

Actions Have Consequences: The Sons of Jacob

Genesis 49.1-28

While Genesis reveals God as being patient and faithful, He is also *holy* and *just*. In Gen. 49, Jacob gathers his sons to tell their futures, both good and bad, based on how they lived their lives. The lesson for Christians today is transparent: *What you do now matters!*

Setting: Telling his sons about their descendants (48.1-2, 28)

Jacob's prophecies are 'appropriate' to his sons' actions.

Key: Look for descriptive words, comparisons to animals

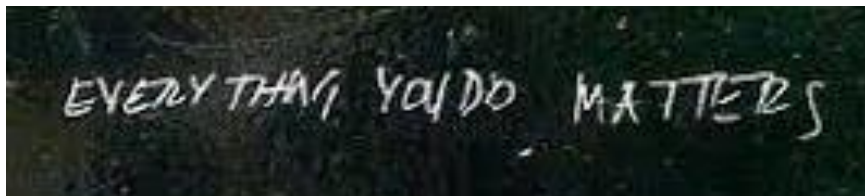
Blessing and Cursing (all 12 sons addressed, but five stand out)

- Reuben: *Primacy lost due to flawed character* (3-4)
- Simeon and Levi: *Cursed for anger and violence* (5-7)
- Judah: *Power, dominion, and the coming Messiah* (8-12)
- *Shiloh* → 'He to whom it belongs' → *Messiah*
- *Looks beyond the present age to a glorious future*
- Joseph: *Surpassing blessings for those who endure* (22-26)
- *Joseph persevered despite persecution and opposition*
- *Joseph's descendants will be blessed and defended by God*

'Morals of the Story'

Our relationship with God is sure; our blessings are not.

How we live now matters – for our families and future rewards.



1. Jacob's words to his sons in Genesis 49 are both prophecy (v1) and blessings (v28) – though some of those 'blessings' are not good! While these may seem unimportant to us, they are more significant than the reading of a will today, since they relate not only to 12 sons, but to their descendants for centuries to come! The power of blessings and other divine pronouncements has surfaced many times in Genesis. How many can you think of?
2. Reuben, the oldest son, should have been Jacob's heir, entitled to a double inheritance. In fact, Jacob describes him in glowing terms (v3), but all his *potential* comes to nothing. What caused Reuben to fall so far (see Gen. 35.22)? His act was an attempt to prematurely secure heirship, but it resulted in the opposite. Jacob calls him 'unstable as water,' but the Hebrew word can mean 'turbulent' or 'destructive' like water. Sexual immorality creates instability *and* is destructive, isn't it?
3. Simeon and Levi, second and third in line as heirs, were passed over for anger and violence. To review their disqualifying act, see Gen. 34. Uncontrolled temper and violence are condemned throughout Scripture. See Ps. 11.5; 37.8; Prov.14.29; 15.1, 18; 16.32; 19.11; 22.24; 29.11; Eccl. 7.9; Mt. 5.22; Eph. 4.26-27; Col. 3.8; James 1.19-20; 4.1-2; 1 Pet. 3.9.
4. Judah is praised (8-12). What prophetic blessings can you decipher from Jacob's poetic words? The phrase 'until Shiloh comes' (10) is better translated 'until He to whom it belongs comes.' Who does this refer to? What belongs to him? What time period does the paradise-like splendor in 10b-12 refer to?
5. Joseph is also praised (22-26). He receives the birthright that Reuben lost (1 Chron. 5.1-2). How does he receive a double-portion? No pronouncement overflows with blessings (notice how many times the word is used) like Jacob's to Joseph! This reflects Joseph's surpassing character. What principle does this affirm for receiving God's blessing in our lives?