



Genesis 49

PROPHECY ACCORDING TO GOD

The last address of Jacob-Israel to his twelve sons is designated “the blessing,” with which “their father blessed them, each one according to his blessing” (49:28). This blessing is at the same time a prophecy... The groundwork of his prophecy was supplied partly by the natural character of his twelve sons, and partly by the divine promise which had been given by the Lord to him and to his fathers, Abraham and Isaac. On this foundation the Spirit of God revealed to the dying patriarch, Israel, the future history of his seed, so that he discerned in the characters of his sons the future development of the tribes proceeding from them, and with prophetic clearness assigned to each of them its position and importance in the nation into which they were to expand in the promised inheritance. —Keil & Delitzsch (1861)

A The brother’s envy and hatred toward Joseph (37:1-28)

B Jacob mourns the “death” of Joseph (37:29-36)

C Interlude: The birth of Judah’s sons (38:1-30)

D Unexpected reversal: righteous Joseph in prison (39:1-23)

E Joseph: the savior of Egypt (40:1-41:57)

F Journey of the brothers to Egypt (42:1-43:34)

G Joseph tests his brothers (44:1-34)

H Joseph reveals his identity (45:1-15)

G Joseph provides for his brothers (45:16-28)

F Journey of the family to Egypt (46:1-27)

E Joseph: the savior of Israel and Egypt (46:28-47:31)

D Unexpected reversal: younger blessed over the older (48:1-22)

C Interlude: The blessing of Jacob’s sons (49:1-28)

B Joseph mourns the death of Jacob (49:29-50:14)

A Joseph’s forgiveness and grace toward his brothers (50:15-26)

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS ON GENESIS 49

- It is _____.
 - Jacob speaks as a prophet, inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - Jacob speaks of the “days to come” (both near and far fulfillment).
- It is _____.
 - This is the longest poem in Genesis, and one of the oldest in history.
 - It abounds in imagery, with unique words that are hard to interpret.
- It is _____.
 - Jacob speaks not only as a prophet but also as a father to his sons.
 - Jacob speaks out of fatherly love and warning to his sons.

Gen 49 is somewhat obscure and difficult, especially because it has many teachers and interpreters with completely divergent views.

—Martin Luther (1483-1546)

One of the most fascinating and most difficult portions of Genesis is chapter 49. —Henry M. Morris

Jacob’s blessing is the first sustained poem in the Bible and one of the oldest of any length.

—Bruce K. Waltke

Jacob predicted how things would turn out for each of his sons and their descendants, should they continue to display the character they had displayed thus far.

—Joel D. Heck

In the last days refers to Israel’s future in dual perspective: the period of their occupation of Canaan and the time of the coming of the Messiah.

—Charles C. Ryrie

Jacob’s last words to his sons have become the occasion for a final statement of the book’s major theme: God’s plan to restore the lost blessing [Gen 3] through the offspring of Abraham [Gen 12].

—John Sailhamer

1. Each person is uniquely created and designed by God.

Reuben: Indecisive, undisciplined
Simeon: Fierce, angry, violent
Levi: Fierce, angry, passionate
Judah: Strong, decisive, leader
Zebulun: Ambitious, industrious
Issachar: Lazy, passive, compliant

Dan: Aggressive, insidious
Gad: Tenacious, strategic
Asher: Affluent, materialistic
Naphtali: Free-spirited, poetic
Joseph: Godly, faithful, fruitful
Benjamin: Brave, skillful, cruel

2. Sin has consequences for us and for our descendants.

- Reuben fails because of his _____.
- Simeon & Levi fail because of their _____.
- Issachar fails because of his _____.
- Dan fails because of his _____.
- Asher fails because of his _____.

3. The hope of the nations will come from the tribe of Judah.

- The Lion of Judah will _____ our enemies.
- The Lion of Judah will bring _____ to the world.
- The Lion of Judah will usher in the _____ of the kingdom.

“Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

—Revelation 5:5

I have waited for your salvation, O Lord! —Genesis 49:18

4. The blessed life is the life aligned with God and His will.

- Be _____ to God.
- Be _____ on God.
- Be _____ for God.

The Reubenites seem to fade out of national history: no prophet, judge, or king came from this tribe.

—Gordon Wenham

Their circumcision knives are instruments of violence [49:5b].

—Mitchell Dahood

Leah’s sixth son [Zebulun] is listed both here and in Moses’ blessing (Deut 33:18) before his brother Issachar, Leah’s fifth son... In both blessings, Zebulun is the more energetic and prosperous of the two. Issachar is represented as lazy, submissive, and effete.

—Bruce K. Waltke

Samson comes from the tribe of Dan (Judges 13:1-25).

The Danites introduced idolatry into the land of Israel on a regular official basis (Judges 18:30-31). It was also in Dan that Jeroboam set up one of his two golden calves (1 Kgs 12:28-30). It may be that this is why Dan is not listed among the tribes in Rev. 7 (cf. Deut 29:16-21).

—Henry M. Morris

Shiloh. This Hebrew word can be interpreted as 1) a proper name—possibly “the peaceable one”—2) “tribute to him,” or 3) “to whom it belongs” (cf. Ezekiel 21:27).

Until Shiloh arrives—this is the messianic king. —Genesis Rabbah

Binding a foal to a vine and washing garments in wine...speak of a time of great plenty and the splendor of paradise. —Allen Ross

Salvation. Heb., *yeshua*. Used for the first time in the Bible in 49:18.

God is identified as the Mighty One of Jacob, the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, and El Shaddai.