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Joseph is a Fruitful Vine

49: 22-26

Joseph is a fruitful vine 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 (**to see link click [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; Ezekei'el 47:13**). The TaNaKh does, on occasion, refer to a **tribe of Joseph (Joshua 17:17; Judges 1:22-23; Second 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; Ezekei'el 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 (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 and 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; Deut 32:4 and 13; 2 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 Isra'el, 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 Isra'el 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 (see my commentary on [The Life of Christ Mv - The Jewish Concept of Two Messiah's](#)).

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, **Jacob** was **blessing twelve 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 (**Ezeki'el 47:13**), one being for the tribe of **Manasseh (Ezeki'el 48:4)**, and the other being for the tribe of **Ephraim (Ezeki'el 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.