



18- Heal a Family / Build a Nation

02/28/2010 - Jim Johnson – Gen. 49:1-27

In Gen. 49, Jacob, by the Spirit of God, considered each one of his sons. He thought on their pasts, their character, habits and values, strengths and weaknesses. On that basis he projected into the future.

The character formed in the _____ is the character that shapes the nation.

The family is the primary environment where the character of our children is shaped. The child that is trained and formed and developed in my family today – will be the person who shapes our nation tomorrow – for better or for worse.

A. _____ 3-5: He was the first born in position and power. His honor was removed because of indiscretion. (Gen. 35) He so lacked self discipline that Jacob portrayed him as being as unstable as water. When Israel finally entered the promised land, Reuben's descendents settled in southern portion of modern day Jordan. They soon after disappeared from history. Unlike the other tribes, Reuben's descendents never produced a prophet, judge or king to lead the people of Israel.

B. Simeon and _____ – 5-7: They were pictured as violent men, who were driven by their fierce and cruel anger. This was due to their vengeful acts in Gen. 34. Jacob, therefore, predicted that they would be divided and dispersed in the land of Israel. Indeed, once the conquest of the land was complete, Simeon was assigned a territory within the tribe of Judah, but they virtually disappeared soon after. Levi's sons were chosen as priests, and therefore did not inherit any territory at all. The anger of Simeon and Levi shaped their future, and that of their descendents.

C. _____ – 8-12: He had his own set of problems. (Gen. 38) In spite of his past sin, Judah emerged as a leader. He pleaded with the ruler of Egypt for the freedom of his brother and offered himself as a substitute. Judah distinguished himself as a courageous leader in the past, and Jacob therefore envisioned him as a leader in the future. Verse 10 predicted that the future kings of Israel would emerge from Judah's family. David, was of the tribe of Judah, and God promised him that every king after him would descend from the family of David (the tribe of Judah) He also promised that from this family would come Shiloh (a name for the Lord Jesus - also a member of the tribe of Judah.) Judah also distinguished himself by his willingness to become a substitute for his brother Simeon. It was another descendent of Judah by the name of Jesus who would be distinguished by his willingness to become a substitute on the cross for all men and especially for his people Israel.

D. _____ – 13: Jacob doesn't say much about this man. Doesn't brag on him, or criticize him. He was still a son of Jacob, so he would also be given an inheritance in the land of Canaan. Zebulun was to dwell at the seashore. They were toward the seashore but not on the seashore. Having settled on a strip of land about 10 miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea, and separated from it by territory of Asher.

E. _____ – 14-15: He was a strong guy with a serious work ethic but he evidently didn't have a lot of discernment. When it was time for him to rest he didn't pay much attention to where he landed. In the future, Issachar would settle in region just a little southeast of the Sea of Galilee. It was extra fertile soil worth fighting for. The tribe of Issachar found themselves in the middle of many battles, and they were eventually made slaves to those who conquered them.



F. _____ – **16-18**: The favorite son of the tribe of Dan was Samson, who judged the people of Israel for 20 years. But Jacob predicted that Dan was more of a snake than a judge. The tribe was not able to conquer the people who lived in their allotted territory. Dan the serpent slithered up to the far northeast, and there became the first tribe to infect the others with idolatry.

G. _____ – **19**: This tribe settled east of the Jordan River. The marauding nation that wanted a piece of Israel, had to go through Gad first. So Gad was always defending his turf – raiding and being raided.

H. _____ – **20**: This tribe settled along the fertile rich northern coast of Canaan.

I. _____ – **21**: This guy was evidently was a wordsmith able to speak beautiful words. But more important was that he was like a doe let loose. The tribe of Naphtali would eventually settle in the mountainous region northwest of the Galilee where they would enjoy the freedom to roam.

OBSERVATION: Very little is said about Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher and Naphtali. There is little history given on each kid - and very little said along the prophetic vein. It's as if Jacob did not know them very well. He probably didn't, considering the family was so large and these boys were the middle children. It seems that Jacob made no great investment in those boys and they therefore yielded little in terms of greatness. And their descendents would follow in their father's undistinguished steps. It is also true that "The character that is not formed in the family is the character that does not shape the nation."

J. _____ – **22-26**: Jacob had come to know the full story of the ambush and betrayal of Joseph by his brothers. They boys had evidently confessed all the details to him which is why he compared him to a fruitful vine that grew and prospered in spite of spite of the treachery. Three times does he uses the word "from" pointing to the source of blessing as being from the Lord. He then enumerated the blessings and prayed that the blessing he himself had received would be even greater in the life of Joseph. One unique thing about this blessing is how prominent the Lord is in it. He is referenced 5 times. Jacob and Joseph were close. When the other boys went away to tend the flock, Joseph was still at home with dad. One thing that was evidently transferred, father to son, by virtue of that intimate relationship, was a passion for and respect for God. Jacob's faith became Joseph's faith.

K. _____ – **27**: Jacob portrayed this person as being ravenous and violent. He was greedy - wildly hungry - like a wolf pursuing and gobbling up his prey around the clock. He was an intense kid. The tribe of Benjamin settled to the northeast of Judah. It was small territory, but they had a reputation as being intense fighters, and in fact were ambidextrous, able to use either hand to draw a bow or use a sling. The first King of Israel was Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin but the best know Benjaminite was also known for his intensity – It is Saul of Tarsus who became Paul the Apostle. The intensity of Benjamin the man seemed to have settled in his descendents.

CHALLENGE

So what is going on in our homes, right now, today? What is your child learning? What are we modeling? What are we teaching? What kind of attitudes are we breathing? What kind of character is being formed in our kids? We ought to know and we ought to take an active role in the character development of our kids. Because the character formed in the family is the character that shapes the nation.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Use this section in your personal or family devotions to better apply the truth.

1. Which child of Jacob does each of you and your siblings seem to compare to?
2. Knowing the character of your children today, what do you foresee in their future 10 years from now?
3. What can you do to help positively develop the character in your children today?