

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“Prophetic Parenting”

Genesis 49:1-28

2003

Introduction

Parenting is without question the most challenging experiences in life!

It’s been described as “part joy and part guerilla warfare!!”

It’s also very expensive. The average cost for raising a child is \$350,000!!

It’s always been expensive to raise children!

Socrates put it this way:

“Could I climb to the highest places in Athens, I would lift up my voice and proclaim; Fellow citizens, why do you turn and scrape every stone to gather wealth, and take so little care of the children to whom you must someday relinquish it all?”

In the twilight of Jacob’s life, he realizes that an investment of a lifetime is about to be passed on to his sons. In wisdom, he gave that very critical life-transition a great deal of prayer and consideration.

What we read in Genesis 49 are not the spontaneous thoughts of a dying man, but the carefully prepared words of a prophetic poet.

The first six sons referred to are the offspring of Jacob and Leah. The next four are the sons of the concubines of Rachel and Leah. The last two sons are the children of Jacob and Rachel, the wife of his preference.

I Jacob Prepared For is Death

A. He gathered his sons around him [Verse 1a, 2]

After Jacob had blessed Joseph’s sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, he called the rest of his sons in order to give them each a blessing from God.

B. He told them the **future** [Verse 1b]

The purpose of prophecy:

1. To reveal the future

Amos 3:7 “Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.”

2. To serve as a warning against sin

A good example of this was Jonah prophecy that Nineveh would fall in 40 days. The entire city repented and God spared (Jonah 3).

3. To motivate us to godly living

Col 3:1-4 “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and

your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

4. To foreshadow the life and ministry of Jesus the Messiah
Col 2:17 “These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”

II Jacob Spoke Prophetically To Each Son

A. Reuben [Verse 3-4]

1. He was Jacob’s **firstborn** son
 - a. He was a sign of Jacob’s might and strength
 - b. He excelled in honor and power

2. He **forfeited** his rights as firstborn son
The firstborn normally had two rights.
First, he became the leader of the family, the new patriarch.
Second, he was entitled to a double share of the inheritance.
But Reuben’s unconfessed sexual sin of the past disqualified him from God’s blessing in the future.
 - a. He was turbulent as water
 - b. He would no longer excel - 1 Chron 5:1-2
Turbulent = Pachaz = “Unstable, uncontrolled or lustful”
James 1:7-8 “[An unstable man] should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”
 1. Because he defiled his father's bed
Reuben was guilty of committing adultery and incest with his father’s wife, Bilhah. And though Jacob had apparently said little about it at the time (35:22), he had never forgotten.

Why did he do it?

1. He was driven by unbridled lust

Application:

Prov 6:32-33 “But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself. Blows and disgrace are his lot, and his shame will never be wiped away.”

“He who would rule over others must first rule himself.”

2. He was driven by the desire for power
Reuben, like Satan, was not content with his exalted position and wanted more power, more pre-eminence (Is 14:12ff.; Ezek 28:12ff).
So he took Bilhah, his father’s concubine, not only because of his unbridled passion, but also to usurp the right to rule over the family.

True to Jacob's prophecy:

The Reubenites never produced a leader of any kind for Israel.

They never entered the Promised Land (Numbers 23).

They built unauthorized places of worship (Joshua 22:10-34).

B. Simeon and Levi [Verse 5-7]

1. Their swords were weapons of violence

Jacob is referring to an event recorded in Genesis 34:25-29 where Simeon and Levi slaughtered the Shechemites because Shechem had violated their sister, Dinah. While their shock and grief was understandable, their response was self-willed and disproportionate.

2. They were not to be imitated

a. Jacob didn't want to enter their council

b. Jacob didn't want to join their assembly

1. They killed men in anger

2. They hamstrung oxen as they pleased

Horses were hamstrung to eliminate their military use (Joshua 11:6).

But hamstringing of oxen served no purpose except to display cruelty and senseless destruction.

Application:

Ps 1:1 "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers."

Prov 22:24-25 "Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared."

3. They would be scattered and dispersed

Initially, the tribe of Simeon was the 3rd largest tribe in Israel (Numbers 1:23).

But just 35 years later the tribe of Simeon shrank to become the smallest of the 12 (Num 26:14) and were scattered throughout the tribe of Judah (Joshua 19:1).

The tribe of Levi, on the other hand, started out poorly but turned a new direction when they took their stand with Moses against the worship of the Golden Calf (Ex 32:26). They eventually became the priestly tribe, but never had any land of their own and instead were scattered throughout Israel.

Application:

These first three brothers were disqualified because of their failure to be self-governing and for their unrepentant sin.

Num 32:23-24 "... you may be sure that your sin will find you out."

Ezek 18:30 “Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall.”

C. Judah [Verse 8-12]

The first three brothers are disqualified from their position and now the mantle falls to Judah, Jacob’s 4th son.

If you recall from our previous studies, Judah wasn’t exactly a spiritual giant:

1. He lobbied to sell Joseph for a profit (Gen 37:26)
2. He separated himself from God’s covenant people (Gen 38:1)
2. His hung around ungodly men (Gen 38:12)
3. He was sexually immoral (Genesis 38:18).
4. He failed to keep his word to his daughter-in-law Tamar (Gen 38:26).

So why did Jacob pronounce such a rich blessing on Judah?

1. He confessed and repented of his sins (Gen 38:26)
2. He took full responsibility for the safety of Benjamin (Gen 43:8-10)
3. He offered himself as a substitute for Joseph (Genesis 44:18ff)

Application:

The blessing of Judah is a beautiful picture of God’s grace to those who confess and repent of their sins.

Jer 15:19 “If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me.”

1. He would be **preeminent** among his brothers
 - a. His brothers would praise him

This is a play on words since the name Judah means “Praise.”
 - b. His hand would be on the neck of his enemies
 - c. His brothers would bow down to him

But his leadership wouldn’t be fully realized until the days of King David – some 640 years later.
2. He was like a lion’s cub

In Revelation 5:5, Jesus is called *the Lion of the tribe of Judah*.
3. He would be the line of the **Messiah**

Jacob foretells that the Kings of Israel will come from Judah.
 Heb 7:14 “For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah ...”
 Zech 10:4 “From Judah will come the cornerstone, from him the tent peg, from him the battle bow, from him every ruler.”

 - a. The scepter would not depart from Judah

Num 24:17 “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.”

And if you read Matthew 1:2 you see that Jesus was from the tribe of Judah. But unlike Judah, whose descendents would sit as earthly kings, Jesus would be King over all creation!

b. Until he comes to whom it belongs

The actual Hebrew phrase is “Shiloh” and could mean:

1. A city that would later be built near Bethel – Joshua 1:8
2. A person: "He whose right it is" or “to whom it belongs”

Ancient Jewish commentators and early church fathers believed this to be a reference to the promised Messiah.

Mic 5:2 “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

4. He would prosper in every way

- a. He would tether his donkey to a vine
- b. He would wash his clothes in wine
- c. His eyes would be like wine and his teeth like milk

He would be so blessed that his grape vines would be strong enough to hold a young donkey and his vineyards and cattle, respectively, would produce an abundance of wine and milk.

Ps 16:11 “You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”

D. Zebulun [Verse 13]

1. He would live by the seashore as a haven for ships
2. His border would extend toward Sidon - Joshua 19:10-16

Zebulun’s geographical inheritance was situated between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee – the region of Jesus’ public ministry.

Matt 4:15-16 “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles -- the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

E. Issachar [Verse 14-15]

Issachar was the 3rd largest tribe of Israel (Numbers 26).

1. He was a lazy, rawboned donkey
 - a. He was lying down between two saddle bags
 - b. He will bend his shoulder to the burden

2. He would **submit** to forced labor

Evidently Issachar was strong and capable, but also passive and lazy.

In contrast to Judah, who subdued his enemies like a lion, Issachar submitted themselves as slaves to the Canaanites.

Application:

That which we do not master often tends to master us.

2 Peter 2:19 "... a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him."

F. Dan [Verse 16-17]

1. He will provide justice for his people

The tribe of Dan produced a number of famous judges including Sampson (Judges 13:2). But like Samson, the tribe of Dan was spiritually carnal.

- a. He would be a serpent beside the road
- b. He would bite the horse's heels
 1. So that its rider tumbles backward

The tribe of Dan repeatedly led Israel into idolatry:

1. Dan first introduced idolatry to Israel (Judges 18:30-31)
2. Dan allowed Jeroboam to set up one of his idolatrous golden calves in their city (1 Kings 12:26-30).
3. Dan became a center of idol worship in Israel (Amos 8:14).

This picture of a serpent would have reminded Jacob of the events of the Garden of Eden and God's prophecy that the serpent would bite the heel of God's promised deliver, but the Messiah would finally crush his head and bring the long-awaited salvation (Gen 3:15) It was natural, therefore, for Jacob to cry out: "I look for your deliverance, O Lord!"

The Hebrew word is "*yeshuwah*" (translated into Greek = "Jesus") and it means, "Salvation."

Ultimately, Jacob knows that the future of the nation of Israel does not depend on his 12 sons, but rather on God who would one day send "Yashuwah" to deliver mankind from their sins.

Matt 1:21 "... you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

G. Gad [Verse 19]

1. He would be attacked by a band of raiders
2. But he would attack them at their heels

The tribe of Gad would be continually plagued by foreign armies (Jer 49:1), but they were tenacious fighters and had a history of military victories.

H. Asher [Verse 20]

1. His food will be rich -- fit for a king - Deut 33:24-25

Asher's inheritance of land was on the rich northern seacoast north of Mount

Carmel (Josh 19:24-31) and produced an abundance of rich foods.

I. Naphtali [Verse 21]

1. He would be a **doe** set free that bears beautiful fawns

The prophecy of Naphtali's future is one of freedom and fruitfulness.

Also translated: "A doe let loose, He gives beautiful words"

The tribe of Naphtali would be well known for producing eloquent speakers and beautiful literature. The most famous of these was Deborah who composed a beautiful poem of military triumph in Judges 5:1-31.

Along with the land of Zebulun, Naphtali's territory was near the Sea of Galilee, the region where Jesus did much of His teaching and ministry (Matt 4:15-16).

And it goes without saying that there has never been a man who spoke such beautiful, life-giving words as Jesus Christ.

J. Joseph [Verse 22-26]

While the political leadership of Israel along with the promised Messiah would be Judah's birthright, the material blessings were promised to Joseph.

1. He was a **fruitful** vine near a spring

- a. His branches climb over a wall

Ps 1:2-3 "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."

2. He was attacked by bitter archers

Undoubtedly a reference to the persecution of his brothers who sold him into Egyptian slavery (Gen 37:28).

3. But his bow remained **steady**

How was Joseph able to persevere through the challenges of life?

- a. Because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob

Isa 60:16 "... I, the LORD, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

- b. Because of the **Shepherd**, the Rock of Israel

Ps 28:8-9 "The LORD is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one. Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever."

- c. Because of Jacob's God who helped and blessed him

1. Blessings of the heavens above
2. Blessings of the deep below
3. Blessings of the breast and womb

Eph 1:3-4 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”

4. He was a **prince** among his brothers

K. Benjamin [Verse 27]

1. He was a ravenous **wolf**

a. Devouring his prey in the morning

b. Dividing the plunder in the evening

The tribe of Benjamin had a reputation for being fierce and aggressive (Judges 19 and 20).

We have a number of examples of Benjamin’s aggressive leaders:

1. Ehud (Judges 3:15-23)

2. King Saul (1 Samuel 9:1, 14:47-52)

3. Paul the Apostle (Acts 8:1-3)

III Jacob’s Blessings Summarized

A. These were the **twelve** tribes of Israel [Verse 28a]

B. These were the blessings Jacob gave to his sons [Verse 28b]

C. These were the **appropriate** blessings for each son [Verse 28c]

Heb 11:13 “All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance.”

Conclusion

1. Become a Prophetic Parent! How does one go about doing this?
 - a. Be a passionate follower of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Be a person of the word and of prayer.
 - c. Specifically ask God for insight into your child's character and future.

Jer 33:3 “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”
 - d. Pronounce a blessing on your child on a regular basis
 - e. Make a commitment not to saddle your child with hurtful words that could potentially hinder the future work God has planned for their life.
2. Be warned – there is a price for sin.
 - a. We can see from Reuben, Simeon and Levi that sin is not overlooked
 - b. Our past choices can adversely affect our future blessings
 - c. Confession and repentance open up the way for renewed blessing

Acts 3:19 “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord ...”
3. Remember God’s plan of salvation is found in Yashuwah -- Jesus Christ

Acts 4:12 “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under

heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Yashuwah

4. Be assured that your heavenly Father has good things ahead for you
Jer 29:11 “I For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

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