

# Jacob's Sons

MOTHER	SON	MEANING OF NAME	REFERENCE OF BIRTH (GENESIS)	ORDER OF BLESSING	SYMBOL OF BLESSING	REFERENCE OF BLESSING (GENESIS)
L E A H	Reuben	Behold, a son	29:32	1	Reckless	49:3-4
	Simeon	Hearing	29:33	2	Violence	49:5-7
	Levi	Attachment	29:34	3	Violence	49:5-7
	Judah	Praise	29:35	4	Lion	49:8-12
B I L H A H	Dan	Judgment	30:6	7	Serpent	49:16-18
	Naphtali	Wrestle	30:8	10	Doe	49:21
Z I L P A H	Gad	Good fortune	30:11	8	Raider	49:19
	Asher	Happy	30:13	9	Rich food	49:20
L E A H	Issachar	Reward	30:18	6	Donkey	49:14-15
	Zebulun	Abode	30:20	5	Ships	49:13
R A C H E L	Joseph	May he add	30:24	11	Fruitful	49:22-26
	Benjamin	Son of the right hand	35:18	12	Wolf	49:27

# Bountiful Blessing

Long Beach Alliance Church • November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**THEN JACOB SUMMONED HIS SONS AND SAID, "ASSEMBLE YOURSELVES THAT I MAY TELL YOU WHAT WILL BEFALL YOU IN THE DAYS TO COME. GATHER TOGETHER AND HEAR, O SONS OF JACOB; AND LISTEN TO ISRAEL YOUR FATHER. ~GENESIS 49:1-2 (NASB)**

## 1) Jacob's Adoption Of Joseph's Sons

- A) As Jacob nears death, he calls Joseph and his two oldest sons, Manasseh & Ephraim, to his bedside (Genesis 48:1-2).
- B) Jacob's health is failing, but his memory is sharp. He recounts the memory of Almighty God (אל שדי ~ El Shaddai) blessing Jacob at Luz† (35:9-15).
- C) Jacob's purpose in recounting this well-known story was not to say, "Joseph, let me tell you about what God did for me at Luz..." (Jacob even diminishes his role by skipping his name change), but rather, "Joseph, let me tell you about how good

† Luz is the old city name (still well enough (at the time of Moses' writing) known to escape anachronistic editing) for the city of Bethel (which means, "House of God").

our Almighty God is and about the promises he made for you, our family, and our family's families..." (48:3-4).

- D) Jacob recounts the blessing of God because he is about to give his blessings to his sons (much in the same way his father (Isaac) gave his death-bed blessing (fraudulently) to Jacob in Genesis 27).
- E) Somewhat abruptly, Jacob "adopts" Joseph's two oldest sons, naming them in reverse birth-order (foreshadowing), selecting them for inheritance (48:5-6).

## 2) Jacob Blesses Joseph To First-Born Status

- A) Jacob calls for his two newly-adopted sons to come close to him (he, like his father, is almost completely blind) to receive his (and more importantly, God's) blessing\* (48:8-11).

B) Joseph positions his sons so that the eldest (Manasseh) will

\* Old Testament blessings can seem mysterious and confusing for most 21<sup>st</sup>-century readers. Since we have little parallel for verbal blessings, it is difficult to understand why they had any lasting significance for families or individuals in Genesis. Let me add a few important insights into the custom, to help us understand the significance and impact of Jacob's blessings of his sons. First, a blessing was the recognized way for the transfer of goods and authority to children prior to death. It was the ancient manner of transferring your inheritance. Second, the eldest male child (women seldom received an inheritance. A woman's well-being was secured exclusively by her father or husband) received a double-portion of the inheritance to signify authority and birthright. Third, blessings were covenants (legally binding) with God -- so there was no renegotiating or revocation of a blessing once it was given. Blessings were binding. Finally, blessings sometimes had spiritual significance to them, as though the speaker was giving a prophetic view of what the future would be like. This was true of the blessings amongst God's chosen people (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel) in Genesis. There are aspects to the blessings (ignoring primogeniture, precision and detail of blessing, future fulfillment of blessing) which extends beyond the human element and reveals God's sovereign hand in the words of the patriarch giving the blessing. Ultimately, what we are witnessing is God's voice through the patriarch, establish God's Kingdom by God's design. (Various sources cited, especially *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE), Volume 1 (A-D)*, by A.C. Myers, pgs. 523-524 & *Genesis*, by Victor P. Hamilton, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT) various selections).

be on Jacob's right (superior blessing) hand (48:12-13).

- C) In another stunning ignoring of the eldest's right to greater honor ("law of primogeniture"), Jacob crosses his hands to place the superior blessing on Ephraim, and the lesser blessing on Manasseh<sup>‡</sup> (48:14-16).
- D) Joseph naturally objects to his father's mistake, insisting on Manasseh's firstborn right (48:17-18). Jacob gently affirms the superior blessing of Ephraim over Manasseh, while raising Joseph to first-born status (48:19-22).

## 3) The Testament Of Israel & His Sons

- A) In the same way Jacob summoned Joseph, he summons all of his sons for their death-bed "blessings" (49:1-2).
- B) The Genesis 49 account is most notable because it is filled with both blessings and curses. Most of the sons are mentioned quickly (Reuben, 3-4; Simeon & Levi, 5-7; Zebulun, 13; Issachar, 14-15; Dan, 16-18; Gad, 19; Asher, 20; Naphtali, 21; and Benjamin, 27).
- C) However, Judah (49:8-12) and Joseph (49:22-26), are given prominence in Jacob's death-bed blessings. Joseph's blessing is one of fruitfulness and warrior-like strength. His blessing is, as in the previous chapter, superior (cf. 49:26).
- D) Judah's blessing is the most significant, establishing Judah as the royal line and giving allusion of the Messiah (49:8-12).

‡ Manasseh joins a long line of firstborns who are passed over for blessing in Genesis (Cain, Ishmael, Esau, Zerah, Reuben). God often blesses the lesser or weaker.