



Three Rivers Fellowship

Jacob's Blessings and Curses on His Sons in Genesis 49

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1. The Context Established in Chapter 48 and Verses 1 & 2

The time had come that Jacob was going to die (Gen 47:29) and be carried off to Abraham's Bosom (a part of Sheol). He had lived in Egypt for 17 years and was 145 years old (Gen 47:28). Jacob's request to Joseph (with Manasseh and Ephraim) was to take his bones back to the Promised Land and bury them in the family cave with his Grandparents (Abraham and Sarah), Parents (Isaac and Rebekkah), and first Wife (Leah)¹ [See Gen 47:29-31; 49:29-33].

Gen 49:1 And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you *that which shall befall you in the last days*.

2 Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

Recall however, before Jacob gathered all of his sons, he first talked to Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh in Gen 48.

Jacob had many sons, twelve in number, and many daughters, of whom we only know one by name, Dinah (Gen 37:35). Naming Dinah in the inspired text is important, because she was possibly the victim of rape,² whose due process was corrupted by two of her brothers, Simeon and Levi (Gen 34:1-34). Their eventual "reward" is manifest in their father's blessing/curse as will be seen below (see section 4 for a complete list of correlation items).

- The Patriarchs' Births – Gen 30
- Moses Tribal Blessings - Duet 33
- Post-Conquest Land Divisions – Joshua 13-24
- Millennial Land Division – Eze 40 - 48

These blessings and curses need to be read in parallel with the above, especially Deut. 33. When considering the land allotment, then refer to the Post-Conquest Land in Joshua 13-24 and the Millennial Land in Ezek. 40-48. Remember that the Levites will not receive a Land portion, but a host of cities throughout Israel to dispense the priesthood and discipleship of the Nation.

¹ Several reasons why Jacob's beloved wife Rachel is not buried in the Family Cave have been offered. One is for her treatment of Leah, while a second is her treatment of Jacob, blaming him for her infertility, despite Jacob's fathering many children with Leah. Moreover, it would seem that only the first wife of the Patriarch is buried in the Family Cave. See also Gen 31:19 for additional reasoning. That Rachel is not buried in the family plot (though still within the Land) provides an interesting research topic.

² There are differences of opinion as to whether Dinah was raped or consented to the relationship. We shall assume for now, without further effort that she was raped. When we look at this period during Israel's journey later in our History of Israel Series, we shall examine this question in more detail.

2. The Blessings and Curses

To help better understand the distinction between the birth and blessing orders of Jacob's Sons, Table 1 is provided below for comparison.

Number	Birth Order (Gen 29, 30, 35)		Blessing Order (Gen 49)	
	Son	Mother	Son	Mother
1	Reuben	Leah	Reuben	Leah
2	Simeon	Leah	Simeon	Leah
3	Levi	Leah	Levi	Leah
4	Judah	Leah	Judah	Leah
5	Dan	Bilhah	Zebulan	Leah
6	Naphtali	Bilhah	Issachar	Leah
7	Gad	Zilpah	Dan	Bilhah
8	Asher	Zilpah	Gad	Zilpah
9	Issachar	Leah	Asher	Zilpah
10	Zebulon	Leah	Naphtali	Bilhah
11	Joseph	Rachel	Joseph	Rachel
12	Benjamin	Rachel	Benjamin	Rachel

Table 1. Jacob's Son's Birth Order Compared to the Blessing Order

The sections below enumerate and discuss the blessings/curses of Jacob's sons in the order in which they were given (Gen 49) not in their birth order. Two reasons for this approach. Firstly, Gen 49 actually provides discussion of the blessing in this order, and we want to keep this discussion in context, and secondly, Jacob's order is Leah's sons, handmaid's sons, and finally Rachel's sons. In this way, Leah being Jacob's first wife, goes first, then the handmaids in keeping with the historical birth order, and finally Rachel's sons. They are all grouped together in a nice package based upon their mothers.

Gen 49:2 Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

Some expositors think that Jacob's sons surrounded the bed of Jacob grouped by mother. Leah the despised-wife (6-sons), the handmaid-wives (Bilhah (1-son), Zilpah (2-sons), Bilhah (1-son), and finally Rachel the beloved-wife (2-sons).

Recall that Jacob had already talked these things over with Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh in Gen 48, before discussing with the entire set of brothers.

2.1. The Sons of Leah

In this section we identify and enumerate the blessings and/or curses assigned to Leah's sons.

Reuben

Reuben is identified by his father as his firstborn. In this context he is the first born of all of Jacob's sons, and therefore by Jewish tradition / law ought to receive the glories of the firstborn. What follows is a sad description of a sad individual.

Gen 49:3 Reuben, thou *art* my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:
4 Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou *it*: he went up to my couch.

As in the case of most firstborns, they are Biblically described as being their father's strength, since a father begins to establish himself and his family with his firstborn son. We see this term used in other places.

Psm 105:35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.
36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength.

In the above reference we see the Psalmist referring to the killing of Egypt's Firstborn. Thus, the "chief of all of Egypt's fathers" were not around in the next generation, which may have played a role in weakening Egypt's future grip on Palestine when Israel under Joshua performed the conquest. For more references to this phrase, see Deut. 21:17b (quite interesting); Psalm 78:51.

As Jacob's firstborn, even as the firstborn of Leah (the despised-wife) Reuben was to inherit the "double portion" by law (see Gen 21:17). But he was refused the double portion for reasons Jacob will explain (see also 1 Chron 5:1-3³).

Reuben is described as a man "unstable as water", a poor translation from the Hebrew intention. Rather, Reuben is "like boiling water", who boils over with passion and lust. A man who is not in control of himself and so Jacob recounts the historic event to justify Reuben's well-deserved loss of both the birthright and double portion (and there is more, which will be discussed below).

Continuing in verse 4, Jacob retells the tale of Reuben bedding his stepmother Bilhah in violation of Levitical Law (uncovering your Father's nakedness by having relations with one's stepmother).

³ A quick and unstudied question concerning 1 Chron 5:4, which goes ahead and mentions Joel immediately after enumerating Reuben's children. It is an unusual construction, since usually the child of each son follows. But here Joel is mentioned out of the blue. All commentators argue that Joel is either the son of Carmi or Hanock. Could it be that Joel is Reuben's son of incest through Bilhah? A good research project.

Gen 35:19 And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which *is* Bethlehem.
 20 And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that *is* the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.
 21 And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar.
 22 And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard *it*. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve.

Reuben's sin of incest with Bilhah, is similar to Ham's incest, but in Reuben's case Bilhah was not "genetically related" to Reuben. The Mosaic Law has quite a lot to say about such a grievous sin (Lev 18:7-11; 20:11-21[includes Mosaic Penalty]).

Lev 18:7 The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she *is* thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.
 8 The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it *is* thy father's nakedness.

Since God's Law was not yet "codified" there was no such capital law and punishment for this sin, though it is a sin "written upon men's heart" (Rom 1) that ought not to be committed.⁴ Four hundred years later after Moses was given God's Moral Code, Reuben would have been executed by stoning (see Deut. 21:18-).

As a result of his grievous sin, Reuben lost his birthright to Joseph and Judah as we see throughout the remaining Scriptures. Joseph receives the double portion of the firstborn and Judah receives the leadership role (see discussion below under Judah) [1 Chron 5:1-3].

Reuben was a morally weak man, morally corrupt, and out of control when it came to his passions and lusts. He was unworthy of his firstborn birthright privileges. Besides having the birthright and double portion taken from him, he is also described as a man, whose family and tribe will provide no great leader in Israel's future. The Judges period produced no Reubenite leaders and no great feats of the Reubenites were ever performed in the history of Israel.⁵

Being naturally wimpy, the Reubenites were the first tribe (along with Gad) to ask to settle and not cross over the Jordan to help the other tribes (Num 32)⁶. During the great reign of Deborah (an Ephraimite) and Barak (a Nephtalite), the Reubenites failed to aid in Israel's defense (Judges 5:15, 16). The Reubenites never excelled in anything.⁷

See section 3.1. The Historic Fulfillment of the for the historic fulfillment of Reuben's inheritance and section 3.2. The Prophetic Fulfillment of the for their Millennial inheritance.

Simeon and Levi

Simeon and Levi, the "Brothers Grimm", were a bunch of violent men who had little from their father to recommend them.

⁴ Many of the surrounding Gentile nations codified their own law and it could be that until given God's Official Law (through Moses) that the early Patriarchs operated under some kind of Gentile Law (perhaps Babylonian, since Abraham was originally from that area).

⁶ They had to be coaxed by Moses to be useful to their brethren and hope.

⁷ Paraphrased from Morris, p. 652. It will not be until the great 144K that the Reubenites not grudgingly crush their enemies and help Israel through Shekinah conquer the entire Promised Land and rid the land of evil.

Gen 49:5 Simeon and Levi *are* brethren; instruments of cruelty *are in* their habitations.
 6 O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not
 thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a
 wall.
 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.

Jacob starts off by stating that both Simeon and Levi are of one mind; the same kind of individual and “connected at the hip” which gets amplified in their pursuit of evil. “Vessels” of cruelty is a better translation to the modern-ear, rather than “instruments”.

The word translated “habitations” (mekheroth) has some textual difficulty being understood between two distinct usages.⁸

In verse 6, Jacob makes it quite clear that he wants nothing to do with the act of cruelty and sedition belonging to Simeon and Levi when they unrighteously reacted⁹ to their sister’s rape. Jacob’s very soul (nephesh) reacts against such violence and murder. Indeed, his honor as a Patriarch of Israel, indeed the very patriarch providing the tribal divisions of the nation through his sons loathes this action and forthrightly denies and makes sure that his honor is intact by utterly condemning the sin of Simeon and Levi.

What was the sin of Simeon and Levi, that they were so utterly united in purpose and single-mindedness?

Recorded for us in Gen 34, Dinah had gone to Shechem to a parcel of land purchased by her father where he had built an altar (Gen 33:18-20). Shechem lay within the land of the Hivites (a Canaanite tribe, see Figure 1) in north-central Canaan. While in the area, Shechem the son of Hamor (Hamor was the Hivite-King) saw Dinah, lusted after her, and took her and lay with her.

Hamor was incensed at his son’s actions that he desired to make peace with Jacob and the Israelites and sought at Hamor’s request to have Dinah as Hamor’s wife. Simeon and Levi constructed a plan, whereby the Hivites would be circumcised (essentially become Jews as far as the future Mosaic Law will be concerned) and they would share women to be their brides. All of this is fundamentally against the future Mosaic Law. This seditious plan was conceived by Simeon and Levi to not only kill Hamor, but the entire Hivite population in the Shechem area. The Hivites agreed to this treaty and all of their males were circumcised.

While the Hivite men were “sore and healing”, Simeon and Levi murdered the entire population with their “instruments of violence” and brought shame and ridicule upon the nation. Simeon and Levi committed treason against God’s law and the treaty in which

⁸ *Mehheroth* can be thought of as a small sword, or considering its root word khur, reference may be made to a digging tool, such as a Mattox (as referred to by Leupold [p.1173]). Either way, sword or Mattox the “tool” was used to unjustly destroy a whole community.

⁹ Instead of seeking justice, Simeon and Levi sought revenge on more than just Shechem, they killed the entire village in which Shechem lived (see Gen 34).

the Hivites agreed to with good intentions despite the treaty being contrary to Israel's hope.

This remarkable sin of sedition and treason was not forgotten by Jacob, even on his deathbed where he was fully cognizant and had his "wits about him".

For their treasonous sin, Jacob prophesied that they would be divided (from each other) and scattered throughout Israel. See section 3.1. The Historic Fulfillment of the for how this prophetic curse worked out in fulfilling Israel's hope.

Judah

In contrast to Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, Judah is the first son of Jacob to actually receive only a blessing. There is no curse related to Judah and no sin brought up in his inheritance.

Gen 49:8 Judah, thou *art he* whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand *shall be* in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

9 Judah *is* a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

11 Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto 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.

Before we get into Judah's blessing, we can ask the question. Why did God bless Judah so much, especially since in the middle of recording the details of Jacob's beloved son Joseph, Moses gives us a chapter solely devoted to Judah and his sins (Gen 38)? One can enumerate more than seven sins committed by Judah and his immediate offspring.

1. Abandonment (vs. 1)
2. Adultery with Canaanite Women (vss. 2-5)
3. The Evil of Judah's son, Er (vs. 7)
4. Judah's son Onan's Violation of the Law of the Levirate (vss. 8-10)
5. Judah's Lies about Tamar (vs. 11)
6. Judah's Incest with Tamar (his daughter in law) (vss. 13-18)
7. The Desire to Burn Tamar to Avoid being found out (vss. 24-26)
8. There's more, enjoy looking into them on your own

So, why did Jacob completely ignore Judah's unrighteous life? My own opinion is that it cannot be for anything that Judah has done to honor the Lord. It must be due to God's doing and I suspect God's Will is reflected in the life of despised Leah, Judah's mother. Because Leah was Jacob's "despised-wife", her life was not one of happiness and joy, but of sorrow and pain coming from an unloving husband and a dysfunctional family. On top of that, her attitude was one of anger, bitterness, and longing for better circumstances (nothing wrong with wanting that). This agony of soul, which obviously overtook her, is seen in her naming of her children (Gen 29:). This is actually remarkable.

Gen 29:31 And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.

32 And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me.

33 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon.

34 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore, was his name called Levi.

35 And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore, she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

Apparently, Leah had little faith and understanding that the Lord understood her plight, hated by her husband, and living in a dysfunctional family.

1. Her firstborn was named **Reuben**, which means “son”, thinking that now after **giving Jacob a son, he will love her**. He did not and Leah continued in her agony of soul.
2. Leah’s second born was named **Simeon**, which means “hear” or “hearing”. Leah’s second born is thus named because **Leah believes** that the Lord has (1) heard her plea or (2) **questions whether the Lord has heard her plea and sensitive to her plight**. I favor the later usage, given the context of Leah’s current circumstances and unbelief. The two together make for an ugly life.
3. Leah’s third born is named Levi, meaning “to join” because Leah believes now that she has provided Jacob with three sons, that **he will join her, and she will become a beloved wife**. In this historic and sad case, *“three is not the charm!”*. Jacob is unwilling to give up his lack of affection toward Leah and she continues to be the “despised wife”.

In each of these children and their names, Leah was overwhelmed with her plight and totally consumed with her undesirable circumstances. Hated from the start, she has given the man who “married her for convenience” three male children, and he remains uninterested in her. Is it any wonder that we can fully understand and sympathize with Leah? Nevertheless, we should not allow ourselves to be overcome with psychological analysis of this event and the circumstances of Leah’s plight. There is something greater being played out here and it is about to happen.

Between the time of giving birth to Levi then Judah, Leah apparently had a change of heart. It seems that she came to the realization that the Lord was sensitive to her plight and that she needed to learn to keep things in His hands. As such, Leah must have repented of her attitude and demeanor and had a different attitude and commitment at the birth of Judah.

Gen 29:35 And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore, she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

Instead of naming her child within the energy of her plight and unbelief, Leah named her child "Praise" or in anglicized form Judah. Leah seems to have repented of her unbelief and resting in the fact that Jehovah has a purpose in her plight.

Now we turn to the man and the nature of his tribe. Given Judah's sins, we ought to find it remarkable that in the end, Judah receives half of Reuben's birthright ... the leadership half!

We see first in verse 8, that it is prophesied that Judah will be praised by his brethren. This is the first indicator that Judah will have a unique role within the nation. That his very name will describe the nature of his tribe. Furthermore, he shall be a great warrior and will lead in conquering Israel's enemies. Finally, we see that all the other tribes will submit to Judah's position.

The tribe of Judah is described as a "lion's whelp". According to Leupold (place reference), the reference to a "lion's whelp" is a reference to a newly matured lion, healthy in every respect and ready for action. Not so apparent in English, Judah as the Lion is pictured as one just after capturing and consuming his prey and now back in his home resting from his battle enjoying the aftermath of a fine meal. This young mature lion is the one to worry about and not disturb, otherwise he will be having dessert. Let sleeping lions lay (so to speak). At this point he prefers to lay around and enjoy his meal, but should you disturb him, remember he is in the his prime! Imagine, the female lioness protecting her cubs. Stay away!

Verse 10 tells us that once received the royal line will never leave the house of Judah. There will not be multiple dynasties in Israel. Only the Judaic Dynasty. Should not have reprobate Israel known this when they chose Saul as their first king? Is this not proof as to their unbelief and lack of knowledge of their eternal hope?

Given the context and usage elsewhere, "lawgiver" while a legitimate translation is not the best for this case (see Deut. 33:21; Judges 5:14; Isa 33:22). Moreover, the following parallel phrase does not make sense if "lawgiver" is the proper translation since "sceptre" refers to the royal line, making "commander" or "leader" the preferred translation based upon context. This makes better sense since "between his feet" can be a reference to his genetic line, making the reference to lawgiver to be part of Judah. In this case, Moses as the lawgiver does not fit the family history since Moses was from the tribe of Levi.

A mass of literature has been generated over the usage here regarding "Shiloh". "Shiloh" means "rest" and here the context drives us to understand this usage as "personified rest". This is a reference to Messiah when Christ refers to himself as giving rest - the Rest Giver.

"Mat 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

This has major implications for the Millennial kingdom. After defeating His enemies, Messiah and His people rest (like the lion's whelp after his meal) for 1000 years for they have just conquered their enemies and now resting in the Promised Land. As such, all peoples of the earth obey Him ("Gathering" should have been translated as "obedience").

Verses 11 and 12 both refer to Judah's bountiful land. Judah's land was mountainous and perfect for the cultivation of grapes. Thus, Judah was a wine maker and flowing in the fruit of the vine, also a symbol of wealth and plenty. Apparently, some have argued that the fruit of the vine provides for good eyesight and strong white teeth. Note too that the type of grapes being referred to are red. It is well known that red wine contains many differing nutrients that are beneficial to the drinker (in moderation of course). As an example, Resveratrol¹⁰ is such an example of a desired Phenol nutrient.

Grapevines are so plentiful in Judah that they even tie up their livestock with vines.

Thus, despite Judah's sins, his tribe is destined for great military escapades and leading the nation to victory through the "Prince of peace".

Zebulun

Little is spoken about Zebulun, but for his role to play in Joseph's slavery no sin is directly attributed to Zebulun.

Gen 49:13 Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he *shall be* for an haven of ships; and his border *shall be* unto Zidon.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the post-conquest land of Zebulun is in the north between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean. Our map does not show the parcel touching the Sea of Galilee, but many scholars and archeologists argue that Zebulun's land extended to its shore (Mat 4:13-16), but stopping short of the Mediterranean (the latter as shown).

Interestingly, Zebulun's land probably extended far and west enough to touch upon the river whose mouth is at Mt. Carmel. The Kishon River runs through the Zebulun valley which is otherwise known as the Valley of Jezreel or the Valley of Armageddon. Perhaps through this river Zebulun enjoyed the hospitality of ships and served as a central loading and distribution center for the whole nation. Our map does not show Zebulun extending as far north as Zidon, but perhaps through economic hegemony and his shipping responsibilities his influence does.

Issachar

As in the case of Zebulun, little is spoken of Issachar at this time.

Gen 49:14 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 unto tribute.

¹⁰ See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resveratrol>

Jacob provides a little prophecy on Issachar apparently based on his observations of his son. First, Jacob notes that Issachar is physically very strong and able to easily manage a double burden (between two burdens). Secondly, Issachar loves the “lazy life” and saw that “rest was good” (preferred), even if it did not lead to the best of situations.

Later in Israel’s history under Joshua, apparently Issachar was given rich sheep herding land. Instead of driving out the Canaanites, the tribe of Issachar preferred to “rest” and pay tribute to God’s perverted enemies.

2.2. The Sons of the Handmaids of Leah and Rachel

In this section we identify and enumerate the blessings and curses of the Handmaiden wives.

Dan - The First Son of Bilhah

Dan is a wonderment.

Gen 49:16 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 biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.

18 I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.

No doubt, the judging of Israel by Dan is fulfilled in the person of Samson, who judged Israel for 20 years, destroying the Philistines (Judges 13-16).

Bullinger notes the usage serpent here refers to *being driven to the serpent of idolatry*. Given Dan’s history of apostasy this observation is quite telling (Judges 18-29-31).

As a result of apostatizing first they are not numbered among the 144K. Indeed, they may all have died off in their history based on Lev 24:10-16. See also the sin of Jeroboam 1 Kings 29:27-33 and 2 Kings 10:29.

These cases of idolatry and apostasy indicate the evil of the tribe of Dan. That their nature is one of traitorhood, so much so, that God does not allow them to participate in the capturing of the land, especially since they were so willing to give it up to Pagan peoples in the form of idolatry.

Also, as a historical note. It is interesting that Assyria attacked the 10 Tribes from the north, the land of Dan. See Jer 8:16,17.

Gad and Asher - The Sons of Zilpah

The two sons of Zilpah, Leah’s Handmaiden.

Gad

Gad the warrior.

Gen 49:19 Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.

A horrible translation apparently. The idea here is that Gad will be constantly attacked and will become a skillful “counter-puncher”. We see them along with Reuben and half of Manasseh described as such:

1 Chron 5:18 The sons of Reuben, **and the Gadites**, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, were four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore, that went out to the war.
 19 And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab.
 20 And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: **for they cried to God in the battle**, and he was intreated of them; because they **put their trust in him**.

No doubt this would have come in handy when taking the land on the west side of the Jordan in both frontline and rear echelon action to help Israel conquer the remaining western land. According to Leupold, the Gadites became experts in counter-punching partially due to necessity. Being on the eastern bank of the Jordan River, in the area called the Transjordan, they would naturally be subject to attacks from eastern peoples and tribes.

Asher

Asher the tribe of chefs and fisherman.

Gen 49:20 Out of Asher his bread *shall be fat*, and he shall yield royal dainties.

Asher is described as a man who apparently knows how to cook and prepare a meal¹¹, and his tribal lands reflect that characteristic in that they are given one of the most productive areas in the land of Canaan, in the north on the Mediterranean coast. No doubt seafood and olive groves are in abundance and according to Deut. 33:24, all Israel is impressed with Asher’s culinary and hospitable talents.

Sadly, Asher came to essentially nothing and apparently had little “stomach” for fighting and defending their land.

Naphtali - The Second Son of Bilhah

Naphtali the orator and author.

Gen 49:21 Naphtali *is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words*.

The greatest Nephtalite was Barak the warrior who with Deborah judged Israel. However, I believe Deborah was officially the Judge and Barak her main commander.

No doubt together with Deborah, Barak co-authored the Song of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5). The lyrics are world class and no doubt the music is glorious as well.

¹¹ A bit of a humorous reference!

So, the tribe of Naphtali will be a tribe of great warriors and authors as well. No doubt the 144K of Naphtali will be responsible for writing the Battle minutes of Armageddon, which will be read for a thousand years.

2.3. The Sons Rachel

Now we come to the sons of the beloved-wife, Rachel.

Joseph

Jacob's favorite son. Wearer of the "coat of many colors", hated by his brothers, and ruler of Egypt.

Gen 49:22 Joseph *is* a fruitful bough, *even* a fruitful bough by a well; *whose* branches run over the wall:

23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot *at him*, and hated 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:)

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

26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto 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.

Jacob's description and blessing of Joseph is full of wonderful characteristics and also includes Messianic language in describing the source this blessing. Joseph is said to be a tribe which is to be quite numerous through his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Manasseh will be plentiful, but Ephraim will be double plentiful. Through his two sons, Joseph receives the double blessing. The imagery of the well indicates well-watered vines so impressive that they quickly overtake walls. Since olives and grapes are important crops in this area, this may refer to remarkable harvests and fruitful blessings for Joseph and Israel as a whole.

It clearly seems that the "archers" refers to Joseph's brothers who in fact want him gone, out of the picture, or even dead - despite their father's love for Joseph. They tried, they failed, and they hated him not knowing that God is quite capable and indeed does use man's sin to accomplish His will.

Yet, despite the evil shown by his brothers Joseph was found to be much stronger and more blessed than all of his brethren. We see the source of his strength was the Lord Himself, "the Mighty One of Jacob". Verse 24b contains three Messianic references, of which the last two are first-time usages:

1. Mighty One. See Psalm 132:2; Isa 1:24
2. Shephard. See Psalm 32:1; 80:1
3. Stone. See Isa 12:16; 1 Pet 2:4; see also Eph 2:20 for a Body Usage

Joseph will be blessed with a numerous tribe and many animals. He is blessed more than all his brothers (which also includes Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). As the ruler of Egypt, Joseph's brothers bowed down to him.

Benjamin

Interesting, how Benjamin being the youngest of Jacob's sons is also arguably the fiercest.

Gen 49:27 Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

We see Benjamin and Israel devouring its enemies (or its brethren) as a ravenous wolf at times. For Benjamin killing their brethren see Judges 20:21-27 and for reprobate Israel see Ezek. 22:27.

3. The Fulfillment of Jacob's Blessing / Curses

In this section we shall examine how the blessings or curses worked themselves out in the dividing up of the land under Joshua.

3.1. The Historic Fulfillment of the Conquest

Figure 1 below shows how the tribal lands were divided up among the tribes under Joshua. The specific parcel given to each tribe is based on Jacob's "commentary" on each of his sons (Gen 49).¹²



Figure 1. The Conquest Inheritance

¹² <https://www.albert-tours-israel.com/single-post/borders>

Note: The author does not agree with the dates in this figure, for it supports a late date for the Conquest.

Reuben

As the firstborn, Reuben should have been the “leader type”, but instead he was lazy, wimpy, and not all interested in living an honorable life. The latter of which is seen in his crimes of passion and lust. As a wimpy guy, the Reubenites were the first tribe to “cry uncle” and ask for the very first available land parcel when the nation was entering the land. The land they received is in Transjordan on the southern border, next to the land of Moab,¹³ their pagan cousins and constant source of turmoil. Much like a desert climatically and spiritually.

Simeon and Levi

These two brothers have to be discussed together, since they were “peas in a pod” for their entire lives. When their sister Dinah was “allegedly” raped, they sought out a plan to kill the entire village of the so-called rapist (Shechem). They “planned a plan” of sedition and betrayal that caused Jacob to convolve upon himself and loathe their actions. Jacob never forgot their act of treachery and deception, realizing they acted together in their actions, he knew they needed to split up and separate. Indeed, as an unruly lot Simeon even needed to be “watched over” – essentially babysat to keep him from immolating himself (and others). What better “babysitter” could have been chosen to watch over Simeon?

As a result of their tribal characteristics, Simeon’s land was literally “land-locked” within the land of Judah. Simeon shared no border with the sea or river or outside group. He was “hugged” by the tribe of Judah, the great warrior tribe of Israel and the one who will carry the crown. The idea being that God is not going to have Simeon get out of control again and “sign up” with his brother Levi to perform mischief. Simeon is completely separated from Levi and protected (or rather guarded [babysat]) by Judah.

Levi in some ways receives a greater separation. Levi as a nation does not receive a land parcel, but a group of separate cities. Forty-Eight cities¹⁴ were assigned to Levi to inherit. God used this to spread the Levitical Priesthood throughout the land of Israel for teaching, preaching, and priestly intercession. But Simeon has no Levitical cities within his land and no city of refuge. He is solely under the purview of Judah.

These two brothers were thoroughly separated from each other, and God used Levi’s cities to propagate the Kingdom gospel throughout Israel. Did they do a good job?

Judah

The Regal Portion of Israel went to Judah. As such he inherited a remarkable tract of land reaching as far north as the northern shore of the Dead Sea and as far south as Kadesh Barnea (perhaps even farther south).

As Simeon’s Little-Big brother, Judah has a hole in the middle of their parcel belonging to Simeon. As mentioned above this is a wonderful way of keeping Simeon in line and not

¹³ Recall that the two troublesome tribes on the Transjordan side for Israel were Moab and Ammon. These were the children of a horribly incestuous relationship of Job’s daughters essentially “raping” their father while he was “blitzed”. Not doubt their progeny were in some way “genetically compromised”, but how that compromise works its way out physically is up for discussion.

¹⁴ For nice discussion on this topic see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levitical_city.

out of control. The tribe of Judah is the main tribe of the southern tribes, and the southern kingdom eventually inherits the name Judah in contrast to Israel, the northern 10-tribes.

Zebulun

Zebulun inherits the land at the beginning of the Kison River which runs through the valley of Megiddo. No doubt during the Campaign of Armageddon, Zebulun will be providing intelligence and fighting furiously in this area, which may take place toward the end of Armageddon as the 144K march onto Jerusalem.

Issachar

Issachar receives a land that is rich in sheep herding as mentioned above.

Dan

Dan's land is west and south of Ephraim and has a coastline with the Mediterranean. The land contains the great city of Joppa.

Gad

Gad's inheritance resides on the eastern side of the Jordan River bordering Manasseh to the north and Reuben to the south. This meant that Gad was constantly being attacked by the eastern peoples.

Asher

Asher's inheritance falls on the coast of the Mediterranean in the furthest parcel north, but east of Naphtali. Their land is such that they will aid Israel in the food commodities market keeping Israel owners of healthy food and a land rich in agriculture and livestock.

Naphtali

Naphtali is the northern most tribe just east of Ashur with a eastern boundary just slightly east of the Jordan River to include the city of Dan.

Joseph

Joseph receives no direct land inheritance, but does receive his double portion through his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. Together their inheritance is huge relative to the other tribes including Judah and it is contiguous.

Benjamin

As Rachel's youngest son Benjamin and the "baby of the family" receives a small parcel between his full brother and his strong brother Judah. Within his parcel resides Jerusalem.

3.2. The Prophetic Fulfillment of the Millennium

Figure 2 below shows the Millennial Land as it is divided up among the twelve tribes.¹⁵

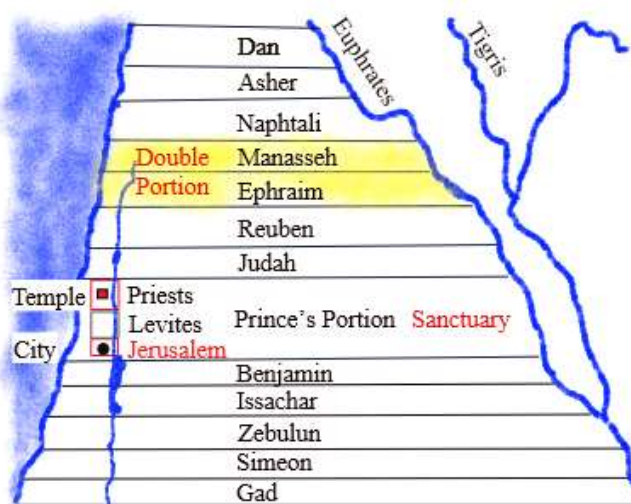


Figure 2. The Millennial Inheritance

Some comments are in order without detail. During the Millennial Kingdom, the entire nation will be living peacefully in their land. The Promised land stretches from Hamath in the north to “the River of Egypt” in the south and from the Mediterranean in the west to the Euphrates River in the east. There are many questions that are unanswered as to the rationale in this allotment and arrangement. There are a few things that are obvious to understand.

The Prince's Portion (David's personal inheritance) is large and almost in the middle of the tribes. Its northern border is the parcel of Judah, making Judah's over all land mass large in comparison. In the middle of the Prince's port resides the Levite Village. Not shown or discussed in detail herein is the Holy Oblation¹⁶ with starts in the north at Shiloh and ends is Jerusalem (see Figure 1 below).

¹⁵ <https://churchages.net/en/study/millennium-part-4-ezekiel-vision/>

¹⁶ R.E.Walsh, *The Holy Oblation in the Millennial Kingdom*, TRF, Pittsburgh, PA 2003, upd. 2023.

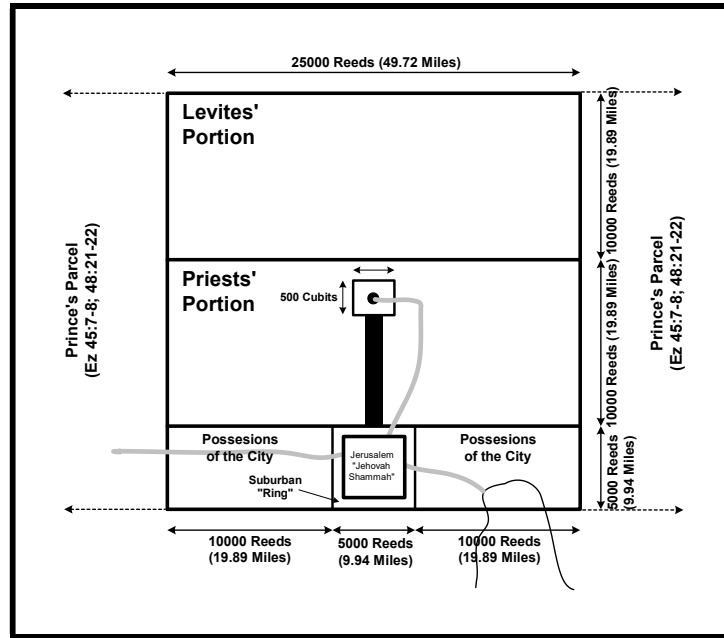


Figure 3. The Holy Oblation of the Millennial Kingdom

Joseph receives his “double portion” through the inheritances of his two sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) whose land parcels are adjacent and therefore contiguous.

Simeon and Levi remain separated.

Zebulun is now in the south along with Gad and Issachar, while Dan moves to the extreme north.

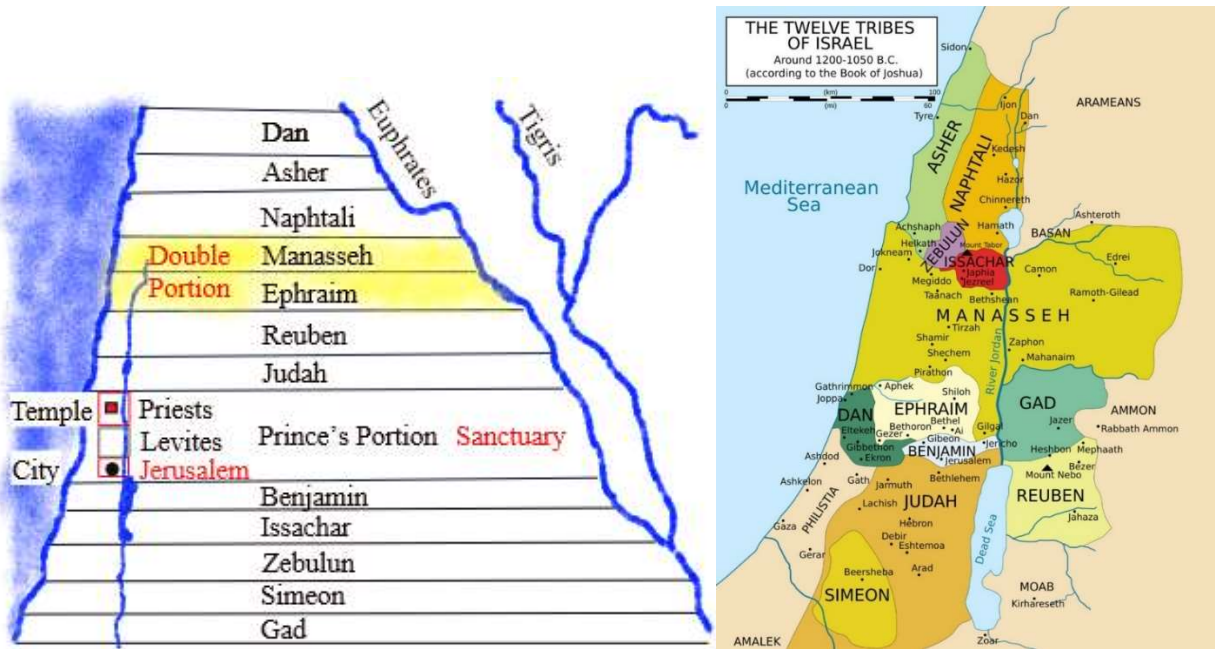


Figure 4. A Comparison of Land Inheritances

3.3. Comments on Israel's Inheritance in New Jerusalem

Below illustrates the wall surrounding the New Jerusalem. Each foundational section is named after an apostle, while each gate is named after one of the tribes.

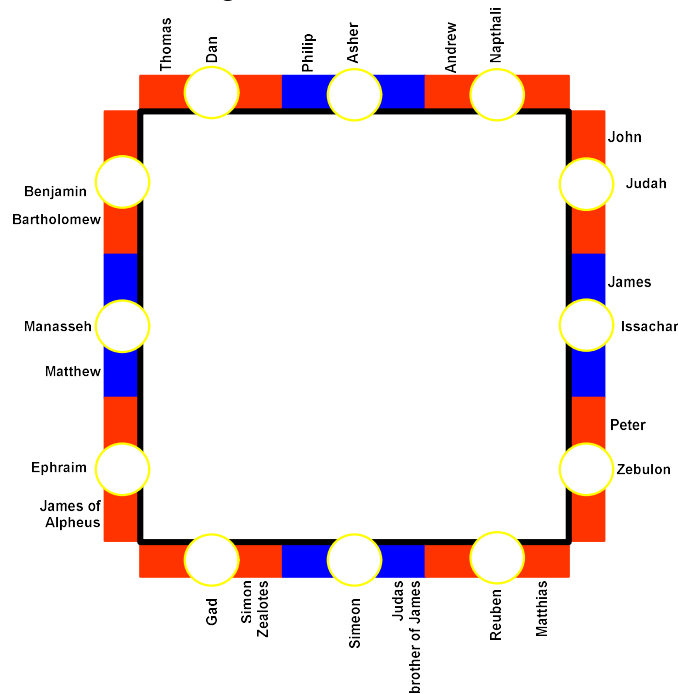


Figure 5. The Wall Surrounding New Jerusalem

Several things worthy of note. First, Joseph still gets his double portion, and it is still contiguous. Second, is there a correlation between the names of the foundation and its respective gate?

4. Summary

After Jacob gives his blessings and curses to his sons, crawls in bed and expires. Having left instructions to carry his bones back to the Family Cave with his wife Leah. Rachel is not in the Cave.

Gen 49:28 All these *are* the twelve tribes of Israel: and this *is it* that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

29 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto 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 buryingplace.

31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.

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 unto his people.

We also need to correlate these analyses with the Tribes around the Tabernacle, which will now be with them for centuries.

A lot more work needs doing in this effort. A great idea for a workshop team to attack. Correlating

- The Patriarchs' Births – Gen 30
- Jacob's Blessings and Curses – Gen 49
- The Tabernacle in the Wilderness – Exo 26-30
- Moses Tribal Blessings - Duet 33
- Post-Conquest Land Divisions – Joshua 13-24
- Millennial Land Division – Eze 40 – 48
- New Jerusalem – Rev 21

Figure 6 illustrates the tribal assignments around the Tabernacle in the Wilderness.¹⁷

¹⁷ <https://www.israel-a-history-of.com/tabernacle-of-moses.html>

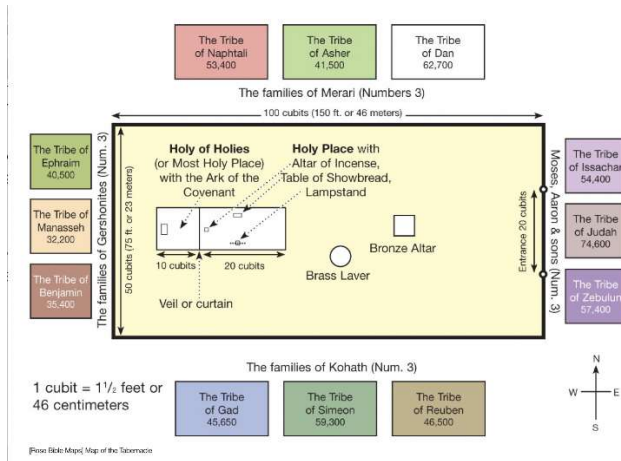


Figure 6. The Tribal Assignments Around the Tabernacle

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