

The Tribe of Reuben

Genesis 49:1: *“And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.”*

A latter time judgment and prophecy is being told to all the Sons of Jacob. Reuben is the first to receive the understanding as to what shall befall him.

Genesis 49:3: *“Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:”* Jacob is explaining the importance and heritage of his legacy starting with his firstborn son. The first born is the beginning of a man’s next generation, his might and the dignity of the law will make sure that the firstborn receives his entitled inheritance.

Deuteronomy 21:15-17: *“[15] If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: [16] Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: [17] But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.”* Reuben was born of Leah who was the less loved (hated) wife of Jacob.

Let’s revisit the history Genesis 29:31-32: *“[31] And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren. [32] And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me.”* This is why Jacob had to acknowledge the law and Reuben’s position among his brethren. Reuben was to receive a double portion of Jacob’s inheritance for himself and his tribe.

Deuteronomy 33:1: *“And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.”* Notice here at a “later time” Moses is bestowing the blessings to the tribes before entering the promised land of Caanan (later known as Israel). Let’s examine the blessing of Reuben:

Deuteronomy 33:6 *“Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few.”* Reuben was promised to live and not die. Reuben committed adultery with Jacob’s wife, Bilhah, and should have been put to death, but that would have interrupted the lineage of the 12 Tribes by eliminating one of its forefathers. Genesis 35:22: *“And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it.”* Now

the sons of Jacob were twelve. By law, Reuben should have been put to death (Leviticus 18:8, 29). Reuben's blessing was being spared from the judgment of death for committing adultery and still being able to multiply and be fruitful (*let not his men be few*).

Genesis 49:3: “...and the excellency of power:”

Reuben would be the Father of a powerful tribe. A tribe brave with dignified warriors, men who valiantly fought for their nation. (1 Chronicles 5:18).

Genesis 49:4: “*Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.*”

Although being the firstborn was a coveted position, Reuben would not be able to excel in his position due to his transgression. (Deuteronomy 27:20). His inheritance would later be stripped from him and given to Joseph and Judah (1 Chronicles 5:1-2).