



Lesson 4 | The Seed of Judah | 12/30/2020

As noted, Messiah was first promised with Yahweh's announcement of "the Seed" that was first spoken to Satan that from the seed of the woman would come this One who would bring about man's deliverance and Satan's destruction. That "seed" defeated Satan's tyranny through death and accomplished the salvation of all through His resurrection (c.f. Hebrews 2:14). Over time, God made this promise again by entering covenant with Abraham, and reiterating it to Isaac and Jacob (Gen 26:3-4; 28:13-14).

Throughout the Old Testament, the hope for Messiah often waned. In Haran, Jacob found a wife but things did not turn out as he had planned. He wanted Rachel, Laban's younger daughter. However, Laban tricked the trickster and he was given Leah and he had to work seven more years for Rachel. Jacob did love Rachel more than Leah. Yet Leah bore him the very first son and the first of two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. And Jacob loved Joseph the most and wanted Joseph to rule over his family. In God's sovereignty, however, it was not Ruben (the oldest son of Jacob; see Genesis 35:22; 49:3-4) but Judah who was designated as the "seed" through whom the blessings would be brought upon all mankind. *"He rejected the tent of Joseph; he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves"* (Psa 78:67-72). The promise was stated: *"Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's sons shall bow down to you"* (Genesis 49:8-10). In his final days, Isaac tried to set aside God's choice of Jacob as the one whose "seed" would be heirs of the Abrahamic covenant but would, in the end, Isaac surrendered to God's will and pronounced on Jacob the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant: *"May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you..."* (Genesis 28:4-5). And so would Jacob surrender to the sovereignty of God in this seed promise.

While Judah was chosen to be the son through whom the "seed" would come, he certainly was not the kind of person we would have selected for this position. Unlike Joseph, who refused to enter into an illicit sexual relationship with his master's wife (Genesis 39), Judah married a Canaanite woman (Genesis 38:2). He took what appears to be a Canaanite wife for his son (38:6). When two of his sons died because of their wickedness, Judah would not give his last son to Tamar as her husband. In so doing, he jeopardized his own "seed." Tamar outwitted Judah, by playing the part of a Canaanite cult prostitute, and became pregnant by her father-in-law (38:12-19). Had God not providentially protected the "seed," Judah would have irreversibly corrupted it. From this union of Judah and Tamar, the messianic line was continued (38:27-30). The word "until," by the way, does not imply that Judah's rulership will end when the ruler arrives. The compendium *Hard Sayings of the Bible* notes that: *"The until is used not in an exclusive but in an inclusive sense. That is, the coming of Shiloh does not mark the limits of Judah's domination over the nation of Israel, for if it did it would constitute a threat and not a blessing. Instead, the idea is that the sovereignty of Judah is brought to its highest point under the arrival and rule of Shiloh."*

Yet, there are things about Judah that are praiseworthy. When he suggested that Joseph's life should be spared, his listened (Gen 37:26-27) and he was able to persuade Jacob to let him be surety for Benjamin (43:8-9). Again, in Egypt, he pleaded eloquently for the release of his youngest brother, offering himself as a bondservant in Benjamin's place, and for the heart of his own father (44:18-34).

So in the words of Jacob, in 49:8-12, **Judah would be the tribe who would receive praise and adoration from the nation of Israel** (i.e. your father's sons). The term "Jew" is derived from Judah (or Yehudah) which may have been intended first for the tribe's descendants. The first individual to be called a Jew (Yehudi) in the Scriptures was Mordecai (Esther 2:5). But before that, in 722 BC when the north tribes constituting Israel was conquered by

Assyrian King Sennaherib and those ten tribes were exiled and lost, the remaining Israelites were residents of the territory of Judah and the term "Yehudi" or "Jew" came to refer to all the Israelites, regardless of their tribal ancestry. And even today, the **selflessness** of Judah's actions in the incidents above become the pattern that even modern Jews attribute to their nation by that name.



Why the tribe of Judah? Why would “the scepter not depart from Judah nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet” (49:10) until Shiloh comes (49:11). The tribal scepter was an emblem carried by the head of a family (c.f. Amos 1:5), or the leader of a tribe (Num 17:2) or a complete nation (Zech 10:11). Ultimately, it is the symbol of complete power (c.f. Isa 14. 5; Est 4:11). Because of his travail and weak character, it makes it hard to believe that Judah should be the prominent one to carry such a thing. Yet, while a small detail, it is significant that Moses said (44:14), “*Judah* and his brothers.” The brothers return to Joseph, and *Judah steps forward* to give the longest speech in the book of Genesis, and the climax of the whole book where he declares he will be “a pledge of safety for the boy to my father” and will “bear the blame before my father all my life” (44:32–33). In several ways, one could suggest that these actions prefigured the greatest member of the tribe of Judah, Jesus, who became surety for us. Perhaps this foreshadowing is the key to what influenced God to choose Judah to be His lawgiver and the tribe from which His Son would later be born (Hebrews 7:14).

Note these other attributes:

- Until Shiloh comes (Gen 49:10). Expositor’s Bible Commentary says, “The word ‘Shiloh,’ found in some English versions, is simply an untranslated form of the Hebrew expression meaning ‘one to whom it belongs.’” Jesus Christ is the “one to whom it belongs” (Frank E. Gaebelien, ed.).
- In Psalms is Judah described twice as “My lawgiver” or “My scepter” (NASB) (Psa 60:7; 108:8).
- Judah prevailed over his brothers. During the time of Moses, the tribe of Judah became the stronger tribe. In Numbers, the census placed Judah as tops in population and in men soldiers (1:2-3, 27). After the death of Joshua, God chose the tribe of Judah to take the lead in conquering the nations who were living in the land promised to the 12 tribes (Judges 1:2) and it will be the tribe of Judah who was most aggressive in driving out the Canaanites in the southern half of the land of Canaan. In Jewish history the prophet wrote, “Yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph’s” (1Chr 5:2).
- The promise then spoke of Judah’s role as bringing Messiah as the scepter (or King) and lawgiver. And still, the tribe of Judah is also attributed with the preservation of God’s written laws. The apostle Paul said, “What advantage then has **the Jew**? ... Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles [that which was spoken or commanded] of God” (Romans 3:1-2).

"Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?" (Gen. 49:9). The figure begins with a young, conquering lion; then, Judah is likened to an mature Lion prepared for a final kill and who consumes his prey and where none dare rouse him. This lion-like description of Judah in general and of the Lord Jesus in particular is referred to frequently in Scripture (Num 24:7-9; Micah 5:2-8. In Revelation 5:5, Messiah is personified as a lion from Judah who will conquer the world of men – and Satan (i.e. 1Pet 5:8.)

So how do we know that Jesus, as Messiah is the fulfillment?

1. Matthew 2:6 and 11 (with Micah 5:2) shows Jesus was who the Magi’s came to worship.
2. Hebrews 7:14 (with Matthew 1:2-3) shows Jesus is from the tribe of Judah.
3. Revelation 5:5 (with Isaiah 11:1,10) shows Jesus is Judah’s Lion and from the Root of David.

Last, it is worth nothing that the ruler from Judah will receive the “obedience of the peoples” – that is, nations that are not Jewish. Paul could well have been thinking of this verse when he wrote, “...we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name *among all the nations*” (Romans 1:5), and, “For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience – by word and deed.” (Romans 15:18; see also Romans 16:26).