

Design

Two hundred and forty years before the Law was given to Moses and the Israelites. The priesthood was given to the children of Levi, and the kingship was given to the children of Judah. This all came about through the offence and reaction of Rueben. When Rachel died, his father Jacob, rejected Leah his first wife- Rueben's mother, and chose to stay with Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid instead. As Esau, the firstborn of Isaac, had scorned his birthright, and Jacob his brother had inherited his brother's birthright; Rueben offended Jacob, and his birthright was taken from his sons, and given to his brothers. This account is only partially mentioned in Genesis, but the Book of Jasher explains it in full detail.

Genesis

Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother."

And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone."

So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem. And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother. Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth (! terebinth of weeping). Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel. Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land."

Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him. So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel. Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored in childbirth, and she had hard labor. Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, "Do not fear; you will have this son also."

And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni (! son of my sorrow); but his father called him Benjamin (! son of the right hand). So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day. Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Rueben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard about it.

Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: the sons of Leah were Rueben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; the sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin; the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali; the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, were Gad and Asher.

These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Padan Aram.

(Gen 35:1-26)

From this Genesis account, it seems like Rueben slept with Bilhah!

Jasher

At that time the Lord appeared to Jacob saying, "Arise, go to Bethel and remain there; make an altar to the Lord who appears to you, who delivered you and your sons from affliction."

And Jacob rose up with his sons and all belonging to him; they went and came to Bethel according to the word of the Lord. Jacob was ninety-nine years old when he went up to Bethel, and Jacob and his sons and all the people that were with him remained in Bethel in Luz; he built an altar there to the Lord who appeared to him, and Jacob and his sons remained in Bethel six months.

At that time Deborah the daughter of Uz, the nurse of Rebecca, who had been with Jacob died and Jacob buried her beneath Bethel under an oak that was there. And Rebecca the daughter of Bethuel, the mother of Jacob, also died at that time in Hebron, the same is Kireath-arba. She was buried in the cave of Machpelah which Abraham had bought from the children of Heth. And the life of Rebecca was one hundred and thirty-three years, and she died. When Jacob heard that his mother Rebecca was dead he wept bitterly for his mother, and made a great mourning for her and for Deborah her nurse beneath the oak. He called the name of that place Allon-bachuth.

Laban the Syrian died in those days, for God struck him because he went contrary to the covenant that existed between him and Jacob. Jacob was a hundred years old when the Lord appeared to him and blessed him and called his name Israel, and Rachel the wife of Jacob conceived in those days.

At that time Jacob and all belonging to him journeyed from Bethel to go to his father's house, to Hebron. And while they were going on the road, and there was yet but a little way to come to Ephrath, Rachel gave birth to a son; she had hard labor and died. Jacob buried her on the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem, and he set up a pillar on her grave which is there to this day; the days of Rachel were forty-five years when she died. Jacob called the name of his son that was born to him, which Rachel gave birth to, Benjamin, for he was born to him in the land on the right hand.

It was after the death of Rachel that Jacob pitched his tent in the tent of her handmaid Bilhah. And Rueben was jealous for his mother Leah on account of this; he was filled with anger, and he rose up in his anger and went and entered the tent of Bilhah and then removed his father's bed.

At that time the portion of birthright, together with the kingly and priestly offices, was removed from the sons of Rueben for he had profaned his father's bed; the birthright was given to Joseph, the kingly office to Judah, and the priesthood to Levi, because Rueben had defiled his father's bed.

These are the generations of Jacob who were born to him in Padan-aram, and the sons of Jacob were twelve:

The sons of Leah were Rueben the first born, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and their sister Dinah;

and the sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

The sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, were Gad and Asher,

and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid, were Dan and Naphtali;

these are the sons of Jacob which were born to him in Padan-aram.

Jacob and his sons and all belonging to him journeyed and came to Mamre, which is Kireath-arba, that is in Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned; Jacob with his sons and all belonging to him lived with his father in Hebron.

His brother Esau, his sons and all belonging to him went to the land of Seir and lived there and had possessions in the land of Seir, and the children of Esau were prolific and multiplied greatly in the land of Seir. (Jas 36:1-20)

Isn't it strange that Genesis mention's the death of Rebecca's nurse, but not the death of Rebecca? As Rebecca was Jacob's mother, you would have thought her death was important to mention! The ages of the people, Laban's death and the cause of his death, are also mentioned in Jasher. Clearly Rueben had removed Jacob's bed, from the tent of Bilhah. Rueben had been angry with his father, because of the way he had disrespected his 1st wife, Rueben's mother. This action caused the nomination of Levi and Judah for priesthood and kingship respectively. This was not earned through their own righteous actions, but came through Rueben dishonouring his father. One can understand why Rueben did this, as he had been offended on his mother's behalf. Another reference to the future roles, of the children of Levi and Judah, are found in the account of the death of Jacob, in the Book of Jasher.

The death of Jacob

Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years, and the days of Jacob, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty seven years. At that time Jacob was attacked with that illness of which he died and he sent and called for his son Joseph from Egypt, and Joseph his son came from Egypt and came to his father. Jacob said to Joseph and to his sons, "Behold I die, and the God of your ancestors will visit you and bring you back to the land which the Lord swore to give to you and to your children after you; now therefore when I am dead, bury me in the cave which is in Machpelah in Hebron in the land of Canaan, near my ancestors." Jacob made his sons swear to bury him in Machpelah, in Hebron, and his sons swore to him concerning this thing. And he commanded them, saying, "Serve the Lord your God, for He who delivered your fathers will also deliver you from all trouble." And Jacob said, "Call all your children to me," and all the children of Jacob's sons came and sat before him, and Jacob blessed them, and he said to them, "The Lord God of your fathers shall grant you a thousand times as much and bless you, and may He give you the blessing of your father Abraham." And all the children of Jacob's sons went forth on that day after he had blessed them. On the next day Jacob again called for his sons and they all assembled and came to him and sat before him, and Jacob on that day blessed his sons before his death; each man did he bless according to his blessing. So it is written in the book of the law of the Lord pertaining to Israel. (! See Gen 47:27 - Gen 50:14) And Jacob said to Judah, "I know my son that you are a mighty man for your brothers; reign over them, and your sons shall reign over their sons forever. Only teach your sons the bow and all the weapons of war, in order that they may fight the battles of their brother who will rule over his enemies."

{ This is referring to King David, who refers back to this prophecy, in 2 Samuel!!!
Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son, and he told them to teach the children of Judah the Song of the Bow; indeed it is written in the Book of Jasher: (2Sa 1:17-18) }

*And Jacob again commanded his sons on that day, saying, "Behold I shall this day be gathered to my people; carry me up from Egypt and bury me in the cave of Machpelah as I have commanded you. But take care I pray you that none of your sons carry me, only yourselves, and this is the manner you shall do to me, when you carry my body to go with it to the land of Canaan to bury me:
Judah, Issachar and Zebulun shall carry my bier at the eastern side;
Reuben, Simeon and Gad at the south;
Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin at the west;
Dan, Asher and Naphtali at the north.
Let not Levi carry with you, for he and his sons will carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord with the Israelites in the camp, neither let Joseph my son carry, for as a king so let his glory be; but Ephraim and Manasseh shall be in their stead."*

"Thus shall you do to me when you carry me away; do not neglect anything of all that I command you and it shall come to pass when you do this to me, that the Lord will remember you favorably and your children after you forever. And you my sons, honor each his brother and his relative, and command your children and your children's children after you to serve the Lord God of your ancestors always. In order that you may prolong your days in the land, you and your children and your children's children forever, when you do what is good and upright in the sight of the Lord your God, to follow in all His ways."

"And you, Joseph my son, forgive I pray you the prongs of your brothers and all their wrongdoings in the injury that they heaped on you, for God intended it for you and your children's benefit. And O my son leave not your brothers to the inhabitants of Egypt, neither hurt their feeling, for behold I consign them to the hand of God and in your hand to guard them from the Egyptians;"
the sons of Jacob answered their father saying, "O, our father, all that you have commanded us, so will we do; may God only be with us."

Jacob said to his sons, "So may God be with you when you keep all His ways; turn not from His ways either to the right or the left in performing what is good and upright in His sight. For I know that many and severe troubles will befall you in the latter days in the land, yes, your children and children's children; only serve the Lord and He will save you from all trouble. It shall come to pass when you shall go after God to serve Him and will teach your children after you, and your children's children, to know the Lord, then will the Lord raise up to you your children a servant (! Moses) from among your children; the Lord will deliver you through his hand from all affliction, and bring you out of Egypt and bring you back to the land of your fathers to inherit it securely."

Jacob ceased commanding his sons, and he drew his feet into the bed. He died and was gathered to his people. And Joseph fell on his father and he cried out and wept over him and he kissed him, and he called out in a bitter voice, and he said, "O my father, my father." His son's wives and all his household came and fell on Jacob, and they wept over him and cried in a very loud voice concerning Jacob. (Jasher 56:1-24)

Note the future reference to Moses, and that Ephraim and Manasseh, replace Levi and Joseph in the twelve tribes of Israel. Jacob says the same thing to Joseph, in the account in Genesis.

And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Rueben and Simeon, they shall be mine. (Gen 48:5)

Note what Genesis says about Judah – it is a prophecy of kingship from David to the coming of Jesus Christ.

*"Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him?
The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding His donkey to the vine, and His donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed His garments in wine, and His clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and His teeth whiter than milk." (Gen 49:8-12)*

These verses remind me of the following two sets of scriptures: -

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey. A colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.' " (Zec 9:9-10)

Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? -

"I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?

"I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, and I wondered that there was no one to uphold; therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; and My own fury, it sustained Me. I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, made them drunk in My fury, and brought down their strength to the earth." (Isa 63:1-6)

The blessing of Joseph in Genesis, also makes reference to Jesus Christ, the Shepherd and the Rock of Salvation.

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall. The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), by the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless 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 excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers." (Gen 49:22-26)

The death of Joseph

All the souls that went forth from the loins of Jacob were seventy souls; these are they who came with Jacob their father to Egypt to dwell there: and Joseph and all his brothers lived securely in Egypt, and they ate of the best of Egypt all the days of the life of Joseph. And Joseph lived in the land of Egypt ninety-three years, and Joseph reigned over all Egypt eighty years. When the days of Joseph drew near that he should die, he sent and called for his brothers and all his father's household, and they all came together and sat before him. Joseph said to his brothers and all of his father's household,

"Behold I die, and God will certainly visit you and bring you up from this land to the land which He swore to your fathers to give to them. And it shall be when God shall visit you to bring you up from here to the land of your fathers, then bring up my bones with you from here."

Joseph made the sons of Israel to swear for their descendants after them, saying, "God will certainly visit you and you shall bring up my bones with you from here." And it came to pass after this that Joseph died in that year, the seventy-first year of the Israelites going down to Egypt.

And Joseph was one hundred and ten years old when he died in the land of Egypt, and all his brothers and all his servants rose up and they embalmed Joseph, as was their custom, and his brothers and all Egypt mourned over him for seventy days. (Jas 59: 19-26) (Also read in Gen 50: 22-26)

Its interesting to note that the way Jacob's bier was carried, is exactly the same way, that Israel camped around the tabernacle of meeting!!!

*Judah, Issachar and Zebulun shall carry my bier at the eastern side;
Reuben, Simeon and Gad at the south;
Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin at the west;
Dan, Asher and Naphtali at the north. (Jasher 56: 12)*

The Tribes by Armies

And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: "Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father's house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting.

On the east side, toward the rising of the sun, those of the standard of the forces with Judah shall camp according to their armies... Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar... Then comes the tribe of Zebulun...

On the south side shall be the standard of the forces with Reuben according to their armies... Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon... Then comes the tribe of Gad... And the tabernacle of meeting shall move out with the camp of the Levites in the middle of the camps; as they camp, so they shall move out, everyone in his place, by their standards.

On the west side shall be the standard of the forces with Ephraim according to their armies... Next to him comes the tribe of Manasseh... Then comes the tribe of Benjamin...

The standard of the forces with Dan shall be on the north side according to their armies... Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher... Then comes the tribe of Naphtali... These are the ones who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' houses. All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty. But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel, just as the Lord commanded Moses. Thus the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses; so they camped by their standards and so they broke camp, each one by his family, according to their fathers' houses. (Num 2: 1-34)

Was not this whole plan, by God's grand design?

-oOo-

The Book of Jasher by Joseph B. Lumpkin - ISBN : 9781933580890