

Messiah in the Books of Moses: Lesson 5 – Genesis 49

NOTES: The Introduction

The promise of Messiah progressively unfolds throughout the Old Testament. *Messiah* became the proper name associated with the promised Anointed One of Yahweh Who would come to deliver, redeem, and restore Israel. Since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, God has kept the hope of His people alive through the promise of Messiah. The Hebrew term *Mashiach* (מָשִׁיחַ) literally translates *Anointed One*. The Greek equivalent of *Mashiach/Messiah* appearing in the New Testament is *Christos* (χριστός). Each time the word *Christ* appears in the New Testament, it is a reference to the office of Jesus as the Messiah.

In the study of *Messiah in the Books of Moses*, six Old Testament prophetic predictions will be explored: *The Edenic Prediction* (Gen. 3:15); *The Noahic Prediction* (Gen 9:25-27); *The Abrahamic Prediction* (Gen 12:1-3); *The Judaic Prediction* (Gen 49:8-12); *The Balaamic Prediction* (Num 24:15-19); and, *The Mosaic Prediction* (Deut 18:15, 18). Each prophecy will be studied within its historical context and in light of its fulfillment in the Person and work of Messiah Jesus as recorded in the New Testament.

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples, opening their minds to understand all that was written concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. “Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27). A study of Luke 24 introduces *Messiah in the Books of Moses*, establishing the primary importance of studying messianic prophecy in the Old Testament. This study focuses on the first six predictions of Messiah in the Pentateuch.

Genesis 3 – The Edenic Prediction (Gen 3:15): Humanity of Messiah

Genesis 3 records the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. Before casting the man and the woman from the garden of Eden, God gives the woman a promise that includes the first predictive prophecy of Messiah in the Bible. Genesis 3:15 has commonly been called the *protoevangelium* (“the first gospel”) because it is the first prophecy in the Bible, revealing the promise of a future Redeemer Who will crush the head of Satan.

Genesis 3:15 is the “mother prophecy” that launches the promise of redemption for fallen humanity through the Messiah Who is the “seed/offspring” of the woman. The Edenic Prediction establishes the humanity of Messiah, the promised “seed/offspring” Who becomes the central figure of God’s unfolding kingdom plan.

Genesis 9 – The Noahic Prediction (Gen 9:25–27): Divinity of Messiah

Based on the genealogies in Genesis 5, at least 1500 years pass between creation and the great flood in the days of Noah. With the assumption that the seven days of creation took place around 6000 BC, some biblical scholars tentatively propose, and evidence supports, 3800 BC as the estimated time of the flood.

In the millenniums that follow the entrance of sin into the world through Adam and Eve, wickedness multiplies exponentially until the whole earth becomes corrupt in God’s eyes. “God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth” (Gen 6:12). Genesis 6–9 records God’s execution of judgment on the earth by a flood that destroys all living things except for Noah, his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, their wives, and the animals God preserved on the ark.

When Noah and his household disembark after the flood waters receded, God blesses them and commands them to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1). Genesis 9 records the sin of Ham, Noah’s son, against his father, resulting in the blessing of Shem and Japheth, and in the cursing of Canaan, the son of Ham. Within this prophetic passage of blessing and cursing, the second prediction of Messiah occurs in Genesis 9:25-27, predicting God’s dwelling in the tents of Shem.

As Genesis 3:15 establishes the humanity of Messiah, Genesis 9:25-27 establishes the divinity of Messiah. The human and divine converge for the first time in the advent of Messiah Jesus, the unique God-Man, the Word of God Who became flesh and made His dwelling among humanity (cf John 1:1-18).

Genesis 12 – The Abrahamic Prediction (Gen 12:1-3): Seed of Blessing

From among the *Shemitic* or *Semitic* people, who are descendants of Noah’s son Shem with whom God had promised to dwell (Gen 9:27), Yahweh selects a single man, Abram, from whom Messiah would descend. Yahweh calls Abram to depart from his native country and to go to a land that Yahweh would show him. Abram then goes out of Ur with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot to go to the land of Canaan.

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When Yahweh calls Abram to the land of Canaan, He enters into an everlasting, unconditional covenant that initially included seven promises (Gen 12:2-3): (1) “I will make you a great nation” (2) “I will bless you” (3) “make your name great” (4) “you shall be a blessing” (5) “I will bless those who bless you” (6) “the one who curses you I will curse” (7) “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” After Abram’s arrival in the land of Canaan, Yahweh changes Abram’s name to Abraham, and He covenants an eighth everlasting promise: (8) “I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Gen 17:8).

The Abrahamic Prediction of Messiah occurs in one of the initial seven promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. Genesis 12:3, “And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” The pronoun “you” is a singular masculine pronoun that refers to Abraham, representative of his collective offspring through Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the covenant, who carried the Seed in whom all families of the earth would be blessed.

The apostle Paul explains, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations will be blessed in You’” (Gal 3:8). The loins of Abraham carried the human seed of the divine Messiah through Whom salvation comes to bless all nations.

Genesis 49 – The Judaic Prediction (Gen 49:8-12): Messiah of Tribe of Judah

Yahweh establishes His covenant with Abraham that includes eight promises of blessing to Abraham and his descendants, including the promise of Messiah in his seed through whom all nations would be blessed. Yahweh then promises to give a son to Abraham and to barren Sarah in their old age. Abraham questions Yahweh about bearing a child in their old age and proposes that He bless Ishmael instead. “But God said, ‘No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him’” (Gen 17:19-20).

When Abraham was 100 years old (ca. 2065 BC), Isaac was born and established as the heir of Yahweh’s covenant. Isaac and his barren wife Rebekah bear twin boys. Before their birth (ca. 2005 BC), Yahweh tells Rebekah that her older son (Esau) will serve the younger son (Jacob). Esau later sells his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup, and Jacob tricks his father to bless him in place of Esau. Yahweh establishes His covenant with Jacob as heir of His promises to Abraham. Jacob’s name is changed to Israel (Gen 32:28).

Jacob/Israel bears twelve sons with his wives Leah and Rachel and their concubines Zilpah and Bilhah. The names of Jacob’s twelve sons are – (of Leah): Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; (of Rachel): Joseph and Benjamin; (of Bilhah, Rachel’s maid): Dan and Naphtali; and (of Zilpah, Leah’s maid): Gad and Asher. Before his death, Jacob/Israel gathers his twelve sons to tell them “what will befall you in the days to come” (Gen 49:1). Jacob/Israel speaks a prophetic message to each of his twelve sons.

Each son would become a tribe, and the twelve tribes become the nation of Israel, the nation which God first covenanted with Abraham to make great (Gen 12:2). Israel is the nation created to carry the human seed of Messiah. In Genesis 49, Jacob prophetically reveals the kingdom destiny of each tribe. The royal tribe chosen by God to carry the seed of Messiah is Judah (Gen 49:8-12). Judah is granted the right to rule over Israel as kings until the coming of Messiah, the One to Whom the kingdom of God belongs forever.

BIBLE TEXT: Genesis 49

Gen. 49:1 Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come.

2 “Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob;
And listen to Israel your father.

Gen. 49:3 “Reuben, you are my firstborn;
My might and the beginning of my strength,
Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.

4 “Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence,
Because you went up to your father’s bed;
Then you defiled it — he went up to my couch.

Gen. 49:5 “Simeon and Levi are brothers;

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- 6 **Their swords are implements of violence.
“Let my soul not enter into their council;
Let not my glory be united with their assembly;
Because in their anger they slew men,
And in their self-will they lamed oxen.**
- 7 **“Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel.
I will disperse them in Jacob,
And scatter them in Israel.**
- Gen. 49:8 “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.**
- 9 **“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?**
- 10 **“The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes,
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.**
- 11 **“He ties his foal to the vine,
And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine;
He washes his garments in wine,
And his robes in the blood of grapes.**
- 12 **“His eyes are dull from wine,
And his teeth white from milk.**
- Gen. 49:13 “Zebulun will dwell at the seashore;
And he shall be a haven for ships,
And his flank shall be toward Sidon.**
- Gen. 49:14 “Issachar is a strong donkey,
Lying down between the sheepfolds.**
- 15 **“When he saw that a resting place was good
And that the land was pleasant,
He bowed his shoulder to bear burdens,
And became a slave at forced labor.**
- Gen. 49:16 “Dan shall judge his people,
As one of the tribes of Israel.**
- 17 **“Dan shall be a serpent in the way,
A horned snake in the path,
That bites the horse’s heels,
So that his rider falls backward.**
- 18 **“For Your salvation I wait, O LORD.**
- Gen. 49:19 “As for Gad, raiders shall raid him,
But he will raid at their heels.**
- Gen. 49:20 “As for Asher, his food shall be rich,
And he will yield royal dainties.**
- Gen. 49:21 “Naphtali is a doe let loose,
He gives beautiful words.**

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Gen. 49:22 “Joseph is a fruitful bough,
A fruitful bough by a spring;
Its branches run over a wall.
23 “The archers bitterly attacked him,
And shot at him and harassed him;
24 But his bow remained firm,
And his arms were agile,
From the hands of the **Mighty One of Jacob**
(From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),
25 From the God of your father who helps you,
And by the Almighty who blesses you
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.
26 “The blessings of your father
Have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors
Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills;
May they be on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.

Gen. 49:27 “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
In the morning he devours the prey,
And in the evening he divides the spoil.”

Gen. 49:28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him. **29** Then he charged them and said to them, “I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, **30** in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site. **31** “There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah — **32** the field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth.” **33** When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

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STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Why does Jacob summon his sons to assemble? When would Jacob's words befall them? (49:1-2)
2. How does Jacob describe his firstborn son Reuben? Why will Reuben NOT become preeminent in dignity and in power? (49:3-4)
3. Which two brothers receive the same prophetic destiny? What are their swords? (49:5) Why would Jacob's soul not enter into their council nor his glory be united with their assembly? (49:6) Why is their anger and wrath cursed? What would happen to their descendants? (49:7)
4. **(P) Prophecy: (Judaic Prediction – Gen 49:8-12)**
Who will praise Judah? Upon whose neck will his hand be? Who will bow down to Judah? (49:8) How does Judah move like a lion's whelp? How is Judah like a lion? (49:9)

(OB) What does this reveal about Messiah Jesus Who descended from the tribe of Judah? (Try to use verses outside of this passage to show how this is realized in the Person/work of Jesus.)
5. **(P) Prophecy: (Judaic Prediction – Gen 49:8-12)**
What will not depart from Judah? What will not depart from between his feet? For how long? What will belong to Shiloh? (49:10)

(OB) What does this reveal about Messiah Jesus Who descended from the tribe of Judah? (Try to use verses outside of this passage to show how this is realized in the Person/work of Jesus.)
6. **(P) Prophecy: (Judaic Prediction – Gen 49:8-12)**
What does he tie to the vine and to the choice vine? In what does he wash his garments and robes? (49:11) Describe his eyes and teeth. (49:12)

(OB) What does this reveal about Messiah Jesus Who descended from the tribe of Judah? (Try to use verses outside of this passage to show how this is realized in the Person/work of Jesus.)
7. Which one of Jacob's twelve sons will dwell at the seashore? For what will he be a haven? Toward what will his flank be? (49:13)
8. Which one of Jacob's twelve sons is likened to a strong donkey? Where does he lie down? (49:14) Why does he bow his shoulder to bear burdens and become a slave at forced labor? (49:15)
9. How will Dan judge his people? (49:16) How will Dan be a serpent in the way, a horned snake in the path? What happens when he bites the horse's heels? (49:17) For what does Dan wait? (49:18)
10. What will happen to Gad? How will he respond? (49:19)
11. Describe Asher's food. What will Asher yield? (49:20)
12. To what is Naphtali compared? What does he give? (49:21)
13. Who is a fruitful bough by a spring? Describe its branches. (49:22) What will the archers do? (49:23) What remains firm? Why are his arms agile? Describe the Shepherd. (49:24) Who helps Joseph? With what does the Almighty bless Joseph? (49:25) What do the blessings of Jacob surpass? Upon the heads of which two brothers does Jacob say his blessings will rest? (49:26)
14. Which one of Jacob's twelve sons is like a ravenous wolf? Describe what he does in the morning and in the evening. (49:27)
15. Who are all these who Jacob blessed? According to what does Jacob bless each one? (49:28)

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16. As Jacob is about to be gathered to his people, where does he charge his sons to bury him? Who had previously purchased this cave along with the field of Machpelah for a burial site? (49:29-30)
17. Who else is buried in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah? (49:31) From whom was the field and the cave purchased? (49:32) What happens when Jacob finishes charging his sons? (49:33)
18. What do you learn about God in Genesis 49? What do you learn about Messiah in Gen 49:8-12? How could these truths transform your life?

Write a prayer response to Gen 49.