

Genesis 49

Does having information/prophecy in advance change our lives? Having the Bible should affect our decision making and prayers. The bible is full of prophecy which confirms God's identity and his power. In theory, God's word should motivate us to make better decisions. Jacob is telling his sons what is coming. Is this supposed to alter their course to avoid this collision? Either way, it sounds like it is going to happen. God is sovereign, and yet we have a choice every day to execute our free will. In The Parable of the 10 Virgins only half remain vigilant to wait for the Messiah/groom. Part of faith is how we hang on to God's word. Do we tether ourselves to it; or do we keep it as merely an option? The prophecies tend to be individual and collectively applied to their patriarchs and their tribes. We know that ultimately, we can only manage our own life:

¹² The word of the LORD came again to me, saying: ¹³ "Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. ¹⁴ Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 14)

Some of these sons of Jacob are almost given a curse or judgement. How can that change their trajectory? I suppose that the point is that they were not worried about it enough to change. Besides, these prophecies are about the later days. Many young men make bad decisions in order to live up to the low expectations of others. I know that we can all repent and pray; but God sees what happens in advance.

Read Genesis 49:1-28: Jacob is on his death bed; and now he will pass on his legacy. I like to think of our children like a quiver full of arrows, who will hopefully fly beyond where we have gone. In fact, I call our daughter "my little arrow". She has lived up to that expectation. Did we leave the earth in better or in worse shape because I was here? More importantly, our spiritual legacy is our eternal footprint. This is why we did not go straight to heaven from the womb.

God is a master at making supernatural things work together in seemingly very unremarkable ways. It is interesting that many years later Joshua cast lots for the tribal allocations and boundaries of Israel. This prophecy on the tribal territories and Joshua's casting of lots concurrently produced the same result.

Ruben is the firstborn; who is normally entitled to a double-portion, and to become the family priest. Ruben made some bad decisions in the moment. We have more information today than ever; and yet some are making the worst decisions. It is a battle between desire and truth. Sometimes the truth is that something is not for us.

Ruben slept with his father's concubine. The first-born son often is the strongest and the most jaded. Ruben was complimented for physical strength, as most firstborn males assume a full working position in the family. He could have been like a second father figure to the others. Subsequent children seem to get an easier and easier life, as the parents become more successful.

Simeon and Levi had no problem taking vengeance with the sword. They killed all of the men in Shechem when their sister was raped. Our battle is against the dark spiritual forces; not mere men. Once we follow our emotions to a personal attack we more or less lose the battle. Today we have leaders and citizens engaged in degrees of insurrection. It is hard to look at them, but instead to the spiritual forces that move people like leaves blowing in the wind around the world.

Judah made some bad decisions, but he also made some righteous decisions. The scriptures are more about redemption than perfect living. Judah produced the messianic bloodline of Christ. He is a warrior. Eventually, the nation of Judah was able to carry out self-rule and capital punishment until 70 AD. The Romans dissolved the Sanhedrin. Jesus will be covered with blood (like a grape stomper) when he returns.

Zebulun will inherit a coastal territory of Israel. Issachar was a farming area, where the residents worked like beasts of burden.

Dan is not even included in one of the tribal accountings. He also led the entire nation into idolatry and murder. Some feel that the antichrist may come from this tribe.

Gad is overrun because it was isolated from the other tribes on the other side of the Jordan. Asher will have fine food. This is another high-production food-growing area. Naphtali is compared to deer. His territory is a largely mountainous, and high valley area, like deer habitat.

Joseph essentially got the double portion, instead of Ruben. Joseph was Jacob's first born from his favorite wife. Obviously, Joseph was a very fruitful and successful son. He excelled in everything he did. He essentially saved the world from starvation. Shiloh is an illusion to the coming Messiah, who is from the tribe of Judah. The Romans took away the power of capital punishment from Judah in 70 AD.

Joseph's son Ephraim had the headship over the combined Israeli army. Joseph's sons; Ephraim and Manasseh received a full share...instead of having to split their father's inheritance in half. The tribe of Ephraim became the headquarters for the northern 10 tribes. Manasseh actually received multiple locations.

Benjamin liked to fight; and he was good at it. His tribe did get almost wiped out for his evil acts (Judges 19-21).

Read Genesis 49:29-33: Jacob commanded his sons to bury him in Canaan with his ancestors. There is a pattern here. Abraham wanted to be buried with Sarah in the same cave (Machpelah). Isaac was buried in the same cave. So was Jacob. Jacob's wife Leah was buried there, as well as King David. We know that only our spirit goes onto the afterlife. What difference (other than sentimental value and a memorial) does it make where you are buried? The corpses are not going to fellowship in the dirt.

God said that he did not select the Jews because they were the greatest people. In fact, like all nations and people, they failed him miserably. How are the Jews unique from others? They do tend to be more likely to carry on a tradition and keep a record of the past. They define themselves by their affiliations. It also has to do with respect for our forefathers.

The Jews may not have fully understood that the spirit goes to heaven; and not the body. Jerusalem was considered to be God's town. Being buried in Israel would be handy for meeting up with God in the afterlife.

Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead. (Isaiah 26)

The Jews are self-identified by their connection with Jerusalem and their ancestors. Perhaps that is why the Muslims decided many years later, that Jerusalem was also a holy site. Taking it from the Jews would be to take away their Jewish identity. The land itself is considered to be holy and special as well.