

Genesis 49:1-33

Understanding the Book of Genesis is essential to understanding the rest of the bible and the world as it is today.

Genesis 49: 1-33

1 ¶ And Jacob called to his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Jacob calls all his sons together to tell them what is going to happen in the last days. This is the first time the term "last days" is used in scripture, and it is used 13 more times in the bible. It refers to a long period of time in the future, what happens when Israel comes to be and what happens to it over time. Jacob is going to utter a prophecy here.

2 Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken to Israel your father. Jacob changes his name to Israel here...he says "sons of Jacob", "listen to Israel". Israel lists all the sons as he goes on. Each son is a tribe of Israel.

3 Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: Reuben is the firstborn and he should have had a double portion of inheritance.

4 Unstable as water, you shall not excel; because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it: he went up to my couch. But Reuben is unstable and will not rise above his brothers in station. Reuben took one of Jacob's wives and slept with her – a terrible abomination. Because of this sin, Reuben will not thrive. God forgives sins, but there are still consequences to sins that God judges harsher than others. Sins against the body – made in the image of God – are judged more harshly than other sins.

5 ¶ Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. Here 2 sons are combined.

6 O my soul, come not you into their secret; to their assembly, mine honor, be not you united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they dug down a wall. Remember these 2 brothers wiped out a whole town for defacing their sister. They killed all the men in the town for revenge and honor, but they are now judged harshly.

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. These 2 tribes were scattered across Jordan.

8 ¶ Judah, you are he whom your brethren shall praise: your hand shall be in the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah will be great.

9 Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, you are gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? He stooped down, crouched like a lion – Judah will be highly respected and feared by the other tribes / brothers.


10 The sceptre shall not leave Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and to him shall the gathering of the people be. This is a reference to the second coming of Christ. Jesus came as prophet, priest, and king. He has not taken His position as king over Israel yet, but He will. There will be no peace on earth until Jesus Christ comes back and takes His position as King.

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

12 His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk. These 2 verses means Judah will be in such a position to dominate other tribes. It became known as Judea. He is so abundantly wealthy that he can tie his donkey to the best grape vine and let it be.

13 ¶ Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be to Zidon.

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



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 to tribute.

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

17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that bites the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. After Dan took over the area they requested on the other side of Jordan, they introduced adultery into Israel. In the book of Revelation, Dan's tribe is not mentioned and God has removed the tribe from the 12 tribes.

18 I have waited for your salvation, O LORD.

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

20 Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties. Asher took over a fertile valley area, and during the rains they provided the king good food and delicacies to eat.

21 Naphtali is a hind let loose: he gives goodly words.

22 ¶ Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: Notice the wonderful things that are said about Joseph.

23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: The archers are his brothers. They tried to kill him.

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:) Joseph is put in this position by God because Joseph passed all the trials and tribulations God tested him with. This applies to us: if we are wicked, we reap wicked consequences. If we remain faithful to God during hard and good times, we are blessed in a good way.

25 Even by the God of your father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:

26 The blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors to 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 did separate from his brothers – they put him in a hole and sold him into slavery. He became the second most powerful ruler of Egypt – the world at that time.

27 Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil. Benjamin was a small tribe, and they were known as the warrior tribe. They were called upon by Israel to step in and protect them from invaders. They were fierce warriors.

28 ¶ All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spoke to them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them. Israel is giving the blessings as he has said. The 12 tribes of Israel is now formed. From this point on, we know how Israel was formed and we can understand why the world deals with them like it does.

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

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 burying place.

31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. This burying place is still there today and is controlled by the Arabs. If they feel nice, they will let you visit it. Remember Leah wasn't Jacob's favorite, but she had many children so earning a place of respect.

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

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 to his people. Jacob knew he was dying, and gathered his sons to deliver his blessings. This chapter is considered poetry in the Hebrew community.