



# FEED MY SHEEP

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## Prophecies over Simeon, Levi and Judah

*The Story of Joseph, Part 40*

In the last issue we began—and in this issue we continue with our examination of the deathbed prophecies of the patriarch Jacob-Israel over each of his sons. We left off in Jacob's utterances concerning his sons Simeon and Levi. We repeat this passage:

**Genesis 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.**

Some portions of this passage have caused disagreement among translators and commentators. Where we read in verse 5 that "instruments of cruelty are in their habitations," we could let that stand; and we would simply understand it as meaning that Simeon and Levi have swords in their houses. But that is like saying today that John Smith has a shotgun in his house. What's the big deal?

But the fact is that the word "in" is not in the Hebrew, and the word translated *habitations* actually means 1. swords, weapons or devices or, 2. the lexicon says that the meaning is dubious. So if it means swords, we could translate it thus:

Instruments of cruelty are their swords

That makes sense but it really doesn't say much either. One commentary from several centuries ago, however, notes that in the Arabic and Syriac texts, it indicates that the root of this Hebrew word has to do with making bargains or exchanges, and even further,

that it has to do with contracts in general, or *nuptial* contracts in particular.

And from that we can see that perhaps what Jacob was decrying here was the fact that these two sons had used a wedding contract—i.e., you Amorite men get circumcised and we will let you have Dinah for a wife—Simeon and Levi used that *wedding* contract, which is usually a contract based upon *love*, and they turned it into an instrument of cruelty. And thus was Jacob's name and reputation besmirched among all the inhabitants of the land.

Verse 6: Jacob excoriates Simeon and Levi by saying that he would *never* want to be part of those kinds of treacherous and deceitful contracts. ... for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

Now that last phrase, "they digged down a wall," is an area of debate also. It doesn't seem to make much sense. It could perhaps refer to both the city walls of Shechem, as well as the walls around the houses within the city, which Simeon and Levi may have torn down in their rage.

Except that the Hebrew words actually mean "to hamstring an ox." Many other translations render it that way, including the Septuagint. I believe that is what they did. It was an added cruelty. Now if you have ever pulled your hamstring, you know how painful and debilitating it is.

But it is referring to a different place on the animal. What it means is that they severed the tendons of the hind feet of the oxen so that the oxen were rendered lame *and* unable to be healed and therefore useless. It was indeed a cruelty to the animals, a premeditated act of violent rage.

Jacob stated that he did not want any part of that, and for those disgraceful actions, Jacob curses their anger and their wrath. This is important. Notice, he did *not* curse the boys and their descendants. He cursed their anger. Because if we will drop down to verse 28, at the end of this discourse, the Bible states...

**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.**

And so Jacob did not curse them. They were still part of the commonwealth of Israel. They and their descendants would participate in the covenant blessings which came down through Abraham. But Israel did prophesy by the Spirit that the offspring of these sons would be divided and dispersed yet still within the commonwealth of Israel.

But in that division and dispersion they were chastised. We can speculate that one of the reasons was so that such an evil character trait as wanton cruelty might not become an addiction of their offspring.

What a fitting punishment! Their sin had come about through the conspiracy and confederation of the two brothers, so now they would be dispersed, not only among the other tribes, but they would also be divided from each other.

Therefore, when Israel took the Promised Land, the Levites were given *no land inheritance*, but merely a number of cities. Yet as our Father is wont to do, He turned the curse on their anger into a blessing. Despite the wicked cruelty of their forefather, the Levites were chosen as the priesthood tribe!

They were scattered to all the territories of Israel so that none would be without proper education and instruction in the ways of Yahweh. They were the civil servants and the teachers, the overseers and ministers of worship. What an honor! What grace was given to the tribe of Levi. Later, of course, it was from this tribe that Moses and Aaron were birthed. Simeon, on the other hand, was actually given some territory, but it was completely within the borders of Judah. Let's take a look at that.

**Joshua 19:1 And the second lot came forth to Simeon, *even* for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah.**

**2 And they had in their inheritance Beersheba, or Sheba, and Moladah,**

**3 And Hazarshual, and Balah, and Azem,  
4 And Eltolad, and Bethul, and Hormah,  
5 And Ziklag, and Bethmarcaboth, and Hazarsusah,**

**6 And Bethlebaoth, and Sharuhem; thirteen cities and their villages:**

**7 Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Ashan; four cities and their villages:**

**8 And all the villages that *were* round about these cities to Baalathbeer, Ramath of the south. This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families.**

**9 Out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon: for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them: therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them.**

Even though the tribe of Simeon never did achieve a large population, they did send out colonies, as indicated by certain passages in the book of 1 Chronicles. We won't go into that here. And so we see that Jacob's prophecies that Simeon and Levi would be divided and scattered in Israel came true literally.

I want to make one final point in reference to Simeon. According to Numbers 26:14, Simeon is the weakest of all the tribes at the end of the wilderness. Hidden within that fact is a telling observation. Consider the meaning of the name. What does the name or word, Simeon, mean? It means "to hear." Obviously, the primary use of that verb is in the ability of God's people to hear His voice. The NT church age is a period which we refer to as the Age of Pentecost. In types and shadows, it corresponds to the period when the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness. How telling it is then that at the close of the wilderness, at which time we now are in history, that Simeon—that is, that hearing God's voice is at its weakest!

We move on now to consider the blessing to the other pre-eminent tribe, along with Joseph. And that is...

**Genesis 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.**

Let's discuss verses 11 & 12 first. When the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, they were told time and time again that the Promised Land was a land flowing with milk and honey. It was figurative language to indicate that the land was very fertile and produced superabundant crops, orchards, olives, vineyards, etc.

Of course, that land today is a far cry from what it used to be. My friends who have been to the Holy Land—and I don't mind calling it that because our Savior lived, died and was resurrected there—inform me that today the land is mostly brown, dusty and relatively barren except for where it is irrigated. It is no longer the verdant and fruitful land, green and fertile, bringing forth great abundance on its own as it was when the Israelites lived there in the second millennium before Christ.

Verses 11 & 12 appear therefore to be a prophecy that the land inheritance of his son Judah would be so fruitful in terms of vineyards—and this later proved to be true—that the vineyards would practically overflow onto the highways so that a traveler would not think twice about stopping to rest and hitching his animal to grapevine—even the choicest vine.

Apparently, wine was so plentiful that one could launder one's clothing in the blood of grapes instead of water. Obviously, that is hyperbole; because can you imagine walking around wearing clothes that had been washed in wine?!

Now that is the surface reading and interpretation of these two verses. I am absolutely certain that there is much greater depth in meaning there, but we are going to forego that at this juncture because in a future issue (soon) the locus will be centered primarily on the three preceding verses. You talk about superabundance! This passage is loaded to overflowing. But let's back up to touch upon verse 8.

The meaning of the name, "Judah," is "praise," and therefore we can see that Jacob is making a play on words. His mother, Leah, had named Judah as *her* praise to God for his birth, but now Jacob turns it around and predicts that Judah and his progeny will be praised by all Israel.

We did not cover it all in FMS, but if you have

read the pertinent accounts from Jasher you have gleaned some understanding of just what a superb warrior Judah was. I would encourage you to read those other chapters of Jasher which we referred to, in connection the battles with the Amorites (Genesis 48:22) for a more complete appreciation of the warrior skills of Judah. He seems like a superman in a sense.

Obviously, father Jacob was well aware of his son's talents, but by the Spirit of the Lord, Israel predicts that the offspring of Judah to many generations would carry this trait of their father in their ability to conquer enemies. And thus the next pronouncement that "thy hand *shall be* in the neck of thine enemies." in Judges 1, we see a fulfillment of this.

**Judges 1:1 Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?**

**2 And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.**

There is a little song for praise and worship called *Send Judah First*, and it points out that sending Judah first was not simply a reference to Judah's military prowess, but it also has meaning for us in that in our daily living and in our prayer life, Judah should be first. In other words, the first thing out of our mouths should be praise!

If you are standing in a crowded room, and suddenly you hear someone across the room mention your name and you hear them praising you, does that get your attention? It's a universal response, isn't it? And we are apparently in the image of our heavenly Father in that way, too. We get His attention when we send Judah first.

**3 And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him.**

**4 And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.**

Thus was fulfilled in one of many instances going on for centuries and millennia that "thy hand *shall be* in the neck of thine enemies." You no doubt noticed the link between Judah and Simeon there because, as we have seen, the lot or inheritance of Simeon was within the territory of Judah.

In Judges 3, we find that Israel is delivered by

Othniel who is from the tribe of Judah. Not many of the deliverers were from Judah, of course, and we will come back to the period of the judges and deliverers soon. Back to Genesis 49.

The penultimate fulfillment of the warrior prowess of Judah is found in the deeds of David. Some longtime readers will recall that we spent many issues on a series dealing with the life of David. (Those older issues of FMS are all available for free download on our website; if you request paper copies from us, we would appreciate an offering to cover our staff time, copying and mailing costs.) We had also done the study in audio CD format with 54 lectures on the life of David. And then we saw how his son Solomon was able to consolidate the kingdom with very *little* bloodshed.

At that point, of course, all Israel bowed down to David and then to Solomon, thus fulfilling the next phrase in Jacob's prophecy...

"thy father's children shall bow down before thee."

Notice that he did not say, thy mother's children, since that would have only included five brothers of Judah through Leah. By saying, "thy father's children" it encompassed all 12 tribes.

As I stated, the penultimate fulfillment was found in David, the warrior. The ultimate fulfillment, therefore, was and is found in Jesus the Christ, the son of David, of the tribe of Judah, who will put all enemies under his feet, the last enemy to be destroyed being death itself.

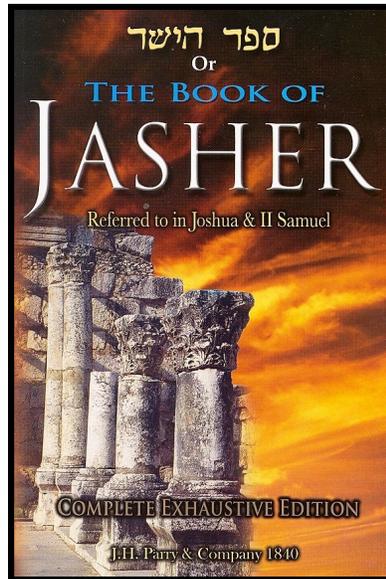
And not only will all the tribes of *Israel* bow down in homage to King Jesus, but all people and nations and tribes of the whole earth shall gratefully and lovingly acknowledge Him as King of kings and Lord of lords, to the glory of the Father—halleluYah!

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