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Let's resume our study now in Genesis chapter 49, in the midst of Jacob's oracle, the blessing that he pronounces on each of the tribes that will come forth from his twelve sons. Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise. Of course, if I haven't mentioned it before, this is not only praise because of his leadership personally, which was evidenced in his speech before his brother Joseph, whom at that time he didn't know was his brother Joseph, but the defense of his young brother Benjamin, and basically also a defense of his father.

Judah demonstrated his nobility of character, his leadership. It wasn't Reuben, it wasn't Simeon or Levi who spoke up in the interests of the father. On behalf of the son, it was Judah.

And this foreshadows the role of the tribe and ultimately the role of the Messiah himself. You are he whom your brothers shall praise. And of course, the ultimate praise that is directed to the Lord Jesus Christ is the final fulfillment of this prediction.

Your hand on the neck of your enemies. And once again, we see that even in the midst of these predictions and these promises, there are suggestions of the possibility of failure. His hand is on the neck of the enemies.

You have the advantage, you have the superiority, you have the chance to utterly demolish the enemy. But here, we're just one step short of that. His foot is not on the neck.

In final victory, his hand is on the neck, meaning the enemy has been put to flight, is fleeing, he has his hand on him, he's caught the fleeing, but what is he going to do? And there's just the hint that the potential is there for either success or failure. Your father's children shall bow down before you. Once again, this is a good thing if you're a beneficent ruler, if you are a compassionate king, if you rule with the love of God for your brothers.

But there is also domination. There is also oppression that can take place on the part of a king. You remember the speech that Samuel gives to Israel when they ask for a king? He says, you're asking for a king, you don't know what you're asking for.

The king is going to do subscription and the draft and bring your sons into service. He's going to accumulate a lot to himself. He's going to tax you and so on.

So once again, the brethren bowing down, this is the promise of great prosperity and leadership, rulership in the tribe of Judah, but there is also the hint and the suggestion that there is the possibility for abuse, there is the possibility for failure even in that. This has been a pattern in a lot of fairy tales where probably the most famous, the one that

comes immediately to mind is when by some mechanism somebody has granted three wishes and the poor couple in the cottage, something takes place, they catch a troll in the woods or I forget how it goes, but anyway, they've got somebody there that gives them three wishes and so they're trying to decide what's the most grandiose, beneficial thing they can wish for and they start arguing between themselves and the wife says, oh husband, you're so silly, she's wanting a mansion and he's wanting a new tractor or something, something related to him and they say, well, we're poor, all we've got is this last little sausage on the plate, why don't we wish for food? And she says, oh, all you ever do is think about food, I want a new house and I wish that sausage was on the end of your nose. Well, that burns the first wish and the sausage is on his nose and they end up having to use their last wish to get the sausage back off and they're right where they started, but you know, you can have this great potential and many is the story and the truism that talks about the fact that you can mess up even with a great opportunity.

And in each of these, being the lion's whelp, going up from the prey, bowing down and lying down as a lion, you'll remember we pointed out last time that these verbs for bowing down and lying down, just as we saw over in Numbers 24 and 9, when Balaam uses these very same words with regard to Israel, the lion bowing down and lying down, the first verb there for bowing down is kara, K-A-R-A. And the second one for lying down is rabats, R-A-B-A-T-S. And rabats is the verb that we found in Genesis 4, 7, when God is speaking to Cain and he says, why is your countenance fallen? Why are you downcast? If you do well, will you not be accepted? But if not, sin lies crouched at the door.

Crouching at the door means that its desire is for you, but you must master it, you must overcome it. Well here, the same word for crouching, rabats, is the second verb here. And you also have an allusion back to verse 8, the father's children are going to bow down before Judah, but then Judah himself bows down and lies down on the ground.

And is this going to be a good thing or a bad thing? Well, it all depends. As a lion, who shall rouse him? We looked last time at the example in 2 Chronicles 10 of a distant grandson of Judah who sits on the throne of Israel and is unapproachable. Elders try to give him counsel on how to rule after his father Solomon, and he listens to the young men who come up and say, no, be twice as oppressive, twice as hard.

My father used his little finger to oppress you. I'm going to crush you with my fist and so forth. And he's the lion and he's ruling, but he's unapproachable.

Who's going to rouse him? Who's going to tell him that he needs to get up and do something? So it is a mixed image in that sense. Then in verse 10, we have the, well let me stop before we leave the image of the lion, because I told you there are two words for lion. There's labia and aria, or ari.

And this word for lion I find interesting for this reason. In the lexicon, normally nouns come from verbs. So you think, well, where does the lion get his name? This A-R-Y or A-

R-I, ari.

You find this, by the way, as a name in Jewish literature for families. Ari, ben, so and so is not uncommon to find, and ari means lion. Well, the verb, there are a couple of different verbs, and A-R has some resonance in several different verbs.

It can end in different ways, but there is an idea involved in it. Why do we have two different words for lion here? Why does Jacob use two different words and dwell on this image of lion? Well, there are two ideas behind it. In the ari side, ara is a verb that means to pluck or gather, A-R-A-H, to pluck or to gather.

And this word sometimes occurs by itself, ari, the noun for lion, and other times it's aria, with the Y-H ending. Well, many times a Y-H ending is a term for Yahweh, and there is the possibility, and I suggest this, I'm not a big Hebrew word etymologist, but it strikes me that at least in a poetic allusion way, the aria would be the gatherer of Yahweh, the one who, you know, God intervenes, lions crouch and ambush, they spring out and catch their prey unawares, and they're plucking. In some cases it seems like random individuals, someone could be making a trip and suddenly are plucked out.

It's the suddenness of springing. They crouch and then they spring. And it's sudden, it's unexpected, and they pluck away sheep or they pluck away goats, they pluck away men in some cases.

And so you have this idea of plucking or gathering. You also have ara, which is a homonym, but it has a completely different meaning. It means to burn, A-R-A-H means to burn.

And this doesn't relate in any way to the lion, there's no way to really relate fire to a lion. But this does help us understand the answer to a little bit of a puzzle. Turn with me to Isaiah chapter 29, because we have a phrase used here in Isaiah 29 that has come all the way down into Disney stories, and you have the little mermaid and so forth.

You remember the little mermaid's name? Ariel, A-R-E-L. And so you would think, well, A-R-E-L would be lion of God. And in Isaiah 29, the city where David dwelt.

Add year to year, let feasts come around, yet I will distress Ariel. There shall be heaviness and sorrow, and it shall be to me as Ariel. I will encamp against you all around.

I will lay siege against you with a mound, and I will raise siege works against you. Remember, Jerusalem is the capital city of Judah, of Israel in the United Kingdom and Judah in the divided kingdom. So here's God promising to Israel, to Israel in the coming destruction against the ruling city.

This is where the prince, the king of Israel is going to dwell. You shall be brought down. You shall speak out of the ground.

You want to talk about a graphic image. Not only are they going to be brought down, but when they talk it's going to be coming up from a hole in the ground. Your speech shall be low, out of the dust.

Your voice shall be like a medium's, out of the ground. You're going to be, well, I'm not just going to level your city, I'm going to make it a crater. We used to talk about that in the artillery, you know, do things with nuclear rounds and so forth and turn people's countries into parking lots.

There used to be a little business card that Marines would carry that would talk about, you know, have your name and then the things you do, just like a standard business card, you know, wars fought, villages pillaged and all this kind of thing. You know, talk about making craters out of people's, well, you know, it's probably very non-tactful. But anyway, that's the idea here is that the destruction is going to be so complete, it's not just going to level the ground, it's going to scoop it away and turn them into a crater.

You will speak out of the ground, your speech will be low, out of the dust, your voice will be like a medium's, out of the ground, and your speech shall whisper out of the dust. And it goes on to talk about how great this destruction is. Verse 6, you'll be punished by the Lord of hosts with thunder and earthquakes and great noise, storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.

And this is the key here because many commentators, and you may even see notes and things in study Bibles and so on, talking about Ariel being a lion of God. But this actually comes from the second verb, the homonym verb, Ara, which means to burn. And the Ariel is the hearth of God.

Ariel also means hearth. It's the place of burning. And the hearth of God is the altar, the stones where the burnt offerings are offered.

And Ariel is the hearth of God. The whole reason I bring this up, it seems like a little bit of a digression, but once again, wouldn't it be a good thing to be the hearth of God, to be the altar? You know, you have the souls in Revelation that are under the altar and saying, how long, oh Lord, until we're avenged and so forth. But here, Jerusalem, the hearth of God, the place of worship and the place of offering the burnt sacrifices, is instead itself going to be burned.

It's going to be destroyed with a devouring fire. And that's why he talks about Ariel. It doesn't make any sense to talk about, oh lion of God.

It doesn't use any animal imagery, you will be slaughtered by the warhogs or the jackals or something like that. This is all construction image, cities, buildings, destruction by fire. And so Ariel, the city where David dwelt, that started out as the altar of God, the hearth of God, is going to instead be characterized by ashes.

It's going to be a burning pit, a hole in the ground where you burn trash and so forth. It's going to be destroyed with earthquake, noise, storm and tempest and the flame of devouring fire. And it goes on to talk about those who fight against Ariel in verse 7. They're going to be like a dream of a night vision, a hungry man dreams and eats but he awakes and his soul is empty and so on.

Then you go on to verse 9, pause and wonder. Blind yourselves and be blind. They are drunk but not with wine.

They stagger but not with intoxicating drink. For the Lord has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep and has closed your eyes, namely the prophets. And he has covered your heads, namely the seers.

So, as a part of this destruction, they're going to be drunk and staggering but not with wine. It's with confusion and with the reeling from the pounding that they're going to take under the discipline from God and these hosts that he's going to allow to come up and destroy them. So instead of being a productive hearth and a place of sacrifice and worship, they are going to be the stone of ashes.

They're going to be the place where everything is destroyed. So once again you have this dual assigning of meaning to a symbol. The hearth of God can be a positive thing or it can be a negative.

In this case it's converted from the positive to the negative. The Ariel where David dwelt is now the Ariel where only ashes are found, like the chaff that passes away, fine dust and so forth. You will find if you read along that sometimes Ariel is called Lion of God but this is not one of those cases.

The idea of lying in wait and ambushing is found in the Hebrew verb Arav, A-R-A-V. You wonder if maybe this is where they get the word Arab when they talk about their neighbors. These crouching and lying in wait, these deceitful guys that pounce out and get you.

But the A-R prefix there has this idea of coming upon something suddenly like a lion or like someone who lies in wait. So that's one part of Judah's heritage and the prediction about Judah is that they are going to be strong and swift. They will crouch down.

But are they crouching down to fall asleep and be unapproachable or are they crouching down to spring and to go up on the prey? That is the question. You have opportunity in either case. Verse 10 of Genesis 49 now, 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.

This is the big crux, dead seas of ink spilt on trying to figure out what this verse means. Let's begin at the beginning. The scepter shall not depart from Judah.

The word scepter here is Shebet, S-H-E-B-E-T. Shebet means the rod, the ruling rod. But some of the Hebrew manuscripts and apparently the Hebrew manuscript that the Septuagint translators used apparently had S-H-P-T here, which would be Shebet or Shofet.

And that would be from a completely different word because Shafat, you may recall, is the Hebrew verb that means to judge. And the Shofet would be judge. And that's the way the Septuagint, the LXX, translates this.

They used the Greek word archon, which is one of your words for rulers, A-R-C-H-O-N. And that suggests to us that the text they were working from had Shofet here instead of Shebet. Of course, the vowel points, whether it's O-E or E-E or whatever, was added later by the Masoretes.

And so you basically, when you're looking at the ancient versions, you look at the consonants. So we either have S-H-P-H-T or we have S-H-B-T. And Shebet would mean scepter or the rod of ruling.

And it is possible for these words to be confused. And we're not real sure which one should be here. For an example of this, you might keep your finger here and turn to 2 Samuel 7.7. In 2 Samuel 7.7, God is speaking to, you know, 2 Samuel 7 is God's covenant with David.

Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, Why have you not built me a house of cedar? Now therefore, thus shall you say to my servant David, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel. And I've been with you wherever you've gone, and so forth. And then if you hold that place and turn over, there's a parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 17.6. Wherever I have moved about with all Israel, have I ever spoken a word to any of the judges of Israel? So in 7.7, have I ever spoken a word to any of the tribes or princes of Israel whom I commanded to shepherd my people? And over here it is judge.

And you have these two words interchanged. These should be identical, but one or the other of them has gotten changed. And I think it's actually the latter in Chronicles that has been changed.

But you have the difference between Shebet and Shofet in these two passages. And so, you know, sometimes they used to tell us in seminary, Never tell people that there are mistakes in the text of the Word of God, in the Hebrew text, and so forth. But there are.

And, you know, to me it's kind of an arrogant attitude to say, Well, the poor people, you don't want to shake their faith or tell them that there might be a mistake in their Bible.

And so, you know, that's a secret for the Illuminati, the people who are studying and so on. But there are mistakes.

There are scribal errors. There are places where the text is obviously corrupt. Especially in places, the Song of Moses is recorded in the law, and it's also over in the Psalms.

And if you compare line for line, there are several places where there's a different word. And you can see that it's a scribal error or somebody heard one thing and wrote another. And these are fruitful places to do work and find out what the original is.

Because where God has not preserved a pristine text, He has preserved the evidence to help us reconstruct it. But what is our whole point here? Why are we worried about this scepter idea? Well, because we're working our way down to the third line, which is until Shiloh comes. And we need to figure out who or what Shiloh is.

And so we've got to be sure we're on solid ground beginning. So this is, in fact, a scepter, not a judge. The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver.

And this is not really lawgiver. This is Mehocek, which is M-O-C-H-E-Q-E-Q. Mehocek, or Mehocek.

And we're going to the Septuagint translates this with hegemonos. We have an English word, hegemony, that talks about oversight or rulership idea. But this is a mace or another kind of a ruling rod.

It's a little bit different from the scepter. In some cases, this was a long staff with an ornate head on it. But it's not so much a lawgiver.

These are both the same thing. They're both symbols of authority. You see these on ancient Egyptian sarcophagi.

Here's the pharaoh in repose, and he's got the little crook in one hand and another rod in the other hand. These are two different symbols of authority. And that's the idea here.

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruling rod or the mace from between his feet. So we have these symbols, the idea of rulership, kingship. What does it mean between his feet? Well, again, there are two possibilities here, and it may be that both of them are being suggested.

One is when you have this large rod of authority, like Moses' rod that he stretched out over the Red Sea, the rod that became a serpent in front of Pharaoh, and so forth. This is a long stick, and when you're seated on the throne, what are you going to do with it? Well, you stick it in the arch of one foot and lean it over your opposite knee, and it's there between your feet. You sit there, and the rod is there for everyone to see that you're the ruling guy.

But you'll remember also that feet are a euphemism for the private parts. The idea of covering the feet was a euphemism for relieving oneself. Saul in the cave, David is hiding back there with his men.

Saul comes in to cover his feet. Well, he's coming in to go to the bathroom. He's in the most vulnerable position one can be in, and the men are all elbowing David, saying, kill him now, kill him now.

So the rod and scepter between the feet of Judah has the idea suggested that his descendants, his offspring, are thought to come from between the feet, if you will, as a euphemism for the procreation. So we have the ideas here, even if we're a little bit uncertain of the specifics, because this Hebrew is so old. This is some of the oldest Hebrew in the Bible, and many of these words went out of use.

This would be the equivalent in English of going back and reading Beowulf, or at best, Shakespearean English. And a lot of the phrases and vocabulary have gone out of use, and we have to work at understanding them. But we see the idea here.

There is rulership evidenced not only in Judah and his immediate heirs in the signs, but also down through his tribe. And this will not depart from him until Shiloh comes. Well, this, as I said, has received no end of speculation and effort.

You can boil this down to four possibilities. First, you can just leave it as it stands here. Literally in the Hebrew, the way it's pointed by the Masoretes, it would say, until he comes to Shiloh.

That's the way it actually reads in Hebrew, until he comes to Shiloh. So we think about Shiloh. What do we know about Shiloh in Israel? In the later days, we know that Shiloh was the place where the tabernacle was.

This is where Samuel hung out for quite a bit of his career. But we don't have any association of the tribe of Judah with Shiloh. We don't ever have a king that David doesn't rule from Shiloh.

He rules from Hebron before he goes to Jerusalem. So that doesn't seem to have any resonance for us. It could be stretched to say, until a Judean ruler controls Shiloh.

But why pick Shiloh out of all of the towns of Israel? Other than there being an important sanctuary there, this was actually, Shiloh was in the territory of Ephraim, so it doesn't even fall in the land that is assigned to Judah. So that doesn't really make good sense. But some of the things like the Samaritan Pentateuch and so forth, and also if you go to the word Shiloh later on in Samuel, it's spelled differently.

This has a Yod in the middle of it. You have S-H-L, Yod, and then an H. So you have Shele-ah, or Shele-oh. And it's got a Yod in there, and the city name Shiloh, when you

find it in Samuel, doesn't have that.

It's just S-H-L and H. So you have to modify the spelling a little bit to get it to match. But some old manuscripts actually do that, and they have the same kind of words in Shiloh without the Yod here that matches over in Samuel. But this does not resonate with me as being the right answer.

I don't think it's a reference to the town of Shiloh. The second option is to split this into two words and say that it is S-H-E, which is one word, and then Lo. And Lo means to him.

And so it would be which is to him. So if you substitute that in, you say, the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until that which is to him comes, or that which belongs to him comes, or until the owner of the scepter comes. And you'll find some of your, and I'm going to agonize over this a little bit, because when you look at your NIV or your New American Standard, you will see that the translators have chosen some of these interpretations when they translate.

They'll say, until the one comes to whom it belongs, meaning the scepter. The problem I have with this is that you have two different ruling symbols mentioned in the first two lines. The scepter shall not depart, nor the ruling rod from between his feet.

I would think it would say, until the one to whom they belong comes. And you would have the plural. And this is the singular.

And so you have to say, well, it's only talking about the scepter, or it's trying to say that the two words are referring to the same single stick. That just doesn't work for me, because the Shabbat and the Makhokech are two different things. So it ought to be, him to whom they belong comes.

So that doesn't really satisfy. It does resonate with people who want to see here a reference to the Messiah, because the ultimate son of Judah, the ultimate lion of the tribe of Judah, he is the one to whom the scepter ultimately belongs. And so that has a nice ring to it.

But it doesn't really fit here too well, in my opinion. And also, when you look at this in terms of poetry, we've talked before about how in Hebrew poetry you have things escalate. You have something stated and then something greater or of a higher magnitude in the next line.

And so you have the obedience of the people in the next line. To him will be the obedience of the people. Well, this doesn't really progress well in terms of Hebrew poetry.

It just doesn't have the right flow of ideas. You would expect the obedience of the people and then the ruling scepter after that. So for a lot of reasons, that one doesn't really

satisfy.

So that's two out of the four main options that don't really work well. Now, the third idea is that there is a lost word here, that Shiloh is a word that actually meant ruler in some way. And there's a couple of great scholars that think, well, there was a maim that used to be in front of this, and it would be from the verb mashal, which means to rule in Hebrew.

And that this mashalah was who was being referred to until the ruler comes. And to him will be the obedience of the people. And they tried to tie this to an Akkadian word that means to rule, but then later on they figured out that that wasn't so.

So that doesn't wash either. But you may occasionally find an English translation that follows that interpretation. It says until the ruler comes.

And this would be, you get your people who list all the different names of Christ and names of the Messiah, and they say until Shiloh comes. And I think, well, Shiloh is a proper name, a term that means Messiah, a synonym for Messiah. And that would be based on this mashal idea.

But the maim is not there, and there's not a good way of explaining why you would go from a clear reading, mashalah, to a difficult reading, Shiloh. Usually, scribes would tend to smooth out and make the text easier to understand and easier to read. And when you say, well, I think this has been amended, this has been edited here, it usually goes toward making it more clear.

Here you would have to say, well, the maim dropped out and made it more difficult and nobody ever fixed it. And that doesn't really, plus there's no cognate language, nobody else has mashalah or Shiloh in this form. So we can't, in my view, take this as a proper name for the Messiah either.

The fourth possibility is the one that appeals to me because it requires no change to the Hebrew text. All it requires is redoing the work of the Masoretes who put the vowel points in. And this has been a suggestion and an interpretation that goes back many, many years in the Jewish interpretive tradition.

And this splits the word the same way we did earlier with sheh plus lo, him to whom it belongs will come. Well, you can split the word, but instead of making it that, you have sheh, which is S-H-A-Y. Sheh means tribute.

Sheh is a perfectly good word in Hebrew that means tribute. And so here it would mean until tribute is brought to him. And when you substitute that in, the scepter will not depart from Judah nor the ruling rod from between his feet until tribute is brought to him and to him is the obedience of the people.

So he's going to have these authorities and it's going to continue until that rulership becomes rulership indeed. And he is not only, because this is going to extend beyond the borders of Israel. You don't get tribute from your own people.

We call that taxation. Tribute is brought from the surrounding peoples who are conquered and brought into subjugation. You know, all of the peoples that Rome conquered, they sent tribute to Rome.

They sent their yearly payments in order to remain in a peaceful coexistence. So Judah is going to be the law giver. He's going to be the one holding the ruling scepter and the ruling rod until his authority spreads beyond his brothers that bow down to him and beyond the land of Israel to encompass the surrounding nations.

And the word here for people is once again, Am, as we saw with Ammon and Balaam from the land of Ammon. To him will be the obedience of the peoples. And in Israel, when you talk about the peoples, you're talking about the foreigners, the outsiders.

So this is a great prediction of rulership for Judah or the line of Judah that goes beyond Israel to encompass the peoples. They're going to send tribute and obedience. So this has the virtue of not requiring us to change the text at all.

As you know, the pointing of the Masoretes is their interpretation and their understanding. It's not a part of the manuscript. But foreign nations are sending their tribute and expressing their submission to the king there in Judah.

So the promise is promising him rule over these foreign nations. And this tribute, the shy word, if you want some other places where it's found, it's in Psalm 68, verse 30. Psalm 68, Rebuke the beasts of the reeds, the herds of bulls with the calves of the peoples till everyone submits himself with pieces of silver.

So in verse 29 there, because of your temple at Jerusalem, kings will bring presents to you. They're going to submit themselves with pieces of silver. In verse 29 there, in Hebrew it's 30.

The verse numbers are off one in Hebrew because when you see that superscription at Psalm 68, it says, To the chief musician, a psalm of David, a song. Well, that's verse one in the Hebrew text. So our English verse 29 is the Hebrew verse 30.

But in your English Bible verse 29, because of your temple at Jerusalem, kings will bring tribute to you. And that's the word shy, S-H-A-Y. You find this also in Psalm 76, verse 11, just a few pages over.

Verse 10 says of Psalm 76, The wrath of man shall praise you. With the remainder of wrath you shall gird yourself. Make vows to the Lord your God and pay them.

Let all who are around him bring tribute to him who ought to be feared. And that word presence or tribute there is shy in verse 11 of Psalm 76. So, and you can also put with this Isaiah 18.7. Isaiah 18.7, In that time a present will be brought to the Lord of hosts from a people tall and smooth of skin and from a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation powerful and treading down whose land the rivers divide, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, to Mount Zion.

And once again, Isaiah 18.7, you have this tribute being brought by the nations. So, this has a good, this resonates with me as making the most sense in the oracle of Jacob here regarding the rulership of Judah. He begins with his brothers bowing down, lying down as a lion, who can approach him? He'll have the scepter and the ruling rod and it will not depart from between his feet until tribute is brought to him from the nations and the peoples submit to him in obedience.

So, that's my suggestion to you for Shiloh. It is tribute being brought to him. Whichever way you understand this, you see clearly that it is the rulership, the leadership role, the kingly role that is assigned to the nation of Judah.

And then in verse 11 it says, 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. Lots of references here to wine.

Why is that? Well, throughout the scriptures, wine is a sign of great abundance, of great prosperity, of wealth. You have to have agricultural prosperity to grow grapes, to have vineyards. If you've ever seen Germany, if you've ever seen the wine country in California or in France, why are these big vintage places big wine producing places? They've got incredibly fertile soil, they've got just the right kind of climate.

You know, the heart of California is, you can't, you have to look hard to find a better environment and this is where grapes grow and flourish. So, to be so blessed with vines that you can tie your donkey there. If you tie your donkey to any kind of an edible plant, what's he going to do? He's going to eat it.

So, especially if you're husbanding and being very careful to try to grow your little crop of grapes, you wouldn't let the animals anywhere near it. But here, he's going to tether his donkey to the vine. Vines are going to be so commonplace that they'll use them for hitching posts and not care if the donkey eats it.

And the donkey's colt, you know how colts do, they not only eat, but they'll play. They'll grab a hold of something with their teeth and pull it and yank it out of the ground and wag it. And if you've ever seen colts play, I've seen them grab a horse's colt.

I've seen them grab a stick or a chunk of tall grass or something and instead of just

eating it, they'll pull it out of the ground and toss it and play with it and then spook away from it. You know, they can be very destructive and Judah is not going to hesitate to bind his donkey to the vine or his donkey's colt, even to the choice vine. Why? Because they are so abundant.

This is almost the same idea as the streets of gold. It's so commonplace. Gold will be so commonplace in heaven, they'll use it for pavement.

He washes his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes. It's as common as wash water, wine is, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. What's the difference here? You would think, well, the blood of grapes would be a synonym for wine, but in reality, the blood of grapes, this is unfermented.

This is when you're stomping the grapes. You're pulverizing them into grape juice that will eventually become wine. Wine has had the chance to sit, it's been in the wine skin and it's fermented.

New wine has to go into a new wine skin because it ferments and the skin has to be able to expand. From ancient times, this has been the case. So he's washing his garments in wine and washing his clothes in the blood of grapes.

There's going to be so much abundance that his clothes are going to be soaked in it. This also has overtones of the royal robes of purple. His purple robes look like they've been washed in the blood of grapes.

Also, the word blood is introduced here because, as we know, down through the Bible and into the New Testament and culminating at the Lord's Supper, the blood of grapes becomes a symbol of the blood of Christ, the blood of the covenant by which we are sanctified. So you have this suggestion, this prophetic foreshadowing of the blood associated with Jesus Christ. Not only the sacrificial blood at the cross, but also his return as the ruler, as the one who will break them in pieces with his rod, like a potter's vessel.

You remember the image of Jesus Christ in victory and conquest in Revelation where the blood splashes up. He's got the blood-stained robe. His robe is stained with his own blood in one place and it's stained with the blood of the vanquished in other places.

So all of this wine and grape juice, blood of grapes analogy, suggests that, especially in hindsight. His eyes are darker than wine and his teeth whiter than milk. Wine and milk, we don't have time to turn to the passages, but over and over again, these are pictures of plenty, pictures of millennial prosperity.

But also, once again, what does it mean for your eyes to be darker than wine? Are you drunk? Are you inebriated? Has the wine, the prosperity, and the abundance from God literally gone to your head and clouded your judgment, clouded your perception? Is it going to be your downfall? His teeth are whiter than milk. Milk, the land flowing with milk

and honey, the white teeth, the dark eyes, a picture of handsomeness. David is pictured as being a very handsome man and you get the idea that there is prosperity, there is health and vigors being suggested here, but also the idea of becoming sated, of being full to the brim and perhaps full to excess of these good things and losing one's way.

So if there is, again, one principle that we can draw from this great blessing and great prediction with regard to Judah, it is that from those to whom much is given, much is required. And even as we find ourselves possessing great prosperity and great spiritual blessing from God, it implies an equally great responsibility to be a good steward of those things, to maximize the potential that God has placed before us. That is our opportunity and it's also our responsibility and something for which we will be held accountable.

Jesus Christ has redeemed us with His own blood. We are sprinkled with that blood and made pure and sanctified. What are we going to do with it?