

Gen. 49:1 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.

Gen. 49:2 Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

Jacob called all his sons to him to give them their final blessing which was basically a prophecy of how their descendants would fare in the future. It's interesting to me that he uses the term "in the last days." I usually take this phrase for this particular time to mean during the generation preceding Jesus' 2nd coming.

Gen. 49:3 Reuben, thou *art* my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:

Gen. 49:4 Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou *it*: he went up to my couch.

First he blesses Reuben. Even though the firstborn, the natural position to reflect the strength and dignity and power of the family, he could look forward to a decline in his position and prosperity because of his sin against his father by sleeping with Bilhah. He was a son of disappointment.

Gen. 49:5 Simeon and Levi *are* brethren; instruments of cruelty *are* in their habitations.

Gen. 49:6 O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

Gen. 49:7 Cursed *be* their anger, for *it was* fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

Simeon and Levi are identified as "instruments of cruelty." Their actions did not reflect the honor of the family; they had murdered. I'm not sure what "digged down a wall" refers to. They would not produce strong tribes for they would be scattered among the other tribes. 11/05 (The Levites were given positions of honor as those who would serve as priests, but this relegated them to cities throughout the whole land.) Simeon and Levi are the sons who acted without the consent of their father regarding the incident with Dinah in chapter 34. The priests eventually acted in their own wisdom and according to their own desires which contributed to the people rebelling in disobedience to God because of lack of spiritual leadership.

Gen. 49:8 Judah, thou *art he* whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand *shall be* in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

Gen. 49:9 Judah *is* a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

Gen. 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*.

Gen. 49:11 Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes:

Gen. 49:12 His eyes *shall be* red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

Judah is told that his brothers will praise him and would bow down before him. He would be powerful against his enemies. He is compared to a young lion, which I think reflects his strength in battle. (1/11) In Egypt at that time a couched lion was symbolic of the right to rulership. He would be wise in battle tactics. No one would dare to bother him in his old age because of his history of victory. He is told that the scepter would not depart from Judah. This represented the fact that his would be the tribe of kings. I've been taught that Shiloh is a term that references the Messiah. (1/11 Shiloh = peaceable, "Prince of Peace") The Messiah is the one all the nations would worship. I think the colt/donkey refers to when Messiah would ride into Jerusalem as King—but be rejected. Verses 11 and 12 make me think of the description in Revelation 14 talking about the harvest of the earth and in Revelation 19 when Jesus returns as King of Kings. I have no idea to what the phrase "his teeth white with milk" refers—1/11 maybe possessing milk of word of truth.

1 Peter 2:2 "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"

Gen. 49:13 Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon.

Zebulun is destined to live by the seashore and be a port of safety or refuge for ships. I guess, from looking at one of my maps, one of the borders of his territory probably the northern border, will be Sidon (in today's Lebanon).

Gen. 49:14 Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens:

Gen. 49:15 And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.

Issachar is compared to a strong donkey who is not afraid of hard work given the right motivation. (11/05) This reflects a desire to live in peace in the land and a willingness to be subservient for that privilege.

Gen. 49:16 Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel.

Gen. 49:17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.

Gen. 49:18 I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.

Dan will be known for justice among the tribes of Israel. I think verse 17 refers to the fact that Dan is the tribe that leads the way into idolatry—like the serpent deceived Adam and Eve, he will deceive many of his relatives. Maybe verse 18 is referring to an attitude of repentance when he eventually realizes his sin and looks to the Lord for forgiveness and restoration.

Gen. 49:19 Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.

Gad will be attacked by enemies, but he will not be overcome. (11/05) The land of Gad was vulnerable to attack since it was on the east side of the Jordan River.

Gen. 49:20 Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

Asher will be known for its expertise in cooking and will experience riches and luxury. (1/11) "his bread fat" – abundant due to rich, fertile land

Gen. 49:21 Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.

Naphtali is compared to a deer running free; he will be smooth spoken and known for speaking wisdom. (11/05) The “good words” could reference the “good news” of the gospel since the disciples came mainly from his territory.

Gen. 49:22 Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:

Gen. 49:23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him:

Gen. 49:24 But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

Gen. 49:25 Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:

Gen. 49:26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

Joseph is compared to a fruitful vine with plenty of nourishment. Even though he will be assaulted by bitter enemies, he will refuse to stoop to their level in response. He will recognize that his strength is in “the mighty God of Jacob” from who will come the Messiah, the Shepherd, the stone of Israel. It is God, the God of his fathers, who will bless him abundantly with blessings of all kinds. Jacob states that he realized that his own blessings have surpassed the blessing of his ancestors and that that prosperity will continue on to Joseph, who was singled out among all his brothers for greatness.

(11/05) There is much talk in recent times of “blessings of the deep” referencing the discovery of oil, and there is a company (Zion Oil) that is drilling for oil in the area based on these verses.

(6/06) I am currently doing a study in Ezekiel and noticed something interesting that ought to be considered at this point. Following is an excerpt from my journal on Ezekiel 20:6:

“In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands: “

God specifically chose the prime real estate on planet earth for His people. He describes it as “the glory of all lands.” It was a land *flowing* (flowing freely like water, gush out) with milk and honey. The Hebrew root for *milk* made reference to that which was richest and choicest. “Milk and honey” was a reference to blessings of the comforts of life. This tells me that the soil was rich and produced abundantly. We are given a bit more detail about the land in Deuteronomy.

Deut. 8:7 For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;

Deut. 8:8 A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;

Deut. 8:9 A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any *thing* in it; a land whose stones *are* iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

In reading through these verses again, I realized that verse 8 calls it a land of "oil, olive and honey." *Oil* was a distinct word from *olive*. I'm not sure that would ever have jumped out at me if I had lived in another time and place. Maybe it means nothing; but just maybe it is a reference to wealth that Israel has yet to discover. The Hebrew and its roots for *oil* is a reference to "grease, richness...to shine, become fat." It wouldn't surprise me for Israel to discover oil in addition to her other natural resources— agricultural, the Dead Sea, technological expertise, etc.

(4/07) Technically, this comment belongs with verse 20 regarding the blessing on Asher, but since I started the comments on this subject at this point, I will continue them here. In a recent article in the Prophecy Update Newsletter (www.prophecyupdate.com) they included an article by Steve Spillman, "Olive Oil vs. Petroleum Oil - In Defense of the Faith," that gave some added insight on the possibility of oil being found in Israel.

When Moses mentioned oil in his repeat of Jacob's Blessing in Deuteronomy, he used the Hebrew word "shemen." In English translations of the Genesis account of Jacob's Blessing, the word oil is never used. "Shemen," according to Strong's Concordance, in its noun form means literally "grease, especially liquid"; in its verb or adjective form it means, "fatness" as in to make fat or to become fat (prosperous). "Shemen" is a general term; it can, in its noun form be used to describe olive oil, but it can also describe any substance that is oily or greasy or fatty.

Ancient Hebrew however, was not without the ability to describe specific meaning. When Moses addressed the people of Israel as God's spokesman, there were times when he wanted them to understand exactly what he meant. If Moses wanted God's people to understand that he meant "olive oil" specifically he would use the words "shemen" (oil) and "zayith" (olive) in conjunction. Moses used this conjunction at least four times recorded in the Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Leviticus 24:2 gives us a good example of "shemen" and "zayith" being used in conjunction to mean specifically olive oil. "Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil (shemen) olive (zayith) beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually." When speaking to the children of Israel, Moses was to express God's instructions precisely and specifically. If Moses wanted the children of Israel to understand that the "oil" in Jacob's Blessing was literally "olive oil" and nothing else, he used the "shemen/zayith" conjunction. Modern day critics who contend that every time the word "oil" was used in the Bible it must be interpreted literally as "olive oil" might have had some trouble convincing Moses.

[My insert: The verse he is referencing in Deuteronomy is: Deut. 33:24,
And of Asher he said, *Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.*]

Gen. 49:27 Benjamin shall ravin *as* a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

Benjamin is compared to a hungry wolf that is quick to share his excess after eating his fill. He will be brave and fierce in warfare and generous with the spoils of victory.

I'm sure these verses contain many significant insights/truths that are beyond my understanding at this time. Looking from a human perspective, it seems that a father would be more concerned with more important things than location (Zebulun), strength (Issachar and Gad), and cooking skills (Asher). Although it sounds like Joseph got the greatest blessing, it is sure that Judah was the most blessed as the one through whom the Messiah would come. You would think that God would have chosen Joseph—BUT God never seems to use the obvious—which gives more confidence to people like me that we can be used in a mighty way if we just yield to the Creator and Ruler of the universe.

Gen. 49:28 All these *are* the twelve tribes of Israel: and this *is it* that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

Gen. 49:29 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

Gen. 49:30 In the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace.

Gen. 49:31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.

Gen. 49:32 The purchase of the field and of the cave that *is* therein *was* from the children of Heth.

Gen. 49:33 And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

Then Jacob instructed his sons regarding his burial. He wanted to be buried in the cave at Machpelah where Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah were buried. (7/09) We aren't told about Rebekah's death, but we are told where she is buried.

After giving his commands about the things on his heart, Jacob laid down on his bed and died.

(11/05 & 1/11) I had made a note early this year from Jon Courson on how the prophecies of the twelve tribes describe the history of Israel from beginning to end. (The notes are modified, but worth including.)

Reuben	Disappointing (his adultery points to future spiritual and physical adultery of Israel)
Simeon Levi	Dispersed twice (Assyrian & Babylonian)
Judah	Delivered – Coming of Messiah
Zebulon	Exiled - displaced from their country – shipped out to other lands
Issachar	Prosperous servant to other peoples - exploited
Dan	Time of following the serpent, the false Messiah, Antichrist
Gad	Armies of the world coming against God/Israel – culminating at Armageddon
Asher	Happy – protected remnant
Naphtali	Preachers of truth (especially during tribulation and millennium)
Joseph	Blessings accompanying rule of Messiah in millennium
Benjamin	Israel in position of prominence over other nations