

The Story of Joseph

Deathbed Blessings

Part 57 – August 18, 2013



Jacob is on his deathbed, bestowing his blessings.

Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed. – Genesis 48:2 NIV

He gave Joseph his ‘double portion’ by adopting his two sons as official tribes; they’re referred to as the half-tribes of Israel.



Then Israel said to Joseph, “I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers. And to you, as one who is over your brothers, I give the ridge of land I took from the Amorites with my sword [“Your brothers, led by Simeon and Levi. My violent sword”] and my bow.” [“You, Joey. My bow of peace. My son of promise. You retake it, for good! That’s a prophecy. Done deal. I’ve seen it.”] – Genesis 48:21-22 NIV



He’s referring to Shechem, where his daughter was raped, (Gen 34) triggering his sons, Simeon and Levi, to viciously slaughter man and beast. It’s also where Joseph was sent, went, and was beaten and betrayed and sold and enslaved. (37:12-36) **Shechem embodied sin and sorrow, but rose to represent God’s sovereign justice and grace.** Joseph chose to be buried in Shechem, (Josh 24:32) near Jacob’s well, where Jesus would one day speak of living water close at hand. (John 4:5-10)



Then Jacob called for his sons and said: “Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come. [Their lives, their tribes, and their futures] Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob; [Now, they assemble, but not in any apparent order; not by birth, not by mother. Why? Is it random, or is it a riddle?] listen to your father Israel. [First up is his firstborn and his biggest regret] Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power. Turbulent as the waters, [wild as well as weak willed] you will no longer excel, [and he didn’t; Reuben’s tribe never produced a single judge or prophet or king; our traits tend to transfer into our descendants] for you went up onto your father’s bed, onto my couch and defiled it.”¹ – Genesis 49:1-4 NIV

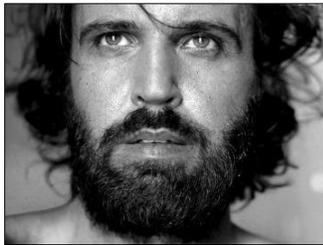


Undisciplined? Unstable. **There’s a high price for unbridled passion.** Reuben’s tribe would never produce a single judge or prophet or king. **Put yourself first and you will be last.**

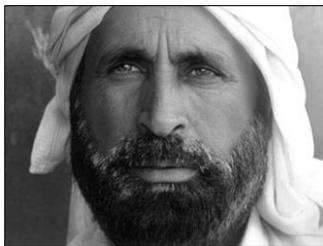
¹ We discussed this in, “**Robe of Wrath**” (1/22/12)

[Next! The sons who slaughtered the Shechemites] Simeon and Levi are brothers — their swords are weapons of violence. [“Vengeance is mine ... says the Lord” (Rom 12:19)] Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstringed oxen [They crippled the cattle by cutting their hamstrings] as they pleased. [Self-indulgent anger crippled them as well] Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel. [Both tribes were denied territory in the Promised Land] – Genesis 49:5-7 NIV

Wait. *These are blessings?!* Yes. **Blessings of restriction; the most difficult blessings to recognize.** Israel was spared from reckless Reubenite leadership, and fierce and cruel domination! But, *that’s not fair!* What if they changed? What if their kids’ kids were *nothing* like ‘em? **Then the blessing becomes more obvious.** Simeon’s tribe shriveled up and moved in with Judah. (Josh 19:1) But, when the golden calf was created, Levi’s tribe honored God, (Ex 32:26) and ended up living among the others as honored priests. Both were dispersed; but, **Simeon’s rebelliousness made his blessing, from God, feel like a curse.**



[Judah must’ve been getting nervous! But, he’s a picture of the stunning grace God bestows on the repentant] Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. You are a lion’s cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness — who dares to rouse him? [The Messiah, the Lion of Judah, comes through the line of Judah] The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.² He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. [There’ll be joy and plenty in the vineyards and winepresses of Judah] His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk. [Health. Beauty. Prosperity. Abundance. It all came to pass for the tribe of Judah, the home of the Temple on Mount Zion. A Jew is called a Jew because of Judah. Next!] Zebulun will live by the seashore [they had no shore of their own. But, a key highway, the via maris (way of the sea) passed through Zebulun, so they conducted a lot of sea trade] and become a haven for ships; [Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, was in Zebulun] his border will extend toward [as in ‘facing’] Sidon. [A seaport to their north; ‘Sidon’ means ‘to hunt’ but, in the sense of fishing (Strong’s H6721) Next] Issachar is a rawboned [strong-boned] donkey lying down between two saddlebags. [The choice land that this huge, strong tribe received (by lot) lay between the Carmel Mountain and Gilboa Mountain Ranges] When he sees how good is his resting place and how pleasant is his land, he will bend his shoulder to the burden and submit to forced labor. [They allowed themselves to be pressed into servitude, valuing peace over freedom. Next up is Danny boy (pronounced Don)] Dan will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel. [Samson was a Danite judge] Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, [Small but sly and deadly; and they were!] a viper along the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider tumbles backward. [Dan turned out to be a poisonous, toxic tribe, introducing idolatry into Israel on an official basis (Judges 18:1-31)] – Genesis 49:8-17 NIV



² We covered this in, “The Lion Trap” (4/22/12), and “The Lion’s Tale” (5/20/12)

All of a sudden, as though Jacob is surprised by the very words coming out of his own mouth, he cries out something incredible.

I look for your deliverance, O Lord. [But, for “deliverance”, he uses the Hebrew word **Yeshua** (Strong’s H3444, yěshuw`ah) “I look for your **Yeshua**, O Lord”] – Genesis 49:18 NIV

That’s Jesus name in Hebrew! Yeshua bar Yosef: Jesus, son of Joseph. In the middle of his deathbed blessings, Jacob suddenly cries out, “I look for your Jesus, O Lord.” Wow. But, why here? Why now? This seemingly random order of 12 blessings tells one story: the fall of man; perfect plan; Lion and Lamb; deliverance. Yeshua! **Jesus is the true and better Reuben.** Firstborn over creation. Second Adam. Excelling honor and power without defilement.

He’s the true and better Simeon and Levi, saying, “I came not to bring peace, but a sword.” (Mat 10:34) **The double-edged sword of God’s Word. God S’word**, that penetrates every defense; (Heb 4:12) prompting Simeon, *the prophet*, to say to Mary, “**A sword will pierce even your own soul.**” (Luke 2:35) He’s the Ox, (Deut 33:17) destined to be hamstringed. At Gethsemane, saying to Simon/Simeon (aka Peter), “**Put your sword back in its place**”, (Mat 26:52) when, as Levi (aka Matthew) records, Simon cut off an ear with one of the *two* swords, brought into the Garden, (Luke 22:37-38) before they scattered and dispersed and left Him to face the fierce and cruel fury of the religious council and the Roman assembly.

But, **He’s the true and better Judah**: a Kneeling Lion who lies down to allow the nails to pin His claws on the neck of His prey. **He is a Lioness come for Her cubs**; for His foe has dared to rouse Him! **His feet are fastened to a ruler’s staff between; His foe has dared to raise Him on a scepter He alone will own.** His staff is a stick, a spike, a stake, and He’s the Vine of Life, the Choicest Branch. He rides into a trap, holding only a tether of a donkey’s colt. His robes will be coated in His blood. But, it’s *wine*. His dark eyes are deep set on Crimson. His teeth flash unadulterated ferocity. **For, it is He who has set the trap!**

He’s the true and better Zebulun: He heads toward the hunt; yet, He’s casting for fish. He’s a fisher of men; the safe haven, cast, like Jonah, into the turbulent waters, so we can reside at His side at the shore of the sea of glass that surrounds His throne. (Rev 4:6) **He’s the true and better Issachar**: a rawboned donkey who submits to enemy forces to shoulder our burden by stretching out between two saddlebags. Two swords. Two criminals. Self-indulgence and violence. Sin and death. **He’s the true and better Dan**: the Perfect Judge who provides justice for all, by allowing the Law, to do to Him, what it does to all, who put their trust in a snake. Steal. Kill. Destroy. (John 10:10)

[And, so the Psalmist prophesied] At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep. ... the earth feared and was still When God arose to judgment, to save all the humble ... – Psalm 76:6-9 NAS



[And Jeremiah said] The snorting of the enemy’s horses is heard from Dan; at the neighing of their stallions the whole land trembles. ... “See, I will send venomous snakes among you, vipers that cannot be charmed, and they will bite *you*,” declares the Lord.” – Jeremiah 8:16-17 NIV

[Pronounced ‘God’] Gad will be attacked by a band of raiders, but he will attack them at their heels. [And, what a surprise!] – Genesis 49:19 NIV

Remember when Aaron's staff became a snake and swallowed the serpents of Pharaoh's magicians? (Ex 7:10) Remember when Jesus said, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up" (John 3:14) Remember when Paul said, "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 15:54-57)



Asher's food will be rich; [their territory was one of the most fertile of Canaan] he will provide delicacies fit for a king. [The Messiah now offers His broken body as true bread, His shed blood as true wine. [Anna, the prophetess who recognized and proclaimed baby Jesus as the Messiah, was from Asher's clan (Luke 2:36-38). Naphtali's land included the region of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus did much of His teaching and ministry] Naphtali



is a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns. [And then there's Yosef] Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall. [A garden wall, that separates us from the Tree of Life] With bitterness archers attacked him; [His brothers; Ishmaelites; Potiphar; Mrs. Potiphar] they shot at him with hostility. But his bow [there's the bow] remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the *Mighty One of Jacob*, because of the *Shepherd*, the *Rock* of Israel, [it's the first time the Messiah, Yeshua, Jesus, is referred to as the Shepherd or the Rock]



because of your father's God, who helps you, because of the Almighty, who blesses you with blessings of the heavens above, [ultimately, resurrection!] blessings of the deep that lies below, [the faithful who died before His day of deliverance] blessings of the breast and womb. [For Joseph, many children. For Jesus, many children. Only, by His own two breasts: Son of Man, Son of God. All the tombs are wombs, hills filled with blessings, ready to break open, and deliver their dead, and release the reborn, when His living water breaks and pours from His side, mixing with His blood, as He drowns in the flood on behalf of His children] – Genesis 49:20-25 NIV



What guarded the way to the Tree of Life? The Cherubim with the flaming sword. (Gen 3:24) **Judgment. Justice. The price of reentry.** And what was God's covenant sign to Noah: the Rainbow. (Gen 9:13) Actually, it's just 'bow'. It's the same Hebrew word Jacob used. **You are the inheritance the Father bestows, hard-fought and won on the ridge of Calvary, with God's sword and His bow.**

Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, [and Yeshua bar Yosef] on the brow of the prince among his brothers. [Including Benjamin. His tiny tribe of warriors was famous for their fierceness] Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; [lit. a wolf that tears (Strong's H2963, taraph)] in the morning he devours the prey, ["he will swallow up death forever" (Is 25:8)] in the evening he divides the plunder." [By tearing the veil to His intimate presence in the Holy of Holies, and invites us in. "And the wolf will dwell with the lamb" (Is 11:6)] All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate to him. – Genesis 49:26-28 NIV

Will you receive the blessing appropriate to you? Time will tell.