

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 48 & 49

THE FAMILY OF JACOB (ISRAEL) IS REUNITED AND HAS SETTLED IN THE LAND OF EGYPT IN THE AREA OF GOSHEN. JOSEPH REMAINS THE LEADER OF THE NATION AND IS ALSO ABLE TO BE WITH HIS FATHER AND BROTHERS AGAIN. AS WE TURN THE CORNER FOR THE CONCLUSION OF GENESIS, THE FOCUS OF THE TEXT WILL BE THE FINAL BLESSINGS OF JACOB UPON HIS SONS. AS WE HAVE ALREADY DISCOVERED AS WE HAVE WORKED THROUGH GENESIS, "BLESSINGS" WERE POWERFUL AND PROPHETIC PRONOUNCEMENTS GIVEN ESPECIALLY FROM ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER AS WELL AS IN IMPORTANT MOMENTS IN LIFE.

THESE "BLESSINGS" ARE WORDS SPOKEN OVER SOMEONE/SOMETHING WHICH CONFERS WORTH OR POWER AND IN SOME CASES SPEAKS PROPHETICALLY ABOUT THE FUTURE AND DESTINY OF THE INDIVIDUAL. THE OPPOSITE OF BLESSING IS "CURSING", WHICH IN THE SAME WAY CONFERS SOMETHING OR SPEAKS OF THE DESTINY OF THE PERSON OR THING, BUT IN A NEGATIVE SENSE.

THESE MOMENTS OF BLESSING AND CURSING HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS IN OUR STORY. IN FACT, THE PRACTICE PREDATES EVEN ABRAHAM AND HIS FAMILY. IN THE BEGINNING, AS GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND EARTH HE "BLESSED" THAT WHICH HE MADE. HE PRONOUNCED IT "GOOD" AND SET IT APART FOR A FUTURE AND PURPOSE THAT WAS GLORIOUS. ADAM AND EVE WERE CREATED AND THEN CALLED TO BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY. AND THEN AS WE READ, WHEN ADAM AND EVE SINNED, THE CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR ACTIONS WAS THAT THEY, THE SERPENT AND EVEN THE LAND ITSELF WAS "CURSED".

THAT'S WHY GOD'S CALL TO ABRAHAM INITIALLY IN GENESIS 12 WAS SO SIGNIFICANT. NOT JUST FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND EVENTUALLY CHRISTIANS TOO, BUT FOR ALL OF CREATION. REMEMBER, THE FOCUS OF GOD'S CALL WAS TO "BLESS" ABRAHAM AND HIS FAMILY. GOD WAS GOING TO "MULTIPLY" HIS DESCENDANTS AND USE THEM TO "BLESS" THE WHOLE WORLD. AND IF ANYONE STOOD IN THEIR WAY OR DID THEM HARM, GOD WAS GOING TO "CURSE THOSE THAT CURSE YOU." SEE HOW IMPORTANT THIS BLESSING/CURSING THEME IS?

AND SO WE ARRIVE IN GENESIS 48 WHERE JACOB IS GOING TO BLESS JOSEPH AND HIS SONS AND LATER JOSEPH'S BROTHERS. JACOB IS NEARING THE END OF HIS LIFE AND WITH SOME OF HIS FINAL WORDS HE IS GOING TO BLESS HIS OWN SONS, AS HIS FATHER AND GRANDFATHER DID BEFORE HIM. REMEMBER, THESE WORDS ARE MEANINGFUL AND POWERFUL. THEY ARE INTERPRETED AS PROPHETIC AND DIVINE PRONOUNCEMENTS UPON THE ONE WHO RECEIVES IT AND THERE ARE NO "DO-OVERS". THESE PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN A TIME WHEN WORDS MEANT SOMETHING AND INTEGRITY RULED.

GENESIS 48:1-7 - JACOB IS DYING, JOSEPH COMES TO JACOB

AS THIS CHAPTER BEGINS, JACOB IS REFLECTING ON HIS LIFE AND HOW GOD HAS BEEN GOOD TO AND WITH HIM. HE RECOUNTS GOD'S PROMISE (V. 4) AND REJOICES THAT HE WAS ABLE TO MEET JOSEPH'S SON. IN THESE VERSES WE GET OUR FIRST FORESHADOW INTO THE BLESSING THAT IS COMING IN THE NEXT VERSES. JACOB STATES THAT JOSEPH'S TWO SONS, EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH WILL BELONG TO JACOB JUST LIKE REUBEN AND SIMEON, TWO OF JACOB'S ACTUAL SONS, ARE. JACOB IS ESSENTIALLY DOUBLY BLESSING JOSEPH BY INCLUDING HIS TWO SONS IN HIS BLESSING AND INHERITANCE.

GENESIS 48:8-16 - JACOB'S BLESSING OF JOSEPH AND HIS SONS

WHILE JACOB BLESSES JOSEPH AND HIS SONS, HE PLACES HIS RIGHT HAND (THE ONE ASSOCIATED WITH BLESSING) ON THE YOUNGER EPHRAIM AND HIS LEFT ON THE OLDER MANASSEH. TYPICALLY THE OLDEST SON WOULD RECEIVE THE GREATER BLESSING, BUT IN THIS CASE, THE YOUNGER DOES. JOSEPH HAD ARRANGED HIS SONS IN FRONT OF HIS BLIND FATHER TO BE IN THE "CORRECT" POSITION TO RECEIVE THE TYPICAL AGE APPROPRIATE BLESSING, BUT WHEN JACOB STRETCHES OUT HIS HANDS, HE CROSSES HIS ARMS AND PLACED HIS HANDS ON THE OPPOSITE SON'S HEAD!

THINK BACK WHEN WHEN JACOB HIMSELF WAS BLESSED BY HIS DYING (AND BLIND) FATHER ISAAC. REMEMBER THAT JACOB WAS NOT THE FIRSTBORN SON OF ISAAC AND REBEKAH, ESAU WAS. BUT ESAU SOLD HIS BIRTHRIGHT AND THROUGH THE CUNNING ACTIONS OF REBEKAH AND JACOB'S DONNING OF AN ESAU COSTUME, JACOB RECEIVES THE BLESSING OF THE FIRST BORN.

AND NOW, ALTHOUGH BOTH OF JOSEPH'S SONS ARE BLESSED, THE YOUNGER EPHRAIM WILL RECEIVE THE GREATER BLESSING.

GENESIS 48:17-22 - JOSEPH UPSET ABOUT THE BLESSING ORDER

JOSEPH SEES THIS ALL HAPPENING AND IS TROUBLED. HE ACTUALLY GRABS HIS FATHER'S HAND AND TRIES TO CORRECT THE "MISTAKE" BUT JACOB RESPONDS WITH A CLEAR AWARENESS OF WHAT HE WAS DOING. THE OLD BLIND PATRIARCH IS INTENTIONAL WITH HIS BLESSING ORDER. HE SAYS:

"I KNOW, MY SON; I KNOW," HE REPLIED. "MANASSEH WILL ALSO BECOME A GREAT PEOPLE, BUT HIS YOUNGER BROTHER WILL BECOME EVEN GREATER. AND HIS DESCENDANTS WILL BECOME A MULTITUDE OF NATIONS." (49:19, NLT)

BOTH OF JOSEPH'S SONS ARE BLESSED AND WILL RECEIVE A TREMENDOUS INHERITANCE. IN FACT, THIS MOMENT CHANGES THE COURSE OF THE LATER NATION THAT WILL BEAR ISRAEL'S NAME. AS WE READ ON LATER IN SCRIPTURE, WE WILL RARELY HEAR ABOUT THE "TRIBE OF JOSEPH" BUT INSTEAD TWO OF THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL WILL BE CALLED "EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH." A WONDERFUL LEGACY FOR JACOB'S FAVORED SON, JOSEPH.

"JACOB ELEVATES HIS GRANDSONS EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH TO THE STATUS OF FULL SONS, ON PAR WITH REUBEN AND SIMEON (48:5). LATER, THIS WILL RESULT IN JOSEPH'S DESCENDANTS, THROUGH EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH, BEING VIEWED AS TWO SEPARATE TRIBES. CONSEQUENTLY, WHEN THE LAND OF CANAAN IS ALLOCATED, JOSEPH THROUGH HIS DESCENDANTS RECEIVES ONE-SIXTH OF THE TERRITORY. THIS DOUBLE PORTION OF THE INHERITANCE CONFIRMS THAT JOSEPH WAS DESIGNATED THE "FIRSTBORN" IN PLACE OF REUBEN" (ESV STUDY BIBLE, GENESIS 48:3-7)

IN FACT, WHEN THE DESCENDANTS OF JACOB'S SONS ARE LISTED LATER IN 1 CHRONICLES 5, LOOK AT WHAT THE CHRONICLER RECORDS:

1 CHRONICLES 5:1-2 (NLT) - THE OLDEST SON OF ISRAEL WAS REUBEN. BUT SINCE HE DISHONORED HIS FATHER BY SLEEPING WITH ONE OF HIS FATHER'S CONCUBINES, HIS BIRTHRIGHT WAS GIVEN TO THE SONS OF HIS BROTHER JOSEPH. FOR THIS REASON, REUBEN IS NOT LISTED IN THE GENEALOGICAL RECORDS AS THE FIRSTBORN SON. 2 THE DESCENDANTS OF JUDAH BECAME THE MOST POWERFUL TRIBE AND PROVIDED A RULER FOR THE NATION, BUT THE BIRTHRIGHT BELONGED TO JOSEPH.

AFTER THIS FIRST BLESSING, JACOB TELLS JOSEPH THAT HIS LIFE IS ENDING SOON AND PROPHESED THAT JOSEPH, AND BY EXTENSION THE FAMILY OF JACOB WILL RETURN TO THE PROMISED LAND OF CANAAN. THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB WILL BE WITH THEM. THIS DOESN'T SEEM LIKE A BIG DEAL AS THEY LIVE LARGE IN GOSHEN, BUT IN THE YEARS TO COME, GOD'S PEOPLE WILL LONG FOR RESCUE AND RETURN TO THEIR HOME.

GENESIS 49:1-7 - JACOB BLESSES HIS OTHER SONS

IF WE REALLY DIG INTO THE CROSS REFERENCES AND HISTORICAL UNFOLDING OF WHAT JACOB PRONOUNCES OVER HIS SONS, WE WILL BE AMAZED AT HOW HIS WORDS COME TO PASS.

REUBEN, SIMEON & LEVI

GENESIS 49:1-7 (NLT) - THEN JACOB CALLED TOGETHER ALL HIS SONS AND SAID, "GATHER AROUND ME, AND I WILL TELL YOU WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO EACH OF YOU IN THE DAYS TO COME. 2 "COME AND LISTEN, YOU SONS OF JACOB; LISTEN TO ISRAEL, YOUR FATHER. 3 "**REUBEN**, YOU ARE MY FIRSTBORN, MY STRENGTH, THE CHILD OF MY VIGOROUS YOUTH. YOU ARE FIRST IN RANK AND FIRST IN POWER. 4 BUT YOU ARE AS UNRULY AS A FLOOD, AND YOU WILL BE FIRST NO LONGER. FOR YOU WENT TO BED WITH MY WIFE: YOU DEFILED MY MARRIAGE COUCH.

REMEMBER REUBEN HAD SEXUAL RELATIONS WITH JACOB'S CONCUBINE BILHAH (GENESIS 35:22-23). HIS BLESSING REFLECTS THE RESULT OF THESE ACTIONS.

5 "SIMEON AND LEVI ARE TWO OF A KIND; THEIR WEAPONS ARE INSTRUMENTS OF VIOLENCE. 6 MAY I NEVER JOIN IN THEIR MEETINGS; MAY I NEVER BE A PARTY TO THEIR PLANS. FOR IN THEIR ANGER THEY MURDERED MEN, AND THEY CRIPPLED OXEN JUST FOR SPORT. 7 A CURSE ON THEIR ANGER, FOR IT IS FIERCE; A CURSE ON THEIR WRATH, FOR IT IS CRUEL. I WILL SCATTER THEM AMONG THE DESCENDANTS OF JACOB; I WILL DISPERSE THEM THROUGHOUT ISRAEL.

REMEMBER THE ACTIONS OF SIMEON AND LEVI AND HOW THEY VIOLENTLY ATTACKED THE MEN OF SHECHEM AFTER THEIR SISTER DINAH WAS ABUSED. SHE WAS TREATED HORRIBLY BY SHECHEM, BUT THESE TWO BROTHERS WENT OVER THE TOP IN THEIR REVENGE. AND IT IS MENTIONED IN THEIR FATHER'S FINAL WORDS TO THEM.

JUDAH

8 "JUDAH, YOUR BROTHERS WILL PRAISE YOU. YOU WILL GRASP YOUR ENEMIES BY THE NECK. ALL YOUR RELATIVES WILL BOW BEFORE YOU. 9 JUDAH, MY SON, IS A YOUNG LION THAT HAS FINISHED EATING ITS PREY. LIKE A LION HE CROUCHES AND LIES DOWN; LIKE A LIONESS-- WHO DARES TO ROUSE HIM? 10 THE SCEPTER WILL NOT DEPART FROM JUDAH, NOR THE RULER'S STAFF FROM HIS DESCENDANTS, UNTIL THE COMING OF THE ONE TO WHOM IT BELONGS, THE ONE WHOM ALL NATIONS WILL HONOR. 11 HE TIES HIS FOAL TO A GRAPEVINE, THE COLT OF HIS DONKEY TO A CHOICE VINE. HE WASHES HIS CLOTHES IN WINE, HIS ROBES IN THE BLOOD OF GRAPES. 12 HIS EYES ARE DARKER THAN WINE, AND HIS TEETH ARE WHITER THAN MILK.

JUDAH RECEIVES QUITE THE BLESSING FROM JACOB. THOUGH JOSEPH RECEIVES THE BIGGEST BLESSING IN TERMS OF FUTURE LAND AND DESCENDANTS - JUDAH'S BLESSING WILL AFFECT ALL OF HUMANITY. JUDAH WILL EVENTUALLY BECOME THE LEADER OF HIS BROTHERS ("YOUR BROTHERS WILL PRAISE YOU", JUDAH'S NAME MEANS PRAISE). EVENTUALLY JUDAH WILL RULE THEIR LATER TRIBES AND THEIR LATER NATION. AS WE KNOW FROM THE LATER BIBLICAL STORY, JUDAH WILL EVENTUALLY BE A NATION ITSELF AND THE ONLY REMAINING NATION (JOINED WITH THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN). "THE SCEPTER WILL NOT DEPART FROM JUDAH, NOR THE RULER'S STAFF" FORESHADOWS THE KINGS THAT WILL COME FROM JUDAH'S LINE - IT IS FROM THE LINE OF JUDAH THAT DAVID AND SOLOMON WILL COME AND EVENTUALLY THE GREATEST KING, THE MESSIAH.

ZEBULUN, ISSACHAR & DAN

13 "ZEBULUN WILL SETTLE BY THE SEASHORE AND WILL BE A HARBOR FOR SHIPS; HIS BORDERS WILL EXTEND TO SIDON. 14 "ISSACHAR IS A STURDY DONKEY, RESTING BETWEEN TWO SADDLEPACKS. 15 WHEN HE SEES HOW GOOD THE COUNTRYSIDE IS AND HOW PLEASANT THE LAND, HE WILL BEND HIS SHOULDER TO THE LOAD AND SUBMIT HIMSELF TO HARD LABOR. 16 "DAN WILL GOVERN HIS PEOPLE, LIKE ANY OTHER TRIBE IN ISRAEL. 17 DAN WILL BE A SNAKE BESIDE THE ROAD, A POISONOUS VIPER ALONG THE PATH THAT BITES THE HORSE'S HOOFES SO ITS RIDER IS THROWN OFF. 18 I TRUST IN YOU FOR SALVATION, O LORD!

THESE WORDS SPEAK TO WHERE THESE TRIBES WILL SETTLE AND THE SITUATIONS THAT SOME OF THESE TRIBES WILL ENDURE.

JACOB THEN BREAKS OUT IN A SHORT PRAYER OF SORTS "I TRUST IN YOU FOR SALVATION O YAHWEH", AS SOME SCHOLARS HAVE INDICATED MAY BE A PRAYER FOR HIS CHILDREN IN LIGHT OF THE TROUBLE THAT WILL SURELY COME THEIR WAY.

GAD, ASHER & NAPHTALI

19 "GAD WILL BE ATTACKED BY MARAUDING BANDS, BUT HE WILL ATTACK THEM WHEN THEY RETREAT. 20 "ASHER WILL DINE ON RICH FOODS AND PRODUCE FOOD FIT FOR KINGS. 21 "NAPHTALI IS A DOE SET FREE THAT BEARS BEAUTIFUL FAWNS.

FROM THESE BLESSINGS, IT SEEMS LIKE GAD, ASHER AND NAPHTALI WILL DO ALRIGHT IN THE DAYS AHEAD.

JOSEPH

22 "JOSEPH IS THE FOAL OF A WILD DONKEY, THE FOAL OF A WILD DONKEY AT A SPRING-- ONE OF THE WILD DONKEYS ON THE RIDGE. 23 ARCHERS ATTACKED HIM SAVAGELY; THEY SHOT AT HIM AND HARASSED HIM. 24 BUT HIS BOW REMAINED TAUT, AND HIS ARMS WERE STRENGTHENED BY THE HANDS OF THE MIGHTY ONE OF JACOB, BY THE SHEPHERD, THE ROCK OF ISRAEL. 25 MAY THE GOD OF YOUR FATHER HELP YOU; MAY THE ALMIGHTY BLESS YOU WITH THE BLESSINGS OF THE HEAVENS ABOVE, AND BLESSINGS OF THE WATERY DEPTHS BELOW, AND BLESSINGS OF THE BREASTS AND WOMB. 26 MAY THE BLESSINGS OF YOUR FATHER SURPASS THE BLESSINGS OF THE ANCIENT MOUNTAINS, REACHING TO THE HEIGHTS OF THE ETERNAL HILLS. MAY THESE BLESSINGS REST ON THE HEAD OF JOSEPH, WHO IS A PRINCE AMONG HIS BROTHERS.

WE ALREADY KNOW OF THE BLESSING UPON JOSEPH THROUGH HIS SONS FROM GENESIS 48, BUT HERE WE READ AN ADDITIONAL BLESSING TO JOSEPH *PERSONALLY*. WHAT A GREAT BLESSING! JOSEPH IS GOING TO GO THROUGH SOME TRAILS (SURELY HE ALREADY HAD!) BUT IS GOING TO BE VICTORIOUS BECAUSE THE MIGHTY ONE OF JACOB, THE SHEPHERD, THE ROCK OF ISRAEL WILL HELP HIM! AND JACOB LONGS THAT JOSEPH'S BLESSINGS WILL BE SO GREAT, THEY REACH THE "ETERNAL HILLS" - HOW COOL IS THAT?!

BENJAMIN

27 "BENJAMIN IS A RAVENOUS WOLF, DEVOURING HIS ENEMIES IN THE MORNING AND DIVIDING HIS PLUNDER IN THE EVENING."

BENJAMIN, THE YOUNGEST SON OF JACOB WILL HAVE MIGHTY WARRIORS IN HIS LINE. THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL, SAUL WILL BE OF BENJAMIN. BENJAMIN WILL ALSO JOIN JUDAH IN THE LATER KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

GENESIS 49:28-33 - JACOB DIES

AFTER BLESSING HIS SONS, JACOB WILL DIE. HIS FINAL WORD REITERATE HIS DESIRE TO BE CARRIED FROM EGYPT AND BURIED WITH ABRAHAM, SARAH, ISAAC, REBEKKAH AND LEAH IN THE LAND OF CANAAN.

THE LAST OF THE THREE GREAT PATRIARCHS HAS DIED AND WE NEAR THE CLOSE OF GENESIS, THE FIRST BOOK OF THE BIBLE. THE GRANDSON OF ABRAHAM AND THE FATHER OF THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL WILL BE "GATHERED TO HIS PEOPLE" A SYMBOLIC WAY OF DESCRIBING DEATH. HE LEAVES US WITH A LEGACY OF FAITH MIXED WITH TROUBLE AND LONGSUFFERING. JACOB WORKED AND WAITED FOR HIS BELOVED RACHEL, ENDURED THE TRIALS OF HIS SON'S FOOLISHNESS AND HIS GREAT LOSS OF JOSEPH. HE KEPT HIS HEART AND EYES FOCUSED ON GOD'S PROMISE TO HIM, FOR BLESSING AND A TIME TO COME WHEN THE GOD OF ABRAHAM WOULD BLESS THE WORLD. THROUGH JACOB, THE FAMILY OF ABRAHAM BEGINS TO EXPAND. NO LONGER ARE WE TALKING ONE OR TWO SONS, BUT JACOB PRODUCES 12 SONS, ONE DAUGHTER AND NOW DIES IN EGYPT WITH THE NUMBERS OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON THE RISE. HIS FINAL ACT IS TO BLESS HIS SONS - WORDS THAT WILL DRIVE THE DESTINY OF EACH ONE OF THEM.

A LOT OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE OF THE NATION AND THE WORLD AT LARGE IS SET UP DURING THE LIFE OF THIS MAN. AND NOW HE IS LAID TO REST, WAITING FOR THE RESURRECTION WHEN IT WILL ALL BE FULFILLED. AND WITH THAT, WE PAUSE FOR ONE FINAL TIME IN GENESIS BEFORE WE CONCLUDE THIS EPIC AND ESSENTIAL BOOK OF OUR FAITH AND IN TURN THE VERY FUTURE OF THE WORLD.