



MATTHEW 6

The Lilies of The Valley

Jacob's Prophetic Blessings over the 12 Tribes

Genesis 49:1–2

"Jacob called his sons, and he said: 'Come together that I may tell you what is to befall you in the end of days. Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel [Jacob], your father.'"

Jacob, of course, did not only bless his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh. He also called all of his sons together to bless and prophesy over them on his deathbed. All of them were blessed in that they would all enter the Promised Land and receive an inheritance there.

The blessings were carefully constructed and appropriate to the individual. They were often based on past behavior that was projected beyond the life of these sons to their descendants.

When Jacob blessed his firstborn son, Reuben, he did not give him the double portion or pre-eminence usually reserved for firstborn sons. Because of Reuben's instability, the double portion was given to Joseph and pre-eminence was given to Judah.

He did this because Reuben slept with Jacob's concubine, Bilhah, which revealed his lust for power over the family. In other words, when Reuben took possession of his father's harem, it revealed an attempt to usurp his authority. For this reason, Jacob resisted giving Reuben a position of pre-eminence.

When Jacob blessed Simeon and Levi, he cursed their anger for their role in the massacre on Shechem after Jacob's daughter Dinah was raped. Though their anger was a fitting response, it was not a righteous anger. They tricked the men of Shechem into a false peace agreement and used it as a trap to kill them. Their violence was so excessive that they even hamstringed the oxen.

However, other sons were blessed with beauty and fertility (Joseph); swiftness of a deer (Naphtali); ferociousness of a wolf (Benjamin); scholarship (Issachar); military might (Gad); and so on.

Genesis 49:8

"Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you."

When the people of Israel came out of slavery in Egypt, Judah became YHVH's "holy ones":

Psalm 114:1–2

"When Israel came forth out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah became His sanctuary [kadosho], Israel His dominion [memshalah]."

The word translated sanctuary is kadosho (קֹדֶשׁ), meaning holiness or holy portion. It comes from the word kadosh (קָדוֹשׁ), which means "holy" or set apart.

In Judah, we see the call to holiness. Although he showed lapses of holiness and good judgment at times, he saved Joseph's life from his brother's wrath after they threw him in a pit. And, later, Judah was the only brother willing to enslave his own life in order to free his brother Benjamin.

These actions revealed character traits similar to our Messiah—the One who saves us from spiritual death and releases us from spiritual enslavement.

When we are not sure what to be thankful for, we can praise and thank Him for these gifts of freedom. In fact, the Hebrew word for Jew comes from Judah (Yehudah יהודה), from the root YDH yadah (יָדָה), which means to thank.

Genesis 29:35

Leah, Jacob's wife, used a play on words in naming her last son Judah (Yehuda), saying that now she would praise (yadah—thank) YHVH.

Romans 2:28–29

And the apostle Paul said that a true Jew, inwardly, is one who praises (thanks) the Lord, whether Jewish or Gentile (pagan).

Jacob also likens Judah to a lion cub; therefore, the tribe of Judah is known as Gur Ariyeh (lion cub).

Genesis 49:9

"Judah is a lion's whelp [Gur Ariyeh]; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him?"

Indeed, from the royal tribe of Judah came forth kings, legislators, and the promised Redeemer Messiah, the anointed King of Israel—Yeshua HaMashiach!

As prophesied, one day, the dominion of His authority will extend to the entire world. To Him, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess He is King of Kings and Master of masters. (*Philippians 2:10*)

As in Isaiah we find the Jacob Propheesied of the Coming of Messiah

Genesis 49:10

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people."

The meaning of the word Shiloh as it is used in this verse literally means that is his or he whose it is. So, this verse could be restated to say that the scepter (staff of a ruler) will not depart from Judah until the one comes to whom it belongs. More specifically, Shiloh is considered to be a synonym for Messiah, even by ancient Jewish scholars. We find hints of who this Messiah is as we look closer at the words of this prophecy.

Though Judah and his offspring would hold the scepter of rule and law over YHVH's chosen people, their reign remained limited to Israel. One would come from Judah as a mature lion who will rule and judge the whole world.
(*Genesis 49:9*)

Yeshua held the sovereign staff of YHVH Himself, releasing spiritual oppression and setting the captives free through YHVH's Holy Spirit (Ruach HaKodesh). With YHVH's staff in hand, Yeshua came as the suffering servant (Mashiach ben Yosef).

The Jewish leadership of Yeshua's day, however, were looking for a scepter to be raised by a military leader who would conquer the Roman oppressors with weapons and force (Mashiach ben David). As a result, many completely missed their Messiah.

Over time, as Christianity developed and Christians persecuted Jews in the name of the Messiah, a majority of the Jewish People came to define themselves as people who reject any claim that Yeshua is the Messiah.

Jacob wanted to reveal the Messiah's coming at the end of days but was prevented by the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit).

"Jacob wished to reveal to his sons the end of days [ketz ha-yomin], whereupon the divine presence departed from him."

In His sovereignty, the Ruach has revealed those end days through Yeshua's many teachings (*Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21*) and the vision of the apostle John in the Book of Revelation, as well as other Bible prophecies.

Further signifying Judah's prophetic call as God's "holy ones," Judah's name, Yehuda — יהודה, uses all four letters of the proper name of God, YHVH (יהוה) with the addition of one Hebrew letter dalet (ד), which stands for delet or door.

Yeshua died in the Land of Judah on the Roman execution stake, rose again, and became the door to salvation.

"In this way, all Israel will be saved, as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will banish ungodliness from Jacob.'" (*Romans 11:26; Isaiah 59:20*)

In these Last Days, as we wait for the return of Yeshua in a display of might and power, please pray for the salvation of the Jewish People and help us bring the Good News to the Holy Land and the nations.

Jeremiah 31:10

"Hear the word of YHVH, you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over His flock like a shepherd.'"

Did Jacob predict Yeshua's first miracle? While we look at Genesis 47:28 – 50:26, one of the most important passages in the Scriptures, we find the most important Messianic prophecies in the Hebrew Bible.

Though people typically think of the Torah as a law book only, the Torah, like the other prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible, was written specifically to foretell a glorious future. In four strategically positioned passages in the Torah, we find people prophesying about "the last days" (translated as "the days to come" or "the latter days")!

In the early years of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, Jacob says to the twelve tribes: *"Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in the last days"* (Genesis 49:1). Then, at the end of the wilderness wanderings, Balaam tells Balak *"what this people will do to your people in the last days"* (Numbers 24:14).

Finally, in Moses' closing instructions to the people of Israel before his death, he speaks about the last days twice! In Deuteronomy 4:30 he says, *"When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the last days, you will return to YHVH your God and obey His voice."*

In Deuteronomy 31:29, Moses says, *"And in the last days, evil will befall you."* Remarkably, in three of the four places where the Torah mentions the last days, the speaker then goes on to describe the coming of the King-Messiah!

We will discuss the other two end-time passages about the coming king in later studies. For now, let us look at Jacob's prophecy about a king from the tribe of Judah who will arise in the last days.

Jacob says,

"Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk." (Genesis 49:8-12)

Jacob's prophecy about this future king literally becomes the "talk of the town" for Israel's later prophets and for the New Testament writers as well. For example, the Prophet Zechariah speaks of the coming of Israel's king "on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9).

It is clear from the reference to the Messiah coming on a colt and foal of a donkey that Zechariah's prophecy is based on Jacob's words about the Messiah "binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine." And here is an interesting question to consider: Could it be that Yeshua's very first miracle, changing water into wine, is intended to be the very first installment of Jacob's prophecy about the future days of blessing? There will be such plenty in the promised land when Yeshua comes again that he will even wash his garments in wine and in the blood of grapes!

Be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them. And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am YHVH who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever"" (Ezekiel 37:15-28).

As we contemplate this prophecy, we are reminded that its fulfillment can by no means be an instantaneous event. Instead, as it transpires, then the people ask: "Will you not show us what you mean by these?" (Ezekiel 37:18, RSV). This question indicates almost as many perplexing thoughts that must have been the initial reaction of the sons of Jacob/Israel, as Joseph revealed himself to them in Pharaoh's courtyard.

I would submit that if we have begun to actually witness the final stages of Israel's restoration in our day, that this question has been answered in a large number of ways: some good and some not so good. Some do not know what to do, and so they choose to ignore the relevant Biblical passages. Others have entered in, have over-simplified things, and have opportunized things quite a bit. And still, others have tried to develop the patience needed to recognize that the restoration of Israel's Kingdom is something that can only occur in the Father's perfect timing, and have tactfully done the best they can in living forth the prophecy's ethic of unity.

Let us be those who truly seek His face, and are given the gifts and temperance needed! May we each possess the discernment to know what our place may be in the anticipated restoration of Israel, so that the Lord can use us to help it along at the appropriate season, rather than deter it through any ungodly flesh patterns that cause confusion.

Many critical lessons should be understood from this week's Torah portion. After all, we witness how Jacob is in a unique position to not only bless his sons, but also prophetically declare much of the future intention of his offspring.

Great lessons for followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob can be imparted by the graphic example of extending one's blessings upon children. Consider how the author of Hebrews indicates that by following the example established by his father Isaac, Jacob exhibited the great faith that he had in the God who was not only faithful to his fathers—but now to him as his life was ending:

Hebrews 11:20-21

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff"

In many respects, the concept of faithfully blessing one's children and offspring, in order to pass on the blessings you have received from YHVH, is reinforced and categorically established by the actions described.

Thankfully, faithful men and women of YHVH who have inherited these blessings throughout Biblical history, have been responsible for passing them on to people like us today, who clearly reap the benefits of the original blessings imparted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We should have great confidence in YHVH that we will see them continue to be passed on to future generations!

As we begin to study and reflect upon some of the details we discover that Jacob, just like his grandfather Abraham and father Isaac, was gifted with prophetic insight about the future of his children and their offspring. Jacob was 130 years old when he arrived in Egypt, and he lived there for seventeen years until his death (Genesis 47:28).

During his time spent in Egypt, Jacob was surely able to reflect upon his life experiences, including his reunion with the presumed-deceased Joseph, and how events had led him to his final days outside of the land promised to him and his descendants. No doubt as he considered all of life's trials and tribulations, he thought about his twelve sons and how they had behaved and acted over the years. He probably remembered some of the dreams that Joseph had shared with he and Rachel years earlier in Canaan, and now how he had witnessed their fulfillment. As he approached death, Jacob desired to finalize his estate.

Jacob was very preoccupied about his final resting place. As his body began to fail, he was compelled to commit Joseph to a pledge to return his remains to the Land of Canaan:

"When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, 'Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness.

Please do not bury me in Egypt, but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.' And he said, 'I will do as you have said.' And he said, 'Swear to me.' So he swore to him. Then Israel bowed in worship at the head of the bed" (Genesis 47:29-31).

Jacob had a very special relationship with the God of his fathers. The various encounters he had with Him over the years, and now the opportunity to be circumspect, forced him to conclude that it was imperative that he have his body laid to rest in the tomb of his fathers. After all, he might have reasoned, he knew of how his father Isaac had placed his grandfather Abraham in the tomb Abraham himself had purchased in Machpelah, then he in turn had placed Isaac in that same tomb. Canaan as an inheritance, it would only be natural for him to be laid to rest in the same tomb. Since Joseph ostensibly had the power to fulfill his request, Jacob secured a vow from Joseph.

Once this request was insured, Jacob was probably content to finish off the days of his life. We soon discover that as the number of Jacob's days were coming to a close, he now went into action to repeat many of the actions that he had witnessed his father Isaac perform decades earlier. Jacob understood the important principles of the birthright blessings.

After all, some of the most memorable events of his life centered around the challenges of the one who would receive the birthright inheritance and the blessing of Isaac. Of course, we remember that in the case of Jacob and Esau, in spite of the fact that Esau was the elder son, Jacob received both the birthright blessings and the leadership blessings for his generation.

Now as death approached, Jacob had the opportunity to pass blessings and important words onto his sons, and as we also see, his grandsons—with each of the words containing an important prophetic theme.

The issuing of the double portion blessing is first extended. As we should keep in mind, Jacob has had a very full life that included multiple wives and multiple concubines. It was the son of Rachel, the beloved Joseph, whom Jacob designated as the heir of these distinct birthright blessings.

As we read in this account, Joseph had two sons, and we witness that Jacob actually adopted them as his own. By in essence making them his own, he passed the double portion blessing onto Joseph's two grandsons Manasseh and Ephraim: "Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, 'Behold, your father is sick.' So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him.

Genesis 48:1-16

When it was told to Jacob, 'Behold, your son Joseph has come to you,' Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed. Then Jacob said to Joseph, 'God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and He said to me, "Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession." And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. But your offspring that have been born after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance. Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).' When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, 'Who are these?' And Joseph said to his father, 'They are my sons, whom YHVH has given me here.' So he said, 'Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.' Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, 'I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well.'

Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to and Because Jacob had also been promised him.

But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the first-born. And he blessed Joseph, and said, 'The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth'"

In this classic passage, the birthright blessings of Jacob are extended to the two sons of Joseph. But in a somewhat confusing manner, due to the inspiration of the moment, the younger son Ephraim actually received the greater blessing that is typically extended to the elder son of each generation. Somehow during this intriguing moment of blessing, Jacob was prompted to cross his arms and place his right hand upon the head of Ephraim. As Jacob placed his name, and the names of Abraham and Isaac upon these two young boys, he declared some truly awesome privileges. He stated that the two of them will grow into a multitude in the midst of the Earth (Genesis 48:16). Then we see that Joseph was somewhat confused, wondering if his elderly father had made a mistake about to whom he was extending his blessings:

Genesis 48:17-20

"When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father, for this one is the first-born. Place your right hand on his head.' But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know; he also shall become a people and he also shall be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.' And he blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel shall pronounce blessing, saying, "May YHVH make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!"' Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh"

The Patriarch Jacob, although aged, was not confused with what he was doing at all. He categorically declares, "I know, my son, I know," so as not to be misunderstood. Jacob was able to see into the future, to not only see what was going to befall his two grandson' descendants, but also bless them according to the preeminence that they would each inherit.

This was a very powerful event in the life of the emerging nation of Israel, as it would have a resonating effect once the Israelites took possession of the Promised Land and established themselves as a kingdom. The ramifications of this blessing and Jacob's other declarations undeniably continue until this very day. They are all a part of God's great plan of redemption for the world, but most especially how we believe today that the restoration of all Israel has begun to take place via the presence of the Messianic movement.

What can we learn from these rich and "loaded" verses as Genesis comes to a close in our Torah examination?

What principles and insight must we embrace that will be beneficial as we bless our children with great love and affection, but most especially model them a dynamic walk of faith in the Messiah Yeshua?

It is important for us to truly understand the power of blessing. All parents are responsible for the next generation and the continuation of the faith that has been passed down to them. If you are a parent, you truly need to grasp a hold of the benefits of blessing your children no different than how you might regularly tell your spouse "I love you" on a daily basis.

We have seen the Holy One bless Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then in turn the Patriarchs bless their children. Of course, as we have read the blessings throughout the Book of Genesis, we are quick to note that all of the Patriarchs were Divinely guided in the proclamation of their blessings over their various offspring. Whether it is Abraham blessing Isaac or Ishmael, or Isaac blessing Jacob or Esau, or Jacob blessing his sons and grandsons the one constant thing that you will note is that each of these parents were uniquely tuned in to what YHVH's will was for the respective children.

Each one listened and heard the still quiet voice of YHVH, as He communicated the blessings and the future determined for their children. They in turn, at the proper times, were then able to pass on the blessings to the succeeding generation. You might imagine what the sons of Jacob/Israel thought when they heard that he was "summoning" them to come and hear what would befall them in future:

Genesis 49:1

"Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, 'Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what shall befall you in the days to come'"

The expectation to hear a 147 year-old father declare his final words over you had to have been one of the most significant highlights and events of their lives.

The Patriarch Jacob, as we know, gave each of them powerful and formative words that would declare forth much of the destiny and future accomplishments of the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Genesis 49:1-28). Perhaps we should take this pattern to heart, and in a similar way desire to pass our blessings down upon our own children. Each parent, who has made the effort to truly train up godly sons and daughters (Proverbs 22:6), should be able to have a special moment near the end of his or her life, delivering some final words of admonishment.

One of the challenges we each have is that we do not know the day or hour of our departure from this world. Even though there is a certain degree of wisdom to store up your insights and wisdom for the end of your days to perhaps give your children a peek at what you see them doing in the future in the interim it is also extremely beneficial to bless your children (or for that matter, any loved one or close friend) on a regular basis.

In the event that you are not able to have some special, final moments with a son or daughter, be sure to impart enough to them in your regular interactions! This is why the Jewish people have taken to heart the admonition given to Joseph and the people of Israel, about blessing their children like Ephraim and Manasseh:

"And he blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel shall pronounce blessing, saying, "May YHVH make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!"' Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh" (Genesis 48:20).

The traditional Jewish prayer, usually recited on Erev Shabbat, is to declare that the material blessings of the double portion which was given to Ephraim and Manasseh, is to now be manifested in the current generation. It is customary for fathers to say this prayer over their sons, followed by them declaring a similar blessing over their daughters that they might inherit the blessings of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah. In Conservative Judaism both parents, father and mother together, will often jointly declare these blessings.

By declaring these blessings over their sons and daughters, faithful Jewish people pass on a godly and most encouraging tradition that finds its root not only in our Torah portion but very early in the Bible itself. The benefits to the children being regularly blessed every week are surely unimaginable!

If there is anything you might want to consider this week as you reflect upon V'yechi, you might want to really think about blessing your children.

Let your sons and daughters know how much you care for them, and how much potential you see in them being exercised. Blessing children for good works accomplished has a far greater return than condemning them for opportunities missed, or reminding them of their past failures and shortcomings. Receiving statements of blessing from parents is something that most children truly cherish and never forget! On the other hand, the accounts of those who do not receive statements of blessing are often filled with feelings of regret and remorse, for not hearing comforting and loving messages of appreciation from parents.

While you are developing a habit of blessing your children, you might be considering the important words that you will want to impart as you continue to age and approach death. Leaving children with a legacy and a hope for their future is quite a blessing in itself. It is also quite possible that as your relationship with YHVH becomes closer, He just might impart to you through His still small voice a vision of what your children will be doing in the future. Then you, like Jacob, might have the opportunity to place a blessing for a hope and a future upon your descendants.

As YHVH has blessed us through the life of Jacob and the legacy his sons, may we continue to bless Him through our perseverance in the things of the faith that we have received. And by faith, may we like Jacob, pour out His blessings upon our children so that all of our families will be blessed!

Of course, if you have no children of your own, or even if you do have children— make regularly blessing all people you know a regular habit. Encouraging extended family members, close friends, and various acquaintances with the love of the Messiah Yeshua is surely something that each of us needs to do. We do not know if the last time we might see a particular person might really be the last time, so we need to make every effort possible that we have left them with a positive impression from the Father's heart! The love that parents have toward their sons and daughters is to surely be extended to all who need a special touch from Him.

Be blessed and stay blessed!