



# FEED MY SHEEP

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Issue #176

September 2013

## Was Jacob's Prophecy Wrong—or are Ministers? *The Story of Joseph, Part 41*

We are well along now in our study of the life of Joseph the patriarch. For the past number of issues we have been examining the prophecies made by Jacob on his deathbed—prophecies of each of the 12 sons. We are in the midst of studying the prophecy over Judah, whose tribe would be pre-eminent, along with Joseph.

**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?*

In verse 9, Jacob describes Judah as a whelp, in other words, as a young lion. The whole verse is a progressive description of the tribe unfolding to maturity as history progresses. First, as a young lion cub, he is ferocious. He grows. He takes a prey and goes back up to his lair in the mountains.

He reaches maturity; he stoops down—meaning he crouches preparing to attack and pounce upon his enemy. Next, he couches. That is not crouches but couches, meaning to stretch out, as on a couch. It is a picture of a lion in its maturity.

The next phrase continues the same thought with an added twist. You see, it is not an old lion, but it literally means a mature lioness. And what could be more fierce? The female lion protecting her cubs is even more ferocious and fearsome than the male, and thus the question, who is going to dare stir up him? And the “him,” the male pronoun, is referring to Judah, masculine, but pictured symbolically as a lioness.

Verse 10 is a very key scripture and it has special significance to those of us Christians who understand our biblical identity as Israel. The average, generic Christian theologian has considerable difficulty with this verse. They are forced to do some verbal and prophetic gymnastics in order to get it to conform to history. In some cases, they are practically forced to deny the plain meaning of the words.

We, on the other hand, having been given the blessing of seeing our identity, can see the very clever way that God has fulfilled this verse, and yet blinded the vast majority of His true Israel people to it. Let's break this verse down.

**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.*

The scepter, of course, is the long staff with a regal emblem at its top. For millennia, it has been a symbol of rulership, and so it is here. And thus, by simple substitution, we see that the dying Israel was prophesying that the *rulership* would not depart from Judah, until Shiloh came, etc.

For now, we will simply state that it is generally agreed that Shiloh is a title of the Messiah. And this causes a problem with this prophecy among almost all orthodox commentators, which we will address in a few moments, but first let's take the words in order, and discuss the word “depart.”

You see, as Israel grew into a nation, they were ruled first by Moses, from the tribe of Levi; then by Joshua, who was from the tribe of ...what? The tribe

of Ephraim. Then after the death of Joshua, they were governed by judges of various tribes, and then the scepter came to the tribe of Benjamin in the person of King Saul.

But when the scepter finally came to Judah in the person of King David, the prophecy then activates, and thus from that point forward, the rulership *would not depart* from the tribe of Judah until the Messiah came. It had come and departed from several other tribes, but it would not depart from Judah!

And so what is the problem that commentators and theologians face in this verse? Do you know? It is this: when one studies the history of Israel, God's chosen people, one finds that the kingship of Judah appears to have come to a grinding halt hundreds of years **before** the birth of the Messiah. Let's explore that a bit further. Many study Bibles have some charts or appendices in the back of the Bible which gives a list of the names of the kings.

It probably starts: Saul, David, Solomon, and then they show the two lists of kings, the one list naming those men who were king over the ten northern tribes, the kingdom of Israel. Then they have the parallel list beginning with Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, who ruled over the southern nation, the kingdom of Judah.

The lists go on until the Assyrian Captivity when the line of kings in the northern kingdom comes to an end with King Hoshea. That does not create a problem for them since there was no prophecy about the scepter over the ten northern tribes.

So the list continues with the names of the kings of Judah and, at about 586 B. C., the kingdom came to an end as King Zedekiah was taken captive to Babylon. Judah was never an independent kingdom again. Even under the Maccabees, otherwise known as the Hasmoneans, the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says this: "The Asmoneans never, in all their history, or at any given period in it, had a united people behind their backs." Furthermore, the Maccabees would be more likened to guerilla warfare leaders; they were not kings in any sense at all.

So do you see the problem faced by orthodox ministers, commentators and theologians? It looks like Jacob's deathbed prophecy about the rulership never departing from Judah until the Messiah comes was **false!** Because there is a period of almost 600 years after King Zedekiah until the Savior was born when there was **no** king from Judah in the Holy Land.

Well, one way they handle this great dilemma is to ignore the plain meaning of the words. One study Bible, for example, contended that the scepter didn't

really mean rulership, but only "the right to rule." What verbal gymnastics! What a specious and bogus attempt to make this prophecy fit!

Do you think the dying Jacob would have wasted his breath predicting that Judah's descendants would have the "right to rule," but at a certain point, they wouldn't be able to rule because they were a tribute nation? In that case, what is the point of the prophecy?

Because there are multitudes of people who might have a **right** to rule, but it is the pattern of history that bad guys frequently usurp that right. So what's the big deal of having a right to rule if you can't actually rule? It is only noteworthy, prophetically speaking, if Judah *actually* rules. There are other hermeneutical gymnastics employed in trying to make this prophecy appear fulfilled, but we won't spend any more time on that. The next portion of the prophecy is:

**10: ...nor a lawgiver from between his feet, ...**

The word translated "lawgiver" simply means one who makes decrees; and therefore it again simply means the king or ruler. The phrase "between his feet" is a euphemism found several times in the Scriptures which is actually referring to body parts half way to the north pole if the feet are considered the south pole.

So how do you like that? I used a euphemism to explain a euphemism. But simply stated, it means that the impregnating seed of Judah would produce kings. The kings from Judah would not cease to reign until Shiloh came. We will return later to explain the wondrous and magnificent manner in which Father caused this prophecy to be fulfilled and for that fulfillment to be hidden from most eyes even to this very day.

**10. ...until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.**

The use of the word Shiloh here has been the source of much controversy over the centuries, indeed, over millennia. But many ancient Jewish sources, as well as almost all Christian sources agree that it is a reference to the Messiah.

The source of the controversy is in the etymology of the word. There are a number of meanings put forth for it and each has its champion, but none are totally convincing. Some commentaries go on for many pages delineating the various positions before settling on their own.

I find such efforts futile since it is already generally agreed that it refers to Messiah. But a thought oc-

curred to me which I found nowhere else which I shall present after we conclude with the standard interpretation.

Which is that the scepter would not depart from Judah until the Savior came, and then the last portion of the verse—and unto the Messiah shall the gathering of the people be. That is self-explanatory. It makes sense; sounds fine. The people will gather around the Messiah.

Except that the word “gathering” is a flat-out mistranslation! The word “gathering” is not found in the lexicons for this Hebrew word “*yik-kawh*’.” The lexicons give as the meaning: obedience, cleansings, or purgings. Most other English translations, including the Young’s Literal and the New King James render it “obedience.”

Unto Him shall the obedience of the people be. So while it is not a false idea that the people will be *gathered* to the Messiah, in *this* verse, it is saying that unto the Messiah will be the obedience of the people.

Now concerning that word Shiloh. We find that it appears 33 times in the KJV and 32 times it is clearly referring to the city of Shiloh. Whether or not that city existed at the time of Jacob cannot be determined. Here is the first use of the word after its use here in Genesis.

**Joshua 18:1 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them.**

We remember from our studies of David and the Ark of the Covenant that the Tabernacle remained there at Shiloh until the time of David. We also learned from our studies of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness that Jesus is typified by every single detail of the Tabernacle, including the Ark, isn’t He?

And so, the fact that the tabernacle was set up at Shiloh lends even more weight to the idea that Shiloh symbolizes the Christ. And let’s not overlook that last statement. “And the land was subdued before them.”

In other words, since Jesus is the *ultimate* fulfillment of the conquering King from the line of Judah, therefore, with Jesus as the Tabernacle being present together with Israel at Shiloh, that therefore the land was subdued—the enemies were conquered.

But now let’s take this one step further. Let me propose a new idea. In which tribe’s territory was the

city of Shiloh located? It was in Ephraim’s! For the hundreds of years before the monarchy of Saul, Shiloh and Ephraim were the acknowledged center of Israel in terms of political and religious activity. All during the period of the judges, Shiloh was the hub of Israel.

And so look at this prophecy from the perspective of incorporating the *second* coming of Christ. Do I see any light bulbs going on? This Shiloh connection is pointing us to the two works of Christ.

Remember, Jesus came the first time to establish His right to the throne of His fathers David and Judah. In other words, He came fulfilling the Judah role.

But He comes the second time to fulfill the Joseph role, to receive the kingdom, to rule and reign over it. We have dealt with that concept much more extensively in lectures some time back, so we basically wanted to see here the Joseph connection because Shiloh is in Ephraim, the son of Joseph.

Now listen to this verse in Isaiah 1. Remember also that Shiloh was at its peak during the period of the *judges*, right? Here in Isaiah we find a prophecy to be fulfilled during the second work of Christ, that is, in the millennial kingdom.

**Isaiah 1:26 [God says...] And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.**

Do you see how that ties us back full circle to Shiloh? In short, the prophecy is that there would be a line of kings from the tribe of Judah who would have an unbroken line of monarchy that would last until the coming of Christ at His second coming!

We say the *second* coming because Shiloh is associated with Joseph and the period of the judges. So the Judah line of kings must reign unbroken until the judges are restored in the millennial kingdom. Does not your Father have a magnificent Plan?

Orthodox theologians are unable to reconcile history with the scepter lasting even until the *first* coming of Christ, and yet we claim that the monarchical dynasty of Judah will remain until the second coming. That seems like a big truck to drive. How do we explain that?

Okay, now let’s return to the dangling riddle? How did Father secretly fulfill the prophecy that the scepter would not depart from Judah, while it *appears* that this prophecy failed? No matter to what verbal

gyrations the scholars, ministers and theologians turn, any honest student can see that their arguments are like air—there is nothing to hang onto.

Here's how Father did it: Judah had three sons: Pharez, Zarah and Shelah. Shelah was the son of Judah through a Canaanitess. You might recall that his two older brothers, Er and Onan, were slain by the Lord because they were evil.

David was a descendant of Judah through the Pharez branch. After David's death, his favorite son Solomon came to the throne, but it was not without its own considerable amount of palace intrigue brought about by Solomon's jealous brother Adonijah. We dealt with that in a two-CD lecture, *Jesus, the Serpent and the Stone Kingdom*. \$12 ppd.

After the death of Solomon, the kingdom split with the ten northern tribes setting up their own kingdom under the leadership of a man named Jereboam, from the tribe of...? Ephraim! With Solomon's son, Rehoboam, counted as the first, there were then 20 kings on the throne of Judah with Zedekiah being the last.

We now must explore the circumstances surrounding the demise of the kingdom in the reign of Zedekiah. To do that, we must turn to the book of Jeremiah, for it is there that we find many of the details recorded. Jeremiah was a young man when he was called by the Lord and given his commission. You will remember how Jeremiah complained that he was so young and didn't know what to say.

**Jeremiah 1:9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.**

**10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.**

That was going to be his lifelong work: to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down. Pretty nasty work to be called to do, isn't it? But it wasn't all negative. The final end was positive: to build and to plant.

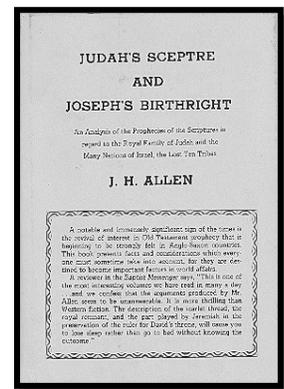
Next issue, we will begin to trace this astounding story of how Jeremiah was personally involved in the fulfillment of Jacob's deathbed prophecy to Judah that his descendants would hold the scepter until the Messiah came. (To be continued.)

## Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright

by Bishop J. H. Allen

This is a classic work from 1902 which continues to thrill modern readers. Many are introduced to their own biblical identity for the first time through this exciting book which traces the royal family of Judah and the many nations of Israel (the "Lost Tribes") through history.

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