the word bless or blessings **five times!**

25 by the God of your father who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. 26 The blessings of your father are mighty beyond the blessings of my parents, up to the bounties of the everlasting hills. May they be on the head of Joseph, and on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers.

All of these blessings, look at it - **May they be on the head of Joseph, and on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers.**

Also, in the blessing of Joseph five different titles of God were used:

- Vs 24 - Mighty One of Jacob
- Vs 24 – Shepherd
- Vs 24 – Stone of Israel
- Vs 25 – God of your father
- Vs 25 – Almighty!

27 "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf, in the morning devouring the prey and at evening dividing the spoil."

Vs 27 - Here three prophetic utterances are made over Benjamin:

- 1) Benjamin is a **ravenous wolf**. He is a vicious wolf that tears his prey into pieces. **Benjamin would be a fierce warrior!**
- 2) In the morning it **devours prey**. He is **aggressive, victorious, and will win the battle.**
- 3) In the evening it divides the spoil. He will share the spoil with others, that is Benjamin!

SO YOU KNOW: The tribe of Benjamin produced some famous fighters **Ehud** (Jud 3:15-30); **Saul** (I Sam 9:1-11:15); **Jonathan** (I Sam 14:1-52) and **Saul** (later renamed Paul). Do not forget how vicious Saul was prior to his conversion!

28 ¶ All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him.

Vs 28 - The **prophetic utterances over the tribes end**. The prophetic utterances go beyond the initial sons of Jacob to the tribes themselves and the **future that awaits them!** This is what Jacob said to them, as he blessed them, as he blessed them with a blessing that was suitable to the son blessed. We will end here, next week we will see the death and burial of Jacob.