

## **The Doctrine Of Israel (Part Eleven): Genesis 49 And Deuteronomy 33**

**Nations Are Families Grown Large**

**Richard T. Ritenbaugh**

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We in the U.S. are somewhat at a disadvantage when it comes to having an innate grasp of nationhood and the way I am going to speak about it today.

The reason for our disadvantage is that the U.S. prides itself as being a nation of immigrants. We all know that this nation, the land itself, was filled up beginning only about 400 years ago. And so we have a very short history, and we and our neighbors and our recent ancestors have come from all over the world to these shores, and perhaps only the Native Americans, the ones we used to call the American Indians, have any kind of grasp of what I am talking in this long term sense of place. And even those people have been Americanized so much that they probably do not feel it as much as maybe their parents or grandparents did.

But what I am talking about is the idea that nations are families grown large. We say that in the church of God quite a bit. I actually looked up this phrase on Google and found out that most of the returns I got were from church of God groups. We seem to be the only ones talking about nations being families grown large. Herbert Armstrong used to quote Henry David Thoreau on occasion saying an "institution is the lengthened shadow of one man." We can see that in corporations and things like that, that have been built over the years. Men like Henry Ford or John D. Rockefeller or J. P. Morgan or Andrew Carnegie put indelible stamps on their companies and over the years, they functioned as extensions of that particular man.

So they functioned according to his ideas. They tried to achieve his goals, his habits are ones that they followed in their work. It was his standards that drove the company. Even his personality had a particular impression on the company and the company followed that. Some have such strong personalities that they have the ability through their heirs to extend their reach to several generations.

If you would please go with me to Genesis the 10th chapter. We are going to read several verses throughout this chapter and it is here that God, I will not say introduces it, but He speaks about this principle in a large way. It is actually a couple of chapters earlier, where He begins talking about the family of Adam and the people that came from him. But here He expands it into families and nations.

**Genesis 10:5-7** [He was talking about the sons of Noah and their sons and I do not want to go through all the names here.] From these [these are the sons of Japheth] the coastland peoples of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his own language, according to their families, into their nations. The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. The sons of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtechah; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

If you look on maps of the area of around larger Arabia, you will see some of these names because these people ended up living there and putting their names on the land.

**Genesis 10:13** Mizraim begot Ludim . . .

Now notice that Ludim here is plural. We cannot necessarily see it but a Hebrew would look at this and not say Ludim. He would think the people of Lud, the many Luddites, we might say. So he is talking about not a specific person, but the people who sprang from that person.

**Genesis 10:13-18** . . . Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim [the "im" ending means it is plural], Pathrusim, and Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines and Caphtorim). Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn [Sidon is a big city there on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea in Lebanon], and Heth [Heth is interesting. From Heth came all the Hittites. They were a huge empire from that region northward into what we now call Turkey.]; the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite [These are all tribes of Canaan within what we call the

land of Canaan, that later became the Promised Land]; the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite; the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed.

**Genesis 10:20** These were the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands and in their nations.

We will not go through all the sons of Shem. It is the same as the sons of Ham.

**Genesis 10:31-32** These were the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations. These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these nations were divided on the earth after the flood.

So the great overall principle that we find here in chapter 10 is that the nations that were in existence, let us say, about the time of Moses, were these nations, and they all came from the sons of Noah. These sons of the sons of Noah had families and they grew and they grew and they expanded and they became nations. So what we say is true according to what God says here, that nations are families grown large. Moses makes it very clear that the nations that he is talking about here were from these particular three sons and their families that they produced.

Now most nominal modern Christians dismiss this biblical principle probably because they have been influenced by evolution and false superior notions of modern times because we think we are the best at everything, we know whatever happened throughout all history and these primitive Israelites cannot tell us a thing. But obviously, here in chapter 10, we have something from God about how He looks at nations as families. We know just from our own view of what we see around us, our view of history, that people tend to be clannish and they want to put down roots. There are not many people who want to travel all the time, migrate all the time, and go from place to place and be rootless, without foundation.

People are tied to their families. There is a strong bond there and they are also tied to particular lands that they have inhabited for a long time. They want to work that land. They want to defend that land. And so what we have is a mixture of family dynamics, ideas of possession, pride, and practicality, and in the end we have what we call, in our own vernacular, birds of a feather flock together. Families tend to stick around one another. They have their own structures and they have their similar habits and similar ideas and similar goals, and so they tend to stay in one place where their family is and if the family decides to get up and go, they go too.

But this happens very rarely because before a few hundred years ago (Martin and I was just talking about this yesterday), people tended to stay within a few miles of where they were born. It is only because of the advent of modern transportation that we can get to places quicker, easier, and more cheaply than we could before that people have tended to start moving and migrating. I mean, it is true, we, in the 21st century can move about with relative ease. We can move half a globe away if we want. It may cost a bit of money, but it can easily be done. We have the transportation systems and all that that makes it work.

But this idea of being able to just pick up and go is really a very recent phenomenon. In historical times it took rather cataclysmic events or series of events to get populations moving. It had to be *real* climate change or it had to be war or famine or some other sort of devastation to get people to move from where they are. Otherwise they were very happy to stay where they were. And when they did move, because sometimes they had to, there were periods of migration when great empires were moving people about, but when they did move, they tended to move in families with the people that they were used to.

Let us move a little bit here from Genesis 10. We are going to go to Genesis 12, but we are going to go through several verses and I want to pick up on this idea of what we will read here in the end of verse 3 of Genesis 12, "the families of the earth."

**Genesis 12:1-3** Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land

that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Obviously Abram was already part of a family. He was of the family of Eber; he was a Hebrew. He is called Abraham the Hebrew. So he already had a family. But God at this point calls Abraham out and says, "I'm going to make you your own family. You came out of the nation of the Hebrews, I'm going to make a new nation out of you and it'll be the nation of Abraham. I'm going to start something new here." And then He gives him all these things that He is going to be doing for Abraham. Then He gets to this phrase "and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." He is saying that some reason, some thing (well, we know it is a person), but there is a reason why all the families, including Abraham's family, is going to be blessed, but it is going to come through this new nation, this new family that He is starting with Abraham.

So here we have, I believe it is the actual first time that this phrase, "all the families of the earth" appears in Scripture. Now, this idea of this blessing in the family of Israel through the Messiah, we know what it is, that Messiah would come out of Abraham's family, but this idea progresses through the Patriarchs. Let us go to another one in chapter 22. This is the chapter where Abraham almost sacrifices Isaac. Here God says, "Okay, this is a watershed moment and because you have proven your faith, I'm going to rehearse My blessing to you." Let us start in verse 15, just after God stopped him from sacrificing Isaac.

**Genesis 22:15-18** Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son [being the one (I am just going to add this in here) through which the family was going to move forward into the next generation and beyond]—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your

descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Here He moves just slightly from all the families of the earth and calls it all the *nations* of the earth. So we have this continued idea that families are nations. He defines, if you will, what He meant by families back in Genesis 12:3.

Let us go to chapter 26, verse 4. This is to Isaac.

**Genesis 26:4** "And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."

So what He said back there in chapter 22 He repeats to Isaac the same idea of all the families of the earth, well, all the nations of the earth more exactly.

**Genesis 28:14** [this is to Jacob] "Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Now we get back to the phraseology of Genesis 12:3 and now it is the families again, "all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Let us leave Genesis and go all the way through the rest of the Old Testament to the book of Zechariah. Actually, we are moving forward in time here. All the way to the Millennium.

**Zechariah 14:16-18** And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which come against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth [Now here, in back to back verses, we had nations of the earth and now we have the families of the earth.] do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts,

on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt [Mizraim, we saw them in Genesis 10] will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Here we have in these three verses, we have actually four different places, phrases, that show that God looks at nations as families grown large. So here we go all the way through the Old Testament and this idea is still persisting.

Let us just go to the end of the Book, to Revelation 1. This just kind of confirms that that this is the same idea throughout the entire Bible. It even moves into the New Testament.

**Revelation 1:7** Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

Here the word is changed a little, but the word used here is just of a large group of people who have some sort of similarity to them, usually by genealogy, by birth, that come from the same family. It is either a kindred or a tribe or a people. Here we have all the *tribes* of the earth will mourn, all the people, all the nations of the earth will mourn because of Him.

So the the Bible is consistent in equating families, tribes, kindreds, with nations. From the time of the Flood to the time of the end, God looks at the nations of the earth as families. He knows where everybody has their roots, as it were. He knows where they come from, whether they are from Ham or Japheth or Shem, and even more specifically, from other sub-tribes among them. He sees peoples with common ancestry, common thinking, common language, common customs and habits, common ideals, and common loyalties. That is what happens within families. And while this division of peoples is not necessarily exact from our perspective (I mean, look at how many non-Israelites are in America and some of the other nations of Israel), they are true in the main. Most of the people in this nation, we believe, are from the tribe of Manasseh. Most of the people in Britain, we believe, is

from the tribe of Ephraim, and the same would be said of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and the other former colonies of Great Britain, and so forth.

Remember, the people of Israel picked up a lot of mixed multitude coming out of Egypt and they were still considered part of the people of Israel if they became circumcised. They became part of that nation and they were actually part of the family because they went through this initiation, if you will, into the family. So even the seeming exception of the foremost immigrant nation on earth, the United States of America, is a family, it is a tribe.

For the rest of the sermon, I am going to be going through Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33. This principle of nations being families grown large plays a major role in understanding what God is telling us in these two chapters about Israel. Taking the long view of these two chapters will show us that God, in His sovereignty, has planned and guided greater Israel and the individual nations descended from Israel throughout history to bring about His purposes. So He has had a special relationship (which is something we are going to get in right now), with Israel and He has made sure that Israel has developed along His lines, the way He wants them to go, every step of the way.

Now, they fought Him tooth and claw every step of the way and they have gone off from Him in many cases, but He is still moving His plan forward and moving Israel forward into the position that He wants them to be in as we come into the end times here. So He has always been working with Israel for His purposes. And when we go through Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33, we can see not only what, let us say, the certain characteristics of the men that were the tribes of Israel, the progenitors of the tribes of Israel, were like and how those traits would carry on through to their descendants for thousands of years (it is about 3,500 years since the the sons of Israel actually lived on this planet), but the traits of some of those sons of Israel still crop up in the people that descended from them. And that is God's doing. God made sure that He made them the way they should be and that those traits followed their genetic line down to the end time.

Let us go first, before we get into these two chapters, to Amos the third chapter to emphasize what I have just been saying here. Verses 1 and 2 are



very pivotal scriptures in terms of God's relationship with Israel. It says it very succinctly.

**Amos 3:1-2** Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

So among all the nations of the world, all the families of the earth, Israel is different. It is unique. Only Israel, *only Israel*, has experienced God's interest and guidance since its very inception. God has been on the ball, eager to see them in action, working with them, helping them in every way, from the time He called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees. And we can argue that He actually began it before then in working with men like Noah and Shem. Biblically, the nations of the earth other than Israel get very little notice or involvement from God, and when they do, it is only insofar as they encounter Israel and play a part in God's plan. I would not say that He necessarily ignores them, but He allows them to go their own way, and He moves them about to make sure that everything is in the right spot. Because it does say that God established the boundaries of the nations according to the tribes of Israel. It was not the other way around. He just did not put Israel where they were not, He made sure that He was going to put Israel in certain places and made sure the others stayed out.

But God has known Israel, maybe I should re-emphasize that, but God has *known* Israel, let me put it that way. That is different than His involvement with other nations. When this word "know" is used (I do not remember right off the top of my head what it is in Hebrew), it speaks of a particular intimacy. It implies the depth of intimacy of the love between a man and a woman. Adam *knew* his wife Eve and she produced Cain and then Abel.

That is the idea behind this word "know." It implies, not just knowing, meaning knowing facts about, but it also implies *loving* the other completely. And it is especially true when the subject of this verb is God—*God knows and loves Israel*. That is what He means here when He says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." He does not just know our names and He does not just know what we do and all those other things. He loves us

and is working for our best interests. And that is what made Israel's defection from Him so terrible. Because He had lavished upon them so much love and blessing and they should have responded better. They should have known better. They did know better, but they failed. They turned away from Him. They broke the covenant, they sinned, and just made a mess of themselves and their kingdoms.

Let us go to Isaiah 49, please. I want verses 14 through 16. This kind of gives us an understanding of God's feeling using a little bit different metaphor.

**Isaiah 49:14-16** But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." [during one of the many times of trouble that Israel had. God replies,] "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget [meaning other women], yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls [meaning Jerusalem's walls, meaning this picture He has of the holy city, as it were] are continually before Me."

He is always checking in, He is always looking out for Zion.

So we get the idea here of the knowing of God that He has had for Israel. He is telling Israel here that He has been with them and has blessed them and has taught them and has helped them as He has done for no other nation. It is not even close. God, you could say, is a one woman man, and His choice has always been Israel. And, as I said, that makes her disloyalty and sin all the worse because the Israelites should have known better. They were better educated in that God had made sure that they understood and were witnessed to in that way.

But the main point I want to grab out of all this is that, with the exception of her multitudinous sins, God has shaped Israel into what she became. That was His purpose. He placed in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the traits and talents that He wanted His people, the Israelites, to have, and He refined these traits and skills through the experiences He put these men through. (We

went over that in one of the earlier sermons in this series.) And He did the same thing for the sons of Jacob, which became the twelve tribes of Israel. He put them through their paces too.

Now the Israelites often did not use these traits in the right way. They did not uphold the standards of God and the laws of God. They used them for their own selfish gain, for their own sinful ways. But God does not see things as a man sees them. He plays a long game through many generations, and in the end, what He established through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve sons of Jacob, will turn out to His glory. He is going to get the fruit, the end product that He has been planning for thousands of years and working out through these people.

We are here in Isaiah. Let us go back a few chapters to chapter 43. I want to pick up something that emphasizes this and that is God's creative work in Israel. We are just going to pick out a few verses in all this.

**Isaiah 43:1** But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine."

Here He used the verbs "created" and "formed" in terms of His work that He is doing with the people of Israel. He made them, He made them for His purposes. He made them for Himself, which is what He says there in the last line, "You are Mine."

**Isaiah 44:21** [He says it just a little bit differently.] "Remember these, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are My servant; I have formed you, you are My servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me!"

So, Israel could sin and go doing what they did and go off to Syria and then go off to various other places in their long travels, but God never forgot them. He always knew where they were because He was still working with them. If for nothing else, He was leading them where He wanted end time Israel to be. But God has always seen Israel as His servant. He could

command Israel to do the things that Israel needed to do to fulfill His purpose. And so He has been working with the people of Israel all along continuing to create what it is that He wants to work out.

**Isaiah 46:3-5** "Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been upheld by Me from birth, who have been carried from the womb: Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you. To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal and compare Me, that we should be alike?"

He is saying, no other God has ever done anything like that nor do they have the power. Only God can do something like this. That He can carry a people all the way from birth to old age, and figure out and work out all the things that need to be done to carry out a purpose. Only God can do this.

We will not go to chapter 55, but it says there when God says something, when God puts His plan in motion, it does not come back to Him empty, but it does the thing that He set out to do, and it is going to work for Israel in the same way.

So, Israel is a project, you might say, that God has dedicated Himself to and He will not stop creating her in His image until He is satisfied, until He brings all things together and finishes the project that He is working on. He has a laser-like focus on Israel in making her ultimately into the model kingdom of priests and a holy nation as He proposed back there in Exodus the 19th chapter before He gave them the law on Sinai. That is still valid today. He is still working at making Israel a nation of priests and a holy nation.

And we now have been drawn into that project, not just as descendants of Israel which we believe many of us are, but now we are the Israel of God, called to an even higher calling than that and we have been plunged, if you will, into bringing the rest of Israel into the Family of God; most of that work being done in the Millennium and in the Great White Throne judgment. But we are being trained for it now. It is all the same project, the purpose of God trying to bring all humanity in. But first He brings the church in and

then He brings the nations of Israel in and then He brings in the world. He keeps expanding it out from a central part: Christ first, church, Israel, world, and even makes a suggestion that when He goes to the world, He is going to pick out Egypt and Assyria and then use them to go to the rest of the world along with Israel, and there will be three—Israel, Egypt, and Assyria—all one, He says.

God has a plan. He has been working on this plan and Israel is a central part of what He is trying to do. So, He has, as I said, laser-like focus on Israel because He needs to get that nation right and in position at the time of the end to make all these things happen and move on to the next step of the plan.

He has not forsaken Israel, not by a long shot! She is not lost to Him and He gives us clues because we need to know, as the Israel of God, where we can identify them to be in today's world because He wants us to focus our work on those same people. He does not want us to get distracted with the rest of the world. That is not the way He is working right now. So He sent His Son to the lost tribes of Israel, He sent the apostles to the lost tribes of Israel, and we can assume that He is sending the rest of the church to the tribes of Israel—but they are not *lost*. They were not lost to any of us. They were not lost to Jesus, they were not lost to the apostles, they are not lost to us. He makes sure that that is a key part of our instruction so we know where to focus our work most appropriately.

Now we are going to get to Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33. I have put markers in my Bible so I can flip back and forth between Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33 because that is how I am going to approach them. Let us go first to Genesis 49. I want to read verses 1 and 2 and then I am going to go to Deuteronomy 33, verses 1-5 just to show a little bit of difference here from the way these things are introduced.

**Genesis 49:1** And Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days: Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father."

**Deuteronomy 33:1-5** Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. And

he said: "The Lord came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints [or holy ones]; from His right hand came a fiery law for them. Yes, He loves the people; all His saints are in Your hand; they sit down at Your feet; everyone receives Your words. Moses commanded a law for us, a heritage of the congregation of Jacob. And He was King in Jeshurun, when the leaders of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together."

We can see just from these two introductions that these chapters are very different. Even though they cover some of the same matter, they set up very different. The one in Genesis 49 from Jacob is presented as a clear prophecy. I am going to tell you what will befall you in the latter days, he says, in the last days. The last days are a specific time element in the Bible. We all know what the last days are, do we not? It means that limited period before the return of Christ. The last days of this present evil world before God establishes His glorious Kingdom on earth. We can argue for different lengths of time for what the last days are. But from Jacob's two references to Messiah, you will find them in verses 10-12 and verse 24 of Genesis 49, the days before the return of Jesus Christ seems to be the best guess that that is the general time period that he is focusing on for that prophecy.

Now what appears in Deuteronomy 33 follows generally the format of Jacob's prophecy, but Moses couches what he says in terms of a blessing. That is what it says there in the first words there in verse 1. "Now this is the blessing which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death." So he gives them a blessing, as it were, as opposed to Jacob's pretty much straight up prophetic words, and it reads like a blessing or a prayer to God to *bring* blessing and to help the individual tribes in a certain way—to give them this or that. But it is without doubt a prophetic speech. And from these blessings, we get a sense of God's purpose for several of the tribes.

However, within the blessings are definite prophecies. He says things like he shall do something, he shall whatever, and it is definitely in the form of a prophetic statement. For instance, verse 22, it says, "Of Dan, he said: 'Dan is a lion's well, he shall leap from Bashan.'" That is something that is going to happen in the future. Dan is going to leap from Bashan and we have to come

to an understanding of what that means. So even though it appears as a blessing, and it is, it is in fact very much a prophecy as well.

Now Moses, in Deuteronomy 33, does not include any Messianic prophecies and commentators note that the prophetic parts seemed to be more immediate than the last days that Jacob concentrates on. These commentators think that it has to do with the near future of the time of Joshua, let us say, and their taking of the land. We can quibble about that. I am sure there are many things that are dual, that apply to the taking of the land as well as the end time. But truthfully, honestly, there is no last days language in Deuteronomy 33, so it does not come across as a last days prophecy right off the top. You have to dig a little further there. But instead, Moses' blessing seems to concentrate on the tribes' overall roles within Israel rather than future traits and locations, although there might be hints of it here and there in a few of the blessings.

We are going, as I said, to go through these prophecies side by side, tribe by tribe. I am not going to cover them very deeply, I have 30 minutes to do twelve tribes and so what we are to see is just a survey of what the two different prophecies say about each tribe. I am going to start with Reuben back in Genesis 49.

**Genesis 49:3-4** [Jacob says] "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch."

**Deuteronomy 33:6** [Moses says] "Let Reuben live, and not die, nor let his men be few."

It is rather morbid, do you not think? It is very weak blessing.

In either of them, Reuben does not come out very well, sad to say. Jacob right away reminds him of his sexual sin that lost him his firstborn status and thus the birthright and the blessing. He is basically saying, "Reuben, you really messed up." All those things—the blessing and the firstborn status and birthright and all that—went to Joseph, his firstborn through Rachel. Now,

Jacob emphasizes for Reuben excellency of dignity and power, but with instability and sexual perversity. That is a bad combination. I feel sorry for Reuben, but he brought it on himself.

What this hints at are pretensions of honor and a desire for power. A desire to get back what he lost, if you will. But it is constantly undermined by his volatility and his variability. He is unstable as water. Not to mention his sexual predatory nature. Like I said, this is a very bad combination of characteristics. Moses blessing, like I said, is rather morbid. He asked God, "Don't let Reuben die out" because a lot of those those characteristics make for making people mad at you and want to kill you.

Now combined, Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33, these two illustrate a people of great potential, but who are constantly destabilized by their character flaws. They have the ability to be great but their pride, their ambition, their insecurity, and their lust always cut their own feet out from under them. They cannot reach the top because they are just flawed people. They will not overcome those flaws. It is pretty grim and that is what we have to start with here.

Let us go on to the next two. We are going to take Simeon and Levi together.

**Genesis 49:5-7** "Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. Let not my soul enter their counsel; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew a man, in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel."

**Deuteronomy 33:8-11** And of Levi [Moses] said, "Let Your Thummin and Your Urim be with Your holy one, whom You tested at Massah, and whom You contended at the waters of Meribah, who says of his father and mother, 'I have not seen them;' nor did he acknowledge his brothers, or know his own children; for they have observed Your word and kept Your covenant. They shall teach Jacob Your judgments, and Israel your law. They shall put incense before You and a whole burnt sacrifice on Your altar. Bless his substance, Lord, and accept the work of his hands; strike the



loins of those who rise against him, and of those who hate him, that they rise not again."

Moses does not mention Simeon in these blessings and nobody really knows why, although there are some suppositions that people have made. Some think that Simeon was pretty early on subsumed by Judah and they just became part of Judah because perhaps they were a very small tribe. Others think that most of Simeon broke away during the wilderness wanderings. And some have even connected them with the people of Sparta in Greece. I will not pursue that. But it is an interesting thing. The Spartans actually wrote back to Judah, I think it was like in the 100's or so BC, and they say, we are your cousins, we are the same people as you. So it could be the Simeonites went to Sparta, but that is not gospel in any way. It is just a supposition that people have made.

In Genesis 49, however, he is very closely connected with Levi. They seem to have been partners in crime, literally. Jacob, back in Genesis 49, reminds them of their attack on the people of Shechem after the rape of Dinah, their sister, and he calls them cruel, self-willed, and angry. And he implies that they were dishonorable and reckless. Because of these very negative and warlike and almost uncontrollable traits that they seem to have had, God said that His judgment was that He would have to scatter them among the other tribes of Israel so that there would not be fights and wars and all kinds of terrible things breaking out all the time starting in the tribe of Levi or in the tribe of Simeon. When too many of them get together, there is likely to be war and destruction and a whole lot of stupidity going on because they are going after things that they should not.

Now, Moses, who was a Levite, paints a much brighter picture of Levi when we get to Deuteronomy the 33rd chapter. He depicts a Levi whose nature has been channeled into a better path. So what we have here is before God gets ahold of Levi, and after, when God has channeled them into the priesthood and the Levitical service.

First, back here in in Deuteronomy 33, Moses points to himself as an example. He uses the example of himself at Massah and Meribah. He was the one that was tested at that place. And you know what? He failed. He was the one that did not honor God in what he told the children of Israel. "Must

we bring water out of this rock?" and smites the rock rather than what God told him to do. But evidently he is pointing to what happened at Massah and Meribah as a sign of repentance and change because obviously he had repented of that, even though God would still not allow him to enter the Promised Land. He had seen what he had done wrong and repented of it.

He is essentially saying that the tribe of Levi has repented of its former cruelty and stupidity and warlike nature, even though God would use that. They became the butchers of Israel, because they are the ones that slaughtered all the animals they sacrificed. So God put their bloodlust into another channel and made them work for Him.

He also here in verse 9 talks about Levi not remembering his father or his mother or acknowledging his brothers. This is a reference to what happened in Exodus 32:28 after the Golden Calf incident. Moses says, "Who is on the Lord's side?" and all the people of Levi came over to him and they began to kill other Israelites, those who were sinning, and they killed 3,000 that day. This is basically what he is saying. That they are going to be a part of God's arm, if you will, and they cannot worry about father, mother, sister, brother. They have to do the will of God no matter what it is. And it is a good lesson for us too, because Jesus says the same thing about what we have to do to be one of His disciples.

So, the Levite, Moses says at this point, the Levitical nature is going to be used in God's service. It is blind to family ties within Israel, not anchored in land, but in God's blessing. The Levites were going to do God's will no matter what it is, even if it comes to going against their own brethren. So now they will teach, this is what it says in verses 10 and 11, and offer sacrifices and make God's will known to Israel. That is the role that God defined for the people of Levi within the tribes of Israel.

Back to Genesis 49. We are going to go on to Judah, but not really. I will read it, but I am not going to say much about it. If you want more commentary on these sections, especially the one in Genesis 49, please get my sermon *Until Shiloh Comes*, when I go through these in quite a bit of detail

**Genesis 49:8-12** "Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise [Judah means praise, by the way]; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; 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? 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. Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk."

Obviously a Messianic prophecy there.

Let us go on to Deuteronomy 33, which says very little about Judah after what Jacob just said.

**Deuteronomy 33:7** And this he said of Judah: "Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him to his people; let his hands be sufficient for him, and may You be a help against his enemies."

And that is it. Maybe just as a summary of what is said in Genesis 49 about Judah. Jacob emphasizes Judah as the tribe from which most of Israel's leadership will descend, particularly Shiloh, which I just mentioned is a reference to Messiah, but the tribe of Judah tends to be leaders in so many different areas and that is what he emphasizes here.

Conversely, Moses says little about Judah. What he does say there in verse 7 may refer to Numbers 2:9. This is where it says that Judah would be the first to leave camp. They are at the start of the line and they would also be there at the forefront of any battle that the Israelites would fight. So Judah is first in line of march for the host of Israel. What he is saying here in chapter 33, verse 7 is that Judah is always out ahead of Israel, they are the first ones to meet the enemy. And because of this, Moses prays that God will hear Judah's cries for help in battle. That is what he says, "Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah." He also prays that the tribe will return in safety and bring him to his

people, bring him back to the rest of the tribes. And third, that God will fight beside them and bring them victory, "Let his hands be sufficient for him, and may You be a help against his enemies." So looking at Judah out in the front, Moses prays that God will be with them and bring them back safely once they fight off all the enemies of Israel.

That is all I want to say about Judah. Let us go on to Zebulun and Issachar.

**Genesis 49:13-15** "Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships, his border shall adjoin Sidon. Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between two burdens; he saw that rest was good, and that the land was pleasant; he bowed his shoulder to bear a burden, and became a band of slaves [or servants]."

**Deuteronomy 33:18-19** [where Moses treats them together] And of Zebulun he said: "Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and Issachar in your tents! They shall call the peoples to the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness; for they shall partake of the abundance of the seas and of treasures hidden in the sand."

These two were the two youngest sons of Leah and I imagine they probably hung out a lot together, so they ended up being very similar types of people and therefore treated together. Now, Jacob separates them into two separate prophecies while Moses puts them into one blessing. What Jacob emphasizes is Zebulun's coastal seafaring maritime setting. They are all about the ocean. On the other hand, he emphasized Issachar's strength and work ethic. He is a strong donkey, he is a servant, he does the work.

Moses, treating them together, calls on them to rejoice at God's blessing of their going out and coming in. That is probably what it means, "Zebulun, in your going out, and Issachar in your tents!" that God would be with them in all of their trade and all that they did. And verse 19 seems to be an illustration of their prosperity from the sea and of the land and their inviting all Israel to partake of their blessings. There is a small thing in talking about

the treasures hidden in the sand, that they might have a skill in something like glass blowing, glassmaking. What else do you make from the sand? What else are treasures of the sand? Nobody knows. It is just a speculation.

Let us go to Dan. Back to Genesis 49. Jacob's prophecy about Dan is rather long.

**Genesis 49:16-18** "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider shall fall backward. I have waited for your salvation, Oh Lord!"

Now let us get the very short one from Moses.

**Deuteronomy 33:22** And of Dan he said: "Dan is a lion's whelp; he shall leap from Bashan."

So it gets lots from Jacob and gets very little from Moses.

What Jacobs says is a bit controversial. Just about everything, it seems, can be translated a different way or understood in a different way. But keying off the meaning of Dan, which means "judge," verse 16 implies one of two things and they are opposites. It could imply that Dan judges Israel or that the tribes of Israel judge Dan. It could work both ways in the Hebrew. It may mean his people will judge Dan as one of the tribes of Israel. That at a certain point they will say, "Yeah, they're one of us, they are part of us." Or it could mean, conversely, that Dan's decisions or Dan's victories will benefit all Israel. It is really hard to say because the wording is just very imprecise.

It also says that Dan is a serpent by the way. This, again, could be taken in a couple of ways. It could imply that Dan uses cunning tactics, maybe guerilla war, that allows them to defeat stronger enemies. Or it could mean that like a viper moving in sand, Dan leaves a trail behind it. That is how the church has looked at it in the past because Dan has a tradition of leaving his name, the tribe's name, behind wherever they migrate. So you have rivers like the Danube, you have the Dnieper, you have Denmark, you have Dunkirk, and various other places that have "Dan" as part of a place name.

Now, Moses' comment about Dan is a lion's whelp leaping from Bashan alludes to youthful timidity, but great future strength. A lion's whelp is young. It is timid until it gets big, until it grows up, and then it is very strong. "Leaping from Bashan" prophesies migration from its territory in Israel. They had a territory near Judah down in the south part of the land of Israel, but they left there and went up to Laish, which they called Dan, up in the northern part of Israel and then they disappeared. So the thought is that they leapt from that area and went elsewhere. But, this particular phrase can also mean, it can be translated as, "Dan shies away from the viper," which is an allusion back, perhaps, to Genesis 49 and the talk about the serpent and the horse rearing up. And in that way it may go with the lion's whelp imagery and that when Dan reaches its future strength, it will be a wary and cautious people. That is the language of prophecy. It is very hard to understand what exactly it means.

Finally, when Jacob says, "I have waited for your salvation, O Lord," this may imply that Dan may be the last of the Israelites tribes to turn to God. They are missing from the tribal roll call in Revelation 7, so we have to ask, will most of the tribe have to wait until the second resurrection before joining Israel? And that may be the answer to the earlier question that the tribes of Israel will judge that Dan is part of them. I do not know, it is hard to say, but these are possibilities.

On to Gad, back in Genesis 49. It is a short one in verse 19.

**Genesis 49:19** "Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him, but he shall triumph at last."

**Deuteronomy 33:20-21** And of Gad he said, "Blessed is he who enlarges Gad; he dwells as a lion, and tears the arm and the crown of his head. He provided the first part for himself, because a lawgiver's portion was reserved there. He came with the heads of the people; he administered the justice of the Lord, and His judgments with Israel."

Jacob only gives that one cryptic verse and Moses gives him quite a bit more. What Jacob says can be translated as, "Gad will be attacked by a band of raiders, but he will attack at their heels." What this is, is a long word play,

a group of puns on the name of Gad, and the puns are in the words "attacked," "band of raiders," and "attack," along with the name Gad, but they all have, in Hebrew, the word Gad in it or or something that sounds very similar to Gad. Now, according to I Chronicles 5:18 and 12:8, Gad was known throughout the tribes of Israel for its military prowess. What Jacob seems to be saying in verse 19 is that Gad may suffer attack, but he will always give as good as he took and prevail. Because if you attack Gad and inflict some injury on him, you will soon be running the other way, with Gad at your heels. They are not going to take these things lying down.

Moses, in what he says in Deuteronomy 33, expands on this idea of military success. Gad is a lion in battle, he says, and deserves a lion share of the fruits of victory because, remember, they were one of the three tribes that took land on the east side of Jordan and they went and helped the rest of the tribes in the land to conquer. And what they did was, they chose the first, or the leaders part, of the Promised Land. They had one of the best parts of the land there on the east side of Jordan and then they administered God's justice on the Canaanites during Joshua's tenure there. So, they fulfilled much of this in the time of Joshua.

When it is all rolled up into one, the Gadites seemed to be a very dutiful, deserving, but very warlike people. Do not get their ire up because you will be running away with them on your heels.

Next is Asher.

**Genesis 49:20** "Bread from Asher shall be rich, he shall yield royal dainties."

**Deuteronomy 33:24** And of Asher he said: "Asher is most blessed of sons; let him be favored by his brothers, let him dip his foot in oil. Your sandals shall be iron and bronze; as your days, so shall your strength be."

Jacob emphasizes Asher's tendency to specialize in rich foods and luxury crafts. And Moses concurs with him, calling him "the most blessed of sons." He will dwell in rich lands. That is what the foot being dipped in oil implies. But he will also be strong in fortifications because it says there "your sandals

shall be iron and bronze." I do not know. I would not want to have iron and bronze sandals. The word should probably be bars, meaning fortifications of some sort. Your bar shall be iron and bronze. And the last line, "As your days, so shall your strength be," implies growth in strength. They are just going to get stronger and stronger as the years go on or that they will continue in strength even though they become old. Take from that what you will.

Naphtali, back in Genesis 49. We get a very short thing here.

**Genesis 49:21** "Naphtali is a deer let loose; he gives beautiful words."

And then another short one in Deuteronomy 33.

**Deuteronomy 33:23** And of Naphtali he said: "O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full of the blessing of the Lord, possess the west and the south."

Again, Jacob's prophecy is brief and also very uncertain. It is another one of those, in my humble opinion, that should read something like this: "Naphtali is a free running deer, who later gave birth to fawns of the fold." In other words, the tribe loves its freedom but later settled down and became domesticated. The sense is that they are a very restless people who found what satisfied them and then they stayed put.

Moses' blessing kind of parallels this. Naphtali became satisfied with what God blessed them with. "Possess the west and the south" is another problematic section here. It may be possess the lake or the sea and the south and they just happened to dwell on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. So it may be meaning possess the Sea of Galilee and its western and southern shores. It is a very well-watered and rich area and they were satisfied with that.

I am not even going to read the ones on Joseph because they are both very long. They are too long to go over with the negative time that I have.



Generally though, Joseph is lauded by both Moses and Jacob as a prosperous, strong, expansive people whom God has abundantly blessed way, way more than they probably deserve. The sons of Joseph are a major force in the world. That comes out clearly in what both Jacob and Moses say. They are the leading tribe of Israel, with Judah, followed closely by Levi. So those are the big three, if you will, and Benjamin is not too far behind.

Let us get to Benjamin now.

**Genesis 49:27** "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil."

Much different from what Moses says.

**Deuteronomy 33:12** Of Benjamin he said: "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him, who shelters him all the day long; and he shall dwell between His shoulders."

You could not have two more different things said about the same group of people.

Now, Jacob describes Benjamin as a wolf, a very warlike, vicious predator. It seems as if war and its spoils are what drives this tribe. A lot of people have thought that they were among the Viking people, if you can imagine it. If nothing else, they are a single-minded, goal-oriented people—think of the apostle Paul who was a Benjamite.

Moses' blessing is very different. Benjamin is "the beloved of the Lord." Kind of like the way he was beloved of Jacob after Joseph was thought to be dead. Benjamin is protected by him and very close to him. This idea that he dwells "between His shoulders" is a reference to Jerusalem, which is in the territory of Benjamin, in the hills and mountains there of the Benjamites. So you can understand why they would be loved and be protected because God was loving and protecting His city, Jerusalem. Of course, I am sure they were worthy of that, right? All those vicious Benjamites.

Let us conclude here in Deuteronomy 33, verse 29. I just want this one verse.

**Deuteronomy 33:29** "Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty! Your enemies shall submit to you, and you shall tread down their high places."

So, this kind of sums up God's dealings with Israel throughout all time. He has always worked for their good and helped them in time of need, because He has always been working to save them as His special people forever.