

Day 47 - THURSDAY: December 15th

Genesis 49:13-33 NKJV

"Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; He shall become a haven for ships, And 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. "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, O LORD! "Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him, But he shall triumph at last. "Bread from Asher shall be rich, And he shall yield royal dainties. "Naphtali is a deer let loose; He uses beautiful words. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a well; His branches run over the wall. The archers have bitterly grieved him, Shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength, And the arms of his hands were made strong By the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), By the God of your father who will help you, And by the Almighty who will bless you With blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, Blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father Have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers. "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he shall devour the prey, And at night he shall divide the spoil." All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father spoke

to them. And he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing. Then he charged them and said to them: "I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave that is there were purchased from the sons of Heth." And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 13 – About Zebulun John Gill writes “f the sea of Galilee, sometimes called the sea of Tiberias and of Gennesaret; and of the Mediterranean sea; and accordingly we find that the border of this tribe, when settled in the land of Canaan, was toward the sea, Jos_19:10 and this was done, not at the discretion of Joshua, or at the choice of this tribe, but by lot; and which shows that Jacob said this under a spirit of prophecy, and which had its fulfilment two hundred years after; and is a full proof of the prescience and providence of God”

Verse 14 – Issachar is compared to a donkey that is in the middle between two saddlepacks. Adam Clarke’s commentary states: “The two burdens literally mean the two sacks or panniers, one on each side of the animal’s body; and couching down between these refers to the well-known propensity of the ass, whenever wearied or overloaded, to lie down even with its burden on its back.”

Verse 15 – The NLT translates it: “When he sees how good the countryside is and how pleasant the land, he will bend his shoulder to the load and submit himself to hard labor.”

John Gill’s commentary would align with this translation: “he part and portion of the good land allotted him; he saw that a quiet industry exercised in a diligent cultivation and manuring his land was preferable to the hurry of a court, or the fatigue of a camp, or the dangers of the seas:”

The Bible typically portrays Issachar as providing powerful assistance (Judges 5:15) and being valiant warriors (1 Chr 7:1–5). Adam Clarke’s commentary states: “It appears they were a laborious, hardy, valiant tribe, patient in labor and invincible in war; bearing both these burdens with great constancy whenever it was necessary.”

Verse 16 – Dan, while being the oldest son of Rachel’s maid Bilhah, he is shown as not being a lesser tribe or son of

Jacob. The NKJV states, that Dan will “judge” people. Again, considering the prophetic nature of Jacob’s words, we will later see that the judge Samson would come from this tribe of Dan (Judges 13:2, 15:20).

Verse 17 – Dan is compared to a serpent (general word for “snake” as used of Satan in the garden (Gen 3:1) and also to an “adder”. A type of “horned snake”. Vipers would also be considered a type of adder.

In Israel there is the “Desert Horned Viper”, the “Painted Saw-Scaled Viper”, the “Bornmuller’s Viper”, the “Israeli Mole Viper”, the “Saharan Sand Viper”, the “Blunt-Nosed Viper”, and the “Field’s Horned Viper” to name a few. A number of these can easily blend in with the sand and environment. Adam Clarke’s commentary states “It is intimated that this tribe should gain the principal part of its conquests more by cunning and stratagem, than by valor; and this is seen particularly in their conquest of Laish, Judges 18, and even in some of the transactions of Samson, such as burning the corn of the Philistines, and at last pulling down their temple, and destroying three thousand at one time, see Jdg_16:26–30.”

Verse 19 – Gad means “troop” (Brown–Driver–Briggs). This verse is interesting in that several of the words of this verse are sort of a pun or play on words.

Gad – Hebrew “gad”

Troup – Hebrew “gedud” – A band or troop

Overcome – Hebrew “gud” – to invade or attack. (Used twice in this sentence).

All these words are connected to a common root word “gadad” which means to “to penetrate, cut, attack, invade”. Here’s what John Gill’s commentary adds “There is a paronomasia, or an allusion to the name of Gad almost in every word of the verse, which signifies a troop: the whole is a prediction that this tribe would be a warlike one, and have the common fate of war, sometimes be conquered, and at other times conquer, but however should be at last entirely victorious; all the three Targums refer this to this tribe passing over Jordan at the head of the armies of Israel, into the land of Canaan, in Joshua's time, which, when they had subdued, they returned to their own inheritance on the other side Jordan, [Jos_1:12](#) and so Jarchi; but it rather seems to refer to what befell them in their own tribe, which being seated on the other side Jordan was exposed to the incursions and spoils of the Moabites and Amonites;” [END]

Verse 20: Asher's tribe allotment fell from the seacoast of Tyre to Carmel. Jamieson–Faucet–Brown records that this land was very fertile and is said to have produced the finest corn and oil in all of Palestine, while John Gill's commentary records that this area was exceedingly fruitful in wine, oil and had the best wheat.

John Gill further records a connection to this idea of "fat" or "richness": "in this tribe, was the valley of Asher, called the fat valley, which began five miles from Ptolemais, and reached to the sea of Galilee, and contained more than ten miles in length; the soil of which was exceeding fat and fruitful, and produced the most delicate wine and wheat, and might be truly called the fat valley.

Verse 21 – NKJV states: "Naphtali *is* a deer let loose; He uses beautiful words."

The Hebrew for let loose is used a lot in the bible (847x and 566x is translated "send", 73x "go", send forth (54x), send away (48x)...all other translations of this word are found 14x or fewer times in the Bible.

I wondered whether the tribe of Naphtali was used in the sense of skilled peaceable communicator that would represent Israel in a sort of Ambassador like role, but I couldn't find that to be the case.

John Gill states this: “Some will have this prophecy to be fulfilled in Barak, as Ben Gersom, Abendana, and others, who was of this tribe, and who at first was fearful like the hind, and backward to go out to war when called, but afterwards readily went out with Deborah, and at last gave goodly words in the song they both sung: but it better describes the genius, disposition, and manners of the tribe, who were kind and loving, swift and expeditious in their affairs; lovers of liberty, well-spoken persons, humane, affable, courteous, of a good address and pleasing language”

Verse 22 – In speaking of Joseph here, we understand that this also includes Ephraim & Manasseh (compared Joshua 17:17).

The translation of this verse is a bit of a mystery to me. I would like to take a fresh look at the Hebrew words to try to gain a clear meaning of these words.

Joseph means “will add” or “Adding”. We see the next connection with him being “fruitful”. This is the same word God used in Genesis 1:22, 28 about “be fruitful and multiply”.

The word “Bough” is a strange translation to me. The Hebrew word is used 4,906 times in the OT and is almost

always translated “son” 2,978x or children/child 1,578x. The clear sense to me is that Joseph is to be a fruitful son who produces a lot of people and offspring for Jacob. This is then repeated that he is a fruitful son by “a well”. This word for “well” is found 887x and is translated as “eye or sight” 711x. It is translated “fountain or well” 22x. Is it saying, Joseph is a fruitful son by sight or in other words, it’s clear to see that Joseph has become fruitful? Not sure. If fountain or well is intended, then it would make sense that like water makes plants fruitful, Joseph is connected to a source that makes him fruitful.

This verse continues and the NKJV uses the word “branches”. Out of 588x this Hebrew word is used, this is the only time they translated it “branches”. It’s almost always translated “daughter(s)” 526x. It’s also occasionally translated town/village (44x) and after that it’s a few various words. So what does his daughters do? They “run” or “go” over the wall.

Young’s Literal Translation renders this verse as “Joseph *is* a fruitful son; A fruitful son by a fountain, Daughters step over the wall; “

This seems to allude that this fruitful son, his offspring spread out beyond their natural borders and create cities

beyond the border. John Gill states: “which some refer to the daughters of Manasseh and Zelophehad, who received their inheritance on both sides of Jordan; and others interpret it of the cities of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, as cities are sometimes called”.

Verse 23 – This verse tells us that Joseph (Ephraim & Manasseh) will have enemies attack them out of bitterness & hate. Yet, in verse 24, we find that in spite of enemies trying to hurt him & his descendants, that through God’s direct intervention and help, they will remain strong.

Verse 25 – We continue to see that it is by God’s direct blessings that will cause blessings from all directions and in so many ways. Ways that would confound common logic. These blessings (as verse 26 adds) will exceed even the blessings of the patriarchs.

Verse 27 – Finally we come to the youngest Benjamin. Benjamin is described as a wolf with a ravenous appetite, starting early in the day and not quitting until nightfall.

John Gill’s commentary records numerous ways this scripture could be prophetic through time:

“we have an early instance of the valor and success of this tribe in a war waged with all the other tribes, and in two pitched battles, in one with 26,000 men it beat

400,000, Jdg_20:15, and if this tribe is compared to a wolf for rapaciousness, this may be illustrated by the remainder of those, after the loss of a third battle, catching and carrying away the daughters of Shiloh, and making them their wives, Jdg_21:23. Some apply this to particular persons of this tribe, as to Saul the first king of Israel, who was of Benjamin; and who as soon as he took the kingdom of Israel, in the morning, in the beginning of that state, fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines, and the Amalekites, 1Sa_14:47 and to Mordecai and Esther, who were of the same tribe, who after the captivity, and in the evening of that state, divided the spoil of Haman, Est_8:1” He continues “Some of the Christian fathers have applied the prophecy to the Apostle Paul, who was of the tribe of Benjamin; who in the morning of his youth was a fierce and ravenous persecutor, and made havoc of the church of God: and in the evening, or latter part of his life, spent his days in dividing the spoil of Satan among the Gentiles...” [END]