

Joseph is a Fruitful Vine

49: 22-26

DIG: In what way was Joseph a fruitful vine? Who attacked him? What are the three main titles of God used here? What do they point to? Why is that important? Does this speak more of Joseph or Joseph's God? What correlation did the rabbis see between Yosef and the Messiah? How did the fact that the rabbis did not, and still do not, believe in two distinct comings of Yeshua affect their theology? Where do we see Joseph during the thousand-year reign of the Messiah during the Millennium?

REFLECT: If you feel overwhelmed today, can you let Jesus be your **Shepherd**? If everyone has deserted you and you are all alone, can you stand on **the Rock** of Christ? If you feel like you can't go on another day, can you let **El Shaddai** nourish and sustain you? Joseph had a choice about how he reacted to adversity in his life. Do you have that same choice? What kind of vessel are you (Second Timothy 2:19)? What kind of spiritual fruit are you producing?

Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall. With bitterness, archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility. But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of **the Shepherd, the Rock** of Isra'el, because of the God of your father, who will help you, because of El Shaddai, who will bless you with blessings from heaven above, blessings from the deep, lying below, blessings from the breasts and the womb. Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers (49:22-26).

Finally, **Jacob** turned to the children of his beloved Rachel, **Joseph** and Benjamin. **Joseph** was the eleventh son of **Jacob** (not to mention his daughters), and he spoke in greater detail to **Joseph** than any of his other sons. He was the firstborn of his favorite wife and **Jacob** had clearly spoiled him (see **Ix - Joseph Sold into Slavery by His Brothers**). But **Jacob** recognized **Joseph's** leadership qualities and placed him in charge of shepherding the flock, even though he was younger than all the brothers except for Benjamin. Put simply; **Jacob** saw qualities in **Joseph** that he did not see in his other sons.

Technically, there is no tribe of **Joseph**. Instead, **Joseph** received a double blessing and his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, each became their own tribe (**Genesis 48; Joshua 14:4; Ezekiel 47:13**). The TaNaKh does, on occasion, refer to a **tribe of Joseph** (**Joshua 17:17; Judges 1:22-23; 2 Samuel 19:20; Amos 5:6; Revelation 7:8**). However, in the contexts listed here, the **tribe of Joseph** seems to be referring to either the tribe of Ephraim or Manasseh, or to **the house of Joseph**, which included Ephraim and Manasseh.

Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall (49:22). The well-watered, far spreading, **fruitful vine** is often used in the Bible to signify great productivity and fruitfulness (**Psalm 128:3; Ezekiel 19:10**).⁷⁹⁴ The word **fruitful** has the same root as the name Ephraim, which means *double fruit*. In the history of **Joseph's** sons are accounts of victorious leaders. **Joshua**, Deborah and **Samuel** all came from the tribe of Ephraim; while Gideon and Jephthah came from the tribe of Manasseh.⁷⁹⁵ So **Joseph's** descendants would be strong and numerous. From the metaphor of a **fruitful vine**, **Jacob** changes to a warlike figure beset by enemy **archers** who had tried to destroy him as a hated foe. **With bitterness, archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility (49:23)**. **This refers to the mistreatment that Joseph suffered first at the hands of his brothers, and then from Potiphar's wife (see Ji - Potiphar's Wife said: Come to Bed with Me! But Joseph Ran Out of the House)**. **Their lying tongues seemed to be as sharp as arrows**.

What was **Joseph's** focus? You never hear a negative word from him. How did **he** make it through the trials and turmoil's in **his** life? **But** because of **his** moral and spiritual strength, **his bow remained steady** in the midst of being attacked. **Joseph** was tested, but **his strong arms stayed limber**, a metaphor for **his** wisdom, courage, and patience. In short, **he** maintained both **his** integrity and **his** comfort through all **his** trials, bearing all **his** burdens with an invincible resolution, and did not sink under the weight of them.⁷⁹⁶

There are three names **the Holy Spirit** uses to describe how **Joseph** made it through the trials and burdens in **his** life. What was **his** focus in the pit (see **Ja - Joseph in the Pit**)? How did **Joseph** cope after being sent to prison for something **he** didn't do (see **Jk - While Joseph was in Prison the LORD was with Him, and Granted Him Favor with the Prison Warden**)? How did **Joseph** keep **his** sanity after being left to rot in prison for two years by someone whom **he** had helped to get released (see **Jp - The Chief Cupbearer did not Remember Joseph: He Forgot Him**)? You never hear **Joseph** complain about his circumstances **because** it was **the hand of God, the Mighty One of Jacob**, who sustained him (**49:24a**). This same **Mighty One** would produce **the Messiah**.

The first name is the Shepherd. Even though the concept of the Messiah had not been revealed during Joseph's lifetime, he knew that God was watching over him. Later, David would be more specific: ADONAI is my Shepherd; I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside the quiet waters, He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely Your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever (Psalm 23:1-6). Finally, in the New Covenant, we learn that the Shepherd is none other than Jesus Himself, when He said: **I AM the Good Shepherd. I know My sheep and My sheep know Me - just as the Father - and I lay down My life for the sheep** (John 10:14).

The second name is the Rock of Isra'el (Exodus 17:6; Second Samuel 23:3; Isaiah 8:14, 30:29). This is the first time in the Bible that Yeshua is referred to as either the Shepherd or the Rock. Once again, although this concept the Messiah being the Rock was not revealed at that time, Joseph sensed that both he and his father Jacob were being led by the same God who was shepherding and strengthening them.⁷⁹⁷ Much later, Isaiah would say: Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD (a doubling to emphasize the point), the eternal Rock (Isaiah 26:4). Here Moses uses the proper name in its most emphatic form. Many times in the TaNaKh, the use of the word the Rock is a picture of the Messiah (Genesis 49:24; Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8; Deuteronomy 32:4 and 13; Second Samuel 22:2; Psalm 18:2, 10:14, 40:2, 61:2, 92:15; Isaiah 8:14). The Bible teaches that Messiah Yeshua is at the right hand of God and is actually pleading on our behalf (Romans 8:34 CJB).

The third name is El Shaddai. There is a play on words in the text with this name. Shad means *breast* in Hebrew and occurs twenty-four times as El Shaddai, and signifies *One who nourishes, supplies and satisfies* (Isaiah 60:16). The Hebrew word dai means *provision, sustenance or blessing*. Combined with the word for God, or El, it then becomes *One mighty to nourish, satisfy and supply*.

The extent of Joseph's blessings was amazing. Jacob reemphasized that because the God of his Father would help Joseph, and because of El Shaddai or *God Almighty*, his son would be blessed in three ways. First, he would be blessed by the dew from the heavens above (Genesis 27:39; Deuteronomy 33:13a). Secondly, he would be blessed by the springs and fountains of the deep that lies below (Deuteronomy 33:13b), and thirdly, he would be blessed by the breast and womb (49:25c). The tribe of Joseph became the largest because it developed from his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh.

The secret of Joseph's ability to endure the hardships that he faced in life was the fact that He relied on the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, El Shaddai. We also need to learn this lesson when dealing with the problems in our lives. It's not that we can minimize our problems, but we need to maximize God. May we learn from Joseph and walk in the Lord's blessing.

The rabbis have always been intrigued with Joseph. They realized that there was something about this son of Israel that spoke to them. Was Joseph human? Of course he was. But they saw what they believed to be a correlation between Yosef and what they believed the Messiah would be like when He came (see Iw - **The Written Account of the Generations of Jacob**). But what would the Anointed One be like?

On the one hand, the rabbis knew that the Messiah would be like King David. He would be the greatest King in Israel's history, bringing peace and blessing upon the Land. Thus, they called Him Meshiach ben-David. But the rabbis also realized that there were verses within the Torah and the Prophets that give a different picture of the Messiah - a suffering and rejected Messiah. Like Joseph, He will be unjustly accused. So the rabbis pondered the possibility that Joseph was a foreshadowing of the coming Messiah. Both were rejected by their own brothers; both were left for dead; both endured persecution, and both were not recognized by their brothers when they saw them! So they call this persecuted One Meshiach ben-Joseph (Sanhedrin 98).

Keep in mind the Torah never actually speaks of two Messiah's, but this is what the rabbis implied from reading the Scriptures. How could there be a coming Messiah to rule and another Messiah to be rejected? The rabbis did not recognize the concept of the two comings of Christ. In His First Coming, He would be called the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29) coming to be slaughtered as a sacrifice; and at His Second Coming, He will be known as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5) coming to rule and reign for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3).

Because of the God of your father, who will help you, because of El Shaddai, who will bless you with blessings from heaven above, blessings from the deep, lying below, blessings from the breasts and the womb (49:25 CJB). Joseph may have felt weak and helpless - but El Shaddai said I'm going to bless you because you're standing on the Rock.

Lastly, Joseph would receive the blessing of Jacob himself. Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills (49:26a). Jacob's blessings were greater than those received from Abraham and

Isaac. They could only bless one son each; however, **Joseph** was blessing fourteen sons. He prophesied: **Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers (49:26b)**. And all of **Jacob's blessings** would likewise be showered **on the head, the Nazir, of Joseph** because **he would be the prince among his brothers**. The word was later used of **the Nazirite (Numbers 6:1-21)**, who was set apart for **God**.⁷⁹⁸ As a result, **he** who was once separated from **his brothers** through spite was then separated from **his brothers** by **blessing**.⁷⁹⁹

In the **far eschatological future**, during the Messianic Kingdom, **Joseph** will continue to inherit a double portion of the land (**Ezekiel 47:13**), one being for the tribe of **Manasseh (Ezekiel 48:4)**, and the other being for the tribe of **Ephraim (Ezekiel 48:5)**.

Jacob began his prophesy with fruitfulness when he said: **Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall (49:22)**. Therefore, the blessing of **Joseph** can be summed up in the word **fruitful**. There is nothing more glorious in life than fruitfulness. **Fruit** is the natural and necessary expression of the spiritual life, and the way in which our **Lord** emphasized it (**John 15:1-17**), shows the importance of fruitfulness in the Gospel. The people who, like **Joseph**, are faithful to **ADONAI** will bring forth much good **fruit**, and their lives will be **filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1:11)**.⁸⁰⁰

Seeing the youngest of **his twelve sons**, **Ya'akov** turned to **Benjamin**, whose mother **Rachel** died during childbirth.