

A Weekly Publication of Relational Concepts Inc.

Lessons from Jacob's Blessing of Joseph

By Jerry Collins



Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; Its branches run over a wall. The archers bitterly attacked him, and shot at him and harassed him; 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), 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. 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 (Genesis 49:22-26).

Verse 22—Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring. Its branches run over a wall—The Word “bough” was chosen over ‘son’ because Joseph is pictured here as a vine extending over a wall, an image of prosperity. The theme of fruitfulness has appeared before in the line of Rachel: God at first withheld fruit from her womb (30:2) but later made her fruitful (v. 22). Then Joseph himself was made fruitful with the birth of Ephraim (41:52). **In spite of the obstacles placed in his path, Joseph was faithful and fruitful in overcoming each one.** The picture is made complete with the explanation that he is by a well and extending over a wall.

Verse 23—The archers bitterly attacked him, and shot at him and harassed him—But Joseph’s prosperity spurs attacks from his enemies. His enemies showed bitterness toward him, shot their arrows *at him*, and hated him. It is clear that people tried to destroy Joseph’s prosperity. The pressure began in Joseph’s life with his brothers. The oracle of Jacob extends that envy into the future as a prediction. Joseph as a prosperous tribe would be attacked.

Verse 24—But his bow remained firm, and his arms were agile—Joseph was aimed and shot at, as it were, by the bitter and reviling words of his brothers, and still more deeply wounded by their cruel treatment. He was sold into Egypt through envy, and imprisoned by a lie. His virtue was violently assaulted by his mistress, his innocence wronged by his master, yet *Joseph’s bow remained firm, and his arm were agile*. **In spite of his suffering at the hands of his brothers, his trust in God was unswerving.**

- **From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel)**—The image of the hands of the Lord is frequent in passages of judgment and deliverance. Here it is strengthened by the term *Mighty One*. The title speaks of how powerful God is. Joseph himself acknowledged that his power came from God. *God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance* (Genesis 45:7). The God who defends Joseph is a Shepherd, one who is able to lead and defend His people. He is also the Stone of Israel, that is, one who is stable and unchanging.

Verse 25—From the God of your father who helps you—He is the *God of your father*, a description that reminds the reader of the ancestral calling and promised blessing.

- **And by the Almighty who blesses you with blessings of heaven above**—The God of the father would save him, and the Almighty would bless him. **Without the help and blessing of God, Joseph could not have made it as far as he had, and his descendants would not make it further.**
- **Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb**—Jacob envisions God imparting both agricultural and human fertility to Joseph and his family. The word *blessing* is used to describe the lavish treatment of Joseph. To bless someone, means to give success to someone, and especially success in fertility. Jacob declared that God’s power on Joseph would continue to make him successful and fruitful.

Verse 26—The blessings of your father Have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills—This blessing would exceed anything given to any of the progenitors. The surpassing blessing would include the hills, select places of choice agricultural lands. In short, the blessing on Joseph would be so great that it would exceed anything that anyone could imagine from a very fertile land.

- **May they be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers**—Just as Joseph had overcome hatred and opposition to become successful in Egypt by the power of God, so too would his tribe continue to have the greatest of blessings. All of the sons of Jacob were blessed to carry the Abrahamic Covenant forward, for they all became founders of tribes that went up to Egypt as the seed of Abraham. Joseph and Judah came to the fore. Joseph received the double portion so that Ephraim and Manasseh would have equal shares with the other sons. Kingship was reserved for Judah.

PT—Joseph is an example of the truth *therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time* (1 Peter 5:6). **It was a test for Joseph to wait for God’s timing after having been unjustly sold as a slave, unjustly accused, imprisoned, unjustly forgotten by one whom he had helped.**

* Learn more by checking out our study of the “Twelve Tribes of Israel” at relationalconcepts.org *

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