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Let's resume our study now in Genesis chapter 49, and I want to take a moment before we continue with Judah to point something out in regard to these first three sons and the oracle that is pronounced with regard to them and their descendants based on things that happened in the past, and that's a clue because Reuben, of course, his oracle is tied directly to his major misbehavior in, you know, it's kind of a euphemism saying misbehavior, but even though he is mighty in the beginning of Jacob's strength, excellence of dignity, excellence of power, instability wrecks all of that. It reminds me of, and it's a truism, everybody I think has seen this, but there are people who seem to have a lot of personal attractiveness. Maybe they have physical beauty or they have charisma.

They walk into a room and everybody focuses attention on them. They have natural leadership. They seem to have so much going for them and so much potential, and over the course of time there is something that prevents that from parlaying itself into permanent success, and it is usually this very thing.

It's instability. They start out and seem to have all of the advantages, but they can't lay hold of the things that they really want and the things that would last and build a foundation and build a stable life because it's instability. A lack of a rudder, it doesn't matter how many sails you've got and how tall your masts are and how well designed the hull of the ship is, if you've got no rudder the first time a contrary wind blows you're hopeless.

Stability and consistency is a key to staying the course, and that is the thing that Reuben lacks. He is frothy. He's unstable and he will not excel, and this is part of his instability.

He was blessed with a lot of things, but I shouldn't say it's a part of it. It's a manifestation of his instability, of his not being able to be relied on. What happens to his trustworthiness in every area when he can't be trusted to keep his hands off his father's concubine, when he makes this power play in the family? He can never again be fully trusted and fully relied on by Jacob, in the same way that there are certain kinds of infraction that permanently disqualify a pastor from a church.

When there is a betrayal of trust at a certain level, when there is a violation of the standards in Timothy and Titus, in those essential areas, people say, well, but everyone makes mistakes. Can't we forgive? Can't we give them another chance? And so forth. The answer is no.

There are certain betrayals of trust. There are certain failures that disqualify from leadership. It doesn't mean that you can't have a meaningful and productive life in other areas, but as far as fulfilling a function, Reuben is not an unhappy man.

He's down in the land of Egypt. He's got family. He's got prosperity.

He's got freedom and protection. He's got lots of good things as an individual. But if he had any ambitions, which apparently he did for leadership in the family, that's over with.

He took that away from himself. He disqualified himself from that level of trust by his failure. And there are believers who may have the gift of pastor and teacher or who may have other leadership responsibilities and betraying that trust disqualifies them.

It doesn't mean their life is over, but that particular function can no longer be fulfilled. And it is surprising that in the church today that principle is so ill understood, both in local situations that we can all think of and in situations where prominent individuals on TV foul up and come back in repentance or gainsay the promise that they initially made to, you know, if they had to abandon their marriage, then they would never continue as pastor and so forth. And then when it actually comes down to it, they can't observe this principle and recognize that whatever possibilities remain for them in this life, it's not going to be fulfilling that function.

And so they go on in an illegitimate way. This is what we see here with Reuben. And you have a clue to this because this goes back to the past.

And actually, if you go back far enough, it goes back to the very beginning. Each of these sons is named here. And when's the first time that we saw all the sons named? Well, it's back in Genesis 37.

If you turn back, keep your finger in 48, but go back to Genesis. It's actually before that it's 31. And then before that, go all the way back to 29, 29, 31.

Can't read my own writing. The children of Jacob in Genesis 29, 31, when the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. So Leah conceived and bore a son and she called his name Reuben.

For she said, the Lord has surely looked on my affliction. Now, therefore, my husband will love me. So the birth of Reuben, the reason he's named Reuben.

Reuben, the verb, as I've mentioned a few times here recently, is raah. R and then the aleph, which is the good consonant, vowel consonant. So it's R-A-A-H in English.

And raah means to see. And ben is the word for son. Ben her.

Charlton Heston is the son of her. Well, reu is a form of raah. It means see a son.

Look, a son. And so Leah says, here's my vindication. My husband will love me now.

He doesn't love me, but this will bring me into his good graces. This will bring me into his favor. Look, a son.

Also, and there's so much paranomasia and wordplay going on in Hebrew. Hebrew is

such a great language for this because you have these three radical words, three consonant words that can be mixed and compared and matched in a lot of different ways. And I won't be able to tell you all of that, but not only does Reuben mean see a son, but it's also the Lord has seen my misery.

And if you want to say he has seen my misery in Hebrew, it's raah ba'anyi, which if you wanted to spell it in English, it would be R-A-A-H and then B-E and then a little apostrophe type of thing. And then A-N-Y-I. Raah ba'anyi.

The Lord has seen my misery. See a son. The Lord has seen my misery.

It's all rolled up in Reuben's name. So here's a miserable condition that is going to be rectified by Reuben. It's going to take Leah from being out of favor into favor.

But what happens? Reuben, the favored son, the one who is going to rectify the situation and bring his mother out of favor into favor to be loved by Jacob, winds up doing just the reverse. He disgraces himself. He disqualifies himself.

And with that advantage and with that start, do you want to say now when he's coming out of Bilhah's tent, do you want to say, see a son? It's a disgrace. It's almost a vindication of the fact that Jacob never favored that side of his family to begin with. And she said, my husband will become attached to me.

And this is also a play on Reuben's name, which he says, now, therefore, my husband will love me. You probably know the word for love in Hebrew, even if you don't realize it. It's Ahab.

It's Ahav, A-H-A-B or A-H-A-V, depending on if you want to use the German. Germans can't say B, so everything turns into a V. And actually, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet is Beit. It can be either soft or hard.

When it's soft, it's hard to duplicate in English, but it's close to a V. So a lot of times you have Ahav instead of Ahab, just depending on how you want to pronounce it. But when she says, my husband will become attached to me, this is Ye'ehabani. It's Y-E and an apostrophe and then E-H-A-B.

There's your Ahav root right in the middle of it. And then Ani means to me. So you have Ye'ehabani.

He will become attached to me. And this Ye'ehav, that Haban is real close to Reuben and links it back with Ra'abani and Re'uben. So all of those, there's this word play and almost what we would do with rhyming in English, where words are different, but they're linked because they rhyme.

In Hebrew, they would do it with these kinds of similarities. And so all of these things,

this is the potential that Reuben has to mend a breach in the family, to bring the disgraced into good grace, to take the unloved and make them loved. But in that position and with that potential, he misses it.

He messes it up and it's because of his instability. He doesn't stay the course. He's not patient.

He doesn't wait. He doesn't recognize his place and his opportunity. If he was patient, he would have everything that belongs to his father, but he can't wait.

He goes and grabs Bilhah after Rachel's death, thinking, well, that side of the family, I'll bring it under my, you know, the family was always divided between the Leah side and the Rachel side. So he's going to reach across the gulf there to Rachel's concubine and bring that under his control and say, well, I'm going to consolidate the family here and get it all under my domain. It's not the time.

It's not the place. It's not the way. And with his own plan for unification, so to speak, he ends up losing everything.

He's unstable, uncontrollable like water. And so we see this going back to his name. This is perhaps even more apparent with Simeon and Levi.

You remember, we saw last time it said, he says, Simeon and Levi are brothers. Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. And literally it says they're, they're macharot.

They're, they're, their covenants are weapons of violence. They take their peace treaties and use them to overthrow. They made this false covenant with Shechem and Hamor and used it to slay them and to sack their city and kill their families.

And so, and again, kara, we saw last time, C-A-R-A-H or K-A-R-A-H means trade or merchandise. It also can mean feasts. And there's a word play there with that and with karat, which is to cut a covenant.

What is it? The maim in front of it, the M in front means this is something that's from. You take the verb and put a maim in front of it and it makes it a noun. So to feast or to trade and have merchandise and so forth, to dig, kara is used of boring a hole in something.

But they use these peaceful things, these trade and merchandise and so forth. They turn that peaceful, productive thing into a weapon of violence. And also the covenant that comes from that, to come from that, karat means to cut a covenant.

It's also circumcision. It harks back, kara, going to karat, when they circumcised the families of Hamor and Shechem and all the men were in pain and that's why they were

able to overthrow them. They took unfair advantage.

They used the covenant as a weapon of destruction. And so ultimately a good way of translating, as we saw last time, when it says, 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. And we saw that once again you have uprooting a wall.

They're instruments of cruelty in their dwelling place. You can say they treated violently their covenantors, those that they were making peace with, they wreaked violence on. But let's do the same thing we did with Reuben.

Let's go back and take a look at their birth. If you still have your finger in Genesis chapter 29, you find that in verse 34, or verse 33 rather, after the birth of Reuben, Leah conceived again and bore a son and said, because the Lord has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also. That tells us a couple of things.

It tells us, first of all, that what she had hoped for Reuben, that Reuben would take her from being unloved to being loved, it didn't work. Reuben was a disappointment in that sense because his birth, giving Jacob his firstborn son, did not bring Leah into her husband's love. And so there's already a foreshadowing of the fact that Reuben is not going to live up to the hopes, to the possibilities that certainly his mother saw for him.

So she conceived again. She said, because the Lord has heard that I am unloved, He has given me this son also. And she called his name Simeon.

And Simeon's name, as we mentioned back in that chapter 29, comes from the verb shamah, which means to hear. Ishmael's name came from this same root. So does Samuel's name later on.

Hannah is going to name her son Samuel because she says, God has heard. Shamuel. So she says, the Lord has heard that I am unloved.

And so here's this idea that God has heard and God has responded by giving her Simeon. Then she conceived again in verse 34, and said, now this time my husband will become attached to me. So even after the first two sons, Jacob still isn't any closer to loving Leah than he was at the wedding.

And so she says, well, now I've got three sons. So she called his name Levi. And Levi means attached.

It means to be joined or attached. And so you have heard and attached. God has heard and responded.

And now she thinks she's going to be attached to Jacob. But when you return to the oracle regarding Simeon and Levi, they are attached, aren't they? They're brothers.

They're in league with each other.

And these are the only two brothers that are addressed together. All of the others are addressed individually. Simeon and Levi are linked almost as though they were twins.

And they are attached. They're attached to one another. But what does Jacob say? Because of their violence, because of their anger and cruelty, let not my soul enter their council.

Let not my honor be united to their assembly. Jacob says, I don't want to be attached to Simeon and to Levi. I'm not going to hear their counsel.

I'm not going to enter in and have fellowship with them. I will not hear them. I will not attach my glory to them.

And so the things that were foreshadowed in their names, their hopes, or the hopes that Leah had for them, is just the reverse. And once again, it is their own choice that has done this. It isn't something in the past.

It isn't Jacob's relationship with Leah. It's their own actions. Because in their anger, they slew a man.

And in their self-will, they uprooted a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce. Cursed be their wrath, for it is cruel.

He says, I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. Are they going to be attached? No, they're going to be divided. These two that are linked together, Simeon and Levi, are going to be separated.

Not only are they going to be separated from each other, but they're going to be separated. The individual members of the tribe will be separated. The Levites are going to be divided up.

And of course, when you think about the later history of Levi, what happens with them? They become the priests in Israel, and they have no inheritance among their brethren. They live in the land that's apportioned to all of the twelve tribes. They're scattered in Israel.

And even among the Levites that are divided up, you have the sons of Aaron, who are the priests, and from whom the high priests come. Well, all of the Levites are not sons of Aaron. We tend to think that all the Levites are Aaronites, but they're not.

Aaron, descended through Amram, is only one fraction of the Levites. There are other Levites, and they're going to perform different functions. You have the sons of Korah, and so forth.

Each of the different divisions of the Levites are assigned different functions. So they're divided up, and the ones who are the singers and the musicians, they're not the sacrifice offerers. They're not the priests proper.

You have others who are tasked with the cleaning and the maintenance of the temple and its grounds, or the tabernacle originally, later the temple. And so they are divided up, and occasionally there is jealousy, and there's vindictiveness between the different branches of the Levites. So they are divided up in Israel, and they're also, in a sense, divided among themselves.

But this can also be a positive thing, because they are scattered through Israel. There are priests available to all of the people. There are people they can go to and consult about the Word of God.

And this division of the Levites, even in the service of God, in the service of the tabernacle, is a good thing, because all of the bases are covered. What does it depend on? It depends on if they see their responsibility and see their opportunity and turn it into a positive thing. It's not necessarily bad to be divided up.

It's not necessarily bad to be scattered. One of the ways that the gospel of Jesus Christ went out into all the world was the fact that it was the diaspora. The scattering of the Jews also scattered the Christians.

And that scattering and the spread of the gospel in the diaspora was one of the ways that the story of Jesus Christ and the good news of God's salvation and God's plan went throughout the world. So people thought, oh, this is bad. We've been driven from the homeland.

We're up here in Asia Minor and Cappadocia and all these other places. But what a great thing. God can use them as lights shining in a dark place.

So the division itself is a fact. It's an oracle from God. It is going to take place.

But what it means and what impact it has on the individual Levites is up to them. It can be a good thing or it can be a bad thing. It can be a blessing to Israel or it can be a curse.

And we don't have time to look at all of the later history of the Levites, but you can think to yourself about some of the things that take place in Judges that we've seen before. Judges 19 and with the Benjamite. There are Levites scattered all down through and some of them are good and some of them are bad.

You have the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram and some of the other things that were bad. And you make of the circumstances through faith and through obedience and through orientation to God's plan, not the circumstance itself. Cursing to blessing.

So Simeon and Levi are a great example of this where the pronouncement is not good. Their anger is cursed. Their wrath is cursed, but not them.

Their fate is to be divided and scattered, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. In the same way that Reuben not having rulership is not in and of itself a bad thing. Not everybody can be the ruler.

He had the opportunity for it and missed it, but it's not the end of the world. He's just going to find, and the Reubenites who descend from him, are going to find their fulfillment in other areas and other ways if they pursue it, if they choose it. So again we can see this foreshadowed in the names.

By the way, Levi, his name, when Leah gave it to him back in 2934, she said, now my husband will become attached to me. His name, if you spelled it out in English letters, would be Y-I-L-L-A-W-E-H. Y-I-L-L-A-W-E-H.

And so you have Y-L-L-A-W-E-H. And that L-A-W-E-H portion there is what becomes Levi. Again, W's turn into V's when the Germans speak them.

So she says, well I've given these three sons, so surely my husband's going to be attached. But these first three oracles are all sort of negative, disassociation, disattached. Jacob says, let not my soul enter their council, and let not my honor, and this is the word kavod, which is the word for glory.

Kavod. Let not my honor be united to their assembly. And there's been some debate about if you change one letter to kavod, it becomes the liver.

Let not my liver be united to their assembly. And it has the idea of one's self. They used to use body parts like the heart and the reins and the liver and so forth.

And there are ancient examples of this. And one of the reasons they suggest this is kavod is a masculine noun. And the verb here that says be united is a feminine verb.

And it's an odd combination. Now the word for liver is feminine, and the word for kavod is masculine. But there are many translation options in Hebrew poetry because it is so concise.

And we always have to do something to render it into manageable English. And I think the best solution for this is to understand that the original pointing of this word is correct. It is kavod and glory.

But that these are evocatives. If you know what evocative is, it's when you say somebody's name or you address someone. And you say, what is that famous saying that says, oh vanity thy name is woman or some such thing.

You address something and personify it by giving it a name. And here it's likely because

of this disparity between the noun and the verb that they're not supposed to be linked the way they are in our translation. It would be better to say, oh my soul, enter not their counsel.

Oh my glory, do not unite to their assembly. And that he's using these things in the evocative. And this is a little bit different statement.

And it makes sense in the context because Jacob's on his deathbed. And it's not going to be his soul or his personal glory that's going to have the option, because he's going to be dead. So he's saying in future generations, in the days to come, the heart and soul of the nation of Israel is not going to unite itself to Levi or to Jacob because of their anger and because of their wrath.

He's saying these counsels of anger, these things that are fueled by bitterness, that's not where the glory of Israel is going to reside. That's not where Jacob's soul is going to be. He says, don't attend these counsels of anger.

And you see plenty of illustrations of this in the later history of Israel, where people confederate themselves together to rebel, to do things in anger that are ill-considered. And the prophet will come and say, this is not God's will. Don't do this.

If you go, you'll be destroyed. And they do it anyway. And sure enough, they are, especially when you get into 2 Kings and Chronicles and you get into the later history of the divided kingdom.

Time and time again, self-will and anger and hubris and pride go before a fall. And the glory of Israel is not manifested there. And the heart and soul, the remnant of Israel does not partake of those things.

And so I think it's likely that that's the explanation for this odd combination of Hebrew words. But that brings us now down to Judah in verse 8. And if you still have your finger in Genesis 29, you might just notice that in verse 35, after the birth of Reuben, after the birth of Simeon, after the birth of Levi, she conceived again and bore a son and said, now I will praise the Lord of the four children that Leah has had so far. This is the first time that she hasn't had her eyes on her husband.

She wants Jacob to love her. And so here's Reuben, see a son. Now my husband will love me.

It didn't happen. So when Simeon is born, the Lord has heard and has answered my plea for me to be united to my husband. Now he's seen that I'm unloved and he's going to fix it with his second son.

It didn't happen. And then the third son came, Levi, and she said, now this time my husband will become attached to me. So the first three sons, she sees them as the

means to an end.

They're going to endear her to Jacob and they don't. This fourth son, she looks at with fresh eyes and she says, now I will praise the Lord. She's not looking at Jacob.

She's not thinking about how can I get into his good graces. She says, I will praise the Lord. That's all she says.

And Judah, his name is Odeh is the word here. When she says, now I will praise the Lord. Yehuda in English would be Y-E-H-U-D-A.

That's how you would actually transliterate this name into English, Yehuda. And Odeh, you can see the relationship there. Let him be praised is what she is referring to there.

And then in verse 35 of 29, it says, then she stopped marrying. And so with these four sons, it stops. When we come to Jacob's oracle concerning Judah in verse eight of Genesis 49, Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise.

Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies. Your father's children shall bow down before you. 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.

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, 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.

His eyes are darker than wine and his teeth whiter than milk. Very long oracle here. As I said earlier, five verses devoted to Judah.

And we don't have the negative overtones with Judah that we had with the others. And yet in the history that we've seen of Jacob's family, we know some negative things about Judah, don't we? We know his reluctance to marry his son to Tamar and the resulting episode with her that results in him fathering a child, two children with her. And we know that Judah was part and party of the scheme to get rid of Joseph.

And yet none of these things are brought up. Why? That's the question. Why doesn't Judah get a ding for his negative? He was as bad as any of the of the brothers as far as violating marriage bonds in a different way by denying a husband that was rightfully his daughter-in-laws and so forth.

Why does Judah make out so well? Well, let's begin by noticing the first verse here. Verse 8. Judah, you are he whom your brothers will praise. Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies.

Your father's children shall bow down before you. There are two things stated right off the bat that tell us that the leadership and rulership part of the blessing of the firstborn has come down and stopped at Judah. He is going to be praised by his brothers and his hand is going to be on the neck of his enemies.

These two things, and of course it's amplified, your father's children shall bow down before you. These are rulership functions. All of the brothers are going to bow down.

So who's going to be the head of the family? Who's going to exercise leadership? It's Judah. Not only within the family, but there's going to be dominance over those outside Israel. Your hand is going to be on the neck of your enemies.

Now a lion, which is what he associates him with in verse 9, it's been suggested that all of these symbols associated with Judah are references back to his earlier life. You remember in chapter 37 of Genesis, when the brothers returned to tell Jacob that Joseph was no more and they brought the bloody coat, they said perhaps a wild beast has devoured him and that's why there's blood all over this garment. Well, what would have been the wild beast? It would probably have been a lion.

And so people have seen here, they've suggested that Jacob is making an oblique reference when he says Judah is a lion's whelp and compares him several times to a lion, that he's the wild beast. He was sort of the instigator and the former of this scheme to fool Jacob into thinking that Joseph had been killed. The staff, the scepter in verse 10 that is spoken of there, the staff of rulership is the staff that he pledged to Tamar in reference to his failure there, where his violation of the marriage bonds and so on, symbolized by that staff.

And when it talks about his donkey is bound to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, the word for donkey or ass in Hebrew is ear, which is the ayin, the evil ayin vowel consonant there, and then a y and then an r. So it would be maybe e-y-r would be the English transliteration for a donkey or an ass there. And his son Ur, you remember the problem with Ur is what caused all this stuff with Tamar, well that's ayin and a resh. The only difference is the little bit of yod in between, between ur and ear, which is donkey, and so that this is referring back to that same incident when he refers to the donkey.

And when it talks about him washing his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes, that this is talking back to the garment of Joseph that was dipped in the blood, quote unquote, of his brother, dipped in the blood of the animal that they killed. And that all of these things are the same sort of thing that we saw in the first three brothers. References back to negative things in the life of Judah.

I am not totally convinced by that suggestion. I think it's possible. I don't, it's not, it doesn't resonate with me in a way that makes me want to teach it as fact.

But it's a suggestion and it may be that it's designed to bring back to memory some of these things. But people who have brought forth this suggestion, everybody else shoots them down and says, well, but the pronouncement on Judah is not negative like it was for Reuben and Simeon and Levi. So why would Jacob be making these allusions back to these negative things when he's not going to receive a curse and Jacob's not going to say you're disqualified, you're a bad guy, your descendants are going to be dispersed and you're not going to excel and so forth.

It's just the opposite. Judah gets one of the best blessings out of this whole thing. So why then would Jacob be referring back to negative incidents in Judah's life? He's probably not.

Well, just for the sake of argument, suppose that he is, suppose that these are things we're supposed to think of when we see all of these symbols suggested by Jacob. Something has converted them from negative to positive. Something has changed Judah's fate.

If these things are in Jacob's memory, he's not going to suffer and his descendants are not going to suffer because of these failures, which are up on a level with his brothers, morally. What's different about Judah that he doesn't get the negative? And I would offer to you Genesis chapter 44 verses 18 through 34, that longest speech in Genesis where Judah presents himself to Joseph and says, in essence, take me and not my brother Benjamin, because if you keep him, it will bring down my father's gray hairs and sorrow to the grave. Judah has learned from his mistakes.

Judah has advanced. Judah has developed a self-sacrificial love for his father and for his brother Benjamin. And Judah demonstrates leadership.

He speaks on behalf of all the brothers on this occasion when they all know that it will break Jacob's heart and kill him if they don't bring Benjamin back. Judah is the one who steps forward. Judah is the one who leads.

Judah is the one who offers himself in the place of Benjamin. And there is a change of mind that we detect in the same way we saw Judah. Judah learns from his mistakes.

We saw the thing with Tamar and he said, she is more righteous than I. We're not going to condemn her. We're not going to have her brought here and burned for infidelity, for adultery, because she's more righteous than me. And he learns.

And he brought her into his household and kept her there and helped raise her sons. So he is teachable. He learns.

He has to learn the hard way in some cases. But there is a difference. We never see signs of repentance with Simeon and Levi.

We don't ever see Reuben making amends or making any change after he is found out in his alliance, his taking of the concubine. But Judah, there is. We have a half a chapter in Genesis devoted to showing us Judah's heart.

And I think that that is the difference. And one of the reasons that Judah is extolled here is because of that. This phrase, your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies.

We see two sides of his leadership, both what's going to happen to people around Israel and what's going to happen internally. The brothers are going to bow down. Your father's sons will bow before you.

It's obvious he's going to exercise rulership. You'd expect that kings in Israel would come from the tribe of Judah. And indeed they do, ultimately.

Hand on the neck of your enemies. In Exodus, chapter 23, verse 27, God promised that when Israel entered into the land of Canaan, he would cause their enemies to flee. They would turn their backs.

When Israel looks at their enemies, they're going to see the backs. And Jacob says, Judah's going to be the one to put his hand on their back. The word for neck and back is the same.

And so Judah, when these enemies are fleeing and turning their backs, Judah is going to grab them. This is a different picture than the foot on the neck. You know, typically you have the foot on the neck or the foot on the back demonstrating that they have been conquered and been defeated.

And here you are standing on the neck of the enemies like the Romans did as a sign of their defeat. But here Judah is going to reach out and put his hand on their back. And this is one step before the victory.

This is when they're fleeing. They've turned their back and now you're seizing them. What are you going to do with them when you get them? And it leaves open the question of you're going to have the ability to put your hand on their neck.

What are you going to do? Are you going to push them on down to the ground and defeat them or not? Are you going to fulfill your potential or not? And it leaves that open. They've got the advantage. They've got the rulership.

They've got the superiority. The enemies are fleeing. But it doesn't give us the foot on the neck, which is the sign of accomplished victory.

It's the hand on the neck, which is one step earlier. And it leaves open the possibility that Judah may not push to that final step and may not get the victory. It's open to question.

You also see this when he says, Your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah

is a lion's whelp. And in verse 9, you have the lion mentioned two or three times here.

And the word for lion's whelp, this is a cub. This is a cub that's not yet grown to maturity and isn't a young lion. And he says, A lion's whelp, from the prey, my son, you have gone up.

He bows down, lies down as a lion. And as a lion, who shall rouse him? And what does this give us a picture of? If you've watched National Geographic specials and things on PBS where they follow these prides of lions around for weeks at a time, what do lions do? When they're hungry, they go and hunt. They track down the prey.

They seize them. They eat their fill. The hyenas and the jackals are all surrounding.

The buzzards are up in the trees. But they don't get near the prey until the lion has had its fill. When the lion is full, it gets up and walks away and goes and lays down and digests and enjoys the fact that it's finally sated and no longer hungry.

Nobody is going to mess with the lion that's gone up from the prey. Nobody approaches until the lion leaves the prey and goes and lays down. And this is a sign of its power.

And God made this promise to Israel. If you turn over to Exodus chapter 15 and verse 16, God gave a promise to Israel when he said, this is in the song of Moses. He's predicting in verse 14, the people will hear and be afraid.

Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be dismayed. The mighty men of Moab trembling will take hold of them.

All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. Fear and dread will fall on them. By the greatness of your arm, they will be as still as stone until your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over whom you have purchased.

So God is going to put fear and dread of Israel on the enemies. They're going to turn their backs and flee. They're going to be available for defeat because they're going to be afraid.

They're going to respect the power of the Lord that's manifested in Israel. You find the same thing in Exodus 23, 27. Turn a few pages over.

God says, I will send my fear before you. I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. Same passage I alluded to earlier.

They will be afraid. They will turn their backs. This is going to be Judah's particular blessing, particular heritage as leaders in Israel.

And then finally you can see this in Deuteronomy chapter 2 and verse 25. Deuteronomy

2, 25. This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the nations under the whole heaven who shall hear the report of you and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you, God says.

Well, that's a great thing. That's a wonderful blessing. The lion is the king of beasts, inspires dread.

He gets to eat the prey. Nobody messes with him. But it says who will rouse him as a lion? Who's going to go mess with the lion? Nobody is.

And that's a blessing when you're talking about being harassed and invaded and bothered by the surrounding nations. But the other thing is, if you are the ruler amongst your brethren and you begin to stray and you begin to err, who is going to come up to you? Who is going to correct you? If you're the lion and all the other animals are afraid, you also wind up getting cut off from listening to correction. You're not approachable.

You're not able to be corrected. And this is also, this is the flip side of that coin. Yes, you are dominant and yes, you are unapproachable, but sometimes you need to be approachable.

Sometimes you need to be responsive to correction and instruction and rebuke that may come from God's prophet or from God's word. And this is also going to be the Achilles heel of the rulers in Judah. If you go study Kings and Chronicles, in particular, the lion that has gone up and conquered on every side no longer listens.

You will remember the story of Rehoboam, for example, in 2 Chronicles chapter 10 and following. Remember after Solomon, Rehoboam comes to the throne and what's the first thing that he does? He's the lion. He's the big, strong ruler in Israel.

And so he says in verse 4 of 2 Chronicles 10, your father made our yoke heavy. Now, therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father and his heavy yoke. He said to them, come back to me after three days.

Then he consulted the elders who stood before his father, Solomon. How do you advise me? They said, if you're kind to these people and please them and speak good words to them, they'll be your servants forever. But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and who stood before him.

He said, what advice do you give? How should we answer the people we have spoken? He said, lighten the yoke. The young men said, no, make it twice as hard. My little finger is thicker than my father's waist.

Put a heavy yoke. I'll add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips.

I will chastise you with scourges. And so he isn't teachable. He isn't approachable.

He's like the sated lion and he's going to wind up having the kingdom torn away from him and Jeroboam is going to take the ten northern tribes. Jeroboam, by the way, is an Ephraimite. If you want to do some interesting comparison, remember what Jacob says to Ephraim.

And Jeroboam, the first one to take the divided kingdom, and the bulk of it, by the way, is from the tribe of Ephraim. But in closing here very quickly, I want to just direct your attention to Ezekiel chapter 19. We saw all of these allusions to donkeys and staffs and vines and so forth with regard to Judah.

I'll spend a little time on this next time, but I just want you to get the chance to read this. Ezekiel 19. Take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel.

Who are the princes of Israel? They're the sons of Judah. What is your mother? A lioness. She lay down among the lions.

Among the young lions she nourished her cubs. She brought up one of her cubs and he became a young lion. That word for cubs is the very same one we saw in Genesis 49.

He learned to catch prey and devoured them. The nations heard of him. He was trapped in their pit.

They brought him with chains to the land of Egypt. This was the first time the family of Jacob excelled and then was brought to Egypt and eventually enslaved. When she saw she waited, her hope was lost.

She took another of her cubs and made him a young lion. He roved among the lions, became a young lion, caught prey, devoured men, knew their desolate places and laid waste their cities. The land with its fullness was desolated.

The nation set against him on every side, spread their net, trapped in their pit, put him in a cage with chains, brought him to the king of Babylon. This is the rise of the Davidic dynasty in Israel and then the Babylonian captivity. So you have the lions there.

Then in verse 10, your mother was like a vine in your bloodline, planted by the waters, fruitful and full of branches, strong branches for scepters of rulers. All the same language going back to Jacob's oracle. Just because you get the beneficial oracle doesn't mean you're going to excel.

Just because you get the bad circumstances like the first three tribes doesn't mean that you're going to be denigrated and never amount to anything. It's our choice. We have so many things from God.

We need to respond. We need to make the most of our opportunities. Let God turn our

circumstances to advantage, bear fruit and reflect his glory.

It's our opportunity just as it's pictured here as we'll see in each of the tribes of Israel. Well, we're out of time here. Let's close in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of studying your word together. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will make these things live in our souls and use them to enable us and empower us to live a life that's pleasing in your sight and reflects the image and glory of our Savior Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name.

Amen.