

## Genesis 49

Verses 1 – 2

**Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves, so that I may tell you what will happen to you in the days to come.**

**<sup>2</sup> Gather together and listen, sons of Jacob;  
Yes, listen to Israel your father.**

**So that I may tell you what will happen to you in the days to come.**

This chapter is a prophecy concerning the 12 tribes of Israel

But it also recounts some of the sins and shortcomings of Jacob’s sons

Verses 3 – 4

**Son # 1**

**<sup>3</sup> “Reuben, you are my firstborn,  
My might and the beginning of my strength,  
Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.**

**<sup>4</sup> Uncontrollable as water, you shall not have preeminence,  
Because you went up to your father’s bed;  
Then you defiled *it*—he went up to my couch.**

**Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength**

The love for a firstborn son is reflected in these words

God had promised to make Jacob a great nation and Reuben was the beginning of that fulfillment.

**You shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father’s bed;**

This is a reference to his incest with Bilhah which cost him the birthright

See Genesis 35:22

Verses 5 - 7

**Sons 2 and 3**

**“Simeon and Levi are brothers;  
Their swords are implements of violence.  
<sup>6</sup> May my soul not enter into their council;  
May my glory not be united with their assembly;  
For in their anger they killed men,  
And in their self-will they lamed oxen.  
<sup>7</sup> Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce;  
And their wrath, for it is cruel.  
I will scatter them in Jacob,  
And disperse them among Israel.**

**For in their anger they killed men,  
And in their self-will they lamed oxen.**

This took place in Shechem after the rape of their sister Dinah

See Genesis 34

The part about laming oxen is not mentioned in Genesis 34, so Jacob is revealing an additional detail here about their cruelty toward man and beast

**I will scatter them in Jacob, and disperse them among Israel.**

Both tribes were scattered in Israel

1. At the time of the Canaan conquest Simeon had become the smallest tribe of Israel

See Numbers 26:14

Therefore Simeon received only a few cities within the limits of Judah

See Joshua 19:1-9

2. The tribe of Levi was scattered among the 12 tribes of Israel in the year 1392 BC, 300 years after Jacob predicted it

See Joshua 21

The tribe of Levi had redeemed themselves by standing with Moses against those who committed idolatry in Exodus 32

Verses 8-9

**Son # 4**

**“As for you, Judah, your brothers shall praise you;  
Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;  
Your father’s sons shall bow down to you.**

**<sup>9</sup> Judah is a lion’s cub;  
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.  
He crouches, he lies down as a lion,  
And as a lion, who dares to stir him up?**

**Judah, your brothers shall praise you**

There is a play on words here because the meaning of Judah is praise

**Your father's sons shall bow down before you**

The first 3 sons of Jacob lost their right to leadership

Reuben because of his act of rebellion concerning Bilhah

Simeon and Levi because of their brutality

Patriarchal leadership now belonged to the tribe of Judah

**Verse 10**

**The scepter will not depart from Judah,  
Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet,  
Until Shiloh comes,  
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.**

The him here means it refers to a person and not the place

Jacob foretold that Judah would be in the position of authority until the coming of the messiah

However, this interpretation is questionable when you consider the history of Israel

## When did the rule by Judah begin?

### 1. During their time of slavery

Joseph died in 1635bc and about 30 years afterward they became slaves

Was there a tribal leader of the Israelites? The scripture is quiet on this question

### 2. In the wilderness, Moses was the leader

But Moses was from the tribe of Levi

### 3. The time of the Judges

There were a number of leaders from different tribes

But there was no central government with a king like other nations

Samuel was the last judge and he was from the tribe of Levi

### 4. Saul became the first king but he was from the tribe of Benjamin

From the death of Joseph to the end of Saul's reign covered about 600 years

But Judah didn't seem to be a dominate tribe during this time

### 5. David and Solomon

Judah finally became the leading tribe of Israel under David in 1010 BC

### 6. Israel divided into North and South

Judah only ruled two tribes, themselves and Simeon who was part of Judah

This continued from 930 BC until 722 BC when the 10 Northern tribes were taken captive

## **7. The tribes of Judah and Simeon**

The tribe of Judah was once again in control but that would only last 136 years

Judah was taken captive by Babylon in 586 BC

## **8. The Persians 538 BC**

King Cyrus of Persia allowed the Jews to return, and accepted a form of Jewish home rule in Jerusalem.

Jews from the various tribes returned but they were no longer divided into the 12 distinct areas as they were before the deportation

## **9. The Greeks 332 BC**

Alexander the Great took over Judea.

## **10. The Maccabees 164 BC**

A Jewish tribe, the "Maccabees", revolted against the Hellenistic occupiers, and from 142 to 63bc Judea was an independent, Jewish state.

The Maccabee brothers were from the tribe of Levi

## **11. The Roman Conquest 63 BC**

The Jews were granted some measure of autonomy in Jerusalem

But Judea was in reality ruled from Rome.

## **12. Herod The Great 37 BC**

Following a failed Jewish rebellion, the Romans turned Judea into a regular Roman province, and installed the Jewish King Herod the Great as administrator.

According to the works of Josephus, Herod was a descendant of Eleazar Maccabeus of the Hasmoneans (tribe of Levi)

After his death in 4 BCE the province was divided between Herod's sons.

### 13. Archelaus 4 BC to 6 AD

King Herod died in 4 BCE and was succeeded by his three sons:

Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and the east bank of the Jordan

Philip ruled the Golan Heights in the north-east;

Archelaus became the ruler of Samaria and Judaea.

### 13. The prefects 6 AD to 44 AD

After Archelaus this territory became the “Province of Judaea” directly under the control of the Romans.

The first prefect of this new province was a Roman named Coponius

The Roman prefects continued to govern Judaea Province until 41 AD

Then Agrippa I was temporarily given authority there until 44 AD

After which Roman procurators governed the province.

### 14. Jesus was put to death in 28 AD

When you look at the history of Israel it seems Judah was only in charge for two short periods of time.

1. During the reign of David and Solomon      80 years
2. When only Judea and Simeon were left in Palestine      722 BC to 586 BC

So how should we interpret this verse?

God has always seen the faithful in Israel as the true Israel. This was true from the time of Abraham to the Christ

For this prophecy, Judah represented the faithful

So even though the tribe of Judah did not have a ruler in charge of the land thru most of their history, the faithful were still ruling in God’s kingdom

And when Jesus came, the faithful were obedient to him

Verse 11-12

He ties *his* foal to the vine,  
And his donkey's colt to the choice vine;  
He washes his garments in wine,  
And his robes in the blood of grapes.  
<sup>12</sup> His eyes are dull from wine,  
And his teeth white from milk.

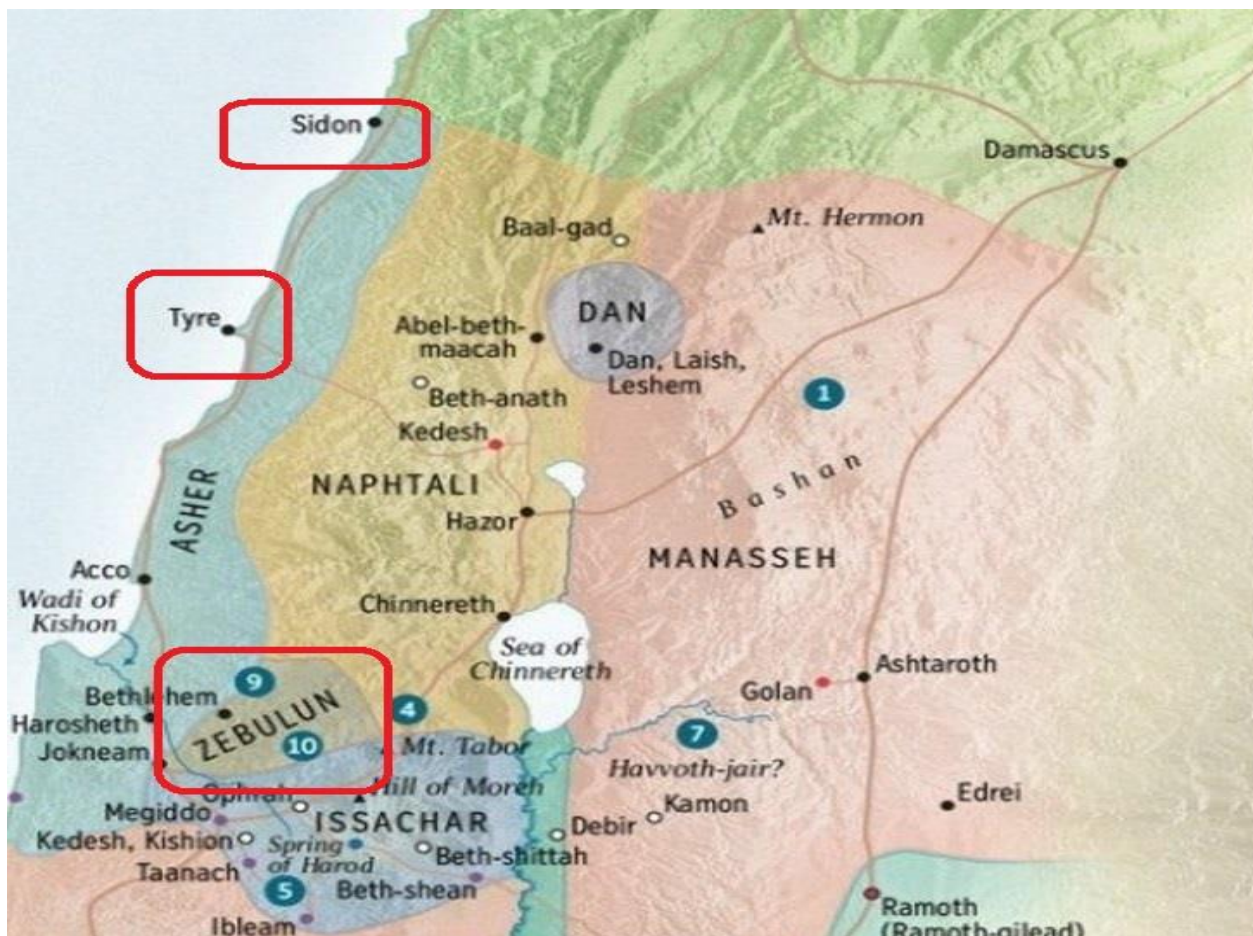
The land of Judah would provide abundant crops for its people

Verse 13

**Son # 5**

“**Zebulun** will reside at the seashore;  
And he *shall be* a harbor for ships,  
And his flank *shall be* toward Sidon.

See pic 4905



Verse 14-15

**Son # 6**

**“Issachar is a strong donkey,  
Lying down between the sheepfolds.  
15 When he saw that a resting place was good  
And that the land was pleasant,  
He bowed his shoulder to carry *burdens*,  
And became a slave at forced labor.**

This is a prophecy that Issachar would be strong but controllable

They accepted slavery rather than fight for their freedom and independence

Verse 16-17

**Son # 7**

**“Dan shall judge his people,  
As one of the tribes of Israel.  
17 Dan shall be a serpent in the way,  
A horned viper in the path,  
That bites the horse’s heels,  
So that its rider falls backward.  
For Your salvation I wait, Lord.**

**Dan shall judge his people**

Samson was from the tribe of Dan

He had an ongoing battle with the Philistines

In the end he destroyed their temple killing more in his death than when he lived

Judges 13 thru 16

Dan was a small tribe but very dangerous

The Danites destroy Laish in northern Canaan

See Judges 17 and 18

This was when part of the tribe of Dan moved to the most northern part of Israel



Verse 19

**Son # 8**

**“As for Gad, a band of raiders shall attack him,  
But he will attack at their heels.**

This is a word play on Gad’s name which means troop.

Gad was not lacking for men of bravery

See 1 Chronicles 12:8-15

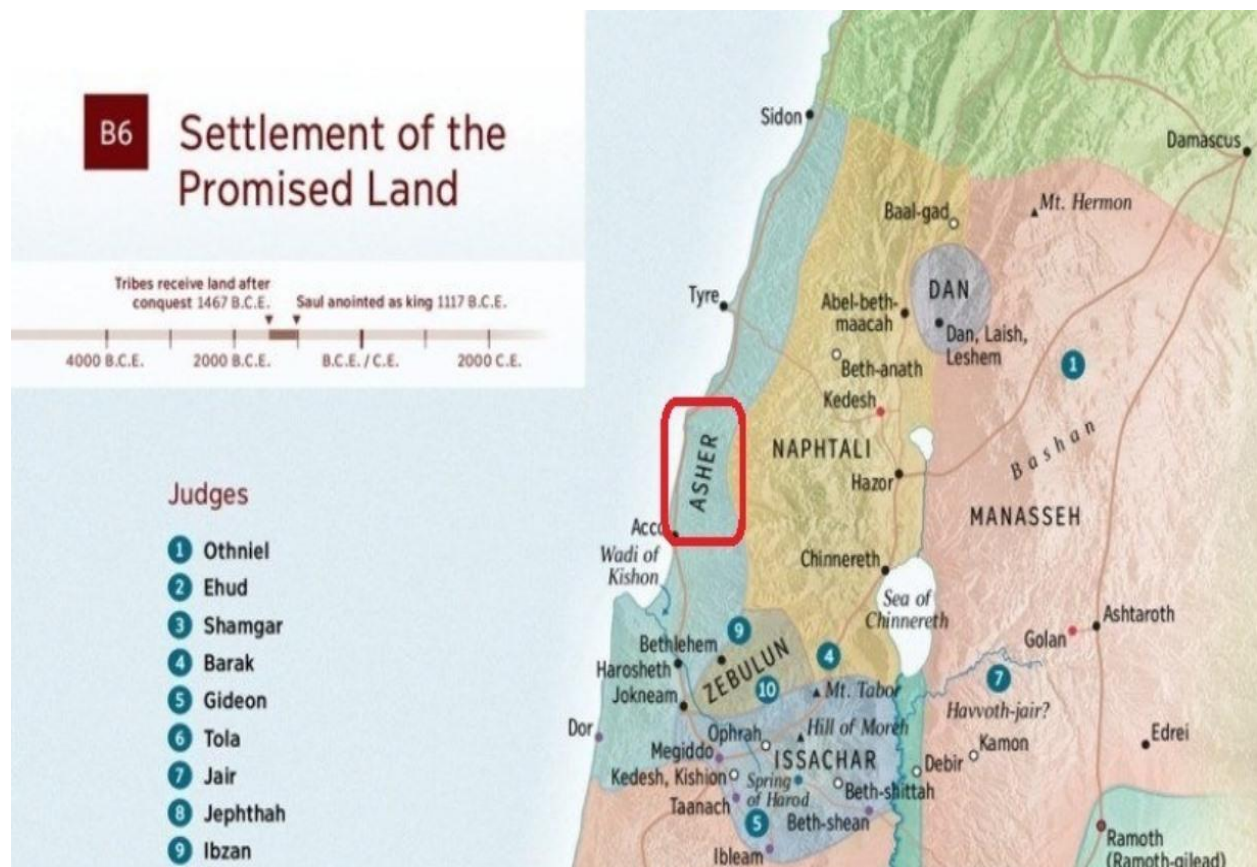
Verse 20

**Son # 9**

**“As for Asher, his food shall be rich,  
And he will yield royal delicacies.**

Asher lived in the lowlands along the Mediterranean between Carmel and Tyre

See Map 4910



Solomon supplied Hiram, the king of Tyre, with wheat and oil products from this region.

See 1 Kings 5:11

Ezekiel spoke an interesting prophecy concerning Tyre

See Video 4915 8.56 The prophecy of Tyre

<http://www.levickfamily.com/8.56.html>

Verse 21

**Son # 10**

**“Naphtali is a doe let loose;  
He utters beautiful words.**

The meaning of the name Naphtali is not clear

Not much is recorded about this tribe in the bible

But Naphtali and Zebulun did win a victory over Jabin a Canaanite king and Deborah mentioned this in her song in Judges 4 and 5

Verses 22-24

**Son # 11**

**“Joseph is a fruitful branch,  
A fruitful branch by a spring;  
Its branches hang over a wall.  
<sup>23</sup> The archers provoked him,  
And shot *at him* and were hostile toward him;  
<sup>24</sup> But his bow remained firm,  
And his arms were agile,  
From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob  
(From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),**

**Joseph is a fruitful branch,  
A fruitful branch by a spring;**

God used Joseph to save countless lives during the famine

He also had a large family

<sup>23</sup> **The archers provoked him,  
And shot at *him* and were hostile toward him;**

This describes his brothers very well

**From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob  
(From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),**

Joseph was instrumental in saving mankind from starvation

And Jesus was the author of salvation

Verse 25-26

**From the God of your father who helps you,  
And by the Almighty who blesses you  
*With blessings* of heaven above,  
Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,  
Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.**

<sup>26</sup> **The blessings of your father  
Have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors  
Up to the furthest boundary of the everlasting hills;  
May they be on the head of Joseph,  
And on the top of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.**

The word blessings is used 6 times in these two verses

Joseph received great blessings during his life and he became a blessing to many

As was mentioned earlier, the tribe of Ephraim became the place where God put His name for over 300 years during the time of the judges

Verse 27

**Son # 12**

**“Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;  
In the morning he devours the prey,  
And in the evening he divides the spoils.”**

The fierce nature of this tribe was quite remarkable

The tribe of Benjamin killed 40,000 fellow Israelites before they were overcome

See Judges 19 thru 21

It's no surprise that King Saul and Saul of Tarsus came from this tribe

Verse 28

**<sup>28</sup> All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him.**

**He blessed them, everyone with the blessing appropriate to him.**

Jacob had lived 147 years and he knew his sons pretty well but some of this had to be a revelation from God.

Verse 29-33

**<sup>29</sup> Then he commanded them and said to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, <sup>30</sup> in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is opposite Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site. <sup>31</sup> There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah— <sup>32</sup> the field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth." <sup>33</sup> When Jacob finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.**

Jacob knew he was about to die and he left no doubt as to where he should be buried

We learn here that Leah was buried in Machpelah but nothing is said as to when that event occurred.

Jacob died shortly after speaking these words.