

GENESIS 49

THE PATRIARCH AS A PROFILER

A few decades ago a new science known as psychological profiling came into play after a psychiatrist accurately predicted a number of key characteristics of a serial killer before he was caught. This opened the door to a very intriguing area of the mind. It has helped to catch countless murderers. It is one of my favorite areas of reading.

It basically works this way: it has been observed that many serial killers do certain things for certain reasons. Over the years certain patterns of behavior have been observed and have been associated with certain criminal behavior. These lessons are then applied to the crime scene and a psychological profile is constructed that helps to narrow down the pool of suspects. Things like level of education, profession, race, even the type of clothing he may wear. It is really amazing. There is no magic to it, it is simply observing tendencies and patterns of behavior that allow you to predict with a reasonable amount of certainty who is doing what.

Today we will see that Jacob or Israel as he is sometimes known is going to do some profiling, at least in some sense of the word. God is giving the inspiration through His Spirit, but we will also see that their past behavior has much bearing on their futures. Jacob is going to bring his boys together so he can bless them. This was a common tradition that we have already seen a few times in the OT. This is also a means of sorting through the will and who inherits what. It was common for the oldest son to inherit everything, but exceptions were commonly made according to the attitude and behavior of the children. That is what we will see today; much of our future can be seen in advance by our behavior in the present. The great news is that

change is what the Gospel is all about so let's get into Genesis 49.

Gen 49:1 *And Jacob called his sons and said,
"Gather together, that I may tell you what shall
befall you in the last days:*

Gen 49:2 *"Gather together and hear, you sons of
Jacob, And listen to Israel your father.*

Gen 49:3 *"Reuben, you are my firstborn, My might
and the beginning of my strength, The excellency
of dignity and the excellency of power.*

Gen 49:4 *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.*

This is the first man- spoken prophecy of the Bible. God has foretold the future elsewhere, but this is the first knowing prophecy so far and it is spoken over the eldest son of Jacob.

As the firstborn son Reuben was supposed to inherit a double blessing of his father's possessions. He is acknowledged here as his father's might and strength but this is quickly followed by statement that he, Reuben was as unstable as water and that because of this he would not excel. He took the mother of two of his brothers in an immoral relationship back in Genesis 35. This is what is meant by going up to his father's bed and defiling it. James speaks of a double-minded man.

Jas 1:8 *he is a double-minded man, unstable in all
his ways.*

Essentially this is a person that can't make up his mind whether he wants to be in or out of fellowship with God. James goes on to say that a man such as this should not expect to get anything from God.

Water takes the shape of the vessel into which it is poured. Reuben was unstable in the fact that he would do what was

convenient for him at the time. This is a man with no conviction and it would not allow him to excel. His descendants, known as the tribe of Reuben would never produce a ruler. They never excelled.

Gen 49:5 *"Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place.*

Gen 49:6 *Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.*

Gen 49:7 *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.*

These two brothers were the second and third sons of Jacob. They were known for hot tempers, something in which some men take pride, but it is not a Christian virtue. Their sister was raped and they took vengeance, but their anger was a result of their self-will, that is their pride was the source of their anger and the wrath they unleashed. They also hamstrung an ox due to the same hot temper. Because of this they couldn't be trusted to govern with level heads.

Eph 4:26 *"BE ANGRY, AND DO NOT SIN": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,*

Eph 4:27 *nor give place to the devil.*

Eph 4:31 *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.*

We should be angry when we see a child or a woman abused, but allowing that anger to be fueled by pride and then become unbridled is not the way God does things. We shouldn't be that way either. These particular incidents had happened years before, but the trait was still sufficiently ingrained in these two

boys that their descendants were scattered among the tribes of Israel because of it.

The tribe of Simeon shrank in number during the wilderness wanderings. 63% of them perished during those years. Levi on the other hand demonstrated faithfulness during the rebellion of the golden calf and was rewarded by being named as the tribe of the priesthood. Though they did not inherit any land once they got to the Promised Land, they received the Lord as their inheritance and lived off of the tithe and offerings of the people. What started out as a curse became a blessing for one and remained a curse for the other. Once again, god can take lemons and make lemonade.

Gen 49:9 *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?*

Gen 49:10 *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.*

Gen 49:11 *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.*

Gen 49:12 *His eyes are darker than wine, And his teeth whiter than milk.*

Jesus is referred to as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He came out of this tribe. In verse 10 we see several phrases that speak of the position of a ruler; lawgiver, the scepter and to him shall be the obedience of the people.

The term Shiloh; meaning He whose right it is, had always been understood as speaking of Messiah. From King David all the way through to the Herods in Roman times, the king was from the tribe of Judah.

Then in 7 AD the Roman government took away the ability to impose capital punishment from the Jews. The rabbis walked the

streets in mourning because they thought the prophecy of God and failed. They no longer had the right to rule and in their minds they had lost that right and there was no Messiah in sight. However, what they didn't know was that in a little town not far from there a young boy was growing up that would fulfill that prophecy. His name was Jesus and He too was from the tribe of Judah. God's Word never fails.

As for the donkey's colt being tied to the choice vine, Judah's land was always known for having the best grapes and producing the best wine.

Gen 49:13 *"Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; He shall become a haven for ships, And his border shall adjoin Sidon."*

Zebulun: Jacob now skipped the birth order, moving to the tenth-born and ninth-born sons, but staying with the sons born of Leah.

Zebulun inherited the land between the Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee. Sidon became a well known sea port and still is today. This tribe was also known for its loyalty to King David as well as supplying more fighting men than any other tribe.

Gen 49:14 *"Issachar is a strong donkey, Lying down between two burdens;*

Gen 49:15 *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."*

Issachar was the third largest tribe of Israel. They had some of the best land in Canaan which often made them a target of foreign raiders. Though they were big, they were lazy and didn't fight for their land. Because of this they were enslaved.

Gen 49:16 *"Dan shall judge his people As one of the tribes of Israel."*

Gen 49:17 *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.*

Gen 49:18 *I have waited for your salvation, O LORD!*

The tribe of Dan supplied Israel with its most famous judge, that being Sampson. If only their zeal for God had matched their brawn, but they were always a troublesome, hard-headed bunch. This tribe actually introduced idolatry into the land of Israel and became a center for idol worship late on in Israel's history. Dan is actually left out of one listing of the tribes of Israel, but is then reinstated the book of Ezekiel. God is a God of second chances.

Gen 49:18 *I have waited for your salvation, O LORD!*

It seems that Jacob was overcome here in the middle of blessing his boys. Maybe it was because the majority of them were so much trouble. At any rate we can see where Jacob's heart was. In spite of seeing what would become of his family, he still trusted in the Lord.

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

Gad supplied many fighting men for King David, but this tribe was oppressed time and time again. They had many years of ups and downs. They could not maintain a stable lifestyle.

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

Asher became noted for the finer things in life. This tribe produced and consumed the best food and drink.

Gen 49:21 *"Naphtali is a deer let loose; He uses beautiful words.*

Naphtali: Naphtali's land was in a key portion near the Sea of Galilee, the region where Jesus did much of His teaching and ministry. It is fittingly said of him that he gives goodly words.

Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned" (Matthew 4:12-16).

Gen 49:22 *"Joseph is a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a well; His branches run over the wall.*

Gen 49:23 *The archers have bitterly grieved him, Shot at him and hated him.*

Gen 49:24 *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),*

Gen 49:25 *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.*

Gen 49:26 *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.*

If you remember, Joseph's two sons had already received their blessing from Jacob in the last chapter. Therefore this is more of an accounting of the life of Joseph than anything else.

Joseph had endured a lot from his brothers as well as from the Egyptians prior to his becoming second in command of Egypt. We see here though that his hands were made strong because God had essentially grabbed his arms and strengthened them. The two tribes of his sons were some of the most populous of the tribes. This was considered a blessing and a sign of power as well as wealth. He was always seen as being above his brothers in a sense.

Gen 49:27 *"Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he shall devour the prey, And at night he shall divide the spoil."*

The tribe of Benjamin was known for its fierceness. You can read about this in Judges 19 and 20. Ehud, Saul and the apostle Paul were all from this tribe. They were all known for their fierce convictions and bravery in battle.

Gen 49:28 *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.*

Gen 49:29 *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,*

Gen 49:30 *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.*

Gen 49:31 *There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah.*

Gen 49:32 *The field and the cave that is there were purchased from the sons of Heth."*

Gen 49:33 *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.*

After Jacob had given out all the blessings, he told his sons that he wanted to be buried in the Promised Land, not in Egypt. He could have been buried in a great tomb like many of the Egyptians but he wanted to be buried in a cave in the land which it was promised his children would possess. He then got back up into bed and passed away.

This was probably hard for Jacob in many ways. He got to see what would become of his children. Some of them would do well, but many of them didn't. Looking back we can see mistakes Jacob made in parenting. We have all made those. However, what we all need to see is that it is hard for people to break out of patterns of behavior.

If you have ever looked at your tires once you have run them on a vehicle with a front end that is out of alignment, you will see that they develop a wear pattern. Even if you go and have your front end aligned those tires will still wear according to that pattern and they will not last as long as they would have normally. Once a wear pattern is established, the tires will continue to wear along that pattern.

We will continue along the same pattern of bad habits and bad behavior also if the pattern is not changed. We are not like tires in this sense. We are capable of having our wear patterns changed, not by ourselves but by God.

The Holy Spirit comes into our hearts and literally changes the way we think. By changing the way we think our habits and therefore our lives are changed. This is what is meant by changing us from the inside out.

Any area of our lives for example; language, viewing habits, praying and giving habits not given over to God, will not change. They will instead cause us grief and trouble. Many people cling to old habits thinking they will make them happy while they are really making them miserable the whole time.

We have seen how God blessed some of these boys and others were not blessed. Of which group do you want to be a part? The more of your life you open up to God the more He can and will bless you.