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Let's resume our study now in Genesis chapter 49. We're looking at the handmade tribes, as they are mentioned by Jacob in his deathbed oracle. Gad, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan.

In the midst of this, we have the statement or the exclamation made by Jacob, I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord. He has covered seven of the brothers at the point that he makes this exclamation. He has five more to cover, or six if you count Joseph as a double tribe.

And so this is approximately at the center of this oracle. And you get the idea that Jacob recognized that much of what he was saying was not necessarily positive. And he is expecting the grace of God to intervene.

We saw Gad as a troop being trampled upon but triumphing at the last, or raiding the retreat of those who had trampled him. Bred from Asher is rich. He will yield royal dainties.

But the question is, how often do you... When God describes the land of promise, He says it's a land flowing with milk and honey. But He doesn't mention royal dainties or rich bread. This is not a part of the standard blessing package.

And you get the idea that these are superficial. Just like a lot of rich food, it may taste really good, but it's not necessarily good for you. And it tends to... Your working class people, the people that get things done, don't tend to be snacking on hors d'oeuvres.

They tend to eat the meat and potatoes that sustains their life and their function. So there is inherent in this statement the possibility of superficiality and lack of substance. Same thing when you get to Naphtali.

And as I mentioned in the first lesson this morning, there is always a challenge when you're translating Hebrew. Even more so when you're translating Hebrew poetry. And another level of difficulty, again, when you're in the earlier, older portions of the Scripture.

Because in many cases you don't have cognates. We don't have extra-biblical literature like we do with the Greek to be able to determine the specific meaning of words and how they were used. And sometimes you come across words that are not used anywhere else in Scripture.

Or perhaps you have a noun form and you'll have only the verb to work from elsewhere in Scripture. And we have that case throughout this oracle. This attests to its being original and ancient.

But it also creates some difficulty in determining exactly what it said. That is why if you do as I suggested and look at this in some parallel Bibles or other translations, such as the New American Standard and NIV and so forth, you will see that there are differences of translation. When you get to Naphtali, in verse 21 it says, Naphtali is a deer let loose.

He uses beautiful words. Well, if you look at the NIV and some other translations, it says he gives something along the lines of giving birth to fawns. And fawns of the fold, I believe it says.

He gives birth to fawns of the fold. And I want to take just a moment and acquaint you with the Hebrew difficulties that we're contending with here. I have a book here that gives six different possible translations for this verse.

Scholars such as Spicer, DeHood, O'Connor, Westerman and Sarna say that the translation should be Naphtali, a productive hind which brings forth beautiful fawns. Cross, Friedman and Stewart say Naphtali is a spreading terebinth, putting forth lovely boughs. Albright says Naphtali is a racing stag which bellows with trumpet notes.

Barnes says Naphtali is a hind let loose, giving forth sweet songs of freedom. Anderson says Naphtali, a hind is released, sheep of the fold are sold. And Gibberts says Naphtali, a mountain ewe was born who gives birth to lambs of the fold.

So you can see that these are all men, if you know Hebrew and know Hebrew scholarship, these are well-known names. And so great and knowledgeable men, much more greatly trained than me, have a widely differing understanding of how this verse should be translated. And none of them are slouches when it comes to Hebrew scholarship.

But you will note that there are some certain common elements. There seems to be a choice between this being a deer or a tree. And one of the reasons for this is that the verb, or the word rather than noun that's translated doe is the Hebrew word Ela.

There's an Aleph there, which is an initial guttural, and then Y-L-A-H. So depending on how you point this word, if you take the Masoretic pointing, which is the addition of vowels between these consonants, it comes out as doe. A different pointing with the very same consonants gives us the word terebinth, or spreading oak, that we've seen elsewhere in Genesis.

Very same consonants, it just depends on how you point it. And, of course, the Masoretic pointing is what we usually go with, but that is not inspired. That was added thousands of years after the initial, I say thousands, probably many hundreds of years after the writing of the original manuscripts.

If Moses wrote Genesis down circa 1400 B.C., the Masoretes didn't begin to put pointing into the consonantal text until after the time of Christ. We're not sure exactly when.

Some people think they started pointing the text before.

The Masoretes were in existence before that, but they wanted to try to record the verbal reading of the Scripture, and so they began to put these points in as helps. I saw a really funny newspaper article back 15, 20 years ago. There was a big splash in the press about how they had rediscovered the tunes that the words of the Psalms were set to, that the music of the tunes was actually in the text and that it was in the vowel points.

And anybody that knew Hebrew was just laughing themselves silly because there were no vowel points when David wrote the Psalms, and when Asaph and the other psalmists wrote, there was no such thing. And it is the most blatantly ignorant thing to say that, oh, here are the tunes and it's in the vowel points. It completely makes no sense.

And, of course, there are vowel points throughout the Scripture. Are you going to go through the genealogies and try to sing those and so forth? It is to laugh. But anyway, we have a word here that could be terramenth or could be doe.

So we say, well, what is the verb here? The verb will probably help us out because does and trees are, I mean, the whole difference between plants and animals here, whatever the verb is, is probably going to tell us which it should be. But the verb here doesn't really give us a whole lot of help because the verb is from shalach, S-H-A-L-A-C-H, and it is the word that means to send. But this is the passive participle from shalach, shalachah, and so it means to be sent in its root form.

So you think, well, and this is where they get the idea that the doe is released, that it is sent, it's let loose, so to speak. It is sent forth because you free it. That's the source behind that translation.

But in Job, this same verb is used of giving birth. We might turn just real quickly over to Job 21, verse 11, where this verb is used. Job 21, verse 11 says, They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance.

You look back up to see what he's talking about here, and he says he's talking about the wicked living and becoming old, becoming mighty in power. Their descendants, verse 8, are established with them in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.

Their bull breeds without failure, their cow calves without miscarriage. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. He's talking about production of offspring, and that sending forth their little ones is shalach, it's the same verb.

And you can turn over to Job 39, verse 3. Remember, Job is also some of the oldest Hebrew, and it's a good place to go for comparison with things that we find in the Pentateuch. Job 39, verse 3, we have a similar usage, talking about do you know the time when the wild mountain goats bear young in 39.1? Can you mark when the deer

gives birth? Can you number the months that they fulfill? Or do you know the time when they bear young? They bow down, they bring forth their young, they deliver their offspring, and that word deliver is shalach, they send forth their offspring. And this is talking specifically about goats and deer and this kind of thing.

So you can see where someone who decides to repoint elah, understanding it as a doe, would say, well, they're sending forth and giving birth. And so some of these translations where they say a mountain ewe is born, for example, that was the translation of gibberts, or this is a hind that sends forth, meaning this is a deer, a wild deer that sends forth, gives birth to lots of fawns, so to speak. And then the second line would restate what's in the first line.

Naphtali is a hind that sends forth, a hind sending forth. Of course, that doesn't really do justice to the passive nature of the participle. It's more like a hind being sent forth, or a hind, it's a stretch to do it.

But they're trying to harmonize it with the second line, because in the second line you have, in our translation, in the New King James, it says he uses beautiful words. Well, in these alternate proposals, it says he brings forth beautiful fawns. Well, you say, well, bring forth would probably be, you could bring forth words or you could bring forth fawns.

But this is the, when you talk about words of beauty or beautiful words, amar is the Hebrew word for word, A-M-A-R. And there's a verb associated with it, to speak, you know, answered and said. You almost always have amar in that phrase in the Old Testament.

So you have amre, which is the plural of words, and then shafar, S-H-A-P or P-H, depending on how hard you want to make it, A-R, shafar. And shafar is a word that means beauty or beautiful, normally. But, again, depending on how you point these and depending on how you translate it, amar can also be sheep.

It's the same consonants, sheep or lambs. And shafar can also be the noun that means the fold. And so you get the idea that you could translate this.

Well, naphtali is a productive deer sending forth lambs of the fold. Lambs of the fold are being sent forth. But here's the problem.

It's lambs or sheep, and you're switching from deer to sheep, and it seems like kind of an odd thing. They justify this by saying, well, it's poetic, and it just means offspring, that maybe the idea of a kid where you can say, well, it's a kid of the goats or where it's a generic word for these young offspring might have been how it's used. But it's sort of conjectural.

I choose to stick with what we have in the New King James, and I think the New American

Standard also sends forth beautiful words because it seems to do the best justice. But you also have a problem of agreement of gender here because doe is feminine, obviously, and this is the word for doe if you point it that way. But the participle, to give, here, which is from natan, is also in there, and it's a masculine participle.

So there's all kinds of translational problems, and this is why the translations spread across the spectrum this way. But here's the thing. Either way, you have the idea that there is beauty involved.

If you want to go with the alternate translation and say that this is a productive deer, the idea would be that it's let loose, it's free, it's been sent forth, but yet, in the next line, it is giving birth to fawns of the fold, which would be captive, started out free, ended up captive. And I think they get this idea from looking up above. You remember when we had the laying down between the burdens, Issachar is a donkey laying down between two burdens and winds up being a band of slaves, and started out free ends up captive, and that there's an echo of that in this pronouncement.

That is possible. I don't claim a greater level of expertise than what these scholars and professors have put forward. But the idea here of beauty that is external and without substance, I think, is also consistent.

And there's a reason why I choose to stick with this original that we're going to see here in a few minutes. But this gives you some idea of some of the difficulties when you come as a sort of journeyman scholar to translate for yourself and interpret for yourself. It's not always, oh, well, here's my Hebrew lexicon, so that's what it means.

You know, people that say, well, according to the Greek and according to the Hebrew, well, that's not always, sometimes it's more trouble than it is a help. You almost wish you didn't know what's behind it because it poses more problems than it solves. So just to give you a little bit of an idea.

And one of the reasons I bring that up is we're moving on now to Joseph in the next verse. Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well. His branches run over the wall.

Well, let me once again tell you what some of the scholars say about this verse. We again here have the tree possibility here, a branch, a fruitful branch running over, it's planted by a well and the branch is running over the wall. But in reality, it's not as that simple.

An alternate translation of this, the foal of a wild she-ass is Joseph, the foal of a wild she-ass at a spring, the foal of wild asses by a rocky rim. So you can imagine the same sorts of alternate understandings and alternate pointings of words are in view here. And the problems here are too great for me to go into as far as what the problems are in

translation.

Because once again, you have problems of agreement. This is an interpretive translation because you have the word been here. The idea of being fruitful, a fruitful bough, is actually from the word son of.

You have the word for son of and daughter of down in here. And it's a trick, it's a mess in Hebrew. A lot of hop-hox words here that aren't used elsewhere.

The idea of the branches running over the wall, you get the idea of rocky rim or stack of rocks, is what one of the suggested alternate translations have here. It is appealing to understand it as a tree planted by a well, but again the word tree can also be understood as wild ass. One of the things that appeals about the wild ass translation is there's some idea that perhaps Jacob is alluding to the fact that Joseph has intermarried or his descendants will intermarry with the Edomites.

We don't have any real record of that in scripture. I don't know enough of tracking down all of the finer history where somebody might have come up with that idea. He marries an Egyptian, those are the Hamites, but you don't have those individuals associated with the idea of a wild ass.

Esau is a wild ass of a man. They get the idea that maybe there's some allusion to the fact that Joseph has married outside of the clan, so to speak. I think that's a stretch.

I think this is a good workable translation that we have here. Again, we're going to see why this is an appealing way to take it here shortly. The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him, but his bow remained in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong.

This is another reason why they like the animal imagery, because then it flows into the idea that someone is shooting at these wild asses. It makes a little more sense than shooting at a tree, but as you know, the Word of God often will shift imagery from one verse to the next with no prelude. It doesn't necessarily connect.

The metaphors flow freely, and in one case you have a military metaphor, the next one you have an animal metaphor, sometimes even within a verse. One line will say one thing and another will say another, so I don't see that as a fatal objection to our translation. The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him, but his bow remained in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.

From there is the shepherd the stone of Israel. Again, you have almost an inserted comment, like I have waited for your deliverance, O Lord. Here they put it in parentheses in the New King James.

By the God of your Father who will help you and by the Almighty who will bless you with the blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breast and of the womb, the blessings of your Father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers. Then verse 27, you have the final oracle dealing with Benjamin.

Benjamin is a ravenous wolf. In the morning he shall devour the prey and at night he shall divide the spoil. Well, I'm tempted to spend two or three weeks going through each of these statements about Joseph and we could easily do so, but what I'd like to do is summarize them, also summarize Benjamin and then move to an analysis of the overall passage here.

We've already seen that there's positive and negative associated with each of the brothers that we have studied thus far. When we get to Joseph, he is fruitful, whichever translation you choose. I prefer the fruitful bough with its branches spreading over the wall, but even if you take it as the wild ass producing these colts and so forth, the idea there is fruitfulness.

He's productive and that production produces blessing by association. The branch going over the wall, there's a wall of division just as there was a wall around the temple and only the Jews could go inside and Gentiles had to remain outside. But those branches, those fruitful branches hang over the wall and there's fruit available even for those on the far side of the wall.

Joseph is strong in trial. All of this adversity being attacked, the archers shooting at him and hating him, he remains strong, he remains firm. He has his strength from God and it is clear that what sustains him is strength from God.

The arms of his hands are made strong by the hands of the mighty one of Jacob. And you get the idea that in verse 24 toward the end when he says, from there is the shepherd, the stone of Israel. Our previous reference to stones had the idea of the wall and the branch over spreading the wall and then here you have the stone of Israel.

That stone, whichever side of the stone you're on, you have access to the stone and he can be the rock of salvation or he can be a stone of stumbling and rock of offense. But a wall always has two sides. A stone is always approachable from either side and so you have the idea that from there the shepherd and stone of Israel has implications beyond just what's going to happen with Israel.

If you wanted to put something in the negative column from what Jacob says about Joseph, it isn't so much a criticism or a flaw in Joseph as it points out the fact that he suffers unjustly. He is hated. He's grieved because he's shot at with these arrows and he has need of strengthening from God because he is in adversity and so the possibility of

adversity and of rejection by one's own is prominent when you think of Joseph.

And the other thing you'll notice here, and I find this quite fascinating, this of course is one of the longer pronouncements. Judah and Joseph get by far the most full treatment in Jacob's oracle. But he says, beginning in verse 25, he says, By the God of your father who will help you and by the Almighty who will bless you.

And then he gives a description of these blessings. He says, He will bless you with the blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breast and the womb, blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors 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.

So if you count these, there's a five-fold blessing, isn't there? The God of your father will help you. By the Almighty he will bless you with, one, the blessings of heaven above, two, the blessings of the deep that lies beneath, three, the blessings of the breast, four, the blessings of the womb, five, the blessings of your father, which have excelled the blessings of the ancestors to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills, will be on the head of Joseph. And so there's a five-fold blessing that is pronounced in these specific areas that will be on the head of Joseph and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.

And yet that separation is still mentioned. He was separate from his brothers. He was attacked by his brothers.

And so once again you have that shadow that hangs over this oracle. Then finally, Benjamin. He's a ravenous wolf.

What have we seen of Benjamin up to this point? He's the youngest brother. He's passive in everything. He does nothing.

He says nothing. He is a pawn in the game between the brothers and Joseph. He is an issue to his father.

But he himself is completely passive in the story up to this point. And what a contrast when Jacob says, Benjamin is a ravenous wolf. He's been anything but.

He's been a little lamb being carried to and fro and shielded and protected. And everyone has been looking out for him. And now here he's this hungry wolf that's going to go out and in the morning devour the prey.

And at night he's going to divide the spoil. This is amongst his fellow wolves. A little pack of wolves are going to go out and munch on the spoil of the prey.

So that's quite a contrast. And if you wanted to put something in the positive column,

he's hungry. He's going out.

He's going forth. He's got some initiative. And he's got the hunger to go out and rove and seek out the prey.

And he's going to be victorious. He's going to find the prey. And he's going to consume it.

But he is a devourer and a divider of the spoil. And you get the idea. You wouldn't want to go up to a pack of hungry wolves and try to share in the victory.

They want what they want. They're going to divide it among themselves. And it's kind of an exclusive little club of wolves there munching whatever it is they have attacked and killed.

Each of these oracles, when you think about what Jacob says, some of them have more of an emphasis on relationship of the future nation of Israel to those who are outside. You have internal and external implications. Reuben had the opportunity for leadership inside Israel.

And he blew it. It's a wasted opportunity. Simeon and Levi, they are going to be scattered in Israel.

He doesn't relate Simeon and Levi to outsiders. It's what they did on the inside. And they slew a man and hamstringed an ox.

And their passion, their lack of self-control, is something that affects the nation and their honor. Jacob says, I don't want my honor associated with their counsel. I'm going to divide them and scatter them in Israel.

Judah is pictured in terms of his leadership inside the nation. Not exclusively, but he is going to rule his brothers. And they are going to praise him.

Issachar is strong for bearing burdens in the land. You get the idea that he's going to bear these burdens. Dan is going to be a judge among the tribes of Israel.

And he's primarily internal justice. He is the hidden factor that can make the difference for the horse and rider. Asher, with the rich food, that may be internal.

It may be external. We're not really sure. Naphtali has this auditory appeal of the beautiful words, has the visual appeal of the graceful movement of the deer.

Joseph has the fruit. And even though he stands alone, he's going to bless others by association, the ones who come to Joseph have provision. The ones who come to Joseph are sustained.

So those are some of the internal implications of these oracles. Externally, Simeon and Levi, their fierceness and cruelty went beyond the bounds of the family and affected Shechem. And that power has to be broken because they make Jacob a stench in the nostrils of his neighbors.

We know that from the preceding narrative. Judah is going to be the ultimate ruler and benefactor, not only for Israel, but extending out. He says, till the nations bring him tribute.

That's, you know, a lawgiver will not cease from between his feet until tribute comes to him. And the obedience of the peoples is unto him. So this goes beyond implications within the family and within the future nation and goes out to the world.

Zebulun has this commerce. He's at the border of the sea and the border of Sidon. And he's going to be an interface point for the nation of Israel to outsiders, to those who are characterized by evil.

And there's potential there for witness, and there's also potential for corruption, depending on what these who are on the border do. And my point in making these distinctions between the brothers is that this is a composite. The nation is a composite of these individuals who have strengths and weaknesses, of these tribes who have strengths and weaknesses, of these component parts of the nation that have opportunities and also have potential Achilles heel problems.

And each of us as individuals and collectively as a church, we have these same issues. We have in different areas of life opportunity for leadership, as Judah did. Is it going to be productive or is it going to be destructive? Are we going to maximize our potential or are we going to miss it just because we become unteachable and unapproachable? We begin to wallow in our prosperity and lose sight of.

Our eyes become red with wine and we lose sight of the objective reality that these things have come from God and are to be exercised for His glory. Like Reuben, in any group and in any human soul, there is great potential for being first, being strong, being honorable, having dignity. But we can compromise that if we give in to self-centeredness and the self-serving goals of life.

And we begin to look for ways to maximize our own enjoyment or our own provision and protection of ourselves instead of using those things in the service of God. Zebulun, this prosperity and commerce with the nations, he's a haven for ships and on the edge of the sea. And what a great opportunity to have a harbor.

The greatest communities in a lot of countries are on a harbor because there's such great potential for commerce and for profit there. But you also are the interface point with all of the corruption of the world. And if you, at the point where you make contact

with the world, how's it going to turn out? Are you going to be a blessing and the power and grace of God are going to flow outward to the world? Or is it going to be a corruption point where evil and sin come into your borders? When you go to Dan judging and being decisive, even though small, we've studied in other places in Scripture the idea of the remnant and the invisible hero and the ones who, though not numerous, are the deciding factor toppling the horse and rider.

That's a great thing if the horse and rider are evil ones coming into your midst and your hidden small but powerful factor is the difference. But on the other hand, if you're toppling your own horse and rider and you're the viper in the midst, that's a bad thing. And you can be the one bad apple that spoils the whole barrel.

And so once again, having the power to be a decisive factor can be beneficial or it can be destructive depending on whether or not the power of God and the purposes of God are in view. When you come down to Gad, he has endurance, he has resilience, he can bounce back from being trampled. But are we being trampled as an opportunity for growth or are we being trampled because we have been neglectful and allowed ourselves to be trampled by the enemy? Naphtali, or Asher rather, is productive and attractive.

He's got these dainties. Lots of people have a natural charisma or have a natural beauty. They can speak well.

They can make the food attractive, package it well, royal dainties, rich bread. But are you going to follow that up with a substantial meal or is it going to be ear-tickling? Is it going to be something that sounds great but doesn't nourish and doesn't build up? Is it going to be something that you offer out to others and it doesn't benefit your own people? Naphtali, grace and beauty, is there any substance to it or is it all form and no substance? Then we come to Joseph who is the fruitful branch, the branch hanging over the wall with fruit even for those who are outside, blessing by association, strong in the face of trial, even attack from within. Are we going to have the ability to see and do the good in the face of receiving evil? That's a hard thing.

It's one thing to talk about and it's another thing to actually do, to return good for evil, to love those who hate us and do good to those who spitefully use us. Are we going to develop a hunger that is productive or are we going to be ravenous wolves like Benjamin and have it all be a self-serving exclusive sort of a thing? You can think about this in so many different aspects. You can look at groups of believers, you can look at local churches, you can look at the church at large and see that there are individuals and there are groups within our group that have these characteristics.

You always encounter people who are gifted in the area of making things palatable and making them attractive and desirable to those who are outside. But you have a decision point there. Is this going to be something that introduces people to the things of God and

draws them into something that is permanent and substantial and nourishing or are you going to continue to just entertain and titillate and attract without bringing anything permanent into the picture? This is like some, and I don't mean to pick on ladies, but there are some girls who are just eternal flirts and all they do is they enjoy the process of attracting people and knowing that they can manipulate and have an influence on people but there is no real promise of relationship and stability in that.

It's all manipulation using their feminine attractiveness for superficial purposes. And we have people in the church today who can draw large crowds but when they get them there they don't give them anything. There is no substance.

It's rich food and royal dainties but there is nothing of substantial value. You can think about the brothers here and what Jacob says about them and see the potential for success or the potential for failure and we have these areas even within our own soul, different areas of our lives we have strengths and weaknesses. What I'd like to do though is to turn over to Deuteronomy chapter 33 because overall by the time you finish the oracle of Jacob you are left with something of a gloomy outlook.

There is a lot of discipline. There is a lot of potential for failure there. There is a lot of pointing out of failure and weakness.

With the exception of Judah and Joseph you don't really find a whole lot of commendable, really substantial blessing type statement made there. But years later when Moses gives his pronouncement for the tribes, what does he say? And we've read through this before beginning in verse 6. Let Reuben live and not die nor let his men be few. Jacob had said he is my might, the beginning of my strength, dignity and power and all that but he's unstable.

He's unfaithful. He defiles. He is unclean.

But what is Moses' prayer? Reuben is going to live and not die and his men are not going to be few. There is recovery from this failure as the firstborn and he can still prosper. He can still be multiplied and live and not die.

It is not a sin unto death if you will. Now look at Judah in verse 7. Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah and bring him to his people. Let his hands be sufficient for him and may you be a help against his enemies.

Now we're not worrying about the wine and the milk and the lion going up from the prey. Moses focuses on the unity between Judah and the people. The people are willing followers.

They support him. He's brought to his people and his hands are sufficient for him. He has a sufficiency without a surplus.

He's not going to be led into error by having all of these vines and all of this wine and wealth available to him. It's going to be sufficient for him. He'll be a help against his enemies, avoiding attack.

He's going to be successful. He's going to be the lion going up from the prey. He's not going to be overcome.

Levi, let your Thummim and your Urim be with your Holy One whom you tested at Massah and with whom you contended at the waters of Meribah. Remember, Levi and Simeon are roundly condemned by Jacob. They're going to be divided and scattered because of their fierce anger and their cruel wrath.

But here, there's no mention of cruelty and wrath. Instead, it is guidance from God that is in view. He's going to be a source of instruction from God.

He's going to be a source of guidance from God. God is going to fight his battles. He says in verse 10, They will teach Jacob your judgments and Israel your law.

What a turnaround. If they're going to be scattered in Israel, let them be a benefit in Israel. No longer will their anger and their wrath make Jacob not want to associate his honor and dignity with them and not want to be associated with their counsel.

Now, their counsel is going to be a place of instruction and an opportunity for guidance from God. And God is going to bless his substance in verse 11 and accept the work of his hands, strike the loins of those who rise against him and of those who hate him. He's not going to go out and strike the loins.

Remember the hamstringing of the oxen and so forth that were mentioned in the Jacob story. Now, God is going to strike the loins of those who rise against him and of those who hate him so that they will not rise again. He's not going to go out and fight his own battles in cruelty and anger.

God's going to fight the battles for him. What is the difference here? The Oracle of Jacob is given at the inception, at the outset, when the nation is in its infancy. And when we first come to Christ, when we are in the infant stages of our spiritual life, we bring with us a lot of our baggage, the weaknesses of our sinful nature and of our background and our patterns of behavior are all with us.

And our failures are fresh in our mind. Oftentimes, this is one of the things God, the Holy Spirit, uses to convict us, is the knowledge of our sin and our guilt and our failures, how hopeless, helpless, and useless we really are. And so, Jacob's Oracle is delivered at the beginning.

And all of these are potential. There is potential for change. There is potential for benefit.

But there is also great potential for harm and for failure. Here, Moses, after the 40 years of wandering, after the failure generation has dropped in the wilderness, is now addressing his Oracle to the faithful generation, who is going to have the strength and the relationship with God to enter into the land of Canaan and begin a whole fresh set of challenges. And God has been at work purging and cleansing the nation so that these are your intermediate level believers.

And there will be a weeding out process when they get into the land. But this is the generation who has the faith to cross the Jordan and go in and claim the promise of God. And this is a much more positive pronouncement that Moses gives.

He's looking on what God has done and will do in these areas of weakness. So, Reuben, instead of being a failure and being set aside, he's going to live and not die. Levi, source of guidance and instruction from God.

God will fight his battles. He's not going to fight his own. Benjamin, verse 12 of Deuteronomy 33.

The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him who shelters him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders. He's not the ravening wolf going out and pouncing on the prey and feeding only himself. Now, he is once again the sheltered one that dwells in safety.

But God is now his shelter. It's not Jacob sheltering him. It's not Judah sheltering him.

It's not Joseph sheltering him. It's the Lord God. He's dwelling between the shoulders in the place of safety, in the place of blessing.

He's beloved of God. In verse 13, Joseph. Remember, Joseph was one of the good sections of Jacob's oracle.

We had the fivefold blessing. Here, Moses says, Blessed of the Lord is his land with the precious things of heaven, with the dew and the deep lying beneath, with the precious fruits of the sun, with the precious produce of the months, with the best things of the ancient mountains, with the precious things of the everlasting hills, with the precious things of the earth and its fullness, and the favor of him who dwelt in the bush. Let the blessing come on the head of Joseph and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.

And you have that link. The very same phrase that Jacob used is at the end of this blessing. And this too is a fivefold blessing, but it's doubled.

Because here, look at what we have when you go back up to the blessings of heaven. In verse 13, blessed of the Lord is his land. What kind of blessings? First of all, they are blessings from heaven.

And it's the blessing of dew and deep. That's what you have in verse 13. These blessings of the Lord, these blessings from heaven are blessings of the dew and the deep.

That's number one. Verse 14, the precious fruits of the sun and the precious produce of the months, the signs and the seasons are determined by the heavenly bodies. And the blessings of the sun and the months, this gives us an idea of agricultural prosperity in the same way that the dew and the deep, water from below, water from above.

Then in verse 15, the third doubling, the best things of the ancient mountains, the precious things of the everlasting hills. The fourth is the precious things of the earth and the precious things of its fullness. And then finally, you have the favor of him who dwelt in the bush.

And that is a double all by itself. The one who dwells in the bush. And it harks back to what he said at the beginning.

He is blessed of the Lord. He is blessed from heaven. So, then he goes on in verse 17 to say, his glory is like a firstborn bull.

The blessings of the firstborn have come upon Joseph. And it's a double blessing here as well. He is like a firstborn bull.

And his horns are like the horns of the wild ox. So, he's compared to a bull and an ox. And they have two horns.

And together with these horns, he will push the peoples to the ends of the earth. The ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh. So, the two horns, the double blessing, Ephraim and Manasseh, that's what's going to push the people that don't belong there out of the land and make a space for Israel.

He's going to push them to the ends of the earth. And so, everything about the blessing of Joseph is doubled here.