

JACOB'S BLESSINGS IN GENESIS 49  
AS TREATED BY  
VARIOUS MIDRASHIC COLLECTIONS

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## Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine some of the major Midrashic material on Jacob's blessings in Genesis 49. The Midrashic material is herein compared and contrasted and an attempt has been made to establish any possible connection between the collections.

The Midrashic compilations from which this material has been culled are: Genesis Rabbah, a Classical Amoraic Midrash of the early period (400-500 C.E.); Midrash Tanhuma, a Collection of the middle period (775-900 C.E.); Yalkut Shimoni, the best-known and most comprehensive of Midrashic anthologies of the period around 1200-1300; and Midrash Hagadol a 13th century work on the Pentateuch. Yalkut Shimon emanates from the European Jewish community, being attributed to Simeon ha-Darshan of Frankfort. Midrash Hagadol originates in Yemen and is believed to have been compiled by one David b. Amram Adani.

The versions of the collections which have been used are: Midrash Rabbah by Mirkin and The Midrash translated by Freedman and published by The Soncino Press for Genesis Rabbah, the vocalized Midrash Tanhuma published by Eshkol in Jerusalem, the Yalkut Shimoni put out by Mosad Ha-Rav, Kook in Jerusalem, and the Midrash Hagadol also published by Mosad Ha Rav Kook.

For the purposes of consistency, all of the Biblical verses which are translated are taken from the 1917 Jewish Publication



Society of America's translation of The Holy Bible. Although a more modern translation would have been preferable, this is the only complete Jewish translation available at this time.





Genesis 49:1-28

"And Jacob called unto his sons, and said: 'Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the end of days.

'Assemble yourselves, and hear, ye sons of Jacob;  
And hearken unto Israel your father.

Reuben, thou art my first born,  
My might, and the first-fruits of my strength;  
The excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power.  
Unstable as water, have not thou the excellency;  
Because thou wentest up to thy father's bed;  
Then defiledst thou it -- he went up to my couch.

Simeon and Levi are brethren;  
Weapons of violence their kinship.  
Let my soul not come into their council;  
Unto their assembly let my glory not be united;  
For in their anger they slew men,  
And in their self-will they houghed oxen.  
Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce.  
And their wrath, for it was cruel;  
I will divide them in Jacob,  
And scatter them in Israel.

Judah, thee shall thy brethren praise;  
Thy hand shall be on the neck of thine enemies;

Thy father's sons shall bow down before thee.  
Judah is a lion's whelp;  
From the prey, my son, thou art gone up.  
He stooped down, he couched as a lion,  
And as a lioness; who shall rouse him up?  
The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,  
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
As long as men come to Shiloh;  
And unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be.  
Binding his foal unto the vine,  
And his ass's colt unto the choice vine;  
He washeth his garments in wine,  
And his vesture in the blood of grapes;  
His eyes shall be red with wine,  
And his teeth white with milk.

Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea,  
And he shall be a shore for ships,  
And his flank shall be upon Zidon.

Issachar is a large-boned ass,  
Couching down between the sheep-folds.  
For he saw a resting-place that it was good,  
And the land that it was pleasant;  
And he bowed his shoulder to bear,  
And became a servant under task-work.

Dan shall judge his people,  
As one of the tribes of Israel.  
Dan shall be a serpent in the way,  
A horned snake in the path,  
That biteth the horse's heels,  
So that his rider falleth backward.  
I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord.

Gad, a troop shall troop upon him;  
But he shall troop upon their heel.

As for Asher, his bread shall be fat,  
And he shall yield royal dainties.

Naphtali is a hind let loose:  
He giveth goodly words.

Joseph is a fruitful vine,  
A fruitful vine by a fountain;  
Its branches run over the wall.  
The archers have dealt bitterly with him,  
And shot at him, and hated him;  
But his bow abode firm,  
And the arms of his hands were made supple,  
By the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,  
From thence, from the shepherd, the Stone of Israel,  
Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee,

And by the Almighty, who shall bless thee,  
With blessings of heaven above,  
Blessings of the deep that coucheth beneath,  
Blessings of the breasts, and of the womb.  
The blessings of thy father  
Are mighty beyond the blessings of my progenitors.  
Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills;  
They shall be on the head of Joseph,  
And on the crown of the head of the prince among his  
brethren.

Benjamin is a wolf that raventh;  
In the morning he devoureth the prey,  
And at even he divideth the spoil.'

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is  
it that their father spoke unto them and blessed them; every  
one according to his blessing, he blessed them."

## Chapter I

### "A Breakdown of General Tendencies in the Collections"

The purpose of this chapter is to record the general tendencies of the four Midrashic collections -- Genesis Rabbah, Midrash Tanhuma, Midrash Hagadol and Yalkut Shimoni. This will serve as a foundation for the more specific comparison which will appear in the chapters to follow.

#### Genesis 49:1 and 2

וַיִּקְרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר  
 בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵלַי וְאֶתְּנֵם  
 אֶתְּנֵם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

#### Genesis 49:1 and 2

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said: "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the end of days.

Assemble yourselves, and hear, ye sons of Jacob;

And hearken unto Israel your father."



Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Tanhuma  
 Midrash Hagadol  
 Yalkut Shimoni

Jacob is portrayed as  
 ready to reveal the  
 secrets of "the end of  
 days" to his sons.

Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Tanhuma  
 Yalkut Shimoni

Isaac loses the revela-  
 tion -- so his son  
 Jacob.

Midrash Hagadol  
 Genesis Rabbah

Daniel loses revelation  
 in much the same way as  
 Jacob did.

Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Tanhuma  
 Midrash Hagadol  
 Yalkut Shimoni

Jacob fears some unworthi-  
 ness among his offspring.  
 They reassure him of their  
 faithfulness to God with  
 the words of the *שְׁמַע* --  
 They believe in the One  
 God as he does. -- Jacob  
 responds by whispering,

*יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד*  
*"אֵל אֶחָד"*

Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Tanhuma  
 Midrash Hagadol  
 Yalkut Shimoni

Jacob is compared to the faithful servant of a King. On his death-bed the servant addressing his sons wishes to give them the information necessary to set themselves free. At that moment the King appears. The servant then instructs his sons to be loyal to the King and serve him faithfully as did their father all the days of his life.

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Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Hagadol

Come together from Egypt and gather yourselves to Ramses.  
 Come together from the 10 tribes and gather around Judah and Benjamin (to become accustomed to honoring them).

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol

That they were to be  
exiled twice.<sup>1</sup>

10000

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol  
Yalkut Shimoni

Purify yourselves.<sup>2</sup>

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol  
Yalkut Shimoni

Gather together and guard  
against dissension.

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

Be as one people in all  
matters, united.<sup>3</sup>

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma

Jacob appointed elders  
from the tribes.<sup>4</sup>

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

Form yourselves into  
bands to study.<sup>5</sup>

אק"י, אק"י  
 פ"א

Genesis Rabbah  
 Yalkut Shimoni

It should have been Esau, not Jacob calling to his sons -- for he was the older of the two. However, Esau being unsettled and a wanderer did not make a will, Jacob "the tent dweller" did.

Genesis Rabbah

R. Judah:

He called to God to be with his sons.

R. Pinhas:

He invited God on behalf of his sons.

R. Abun:

He appointed God as a guardian for his sons.<sup>6</sup>

Midrash Tanhuma

The Rabbis speak of various periods in Jewish history when the people took on additional obligations.

Jacob did so here in not revealing "the end" to his sons.

Midrash Tanhuma  
Yalkut Shimoni

Jacob distributed honors to each of his sons. God demonstrated His agreement with Jacob's comments by causing Moses to bless the tribes with similar blessings.

לפי זה יתכן  
שהוא מביא  
ה' יתן

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

The fall of Gog (Edom).  
The rebuilding of the Temple.

Genesis Rabbah

The Messianic coming.

הקדמה

Genesis Rabbah

The tribes were scattered and an angel descended and assembled them.

אל ישראל  
אשר לישראל

Genesis Rabbah

R. Judan:

Hearken to Israel your  
father.

Israel, your father, is  
as a god -- As God creates  
worlds so does Jacob, as  
He distributes worlds so  
does Jacob.

Genesis 49: 3 and 4

ראובן ראשית כחתי אשתי  
אשר לישראל  
עצמי כחתי אשתי  
אשר לישראל  
אשר לישראל  
אשר לישראל

Genesis 49: 3 and 4

Reuben, thou art my first-born,

My might, and the first -- fruits of my strength;  
The excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power.

Unstable as water, have not thou the excellency;  
Because thou wentest up to thy father's bed;  
Then defiledest thou it -- he went up to my couch.

ראשון | קברו  
אלה

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol  
Yalkut Shimoni

Jacob compares Reuben to  
Essau, and praises Reuben  
for being better.

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol  
Yalkut Shimoni

Reuben compared to Jacob --  
does not live up to his  
father's example of the  
proper first-born.

Midrash Hagadol  
Yalkut Shimoni

Reuben was first geneal-  
ogically, first for  
inheritance, first for  
exile, first for cities  
of refuge.

כח | חלוקה  
גל

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

Mighty warriors in battle.<sup>7</sup>  
Reuben -- the beginning  
of my strength and my  
grief.<sup>8</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

Literal interpretation.

אלה נ'ל  
58 נ'ל

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol  
Yalkut Shimoni

These words refer to the birthright, the priesthood and the monarchy, all of which were Reuben's.<sup>9</sup>

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol  
Yalkut Shimoni

The birthright was given over to Joseph, the priesthood to Levi and the monarchy to Judah.

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

The birthright was being returned to its rightful owner, Joseph, whose mother, Rachel should have been Jacob's first wife.

Midrash Hagadol  
Yalkut Shimoni

Reuben was to be first in all things -- and all first fruits and first born animals were to be his. These he lost when he lost his prime position.



Yalkut Shimoni

יִלְכָּל = inheritance

גִּזְרָה = strength

פְּחַד כְּנִיָּה  
אֵל תַּתְּנָה

Genesis Rabbah

(Attributed to  
R. Eliezer)

Midrash Tanhuma

Midrash Hagadol

גִּזְרָה as an abbreviation:

You hastened, you sinned,  
you committed adultery.

Genesis Rabbah

Midrash Hagadol

R. Joshua:

You broke off the yoke,  
you defiled my bed, your  
passion stirred within you.

Genesis Rabbah

Midrash Tanhuma

R. Eliezer b. Jacob:

You trampled upon the law,  
you forfeited the birth-  
right. You became a  
stranger.

R. Eleazar of Modiim:

You did recoil, you  
trembled, the sin has  
flown from your head.

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
(attributed to  
R. Joshua)

You were reckless, you  
removed the yoke from  
your neck, you were  
moved by sin.

Midrash Tanhuma

R. Judah turns the word  
around:

You perspired, you were  
troubled, your sin burst  
forth.<sup>10</sup>

Yalkut Shimoni

Comments appear in

נח"ל - 5:7 | נ"ח

פ' נד

Genesis Rabbah

Reuben was likened to  
water -- his privileges  
were poured away.

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

You have sinned through  
water (semen) so let the  
one who was drawn from  
the water (Moses) save  
you.

Midrash Tanhuma

Reuben is compared to  
a vessel filled with  
water which, when broken,  
has nothing left in it.

נחלן ס'כ

Genesis Rabbah

R. Eleazar of Modiin:  
Nothing of your sin shall  
remain.<sup>11</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

Reuben is likened to a  
vessel filled with water  
which breaks and is left  
empty. You were worthy  
of the birthright, the  
monarchy and the priest-  
hood, but you were broken  
and lost them.

Midrash Hagadol

R. Eliezer and R. Joshua:  
Nothing has been left for  
you.<sup>12</sup>

כי עשיתי לך  
אלהים

## Genesis Rabbah

(Attributed to R.  
Abbahu or R.  
Jacob in the name  
of R. Hiyya the  
Elder and R.  
Joshua b. Levi  
in the name of  
R. Simeon B.  
Yohai)

Midrash Hagadol

Reuben's proclamation on Mt. Ebal (in Deut.) would vindicate him from the alleged guilt alluded to by this statement. - One who is suspicious can never act as a judge in a case similar to his own

## Genesis Rabbah

Midrash Hagadol

Reuben's actions were to vindicate his mother's humiliation.

## Genesis Rabbah

Midrash Tanhuma

Reference to the story  
earlier in Genesis of  
Reuben going out and  
bringing back mandrakes.

אלו חסד  
אלו יסוד

Genesis Rabbah

Reuben will be healed

Midrash Tanhuma

with the coming of Moses.<sup>13</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

Yalkut Shimoni

Genesis Rabbah

Eleazar of Modiin: Jacob

Midrash Hagadol

said his couch was raised  
by mandrakes.

(Reuben's gift)

Genesis 49:5 - 7

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי אֶחָד  
אֶחָד אֶל־מִינֵי נֶפֶשׁ קִדְמָה אֶל־יְהוָה  
כִּי קָאֵם בְּרָא אֵל וּבְרָצָה  
עָקַר עֹר . אֲרֹר אֶם כִּי עַל וְקָרַם  
כִּי קָאֵם אֶחָד קִדְמָה וְאֶחָד  
קִדְמָה .

Genesis 49:5 - 7

Simeon and Levi are brethren;  
 Weapons of violence their kinship.  
 Let my soul not come into their council;  
 Unto their assembly let my glory not be united;  
 For in their anger they slew men,  
 And in their self-will they boughed oxen.  
 Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce,  
 And their wrath, for it was cruel;  
 I will divide them in Jacob,  
 And scatter them in Israel.

181 none  
pink

Genesis Rabbah	Brothers to Dinah, but
Midrash Tanhuma	not to Joseph.
Midrash Hagadol	

Genesis Rabbah	Brothers (partners) in degradation.
----------------	--

Yalkut Shimoni	Brothers (partners) in ideas about Shechem and Joseph.
----------------	--

כלי חנם  
אכילתם

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol

The tools in your hands  
were stolen.-- They are  
fit for Esau who sold  
his birthright.

אכילתם

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol

From the Greek root.

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma

Their dwelling places.<sup>14</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

The selling of Joseph.<sup>15</sup>

אלו האנשים  
הזכורים

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol

Allude to the Zimri -  
Cozbi incident in  
Numbers 25.<sup>16</sup>

Yalkut Shimoni

Jacob asks for mercy -  
he should not be thought  
of as one of them.  
These are the spies.<sup>17</sup>

דקדוק  
אלו כאלו

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol  
Yalkut Shimoni

Allude to the Korah  
rebellion.<sup>18</sup>

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Yalkut Shimoni

My name should be recalled,  
says Jacob, when the  
Levites take their sta-  
tions to chant in the  
sanctuary.

כיוון  
הוא אל

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

This refers to Hamor  
the father of Shechem.



Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma

They slew more than one  
man, but they were thought  
of as one man.

הקטן  
הגדול  
הוא

Genesis Rabbah

הוא = a wall, they  
razed the wall of proselytes,  
destroyed their confidence,  
by destroying Schechem.

Midrash Hagadol

Animals belonging to the  
nations.

Joseph<sup>19</sup>

הוא  
הוא  
הוא

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol  
(Iss: b. Judah)

He cursed their anger  
rather than them, for it  
was their anger which  
caused them to do that  
which they did.

Genesis Rabbah

R. Judah b. Simon - uses  
the same idea as above  
with a different bounty.

Genesis Rabbah

R. Huna and R. Azariah  
in the name of R. Johanan:  
Made hot-tempered lepers  
numerous among them.<sup>20</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

R. Hulia and R. Ezrikan  
in name of R. Johanan:  
Anger brings a man low.  
"Those who dribble on  
themselves are angry."

אָפּ'ס אָפּ'ס

Genesis Rabbah

Levi

Midrash Hagadol

Genesis Rabbah

24,000 fell in the Zimri

Midrash Tanhuma

incident; their widows

Midrash Hagadol

were parcelled out --  
2,000 to each tribe.

Genesis Rabbah

All who go from door to  
door are from Simeon.

Midrash Tanhuma

Levi does not beg, he  
is given his "clean  
morsel."

מדרש רב

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

Simeon

Midrash Hagadol

The majority of Simeon  
was poor.

מדרש רב  
מדרש רב

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

From Simeon came the scribes  
in the synagogues, the stu-  
dents and teachers of the  
Mishnah, and from Levi,  
those who engaged in the  
Study of Torah. -- These  
were scattered as a result  
of their professions.

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

When they saw Jacob chiding  
them, the sons fled --  
he called them back and  
began to bless them.



He washeth his garments in wine,  
 And his vesture in the blood of grapes;  
 His eyes shall be red with wine,  
 And his teeth white with milk.

יהודה ויהוא  
 יוסף ויוסף

Genesis Rabbah  
 (Attributed to R.  
 Simeon b. Yohai)

They will all be called  
 by your name.<sup>21</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

Genesis Rabbah  
 Yalkut Shimoni

Because Judah acted worth-  
 ily by saving Tamar and  
 her two sons, and Joseph,  
 the brothers will praise  
 him and be called by his  
 name.<sup>22</sup>

Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Tanhuma

You confessed in the  
 Tamar incident.<sup>23</sup>

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

The mother of the priest-  
hood, Elisheva came from  
Judah, as did Nehshon b.  
Aminadab, the chief of  
princes, and Caleb, and  
Othniel, and Boaz, and  
David and Solomon, and  
Jehosophat, and Jotham,  
and Hezekiah, and Josiah,  
and Daniel, Hananiah,  
Mishael, Azariah, and  
Zerubabel B. Shealtiel  
and Messiah.

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

Play on Judah's birth  
as fourth --

ד -- fourth letter,  
fourth day the luminaries  
were created parallel to  
Messiah, four of his seed  
were saved, fourth letter  
is the beginning and end  
of דוד ... and  
6 righteous men descended  
from him.

- Genesis Rabbah      Your brothers praise you,  
your mother praised you,  
and I praise you.
- Genesis Rabbah      Judah was first in journeys,  
first in standards, first  
in inheritance, and re-  
ceived a larger portion  
than the others.<sup>24</sup>
- Genesis Rabbah      Whoever confesses misdeeds  
will merit the world to  
come. (God and Cain exchange  
regarding Repentance.)<sup>25</sup>
- Midrash Tanhuma      Your brothers will acknowl-  
edge you as King over them.
- Midrash Hagadol      R. Pinhas: You are like  
your name.  
Such was the thanks of your  
mother.  
The praise is found in  
your tribe.  
Mercy is close to them.<sup>26</sup>

Yalkut Shimoni  
Genesis Rabbah

Judah caused Reuben to  
confess.<sup>27</sup>

Alludes to Davidic dynasty.  
Judah will rule over his  
brothers in this world  
and world to come.<sup>29</sup>

פ'ק' 8787 פ'3'

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

David succeeds in scaring  
off his enemies -- not  
Joshua, for it was Judah's  
paternal blessing and  
David was a descendant of  
Judah.

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

As you sinned (hardened  
your neck) once and con-  
fessed (humiliated your-  
self) your guilt, so will  
you be privileged to slay  
your enemies with weapons  
which strike against the  
neck and speed off (bow  
and arrow).



Midrash Tanhuma

This refers to David,

ישמעאל  
בני אבימלך

Genesis Rabbah

Because Jacob had four

Midrash Tanhuma

wives -- as compared to

Midrash Hagadol

Isaac who had only one.

גור אריה  
יהודה

Genesis Rabbah

The strength of a lion

Midrash Hagadol

and the nerve of a whelp.

Genesis Rabbah

This alludes to the Messiah

Yalkut Shimoni

who comes from two tribes,

the father from Judah and

the mother from Dan --

both tribes having been

compared to lions.

נצח בן  
משה

Genesis Rabbah

You raised yourself from

Midrash Tanhuma

the prey of Tamar -- saving

Midrash Hagadol

her and her two sons from

fire -- and from Joseph who

you took out of the pit.

As you saved 3 from fire and

one from the pit, so I  
will do for your descend-  
ants, says God.

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

You are exonerated from  
the sin of throwing  
Joseph in the pit.

כחז רב  
בארית ופליא  
מי יק' מל

Genesis Rabbah

From Perez to David  
"he crouches and lies  
down like a lion" From  
David to Zedekiah "like  
the king of beasts who  
dare rouse him?"

From Perez to Zedekiah  
"he crouches and lies  
down like a lion" From  
Zedekiah to Messiah "like  
the king of beasts who  
dare rouse him?"

In this world "he crouches  
and lies down like a lion."

In the messianic era —  
 "like the king of beasts  
 who dare rouse him?" --  
 until all the enemies  
 are no more.

נ/ו' יכ  
 מלך מלכות

Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Hagadol  
 Yalkut Shimoni

Refers to the Exilarchs  
 of Babylonia who ruled  
 with a scepter.

Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Hagadol

Alludes to Sanhedrin  
 which strikes and punishes.

Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Tanhuma

The seat of the monarchy.

Genesis Rabbah  
 Yalkut Shimoni

Allusion to the Messiah  
 who will chastise the  
 State with a Staff.

Midrash Hagadol

The government.  
 The heads of the Yeshivot  
 and the Sanhedrin in  
 Palestine.

מִנְחָלֵי  
מִנְחָלֵי  
מִנְחָלֵי

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol  
Yalkut Shimoni

Hillel's children who  
teach Torah in public.

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

The two secretaries of  
the judges who stand to  
the left and to the right.

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma

Messianic allusion.

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

Alludes to the inhabitants  
of Jabez, the Tivathites,  
the Shimeathites and the  
Sucathites who gave legal  
rulings in the Great  
Sanhedrin which met in  
Judah.

Genesis Rabbah

Patriarchs of the House  
of R. Judah the Prince.

Midrash Hagadol

Prophet / Scribe

כ' זר  
ה'ע ק'ר'

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma

He whose Kingdom it will  
be (Messiah).<sup>30</sup>

Genesis Rabbah

Debate question -- from  
whom was Hillel descended.

Genesis Rabbah

All nations will bring  
gift to the Messiah.

(Transposition of

'ע זר' = ה'ע ק'ר' )

Midrash Hagadol

The Messianic King.

- a discussion of the  
names from the various  
schools
- discussion of the coming  
of the Messiah

Yalkut Shimoni

- Nations destined to  
bring offerings to  
Israel and the Messiah.

Genesis Rabbah Will set the teeth of the  
 Midrash Tanhuma nations on edge and they will  
 Midrash Hagadol be subservient to him.<sup>31</sup>

Genesis Rabbah The homage of the people  
 Midrash Tanhuma shall be his.  
 To him whom the people  
 gather around will homage  
 be paid.

Genesis Rabbah Alludes to Jerusalem,  
 Yalkut Shimon which will set the teeth  
 of the nations on edge.

ישראל מול  
 ציון

Midrash Tanhuma  
 Midrash Hagadol

ישראל = Israel  
 ציון = Zion, City of  
 David.<sup>32</sup>

Midrash Hagadol He will put prohibitions on  
 Israel.<sup>33</sup> In the future one  
 vine will lift the load of  
 an ass.

Yalkut Shimoni

Allusion to the Tabernacle.<sup>34</sup>

Dream interpretation re:  
child birth.

מקרא

Genesis Rabbah

An ass tied to a vine  
improves yield.

God bound to Israel  
alludes to the city which  
He chose.

Genesis Rabbah

Allusion to he who will  
gather all of Israel together.<sup>35</sup>

Midrash Tanhuma

Israel described as such.<sup>36</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

מקרא  
מקרא

Midrash Hagadol

One cluster destined to  
lift the burden of an ass'  
foal. Allusion to Solomon's  
Temple with its many open-  
ings.<sup>37</sup>

Yalkut Shimoni

Messianic hope.<sup>38</sup>

Yalkut

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

Lowly and riding upon  
an ass.

Genesis Rabbah

He who plants Israel as  
a choice vine.<sup>39</sup>

Genesis Rabbah

Morally strong sons will  
spring from him.<sup>40</sup>  
God said, "I am bound to  
Israel, and when Messiah  
comes it will be evident."

Yalkut Shimoni

Speaks about wine --  
perhaps alluding to Torah.

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Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma

From an abundance of wine.

Genesis Rabbah

Messiah will compose for  
them words of Torah.<sup>41</sup>



Midrash Hagadol

They will be declared  
pure by bringing  
sacrifices.<sup>42</sup>

Will clarify the law for  
them Wine press will be  
filled.

ל"ב

Midrash Hagadol

White wine.

ל"ג

Genesis Rabbah

Red wine.

Midrash hagadol

ל"ד

Genesis Rabbah

He will repair their  
mistakes.<sup>43</sup>

Midrash Tanhuma

Midrash Hagadol

Genesis Rabbah

R. Hanin:

Midrash Hagadol

Israel does not need  
Messiah; the nations do.  
Israel only needs him to  
return the exiles.

Genesis Rabbah

Elaborates on above with interpretation of quote from Zechariah.

Genesis Rabbah

He will explain things which were previously misunderstood.

חפזים  
ללמוד  
ל"ה

Genesis Rabbah

Midrash Hagadol

The children of the South whose eyes are blue and whose palates are good for Torah study.

Genesis Rabbah

Wine will be abundant in his territory.

. Midrash Hagadol

All who taste it will desire it. (ל' - ל')

As milk is to a baby, so wine is for an adult.

1"

Midrash Tanhuma

= Torah - The Torah

abounded by him -- allow  
me to taste from Wine of  
Torah -- whiteness of teeth  
will come.

ר' יעקב | ר' י  
ר' חנניאל

Genesis Rabbah

R. Azariah, R. Jonathan  
b. Haggai, R. Isaac  
b. Merian -- others say in  
the name of R. Jose b. Hanina:  
The majority of the Sanhedrin  
was from Judah. -- They would  
sit and discuss Torah (wine)  
with their teeth until the  
law was brought forth as  
white as milk.

Midrash Hagadol

The Sanhedrin who sets and  
orders the words of the  
Torah like teeth, until  
they are as clear as milk  
is white.

Genesis 49:13 - 15

זְבֻלֹן שָׁחֵם לַיָּם יֵשֵׁב יֵשֵׁב  
 יֵשֵׁב עַל-צִידֹן.

יִשָּׂכָר עֵמֶר גָּדוֹל רֵעֵהוּ בֵּין  
 בִּמְשָׁחָיו. וְיִשָּׂכָר  
 יֵשֵׁב בֵּין הַצֹּמֶר וּבֵין הַצֹּמֶר.

Genesis 49:13 - 15

Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea,  
 And he shall be a shore for ships,  
 And his flank shall be upon Zidon.  
 Issachar is a large - boned ass,  
 Couching down between the sheepfolds.  
 For he saw a resting-place that it was good,  
 And the land that it was pleasant;  
 And he bowed his shoulder to bear,  
 And became a servant under taskwork.

ג'נ' 1875  
P.N'

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma

Zebulun precedes Issachar because Zebulun dealt in practicality and Issachar in the Torah. They made a partnership so that Zebulun's business was for Issachar too -- and Moses blessed them thus. If it weren't for Zebulun, Issachar could not study.

Genesis Rabbah

Why bless Zebulun first? Because the Temple would be destroyed and Jacob had a vision of the Sanhedrin being moved from Judah and seated in Zebulun's portion. Traces the movement of the Sanhedrin.

R. Johanan:

Messianic age - Nations will receive retribution, Righteous will have limit set to suffering.

Midrash Hagadol

He will deal with  
practical matters.

Judges 5:18 - he puts his  
life in jeopardy unto  
death - and will always  
be victorious.

Comparison of Zebulun -  
worm from which blue dye  
comes.

$\int n$  = white glass.

Discussion of Kitron and  
Sepphoris -- and the  
name  $\int n \int n \int n$ .

$\int n$   $\int n \int n$   
 $\int n \int n$

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

Discussion of the origin  
of the prophet Jonah.<sup>45</sup>

Genesis Rabbah

"This completes the bless-  
ings of Judah and Zebulun."

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol

Gave himself over to the  
words of the Torah as a  
loaded-down donkey.

גמ' גמ' 77  
77

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

An ass caused him.<sup>46</sup>

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

An ass breaks the bone of  
the skeleton, so does  
Issachar break Israel in  
halachah (has undisputed  
supremacy).

Genesis Rabbah

He produced 200 Sanhedrin.<sup>47</sup>

Genesis Rabba

As bones of an ass is visible  
so Issachar's learning is  
clear. Allusion to his  
territory (geography).  
Fruits were of large size  
causing converts.<sup>48</sup>

R. Judah b. Simion in the  
name of R. Aha: He was an  
ass for proselytes bringing  
them in.

Genesis Rabbah

Zebulun brings goods in on boats, while Issachar does so on an ass.

Midrash Tanhuma

Zebulun brings goods in on boats.

Midrash Hagadol

He was stringent in issues of the Torah.<sup>49</sup>

He bows beneath the Torah and does not engage in business.

Strong and powerful boned.

Had strength to delve into Torah more than his brothers.

. Yalkut Shimoni

Moses blesses Zebulun fruit for Issachar could not study Torah without Zebulun's support. Issachar was the ninth tribe, but he comes second to the king because of his Torah.



"Happy are the righteous  
and happy their neighbors."  
Judah and Issachar and  
Zebulun close to Moses  
and Aaron and they become  
great in Torah.

ה' פ' פ' פ'  
פ' פ' פ'

Midrash Hagadol

He would spread Torah  
among the students.

Midrash Tanhuma

Genesis Rabbah

Two rows of disciples --  
The Sanhedrin.

Midrash Hagadol

Quotes Mishnah Sanhedrin --  
Three rows of learned men.

ה' פ' פ' פ'  
פ' פ' פ'

Genesis Rabbah

Passage compared to the

Midrash Tanhuma

Torah paralleling verses

Midrash Hagadol

in Proverbs. <sup>50</sup>

ON 6' 10" /  
228

Genesis Rabbah 200 heads of the Sanhedrin  
Midrash Hagadol which Issachar set up.  
Yalkut Shimoni (based on I. Chronicles 12:33)

Genesis Rabbah Comparison of Issachar  
Midrash Tanhuma and Barak whom the people  
Midrash Hagadol follow -- Issachar in  
matters of halachah --  
Break into battle.<sup>51</sup>

Genesis Rabbah Greatness of Issachar came  
from Zebulun who engaged  
in commerce and supported  
him. Therefore Moses placed  
Zebulun before Issachar  
when he blessed them.  
R. Eleazar and R. Samuel  
b. Nahman -- Dispute status  
of the remnants of original  
inhabitants of Issachar's  
territory.

Genesis Rabbah

ON = תורת - sought  
to correct the mistakes of  
others in the Torah.

Midrash Tanhuma

ON = halachah

Midrash Hagadol

All the tribes consulted  
him.

Genesis 49:16 - 18

בן יוסף בן מרים  
בן יוסף בן מרים  
בן יוסף בן מרים  
בן יוסף בן מרים  
בן יוסף בן מרים

Genesis 49:16 - 18

Dan shall judge his people,  
 As one of the tribes of Israel.  
 Dan shall be a serpent in the way,  
 A horned snake in the path,  
 That biteth the horse's heels,  
 So that his rider falleth backward.  
 I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord.

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Genesis Rabbah	Like Judah, unique among
Midrash Tanhuma	the tribes.
Midrash Hagadol	Like the Unique One of the
	Universe who needs no help
	in battle -- So was Samson
	who descended from Dan.
Genesis Rabbah	Interpretation of passages
Midrash Hagadol	from Judges regarding
	Samson.
Genesis Rabbah	As the most distinguished
	of tribes.

R. Joshua B. Nehemiah:

Had he not been paired with the most distinguished of tribes (Judah, from which Samson's mother stemmed), he would not have produced even on Judge.

Yalkut Shimoni

R. Johanan: Samson judged Israel as their Father in Heaven would.

לוי' 13  
פרק 18

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol

All animals go in pairs, snakes go alone; so Samson needed no assistance.

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol

Just as serpents are  
vengeful so was Samson.<sup>52</sup>

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

Just as the snake is  
found among women, so  
Samson -- leads to a dis-  
cussion about forbidden  
women/forbidden marriages.  
Just as a snake was bound  
by a curse, so Samson.<sup>53</sup>  
Just as a snake has power  
in its head, so with Samson.<sup>54</sup>  
Just as a snake's poison  
permeates after death, so  
with Samson.<sup>55</sup>

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

Alludes to Samson who  
Jacob saw standing between  
the two pillars -- Jacob  
prayed to God to endow him  
with strength.

Genesis Rabbah

Just as snake's eyelids  
quiver after death, so  
Samson quivered.

לפי  
נח/ע

Midrash Hagadol  
Yalkut Shimoni  
(Attributed to R.  
Johanan)

Samson was lame in both  
legs, Balaam was lame in  
one.<sup>56</sup>

לפי  
נח/ע

Genesis Rabbah

Quotes Judge. 16:25 -  
comparing Samson to a  
horse -- an object of sport.<sup>57</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

Quotes Judge. 15:15 -  
interprets an ass pregnant  
with tivins.<sup>58</sup>  
Interpretation of Judge.  
15:18 on Samson's thirst.<sup>59</sup>

לפי  
נח/ע

Genesis Rabbah

They rolled away from him  
(Samson) after falling  
dead.<sup>60</sup>

לפי  
נח/ע

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

Jacob saw Samson, and think-  
ing he was the Messiah,

when he saw what happened  
to Samson in the end, he  
said this.

R. Isaac: -

Everything is in the wait-  
ing; troubles, judgement  
of the Lord, Sanctifica-  
tion of God's name, the  
worthiness of forefathers,  
longing for world to come,  
mercy, pardon.<sup>61</sup>

Genesis Rabbah

He won't bring redemption  
(Samson) but one from Gad  
will.

Genesis 49:19

גד יצא להציל את ישראל  
כי יבא יום קץ  
ויהיה יום קץ

Genesis 49:19

Gad, a troop shall troop upon him;  
But he shall troop upon their heel.



לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
אֶתְּנֶה לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

At the time that all Israel  
will be conquering and  
dividing the land, Reuben  
and Gad will be there too.<sup>62</sup>

- Comments on this period -  
Saying they were saved on  
the merit of Jacob's bless-  
ings.

Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol

Elijah who comes in the  
end comes from him. - He  
will come to raid the  
foundations of the nations.

Genesis Rabbah

An army will come to despoil  
them, but they will despoil  
the army.

Genesis Rabbah

When they went out to  
battle they conquered and  
slew their adversaries  
(Deut. 33:20)<sup>63</sup>

הנה נעלה  
 לראות את  
 פניו

Genesis Rabbah

His daughters are pretty

Midrash Tanhuma

and fit for Kings.<sup>65</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

Genesis Rabbah

His land abounds in oils

Midrash Hagadol  
 (With quote from  
 Mishnah)

and the like in which  
 Kings delight.

Genesis Rabbah

He supplied the oil for

Yalkut Shimoni

anointing.

Genesis Rabbah

His land and bread are  
 rich -- and he shall pro-  
 duce wearers of the eight  
 priestly garments.<sup>66</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

This is the Omer and the  
 two breads from Asher  
 whose fruit ripen early.

Genesis 49:21

נַפְתָּלִי אֵלֶּיךָ יָבוֹא  
וְיִשְׁלַח לְךָ מִן הַיַּלְדִּים  
וְיִשְׁלַח לְךָ מִן הַיַּלְדִּים  
וְיִשְׁלַח לְךָ מִן הַיַּלְדִּים

Genesis 49:21

Naphtali is a hind let loose;

He giveth goodly words.

נַפְתָּלִי אֵלֶּיךָ  
וְיִשְׁלַח לְךָ מִן הַיַּלְדִּים  
וְיִשְׁלַח לְךָ מִן הַיַּלְדִּים  
וְיִשְׁלַח לְךָ מִן הַיַּלְדִּים

Genesis Rabbah

Midrash Tanhuma

Midrash Hagadol

The valley of Genossar

whose fruits ripen early

and the fruit is fat and

easy to eat as hind's meat.

Genesis Rabbah

Midrash Hagadol

Naphtali ran back to Egypt

to bring the title deeds

of the Cave of Machpeloh

to show Esau. -- The

story of Hashim the son of

Dan who killed Esau.

The vengeance of Jacob.

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

Naphtali ran to Egypt to  
bring the deed for the  
Cave of Machpeloh to con-  
firm Jacob's right to be  
buried there.

Genesis Rabbah

A land dependent on  
irrigation -- discussion  
of geographical location.<sup>67</sup>  
Alludes to the woman Judge  
of his tribe and the song  
she sang.<sup>68</sup>  
House of Assembly.<sup>69</sup>

Genesis Rabbah

Their tongues were as  
sweet as honey in the  
exposition of the Torah.

Genesis Rabbah

Their land was blessed.<sup>70</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

Naphtali ran like a hind  
and brought the strength  
of Egypt when the tribes  
went to bury Jacob and the  
sons of Heth came.

## Midrash Hagadol

Refers to female hinds who God provides with water — as hinds pant and long before God so did Esther.

R. Abahu -

Why is morning star called  $\text{כוכב לילה}$ ? - Just as hind's horns are split this way and that, so with the rays of the morning sun.

Rebbi -

Comments on difference between the moon's rays and the sun's.

R. Zera -

Esther compared to a hind - as a hind is narrow of womb and dear to her mate, so Esther was dear to Ahasuerus.

R. Jose -

Esther compared to morning star - as it is the end of night, so Esther marked the end of miracles.

R. Benjamin B. Yafat -

Righteous compared to

hinds - as horns branch off

as they grow, so the more

the righteous pray their

prayers are heard.

Midrash Hagadol

Genesis Rabbah  
(in R. Aha's name)

Midrash Hagadol

R. Jose b. R. Jacob b. Idi

The words which were

uttered with ୨୦।୯

and 73

Midrash Hagadol

### His house and his community

that give off words of

beauty.<sup>74</sup>

Genesis 49:22 -26

בן פרת יוסף בן פרת יוסף - יוסף  
 יוסף - יוסף - יוסף - יוסף - יוסף  
 יוסף - יוסף - יוסף - יוסף - יוסף  
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ר'ג'לת תחת ק'כ'ת ש'צ'ם ו'ר'ח'ם.  
 ק'כ'ת א'ק'י'ק' ג'ק'רו' א'ל-ק'כ'ת  
 ה'ר'י א'ר' ת'א'ות ג'ק'ז'ט א'ו'ל'ם ת'ק'י'ן.  
 א'ר'י'אל י'ו'ס'ם א'ל'ק'ד'ק'ד' נ'ז'ר א'ח'י'ו.

Genesis 49:22 - 26

Joseph is a fruitful vine,  
 A fruitful vine by a fountain;  
 Its branches run over the wall.  
 The archers have dealt bitterly with him,  
 And shot at him, and hated him;  
 But his bow abode firm,  
 And the arms of his hands were made supple,  
 By the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,  
 From thence, from the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel,

Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee,  
 And by the Almighty, who shall bless thee,  
 With blessings of heaven above,  
 Blessings of the deep that coucheth beneath,  
 Blessings of the breasts, and of the womb.  
 The blessings of thy father  
 Are mighty beyond the blessings of my progenitors  
 Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills;  
 They shall be on the head of Joseph,  
 And on the crown of the head of the prince among his  
 brethren.

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Genesis Rabbah	The son who grew by
Midrash Tanhuma	way of cows. <sup>75</sup>
Midrash Hagadol	

Genesis Rabbah	The son broke faith with
Midrash Tanhuma	his brothers and they
Midrash Hagadol	broke faith with him. <sup>76</sup>



Genesis Rabbah

The son who defied his  
mistress.

The son whose mistress  
broke.

R. Abun -

You enlarged the stature  
of Joseph over all the  
others.<sup>77</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

Compared to a tree.

The righteous are likened  
to trees.<sup>78</sup>

18 158

Genesis Rabbah

The evil eye does not

• Midrash Hagadol

rule over him.

Yalkut Shimoni

He who does not stare at  
women, the evil eye will  
not rule over him.

גורל  
נ"ל  
ג'תש"ח

Genesis Rabbah

Because he paid no attention to the Egyptian princesses, his daughters (the daughters of Zelophad) were given a portion of the Torah.

Genesis Rabbah

Because he entertained no evil thoughts about Egyptian women he merited both worlds.

Midrash Hagadol

Egyptian princesses stared at him through lattices and threw jewelry at him to catch his eye, but he paid no attention to them, and as a reward God said his children would have a portion in the Torah.

Yalkut Shimoni

Because he entertained no impure thoughts about Egyptian women he merited both worlds. Story told about R. Matia B. Harash,

a true tzadik who  
resisted temptation and  
God rewarded him -- ends  
with the quote - "He who  
does not stare at women,  
the evil eye will not rule  
over him."

לפי המדרש

Genesis Rabbah

A son whose brothers made  
to suffer.

A son who mistress made to  
suffer.

Midrash Hagadol

The son who didn't change  
his brothers, and they  
did not change him.<sup>79</sup>

לפי המדרש  
פ' צו

Genesis Rabbah

This alludes to his camp  
fellows - his brothers.<sup>80</sup>

This alludes to Potiphar's wife as well as his brothers. Reference to Psalm 120:4- Others smite from close quarters - these from far away. So slander spoken in Rome is carried out in Syria.

#### Genesis Rabbah

Comparison made to embers of a broom fire which burns inside even if extinguished outside. So he who receives slander, even if he is pacified still burns inside.<sup>81</sup>

#### Midrash Hagadol

Those who wished to smite him, who threw at him words as hard as an arrow. Compared to arrows.

מלך עולם  
מלך

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

R. Johanan:

What caused you to be  
rejected from the mighty  
ones was the passion you  
entertained for your  
mistress.

R. Samuel b. Nahman:

The bow was bent but  
returned - the passion was  
inflamed but cooled down.<sup>82</sup>

- This refers to Aksilo  
(unclear)

מלך עולם  
מלך

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

R. Yitzhak -

His seed was scattered  
through his fingernails.

Midrash Hagadol

A garment of fine gold  
came up upon his arms.<sup>83</sup>

נ'צ' ח'ק'ר  
ק'ר'ק'

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

R. Huna in the name of

R. Matia:

Joseph saw the image of his  
father and his blood cooled  
(or his blood ran cold).

נ'צ' ח'ק'ר  
ק'ר'ק'

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

R. Mahama in the name of

R. Abun: He saw the image  
of his mother and his blood  
cooled (or ran cold).<sup>84</sup>

נ'צ' ח'ק'ר  
ק'ר'ק'

Midrash Hagadol

He who appeared to me and  
said,

will bless you, and he shall  
say to the world, your suffer-  
ing is enough - so he will

say to you.<sup>85</sup>

פ'נל חכר  
פ'נ

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

Refers to Azkeroth in  
Baal - highest place in  
Joseph's territory.

חכר  
פ'נ

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

Beth Sheba and Beth Hashki--  
the lowest places in  
Joseph's territory.

פ'נל חכר  
פ'נ

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

R. Luliani b. Turis in name  
of R. Yitzhak:  
He blessed him in the birth  
of cattle.<sup>86</sup>

R. Aba b. Zutra in the name  
of Samuel -

Jacob loved Rachel greatly,

even to the time he blessed  
Joseph - making his son  
subordinate to his wife -  
he blessed her who gave  
birth and nursed Joseph.

הם נתנו  
ליו  
הם נתנו  
ליו

Genesis Rabbah

They who conceived me  
and taught me.

Midrash Hagadol

Your blessings are greater  
than those of Abraham and  
Isaac.

הם נתנו  
ליו

Genesis Rabbah

That for which the fathers  
of the world yearned.

Midrash Hagadol

To the utmost bounds of  
the eternal hills - even  
the blessing with which



Abraham desired to bless Isaac, but didn't because of Ishmael.

- Mountains and hills = patriarchs and matriarchs.

תה"ת"ן  
8011

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

Reference to Deut. 33:16 -

תה"ת here and

תה"ת there -

R. Abba b. Kahana:

You will eat its produce in this world and the interest will be yours in the world to come.<sup>87</sup>

תה"ת  
תה"ת

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

His brothers made him distant and like a Nazirite.

R. Yitzhak of Madale:

"You are the crown of your brothers."

R. Levi: He was a true

Nazirite and didn't drink  
wine until he saw his  
brothers.

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

His brothers did not taste  
wine until they saw him.<sup>88</sup>

Genesis 49:27

בְּבֹרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּבֹרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּבֹרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּבֹרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּבֹרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּבֹרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל

Genesis 49:27

Benjamin is a wolf that raveneth;  
In the morning he devoureth the prey,  
And at even he divideth the spoil.

בְּבֹרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּבֹרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

R. Jose the Galilian  
explained the verse in  
terms of mountains arguing  
for the Torah to be given  
to them. Mt. Sinai is  
chosen by God because it  
is the only one on which

idol-worship has not  
taken place.<sup>89</sup>

R. Akiba explained it in  
terms of the tribes arguing  
over which would have the  
Temple built within its  
boundaries. Benjamin wins  
because it had no part in  
the selling of Joseph.

Quotes (Psalm 84:3 and 131:6)<sup>90</sup>

R. Judah says the Temple was  
built in the portion of Judah  
as well-brings. Psalm 132:6  
and Micah 5:1 for support.

R. Simeon said it should be  
built in the portion of  
Rachel's son (she who died  
in Ephrath.) Why not in  
Joseph's portion? Answer  
found in Psalm 132:6 where  
allusion made to Benjamin  
by reference to a forest  
animal.

Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Tanhuma  
 Midrash Hagedol

Just as a wolf snatches,  
 so the tribe of Benjamin  
 snatches. (Judges 21:21)<sup>91</sup>

Yalkut Shimoni

Alludes to Ehud of Benjamin  
 who captured the beast of  
 Eglon and killed him.  
 The honor which Eglon  
 showed God rewarded by  
 offspring of Ruth who would  
 sit on the throne of Israel.

Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Tanhuma  
 Midrash Hagadol

Just as a wolf snatches,  
 so did Esther.

Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Tanhuma  
 Yalkut Shimoni

Judah blessed as a lion  
 matched against Babylonia  
 which was also compared  
 to a lion - fought by Daniel,  
 Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.  
 Joseph matched against Edom.

R. Samuel b. Nahman;

Aggadah that Esau fell at  
the hands of the sons of  
Rachel - Moses matched Levi  
(Hasmoneans) up against  
Macedonia.

ל"ד - third tribe -

ל"ד - Macedonia Third Kingdom -

3 letters ל"ד and ל"ד

Sacrificed cows - wrote with  
horns of an ox.

Jacob matched Benjamin  
(Mordecai) against Medea.

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

Refers to Saul who captured  
the monarchy.

An assessment of Saul's  
reign and why the dynasty  
collapsed. The Rabbis warn  
against being over-righteous,  
but hail being vengeful of  
one's honor as a good trait.

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

A great and powerful tribe.

Genesis Rabbah

Great and powerful  
when they went out to  
battle, they would be there  
over night or all day.<sup>92</sup>

Midrash Tanhuma

God's secrets went to God  
fearing - righteous - prophets  
the righteous do everything  
by divine inspiration.<sup>93</sup>

Midrash Hagadol

Speaks of a land which  
grabs its fruits -- Jericho  
whose fruits are early.  
The altar which "snatches"  
sacrifices day and night.

סדרת נפח  
38

Genesis Rabbah  
Yalkut Shimoni

Sacrifices brought in  
the Temple.<sup>94</sup>

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol

Saul -- who fought against  
all his enemies.

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Hagadol

Esther who got Haman's  
house.

Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol

Ehud who thrust the sword  
into Eglon's belly.

Midrash Hagadol

The beginning of the  
monarchy in Israel was Saul  
who was from Benjamin.

Yalkut Shimoni

A land which grabs its fruits -  
Jericho whose fruits are  
early.

פרק ע"ב  
ל"ה

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol  
Yalkut Shimoni

Beth El whose fruits ripen  
late.

Genesis Rabbah  
Midrash Tanhuma  
Midrash Hagadol

So Saul died and his three  
sons.

Genesis Rabbah	Esther set Mordecai over
Midrash Hagadol	Haman.
Midrash Tanhuma	The end of the monarchy
	was with Esther who was
	from Benjamin.
Midrash Hagadol	They smote Moab (at the
	time of Ehud).
Yalkut Shimoni	Esther got Haman's house.
	The evening sacrifice in
	the Temple. <sup>95</sup>

Genesis 49:28

כֹּל-אֲלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵלֶיךָ יָבֹאוּ  
וְזֶלְזַלְתָּ אֵלֶיךָ - בְּבֵרַךְ אֲבוֹתֶיךָ אֱלֹהִים  
אֲלֵיךָ אֵל אֲלֹהֵי בְּרָכָתוֹ בִּרְכֵךְ אֹתָם.



Genesis 49:28

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel,  
 And this is it that their father spoke unto them and  
 blessed them;  
 Everyone according to his blessing he blessed them.

כל שבט ישראל  
 ברכה קיבל  
 מפי אביו

Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Tanhuma  
 Yalkut Shimoni

Twelve tribes, neither  
 more nor less.  
 Rebekah saw them as  
 twelve - (interpretation  
 of Genesis 25:23-26).

Midrash Tanhuma

There are 12 hours in a  
 day, 12 hours in a night,  
 12 months in a year, 12  
 constellations, 12 stones  
 in the garment of the  
 high priest.

R. Johanan comments on  
 the number of tribes.

## Midrash Hagadol

I blessed you as much as possible -- the rest of your blessing will come from the man who will bless you with *וְכָל* - Moses. Isaac left off where Jacob started, where Jacob left off Moses began, where Moses left off David began. Isaac left off with *וְכָל* there Jacob started, Jacob ended with *וְכָל*, Moses started, Moses ended *וְכָל*, David started with *וְכָל*.

## Midrash Hagadol

12 Tribes parallel to the  
12 astrological signs --  
12 months of the year --  
the order of the world.

ויקרא אתם כל  
 אתם כלם  
 אתם

Midrash Hagadol

אתם and not כלם -  
 because he blessed Judah  
 as a lion, Dan as a serpent,  
 Naphtali as a hind, Benjamin  
 as a wolf - He compares them  
 all to lions to make them  
 equal -- he equalizes them  
 with a blessing.

אשר נתן  
 אתם אתם

Genesis Rabbah  
 Midrash Tanhuma  
 Yalkut Shimoni

He gave Judah the strength  
 of a lion, Naphtali the  
 lighfootedness of a hind,  
 Joseph the strength of an  
 ox, to Dan the bite of a  
 snake -- thus he included  
 all of them in the end -  
 with an appropriate word  
 for each of them. He  
 divided the land among

them and included each of them, so they would eat from one another.

#### Genesis Rabbah

Another will bless you from where I left off. So Moses began blessing them where Jacob left off. - The blessings will be realized when you accept the Torah. Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David - they begin where the predecessor left off.

#### Midrash Tanhuma

They followed their father's instructions regarding what they should do when he dies.

#### Midrash Tanhuma

Discussion of mourning for 7 days - then discussion of the brothers' fears of Joseph's revenge after Jacob's death.

## Midrash Hagadol

Interpretation of Psalm 57:3 -

Jacob called to God when  
he blessed his sons that  
God would agree to give  
each of them what was  
fitting.

Interpretation of Psalm 25:4 -

R. Simeon - Counsel of the  
Lord is not secret to  
heavens but to mortals.

Matches up tribes with  
tyrants as did the Midrashim  
on Benjamin.

### A Preface to Footnotes on Chapter I

The Rabbis believed that it was possible to uncover the deeper meanings of texts by utilizing certain methods of interpretation. In order to facilitate a better understanding of the rabbinic comments mentioned in the notes, a short explanation of some of the rabbinic methods follows.

One practice involves the comparison of similar expressions. This is most common in the material being treated and is usually used to interpret the meaning of a particular word or phrase. As an example, the word  $\text{לְבַרְרֵם}$  in Genesis 49:1 is interpreted as  $\text{לְבַרְרֵם}$ , "purify yourselves," utilizing a verse from Numbers which implies this meaning.

Another method used is the change of a reading to convey a different meaning. For instance  $\text{שְׁמֹנֶה}$  in Genesis 49:20, is read  $\text{שְׁמֹנֶה}$ , "eight," to indicate that the wearers of the eight priestly garments would descend from the tribe of Asher.

Similar to the aforementioned change of reading, is a change of reading based on the aural similarity to another expression. This is to be found in the comments on Genesis 49:8  $\text{כִּי תִשָּׁחַדְוּ אֶתְכֶם וְאֶתְכֶם יִשְׁחַדּוּ אֶתְכֶם}$  and the aural correspondence  $\text{כִּי תִשָּׁחַדְוּ אֶתְכֶם וְאֶתְכֶם יִשְׁחַדּוּ אֶתְכֶם}$ , "because you confessed, your brothers will praise you."

Also to be found in these texts are instances of "notarikon," or shorthand. Here the letters of a word represent the initial letters of other words. An example is found in Genesis 49:4, where  $\text{ג'נ'ב}$  is interpreted by use of this method.

Another common practice is interpreting a passage by connecting it to one or more scriptural verses in order to establish the verse as an allusion to previous historical happenings or future events. Such is the case with the great number of verses which interpret various parts of Genesis 49 as visions of the future or reviews of the past.

These are some of the methods employed by the rabbis in their exposition of these biblical texts.

Footnotes -- Chapter I

1. Perhaps a reference to Isaiah 11:12

יְהוָה יִקְרָא אֶת הַשְּׂרֵפִים וְיִקְרָא אֶת הַנְּשָׁרִים  
וְיִקְרָא אֶת הַנְּשָׁרִים וְיִקְרָא אֶת הַנְּשָׁרִים

"And He will set up an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the dispersed of Israel and gather together the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth." Indicating two exiles.

2. A reference to Numbers 19:9

וְהָיָה אִם יִשָּׁרֵף אִישׁ אֶת אֶשְׁתּוֹ

"And a man that is clean shall gather us (the ashes...)" or, more likely Numbers 12:14

וְהָיָה אִם יִשָּׁרֵף אִישׁ אֶת אֶשְׁתּוֹ

"...let her be shut up without the camp seven days, and after that she shall be brought in again." (indicating purification.)

3. Ezekiel 37:16

וְלָקַח אֶת הַיָּדָבָר הַזֶּה וְכָתַב עָלָיו  
וְכָתַב עָלָיו וְכָתַב עָלָיו

"...take thee one stick and write upon it; For Judah and for the children of Israel his companion (-- read יְהוּדָה ).

4. Reference made to Numbers 11:16

וְקָרָאתָ אֶת הָאָדָם הַזֶּה וְאֶת הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּם

"...Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel."

5. He ordered them to study in bands אֶלְמָנִים and not alone, as it says in חֲמִשָּׁה בָּיִת

וְהָיָה אִם יִשָּׁרֵף אִישׁ אֶת אֶשְׁתּוֹ  
וְהָיָה אִם יִשָּׁרֵף אִישׁ אֶת אֶשְׁתּוֹ

6. All three read קָרָא - "God" instead of קָרָא.  
R. Judan interprets "called" in the sense of "called upon," "invoked;" R. Pinhas understands it in the sense of "invited;" according to R. Abun it means, appointed for a particular purpose.



7. A reference to Joshua 4:12 "And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, passed on armed before the children of Israel..." Reuben supplied the vanguard of warriors along with Gad.

8. Reading  $\text{גלל}$  as "my grief;" as  $\text{גלל}$  is "a mourner."

9.  $\text{אכל}$  =  $\text{אכל}$ , as it says in Leviticus 9:22 -  
 $\text{אכל אהרן את ידיו ואת רגליו}$

"And Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and blessed them..."

$\text{גב}$  =  $\text{גב}$ , as it says in I Samuel 2:10 -  
 $\text{גב יתן ליהוה}$

"And He will give strength unto His King."

$\text{גב}$  =  $\text{גב}$ , a double portion as in Deuteronomy 21:17

"But he shall acknowledge the first-born, the son of the hated, by giving him of double portion of all that he hath..."

10.  $\text{גנב}$  as an abbreviation

$\text{גנב}$  - you hastened

$\text{גנב}$  - you sinned

$\text{גנב}$  - you committed adultery

$\text{גנב}$  - you broke off the yoke

$\text{גנב}$  - you defiled my bed

$\text{גנב}$  - your passion stirred within you

$\text{גנב}$  - you trampled upon the law

$\text{גנב}$  - you forfeited your birthright

$\text{גנב}$  - you became a stranger to your gifts

$\text{גנב}$  - you recoiled

$\text{גנב}$  - you trembled

$\text{גנב}$  - the sin has flown from your head

$\text{גנב}$  - you hastened

$\text{גנב}$  - you removed the yoke from your neck

$\text{גנב}$  - you were moved by sin.

11. "Nothing of your sin shall remain." He reads it:  
 כל חטאתך יסור, כל חטאתך יסור "All of your sin will be forgiven."
12. "Nothing has been left for you." They read it:  
 כל חטאתך יסור, כל חטאתך יסור "You left nothing over from the sin, you sinned completely."
13. Of Moses it is written in Exodus 19:3  
 "And Moses went up to God" and it also says in Moses' blessing of Reuben in Deuteronomy 33:6 "Let Reuben live."
14. Refers to Ezekiel 16:3  
 "Thine origin and thy nativity is of the land of the Canaanite."
15. Refers to Genesis 37:27  
 "Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites..."
16. This refers to the Zimri-Cozbi incident in Numbers 25.
17. סוד = secret -- The spies had a secret among them regarding the Land.
18. Refers to the Korah rebellion, as it says in Numbers 16:3  
 "...And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron."
19. Joseph who was compared to an ox, as it says in Deuteronomy 33:17 -  
 "His firstling bullock, Majesty is his..."
20. Men afflicted with this particular type of leprosy, חמה, are hot-tempered.
21. Your praise will be that all of your brethren will identify themselves as ייחודי.
22. Because he saved his brothers from committing murder, and thus saved them from being consigned to Gehenna, so all the tribes will be known as ייחודי.
23. "אני חטאתי" = "I have sinned" -- You confessed, you acknowledged your part in the Tamar incident, therefore your brothers will praise you.

24. Refers to Numbers 10:14 - "And in the first place the standard of the camp of the children of Judah set forward;" and Numbers 2:3 - "Now these that pitch on the last side toward the sun-rising shall be they of the standard of the camp of Judah." And Joshua 11:23 - "And the land had rest from war..."
25. Refers to the fact that Judah confessed his misdeeds and caused others to repent as well.
26. Refers to Proverbs 28:13 - "...But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy." Judah confessed and so he will obtain mercy.
27. Judah caused Reuben to confess. When Reuben saw Judah confess his misdeeds, he followed suit.
28. The Kings of Israel will descend from him, as his brothers will acknowledge his right to rule over them.
29. Because he saved them from being consigned to Gehenna they will praise him in the Hereafter.
30. Reads  $\text{לְהוֹלֵךְ}$  as  $\text{לְהוֹלֵךְ}$  (Possessive pronoun) so, "he whose Kingdom it will be."
31.  $\text{לְהוֹלֵךְ}$  is read is coming from the same root as  $\text{לְהוֹלֵךְ}$  - to set on edge.
32.  $\text{לְהוֹלֵךְ} = \text{לְהוֹלֵךְ}$  as it says in Psalm 80:8  
 $\text{לְהוֹלֵךְ} = \text{לְהוֹלֵךְ}$   
 "Thou didst pluck up a vine out of Egypt." (Israel)  
 $\text{לְהוֹלֵךְ}$  read as  $\text{לְהוֹלֵךְ}$  - His city, that is the Holy City.
33. Reads  $\text{לְהוֹלֵךְ}$  as from the same root as  $\text{לְהוֹלֵךְ}$  - prohibited.
34. Allusion to the Tabernacle that was of blue and purple and carried from place to place.
35. Reference to Zechariah 9:9 -  
 "Lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass."
36. Reference to Jeremiah 2:21 -  
 $\text{לְהוֹלֵךְ} = \text{לְהוֹלֵךְ}$   
 "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine..." referring to Israel.

37. Allusion to Solomon's Temple, that every one of the openings was referred to as | וְכַלֵּי הַיָּדָע ,  
"the gate of entrance."
38. Probably a reference to Zechariah 9:9 -  
"Lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass."
39. A reference to Jeremiah 2:21 -  
"Yet I have planted thee a choice vine."
40. Reads בְּיָמֵינוּ אֲנִי חָזָק - strong sons;  
by extension, "Morally strong sons."
41. Torah is compared to wine.
42. They will be declared pure when they come to Jerusalem, part of Judah, they will bring their sacrifices and be purified.
43. Refers to Deuteronomy 13:7 וְאִם יִסְתָּהֵב אֶתְּךָ בְּסֵתֶר  
"If thy brother ... entice you secretly" (leads you astray).
44. The Sanhedrin were not exiled from Tiberias (on the seashore). There the Torah waits for the coming of the Messiah.
45. References made to II Kings 14:25  
"He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which He spoke by the hand of His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher;"  
Judges 1:31 - "Asher drove not out the inhabitants of Acco, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor Ablab, nor of Achzib...;"  
I Kings 17:9 - "Arise, get thee to Zaraphath, which belongeth to Zidon..."
46. Refers to Genesis 30:16 and 17 -  
"And Jacob came from the field in the evening..." (ostensibly on an ass) "...and she conceived, and bore Jacob a fifth son." (Issachar)
47. Reference to I Chronicles 12:33  
"And of the children of Issachar, men that had understanding of the times ... the heads of them were two hundred."

48. A play on רִבְּרִי (large--boned) and פְּרִיָּם (proselytes). - The fruits were so large, when other Nations saw them, they were so impressed they converted.
49. רִבְּרִי seen as coming from the same root as רִבְּרִי, strict, stringent.
50. Allusions to Torah, quoting Proverbs 4:2 -  
 "For I give you good doctrine;  
 Forsake ye not my teaching."  
 and Job 11:9 -  
 "The measure thereof is longer than the earth,  
 And broader than the sea."
51. Reference made to Judges 5:15.  
 "And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah, as was  
 Issachar, so was Barak;  
 Into the valley they rushed forth at his feet..."
52. Refers to Judges 16:28 -  
 "That I may be this once avenged."
53. Refers to Judges 15:12  
 "And Samson said unto them:  
 Swear unto me."
54. Refers to Judges 16:17 -  
 "If I be shaven, then my strength will go from me."
55. Refers to Judges 16:30 -  
 "So the dead that he slew at his death were more than  
 they that he slew in his life."
56. Refers to Numbers 23.3, indicating the lack of power of  
 both Samson and Balaam.
57. Reference to Judges 16:25 -  
 "Call for Samson that he may make us sport."
58. Reference to Judges 15:15 -  
וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁכַּח וְיִשְׁכַּח וְיִשְׁכַּח וְיִשְׁכַּח וְיִשְׁכַּח  
 interprets וְיִשְׁכַּח as meaning two.
59. Reference to Judges 15:18 -  
 "And he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord and  
 said, 'Thou hast given this great deliverance by the  
 hand of Thy servant; and now shall I die for thirst,  
 and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised.'"

60. Reference to Judges 16:30 - 31  
 "And Samson said: 'Let me die with the Philistines.'  
 And he bent with all his might; and the house fell  
 upon the lords, and upon all the people that were  
 therein. So the dead that he slew at his death were  
 more than they that he slew in his life. Then his  
 brethren and all the house of his father came down,  
 and took him, and brought him up, and buried him..."
61. Support found in these verses - Isaiah 26:8 -  
 "Yea, in the way of Thy Judgments,  
 O Lord, have we waited for Thee;  
 To Thy name and to Thy memorial is the desire of our  
 soul."  
 Isaiah 33:2 -  
 "O Lord, be gracious unto us;  
 We have waited for Thee;  
 Be thou their arm every morning,  
 Our salvation also in the time of trouble."  
 Psalm 130:4 -  
 "For with thee there is forgiveness,  
 That Thou mayest be feared."  
 Psalm 130:5 -  
 "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait,  
 And in His word do I hope."
62. Refers to I Chronicles 5:10 -  
 "And in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagrites..."
63. Reference to Deuteronomy 33:30 -  
 "And of Gad he said: 'Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad;  
 he dwelleth as a lioness, and teareth the arm, yea, the  
 crown of the head.' Referring to the way they slew  
 their adversaries."
64. Reference to Malachi 3:23 -  
 "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the  
 coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord."  
 (Elijah was from Gad).
65. Reference to Genesis 30:13 - *וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵינֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים*  
 "For my daughters make me happy."  
 and to II Samuel 1:24  
 "Who clothed you in scarlet and other *וְשֵׁנִי בְּצִיָּה* delights."



66. Play on "אֲנִי" and אֲנִי - women who were descended from Asher married High Priests who were arrayed with eight garments.
67. Connection made between "אֲנִי" and אֲנִי, a field with irrigation ditches.
68. Refers to the Song of Deborah who descended from Naphtali (see Judges 5:1).
69. The great academy of Tiberias which was in Naphtali.
70. Reference to Deuteronomy 33:23 -  
"O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord..."
71. Reference to Psalm 18:34 -  
"Who maketh my feet like hinds' and setteth me upon my high places."
72. Reference to Psalm 42:2  
"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God."
73. That is the Torah.
74. That is Tiberias in the portion of Naphtali.
75. The interpretation of Pharaoh's dream.
76. Read as אֲנִי - he, by bringing home evil reports about his brothers; they, by selling him.
77. "Caused him to flourish," from the same root as "פֵּרוֹת," "fruit."
78. Reference to Psalm 92:13  
"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree..." and other verses from Psalm.
79. "אֲנִי" Read as from the same root as "אֲנִי" to change.
80. "אֲנִי" read as אֲנִי, they that lived in close proximity to him.

81. Reference to Psalm 12:3 and 4 -  
 "What shall be given unto thee, and what shall be done more unto thee, thou deceitful tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty with coals of broom..."
82. Reads "ל'ע" as "ל'ע" "your passion."
83. Reads "ל'ע" as from "ל'ע" "fine gold."
84. His passion was cooled at seeing the vision of his father/his mother.
85. Based on a reading of "ל'ע" as "ל'ע" - that is enough.
86. That the cattle should be prolific.
87. Reference to Deuteronomy 33:16 -  
 "וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁכְּנֵם וְיִשְׁכְּנֵם וְיִשְׁכְּנֵם וְיִשְׁכְּנֵם וְיִשְׁכְּנֵם  
 "And for the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof, and the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush; let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the crown of the head of him that is prince among his brethren."
88. "וְיִשְׂרָאֵל" read as "וְיִשְׂרָאֵל" - Reference to Genesis 43:34  
 "And they drank and were merry with him." With him they drank, but away from him they did not drink.
89. R. Jose - a reference to Psalm 68:17  
 "Why look ye askance ye mountains of peaks?"
90. R. Akiba - a reference to Psalm 84:3  
 "My soul yearneth, yea, even pineth for the courts of the Lord..." in conjunction with Psalm 13:5 and 6 -  
 "Until I find out a place for the Lord... Lo, we heard of it being in Ephrath; we found it in the field of the wood." (Refers to Benjamin who was compared to an animal of the forest).
91. Reference to Judges 21:21  
 "...and see and behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances... then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin."



92. Benjamin's portion was situated between that of Joseph and Judah, so that it was half a day's journey to the land of the enemy.
93. Midrash Tanhuma proem based on Amos 3:7 -  
"For the Lord will do nothing,  
But He revealeth His counsel unto  
His servants the prophets."  
and Psalm 25:4 -  
"Show me Thy ways, O Lord;  
Teach me Thy paths."  
and Proverbs 3:32 -  
"For the perverse is an abomination to the Lord;  
But His counsel is with the upright."
94. Reference to Numbers 28:4 -  
"The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning..."
95. Reference to Numbers 28:4 -  
"... and the other lamb shalt thou offer at dusk."

## Chapter II

### The Consistent Patterns Reflected in the Collections

The aim of the section which follows is to summarize the data contained in the previous chapter and to compare and contrast the consistent patterns which may be reflected in the Midrashic collections.

The introductory verses, Genesis 49:1 and 2, establish the tone for the "blessings" themselves, as well as the Midrashic treatment thereof. The comments on the first verse present very little which may be contrasted. For the most part, the Midrashim share their comments on the verse. This could be some indication that these interpretations were well-known and respected traditions. Certainly the section dealing with the Shema<sup>1</sup> and that text which compares Jacob to the faithful servant<sup>2</sup> have common origins. It is clear that all of the collections agree on Jacob's intention to reveal the "end of days" to his sons. All of them, save Midrash Hagadol, and one tradition in Genesis Rabbah, indicate that Isaac too lost revelation. Midrash Hagadol and the above-mentioned Genesis Rabbah tradition state that Daniel lost revelation. There is no mention of Isaac in either of these collections. The reason for the difference seems unclear, but the statement is substantiated by a quotation from Daniel 12:4.<sup>3</sup>

The main thrust of the remainder of the first passage seems to be the importance of a people unified in all aspects of life: study, war, government, and the like. It would seem clear from the Midrashic interpretations of the other verses that this verse, especially on the phrase *סוף הימים* "the end of days," would contain many references to the Messianic age. This, in fact, is not the case. There is only one direct mention of this, in Genesis Rabbah. In addition there are allusions to the Messianic period in material in Midrash Hagadol.

Other than that comment, there is a re-reading of *וְעָבַדְתָּ* in the first passage as *וְעָבַדְתָּ*, to work God into the blessings; also indications in Midrash Tanhuma and Yalkut Shimoni that God, as evinced by the nature of Moses' blessings of the Children of Israel, approved of Jacob's comments here.

There is an interesting section in Midrash Tanhuma in which one learns of periods in Jewish history when the Jewish people took upon themselves additional obligations, as Jacob did here by not revealing "the end of days" to his sons. These, perhaps, were included to demonstrate to the people of the time the need for self-sacrifice and great devotion to the ideals of Judaism.

Mention should also be made of the tradition which states Esau's right to call together his sons and bless them. Harkening back to earlier sections of the Bible, the Rabbis indicate that Esau was an unsettled type who did not arrange for a last will of any kind, as compared to Jacob who was a home-body and did.

Verses 3 and 4 contain Jacob's charge to Reuben, his first-born. The tone of the biblical text is very negative, and the Midrash picks up on this tone. Reuben is looked down upon by the Rabbis just as he was disdained by Jacob. The fact that Moses would vindicate the tribe of Reuben as would the statements made by the tribe on Mt. Ebal,<sup>4</sup> is far out-weighed by Jacob's portrayal of Reuben as a sinner. The highest praise Jacob gives Reuben is that he differs considerably from Esau who was also the first-born.

It seems clear that the tradition of Reuben as the careless son who lost all of his rights and privileges as a result of his misdeeds, is well-known. In their interpretations of "וְיָבֹב אֶת־רְעֻבֵן אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ" the collections reiterate how poorly thought of Reuben was.

The concept of Jacob favoring Rachel and her sons comes through in the comment in Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah that the birthright was being turned over to its rightful owner, Joseph.<sup>5</sup>

Also of interest is the Talmudic statement attached to comments which appear in Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah on " *אִשָּׁרְיָא דְּרֵיבֵן מִיֵּשׁ בֵּי* " . "One who is under suspicion should never be appointed a judge in a case similar to his own."<sup>6</sup> In this way the Midrashim are commenting on Reuben's vindication of himself by his proclamation on Mt. Ebal.

The "mandrake incident" from Genesis 30<sup>7</sup> plays a significant part in the Midrash on Reuben. This and other material reflect on past incidents rather than concentrating on projections of future events. The Midrashic treatment alters Jacob's intent to speak of the days to come by giving equal time to events of the past. This grounding of material in the past history of Israel and his sons is characteristic of much of the Midrash which is found in these collections.

There is little here to indicate major differences in emphasis among the collections. Reuben and his plight are characterized in the same basic manner in each of the works.

Jacob then begins to address himself to Simeon and Levi. The biblical verses Genesis 49:5-7 are so far removed from what would ordinarily be labeled as "blessings" that one wonders what Jacob's intent actually was. It is almost as if he waited until these last few moments to rebuke his sons for their wrongdoings. The Midrash relates this sense of

stress and tension, and explains in Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah that when Jacob becomes aware of what he is doing, he changes his tone and continues with blessings.

Here, as with the charge to Reuben, the focus is on biblical events. Most prominent are the selling of Joseph, the slaying of the townspeople of Shechem,<sup>8</sup> the Zimri-Cozbi incident,<sup>9</sup> and the Korah rebellion.<sup>10</sup> In a sense then, Jacob's words here may be seen as much a prediction of the future as a recounting of the past.

There are two points here at which linguistic analysis plays an important role. One is in the discussion of מכיראִתָּם and the other is a comment of the word יִלְכֶּם. The Greek influence permeates all of the collections save Yalkut Shimon. Midrash Hagadol, Midrash Tanhuma and Genesis Rabbah all explain מכיראִתָּם in terms of the Greek in which swords are called "mekirin." The theory which interprets מכיראִתָּם as synonymous with מכיראִתָּם brings a scriptural support for the argument, but does leave open the possibility of the close aural connection of the two words. Midrash Hagadol connects מכיראִתָּם to מכִּיר - selling, as in "the selling of Joseph." יִלְכֶּם is interpreted variously as "animals belonging to the nations," which plays on the standard literal translation of יִלְכֶּם meaning "ox;" as a reference to Joseph, because he is compared to an ox;<sup>11</sup> and to יִלְכֶּם "a wall, the wall of proselytes" which



was razed because of the destruction of Shechem.

Verse 7 affords us an opportunity to read the Rabbi's feelings on anger and its effect on man.

The Midrashic collections reveal a marginally positive attitude toward the tribe of Levi, but most notably, Midrash Hagadol has no trace of a positive comment on Simeon and/or Levi. There is no direct mention of the Levitical functions or the fact that the Priestly class descended from Levi. The allusions to Levi's privileged position among the people are hidden behind comments such as "Levi doesn't beg, he receives his clean morsel;<sup>12</sup> or Jacob saying, "my name should be remembered on the יְדִי."<sup>13</sup> A tradition in Genesis Rabbah and Yalkut Shimoni relate some positive aspects of the two tribes, Simeon and Levi, and attach them to the negative statement

"אֵלֶּיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵלֶּיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ." 14

It seems very strange that none of the collections have any definitely positive comments to make about Simeon, but more especially, none for Levi. This would appear to indicate an anti-priestly and anti-levitical feeling among the rabbis who established the earliest traditions, which were then followed through by future generations. This seems especially true of the redactors of Midrash Hagadol.

The sociological view that Simeon was poor may or may not reflect a fact of life or a generally held belief in Palestine

even as early as the fifth or sixth century C.E.

With Jacob's address to Judah we move from punitive charges to passages which can be more easily labelled as blessings. Here too, the Midrash focuses on a number of biblical events, tying them together and placing them in a cause and effect relationship. The Midrash reflects on history, remembering Judah's actions in the Tamar incident<sup>15</sup> as well as his role in the Joseph story.<sup>16</sup> The Midrashim see Judah as the evil-doer turned righteous who saved the lives of four people, resulting in the saving of the lives of four descendants.<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that although this tradition finds its way into all of the collections, they are found in different places. Yalkut Shimoni and one tradition in Genesis Rabbah considers it a commentary for the phrase in verse 8:- "וַיִּשְׁלַח אֱלֹהִים אֶת-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת-אַרְוֶה" His actions were praiseworthy, therefore he, and by extension, his descendants, are deserving of reward, which takes the form of God saving them from death. Midrash Hagadol, Midrash Tanhuma and two other Genesis Rabbah traditions sees this biblical tie-in as a commentary for the phrase in verse 9:- "וַיִּשְׁלַח אֱלֹהִים אֶת-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת-אַרְוֶה". Here Judah is viewed as having raised himself up from the "tearing up" of Joseph and Tamar and her sons, and thereby he was raised up, and therefore he and his descendants were to be rewarded by being saved by God from like punishment.



The Rabbis build on the idea set forth in the scriptural verse that Judah will be a leader of his people. Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah see Jacob's opening statement not only as an indication of Judah's supremacy, but of the fact that in due time the whole of the people will be known as יהודה.

Yalkut Shimoni and other Genesis Rabbah texts speak of the numerous Jewish leaders descended from the tribe of Judah.

The most striking element of the commentary on Judah's blessing is the overwhelming amount of Messianic-oriented material. Every collection alludes to the idea of the Messianic King who will descend from the tribe of Judah. This seems to be a universally accepted idea, and it can be argued that the Messianic references alluded to here are not necessarily a result of times of persecution or oppression, but rather a theological idea which finds its way into all of these collections. Although one could make an argument for the texts borrowing from one another, or from a common source, it seems quite conceivable that each source treated the material independently to some extent, and if they did utilize a common source, at least they elaborated on the source in an individual manner.

Judah's leadership extends to the scholarly realm as well. As part of the material in Midrash Hagadol, Yalkut

Shimoni, and Genesis Rabbah, we find Judah identified as the forebearer of the majority of the members of the Sanhedrin, as well as the exilarchs and heads of various scholarly institutions.

It should be noted that here the Torah is compared to fine wine, and Israel as a vine planted and cultivated by God. Genesis Rabbah sets forth the idea of God tied to Israel as an ass tied to a vine.

The major ideas set forth in the charge to Judah are: the power of repentance, and the righteousness of one who confesses; the great leadership ability of the tribe of Judah from biblical times onward which the Rabbis acknowledge and elaborate upon; and the coming of a Messianic age brought on by a descendant of Judah's which will lead to the return of the exiles, the supremacy of Israel and the recognition of the peoples of the world.

Zebulun and Issachar are closely linked both here and in Moses' blessing in Deuteronomy.<sup>18</sup> Some of the Collections therefore treat these passages, Genesis 49:13-15, as a set. It is for this reason that one of the Genesis Rabbah texts which deviates from this norm should be pointed out.

After the treatment of the passages dealing with Zebulun, the following statement appears: "This completes the blessings of Judah and Zebulun." In contrast to the other collections

this seems a strange statement. A closer examination, however, reveals that this collection closely connects the tribes of Zebulun and Judah as a result of the fact that the Sanhedrin which would originally be seated in Judah's portion would be removed to Tiberias in Zebulun's portion. This is also given as a reason for Zebulun being blessed before Issachar. Zebulun and Judah are further tied together by a statement by R. Johanan regarding the Messianic age, which is essentially identified with the tribe of Judah.

Zebulun's greatness is recognized as his dealings with the practicalities of business, and the support he gives to his scholarly brother Issachar. It is not strange at all that the Rabbis, as indicated in all of the collections praise the efforts of those engaged in business, especially when there is a close tie-in with the study of Torah. Zebulun's mercantile talents would be of no value, it seems, if he did not concern himself with the welfare of Issachar, his brother. However, if for a moment one would think that the Rabbis viewed scholarly pursuits alone as the most admirable of pastime, it is pointed out that Zebulun receives his blessing first, and without him Issachar could not exist. The Rabbis thus demonstrate their strong support of the dictum:

"מלך | חן | חן | חן | חן"

Both Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah have an interest-

ing discussion of the origin of the prophet Jonah based on the geographical locations suggested by the passage. What is even more interesting than the discussion itself are the circumstances under which the discussion takes place.<sup>19</sup> It gives a rare insight into what very well may have been the method by which the Midrash was compiled: from the Sabbath sermons of various scholars.

Issachar is viewed here as a tribe of great scholars from whom descended heads of the Sanhedrin. He was recognized as an authority in halachah and all of the tribes would consult him.

Issachar is paired with a later son of his tribe, Barak. Midrash Tanhuma, Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah all indicate that just as all of the tribes followed Issachar in halachic matters, so they followed Barak into battle. Proof for this is brought from the Book of Judges.<sup>20</sup>

The Rabbis do a great deal with the biblical phrase which compares Issachar to an ass. Issachar's learning is compared to a burden, or it is said that he is weighed down by his study. In addition, the Midrash relates Issachar's undisputed supremacy in halachic matters.

One of the Genesis Rabbah texts contains some interesting comments regarding proselytes. One states that Issachar's fruit were so impressive that it caused people to marvel and

thus embrace Judaism, another refers to the fact that Issachar was an ass for proselytes, bringing them in. None of the other Midrashim follow up on this idea. This particular text appears to be a unique instance of the Rabbis favoring proselytizing.

In addition to the already stated comparison of Torah and halachah to a burden, the Midrashim, with the exception of Yalkut Shimoni, provide a beautiful analogy of Torah to peaceful rest, utilizing verses from Proverbs.<sup>21</sup>

The opening passage of the section dealing with Dan, Genesis 49:16-18, affords another opportunity to view the Rabbis perception of the tribe of Judah as the most distinguished of the tribes of Israel. Genesis Rabbah, Midrash Tanhuma, and Midrash Hagadol compare Dan to Judah as unique among the tribes.

One Genesis Rabbah tradition mentions the fact that Samson's mother was of the tribe of Judah. Had it not been for this fact, Dan would never have produced a leader in Israel.

Another interpretation shared in some way by all of the Midrashim compares Dan to God. Only Yalkut Shimoni alludes to the fact that Samson, a descendant of Dan may be compared to God in the role of judge. The remaining collections see Samson as one not needing the help of any other force when fighting his enemies, just as God needs the help of no other entity.

The Midrashim concentrate on viewing the verses as references to Samson, various aspects of his personality, and different periods in his life. The largest number of comments relating to Samson come in connection with the phrase

"וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יָדָהּ" (And Israel knew)

paralleling Samson's actions to the ways of a snake. Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah follow through on this comparison quoting from Judges for support.<sup>22</sup>

On verse 18, only Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah comment. Both state that Jacob saw Samson in a vision and believed that Samson was the Messiah. When Jacob sees the violent death with which Samson met, he utters these words disparagingly. Another Genesis Rabbah tradition relates the fact that Jacob realized that Samson would not bring the redemption, but rather someone from the tribe of Gad (the prophet Elijah).

Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah close with a paragraph attributed to R. Yitzhak, which is apparently included to teach the virtue of patience and fortitude. In it he states that everything is bound up with waiting, hoping. Using various scriptural verses for support,<sup>23</sup> he sets out to reiterate what Jacob apparently knew, that one must await salvation patiently.



Even the short passage dealing with Gad, Genesis 49:19 has its Messianic overtones. These appear in both Midrash Tanhuma and Midrash Hagadol, which speak of the prophet Elijah, a descendant of Gad, who will come and will raze the foundations of the nations. Midrash Tanhuma adds to this the idea that the redeemer who will come on foot will be of Gad. Midrash Hagadol, Genesis Rabbah and Yalkut Shimoni all speak in terms of the conquest of Canaan and the role Gad will play in this historic event. Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah both state the fact that Gad will aid his fellows in the conquest of the land. Genesis Rabbah adds that when Gad went out to battle, he not only conquered, but slew his adversaries.<sup>24</sup> Yalkut Shimoni adds to this the idea that not only would Gad be victorious in battle, but his victims would be recognizable. The consensus of opinion in Genesis Rabbah and Midrash Hagadol is that an alien army will set out to despoil Gad, but instead Gad will despoil the aliens.

Asher in Genesis 49:20 gets very little attention from the Rabbis. Even so, they find some good words for him. His daughters, say Midrash Hagadol, Midrash Tanhuma and Genesis Rabbah, were very beautiful, so much so that they were a King's delight.

Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah mention that Asher had a rich land which abounded in different kinds of oils.<sup>25</sup>

Carrying this idea a little further, Yalkut Shimoni and another Genesis Rabbah text relate that Asher supplied the oil for anointing. Here too, one might see a Messianic connection, the Messiah being "the anointed one." Genesis Rabbah, however, suggests a slightly different interpretation reading  $\text{אֲשֶׁר נָחַל}$  as  $\text{אֲשֶׁר נָחַל}$ , referring to the wearers of the eight priestly garments, stating that daughters of Asher were married to members of the priestly class.

The Midrashic comments on verse 21, which is Jacob's blessing of Naphtali, may be divided up into three main subsections. The first are those references to the portion of Naphtali whose fruit was said to ripen early and bring great compliments. So good was it that it could turn the heart of a King. These comments are to be found in Genesis Rabbah, Midrash Tanhuma and Midrash Hagadol. Genesis Rabbah and Midrash Hagadol also discuss the water resources of Naphtali's land.

The second group of material deals with Naphtali, Jacob's son, as a swift-footed carrier. He is quick to race back to Egypt to prove his father's ownership of and right to be buried in the Cave of Machpelah. So it is written in Genesis Rabbah, Yalkut Shimoni and Midrash Hagadol. Midrash Hagadol adds the idea that he ran back to Egypt and brought the strength of Egypt when the sons of Jacob came up against the sons of Heth.



The third section speaks of Naphtali's descendant, Deborah the prophetess, and how she and Queen Esther are compared to hinds. This material runs the gamut from comparing the two to hinds as far as their fabled actions are concerned, to an anatomical comparison of Esther to a hind. The major part of this type of material is to be found in Midrash Hagadol, in which the author seems to have compiled an extensive list of comparisons of Deborah and Esther to hinds.

The phrase "וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל" results in comments on 1. The quality of Naphtali's fruit;<sup>26</sup> 2. The sweetness of the words of Deborah's song;<sup>27</sup> 3. The people of Naphtali whose tongues were as sweet as honey in the exposition of Torah;<sup>28</sup> 4. The words of the Torah which had been accompanied by the "וְהָיָה" and "וְהָיָה" .<sup>29</sup>

Jacob's blessing of Joseph is to be found in Genesis 49:22-26. The material found therein can truly be labelled as a blessing, as compared with what is found in some of the preceding passages. The Midrashic collections, however, do not favor Joseph by portraying him as better, or more righteous than his brothers. He, too, has faults.

A good deal of material reflects on Joseph's past history, his poor relationship with his brothers, and his experiences in Egypt. Midrash Hagadol and Midrash Tanhuma, as well as

Genesis Rabbah point out that Joseph is as much to blame as the brothers for their familial difficulties. These collections label Joseph as the son who broke faith with his brothers, and whose brothers broke faith with him.

As regards Joseph's experiences in Egypt, there are many negative comments to balance the number of statements which praise him. One theory set forth by Genesis Rabbah is that Joseph's will was broken by his mistress, Potiphar's wife. In addition, Genesis Rabbah and Midrash Hagadol emphasize the passion which burned within him which was cooled by visions of his father and mother. In contrast, Joseph is said to have defied his mistress (also Genesis Rabbah). He overcame the temptations of the Egyptian princesses, entertaining no impure thoughts of them. This information is taught by all of the collections.

Joseph suffered at the hands of his mistress, as well as his brothers who spoke harshly of him. So relate Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah. As part of the discussion of harsh words, Genesis Rabbah and Midrash Hagadol both contain moral lessons regarding slander.<sup>30</sup>

There are other references to Joseph's sojourn in Egypt: The fact, as related by Midrash Hagadol, Midrash Tanhuma and Genesis Rabbah, that Joseph grew by cows -- referring to his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams; the reference in Genesis

Rabbah, attributed to R. Abun that God enlarged the stature of Joseph above the rest of his brothers; the phrase

"י'צ' 'חגג' 'ל' seen by Midrash Hagadol as a reference to a garment of fine gold which came up upon his arms.

The two closing verses of this section, 25 and 26, make up the body of Joseph's blessing. Midrash Hagadol, in a characteristic re-reading of the phrase "לך אלקים" reads "לך" as "לך" interpreting it to mean that God wills an end to Joseph's suffering ( "לך" meaning "it is enough") and by extension referring to the end of the suffering of the people of Israel.<sup>31</sup>

"לך אלקים" and "לך אלקים" are phrases interpreted by Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah to refer to geographical locations within Joseph's territory. These two collections carry through with two interpretations for the phrase

"לך אלקים". One attributed to R. Luliani b. Tivris in the name of R. Yitzhak, states that Joseph will be blessed in the birth of cattle. The preferred interpretation is one attributed to R. Abba b. Zutra, stated in the name of Samuel, which claims that Jacob meant by this to bless Rachel, Joseph's mother, who brought Joseph into this world and nursed him. Jacob continues, says Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah, by telling Joseph that this blessing surpasses any of the blessings of the patriarchs. He also seems to say, using

this verse in connection with a later scriptural verse,<sup>32</sup> that Joseph will merit reward in this world as well as the world to come.

The closing phrase *וְלֹא יָשָׁה וְיָרַח* is interpreted by Midrash Hagadol, Genesis Rabbah and Yalkut Shimoni as referring to the tradition that Joseph was as a Nazirite in that he was made distant by his brothers, and also in that he did not drink wine from the time he was sold into slavery until he saw his brothers again. Yalkut Shimoni states that they, as well, did not drink wine until they saw him again. One statement in Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah closes this section fitfully with a statement attributed to R. Yitzhak of Madela which states that in Jacob's eyes Joseph was the crown of his brothers.

The Midrashic treatment of the passage dealing with Benjamin, Genesis 49:27, contains many of the same elements of the earlier material. Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah both open with comments regarding the geographical situation of the Holy Temple. The Rabbis engaged in this discussion refer to other scriptural verses for support.<sup>33</sup> These serve to explain not only why Benjamin was chosen over the other tribes, but why his portion was, in fact, chosen over his brother Joseph's. The relating of this scriptural verse to the Holy Temple, which was located in the portion of Benjamin, is carried through by Midrash Hagadol, Genesis Rabbah and

Yalkut Shimoni, all of which relate the second half of the verse to the sacrifices brought in the Temple.

All of the collections connect the verse with Ehud who descended from Benjamin and who slew Eglon, the King of Moab. There are also traditions in Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah which state that the passage refers to Saul, also a descendant of Benjamin. In addition, Midrash Hagadol, Midrash Tanhuma, and Genesis Rabbah share the opinion that the passage refers to Esther, also a descendant of Benjamin. In each case the analogy is carried through to the end of the verse, connecting the verse to different points in the story of each of these illustrious descendants of Benjamin.

Much is made of the power and strength of the tribe of Benjamin, not only in terms of the tribe as a whole, but also in reference to the above-mentioned individuals. In connection with this theme, Genesis Rabbah, Midrash Tanhuma and Yalkut Shimoni all speak of the matching up of some of the tribes with rivals, by virtue of the comparison of these tribes and the tyrants to different animals. Judah, says this tradition, was blessed as a lion, and was thus matched up against Babylonia which was also compared to a lion. Those who would fight against Babylonia were descendants of Judah; Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël and Azariah. Joseph was matched up against Edom (Rome) because there is a tradition that Esau will fall at the hands of the



sons of Rachel. Moses sets Levi against the Macedonians or Greeks. This is proved by a detailed comparison.<sup>34</sup> This section ends with the fact that by comparing Benjamin to a wolf, Jacob was setting a descendant of Benjamin, Mordecai, against the Kingdom of Medea.

It should also be mentioned that all of the Midrashic collections have a tradition which relates the passage to the agricultural produce of the tribe of Benjamin.

The Midrashic treatment of the closing verse, Genesis 49:28, begins with a discussion of the number of tribes - Genesis Rabbah, Midrash Tanhuma and Yalkut Shimoni interpret it in terms of Genesis 25:23-26.<sup>35</sup> Midrash Tanhuma adds to this some comments on a number of important "twelves."<sup>36</sup> Midrash Hagadol has a similar listing, but more significant is the comment that the various blessings of Israel are somehow connected by a chain of tradition. Each subsequent blessing takes up where the preceding one left off.<sup>37</sup> This tradition is found in Genesis Rabbah as well.

All of the collections set out to prove that Jacob, through his blessings here, attempted to make all of the tribes equal in including them all and by speaking appropriately to each of them. Midrash Hagadol, utilizing another scriptural verse<sup>38</sup> adds to this concept that Jacob evoked God for His saction, requesting that He bless each son fittingly. Midrash

Hagadol also uses a verse<sup>39</sup> to support the tradition found in the other Midrashim of matching tribes up against the tyrants who oppressed Israel.<sup>40</sup> Midrash Tanhuma closes with the statement that the sons followed Jacob's instructions regarding burial, and continues with a discussion of the brothers' fears of Joseph, and finally a discussion of the seven day mourning period.

The preceding information indicates that the interpretive material in the various collections is quite similar. This may well be evidence of an independent common source, or more likely the fact that much of the material in the later works was collected from the earlier ones. In this connection two things should be pointed out. The first is, the collections which share the interpretations. The second, the placement of this information in each of the works.

There are many instances where Midrashic collections share the basic theme but contain some variation from the other works. A change in analogy or the mention of a particular rabbi in connection with a comment may appear to change the material a bit. In some cases, however, more drastic differences appear. Such is the case with the material on the first verse, Genesis 49:1.

Midrash Hagadol differs from the other collections in stating that Daniel lost revelation as Jacob did. The other collections speak in terms of Isaac losing revelation. So

we have the same basic text with a major difference. It is possible that Midrash Hagadol reflects another, earlier tradition, or perhaps the author of this collection made an attempt to add his own original material. Whatever the case, he supports the comment scripturally.<sup>41</sup>

It is, in fact, not strange to find some new innovation in some of the later material, particularly in terms of re-situating comments to places where they may seem more appropriate. So it is with the famous *YNe* Midrash. Midrash Hagadol fits the incident in as an aside to explain how the final confessional is said. From the fact that Jacob doubted his sons' loyalty to the One God the Midrash deduces the method of reciting the *'Shema'*. Midrash Tanhuma fits it (the *ine* Midrash) in as a commentary for *... וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁוּעָה*. The other collections fit it in under *... וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁוּעָה*, when God hid the revelation from Jacob. Thus, too, Midrash Tanhuma and Yalkut Shimoni use similar material for the interpretation of the opening verses and closing verses.<sup>42</sup> It is also clear that the closing material in Midrash Hagadol parallels some of the thoughts set forth in the beginning of the Midrash Tanhuma and Yalkut Shimoni interpretations.<sup>43</sup> The idea that Moses would bless the tribes with similar blessings is supported by the numerous references to Deuteronomy 33.<sup>44</sup>

In some verses the various collections carry the same interpretations through to apply them to different parts of the



passage. This may be found in some of the material on Reuben, where the idea of Reuben, the sinner is carried through from the opening interpretations to the closing comments. This also appears to be the case with Simeon and Levi. Due to the incidents the Rabbis claim were alluded to in the opening words of the verse, the outcome will be the closing words of the verse.<sup>45</sup>

Actually, the practice of carrying a theme through a whole block of material is quite common in these collections. It may better be illustrated by using the later material which relates passages to descendants of the particular tribes.

As an example we could take the passage in which Dan is compared to a serpent. The Rabbis then concentrate on comparing Samson, Dan's most illustrious descendant to a serpent, matching up the events in his life and his way of life to the characteristics of a snake.<sup>46</sup>

Another example of the theme of the Midrash being carried through an entire section is the material relating to Judah. Especially important is the material involving allusions to the Messiah and the Messianic age. This material is shared by all of the collections and finds its way into comments from the very beginning of the commentary (in Genesis Rabbah and Yalkut Shimoni) to the very end of the material (in Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah).

Midrashic statements on Zebulun and Issachar present a good example of "traveling comments." Midrash Tanhuma and one Genesis Rabbah text tell of the reason Zebulun precedes Issachar here and how Moses blessed them, indicating that without Zebulun Issachar could not have studied. A very similar comment is found in Yalkut Shimoni in the section dealing with Issachar. In a different Genesis Rabbah tradition the comment is situated at the end of the material dealing with Issachar, as a commentary on the words "וְיִשָּׂכָר יִלְמָד" (Gen. 49:21).

This is also the case with the closing verse. Midrash Hagadol interprets "וְיָבֹקֵעַ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ" (Gen. 49:28) as indicating that Jacob states that he has blessed the tribes as much as he can, and that Moses will take up from where he left off. A similar interpretation is given by Genesis Rabbah to the words "וְיָבֹקֵעַ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ" (Gen. 49:28).

There are a number of major themes which find their way into the Midrashic interpretation of Genesis 49:1-28. Most are shared by all of the collections, and others are characteristic of specific works. The tendency to relate material to the Messianic age or the coming of the Messiah is shared by all of the collections equally, save Yalkut Shimoni where such references occur only in the comments on Judah. Material relating the biblical verse to some aspect of agriculture is a characteristic of Genesis Rabbah, although there are some scattered remarks in Midrash Hagadol and one or two in Midrash

Tanhuma. The same is true for assertions of a geographical connotations for certain Midrashic comments. There is very little mention made of other nations, and these come, to a great extent, in those sections where the Midrash matches the tribes up against the various tyrants who oppressed Israel.

Although there are some halachic references made in each collection, the largest number are found in Genesis Rabbah and Midrash Hagadol.

As to the supremacy of certain tribes, it is clear that the tribes which were the most important were Judah, Benjamin, Joseph. Issachar is mentioned in this connection only because of his recognized supremacy in the area of scholarship.

The most prominent characteristic shared by all of the collections, but most prominent in Genesis Rabbah and Midrash Hagadol are the references to other biblical characters as the apparent objects of the words spoken by Jacob here: the Zimri-Cozbi incident, the Korah rebellion, the many illustrious descendants of Judah, the prophet Jonah, Samson, the prophet Elijah, Deborah the prophetess, Queen Esther and Mordecai, and King Saul.

As has been shown the placement of the material may differ, but the basic themes are essentially the same. There is, however, an area not shared by all of the works, and that is the linguistics peculiar to each of the collections. What is

significant here is not so much the language in which the Midrashim were written, but rather some of the comments find their bases in the re-reading or re-interpreting of certain words. The object here is to point out the incidents of this nature which are variants of the norm. Most prominent in this area is Genesis Rabbah in its observations regarding the introductory passage, the material on Reuben, Simeon and Levi, Judah and Asher.<sup>47</sup> Some of the same materials appear in Midrash Hagadol, Midrash Tanhuma and Yalkut Shimoni.<sup>48</sup> There are also two interpretations to be found in Midrash Hagadol on the passages dealing with Joseph.<sup>49</sup>

The bulk of the information herein contained indicates little in the way of differences between the basic patterns reflected in the Midrashic collections. It will be the object of the next chapter to deal with the common natures of the material and the significance of this fact.

## Footnotes -- Chapter II

1. All are variations of the same basic text. Jacob questions his son's loyalty to the One God. They assure him with the statement:  
"שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ"  
 Listen, Israel, the same God in whom you believe, we believe. Jacob responds by whispering:  
"וְעַתָּה אֶתְּחַלֵּץ בְּיָדֵי ה' וְעָלִיתִי אֶל־אֲדָמָה"  
 expressing his thanks to God for his children's proper attitude.
2. Jacob is compared to a loyal servant of a King. The servant addressing his sons from his death bed begins to give them the information to set themselves free. At this point, the King appears and the servant changes his conversation to an impassioned plea for his sons' devotion and loyalty to the King.
3. Daniel 12:4: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."
4. Deuteronomy 27:20: "Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he hath uncovered his father's skirt. And all the people shall say: Amen."
5. "R. Aha commented: the birthright was not thine... Did Jacob go to Laban for any save Rachel? And when I was with thy mother surely I should have been with Rachel instead. Now the birthright has returned to its rightful owner."
6. Bechorot 4:10
7. Genesis 30:14-16: "And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah: "Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes." And she said unto her: "Is it a small matter that thou hast taken away my husband? And wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? "And Rachel said: "Therefore he shall lie with thee tonight for thy son's mandrakes." And Jacob came from the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said: "Thou must come in unto me; for I have surely hired thee with my son's mandrakes." And he lay with her that night.

8. Genesis 34
9. Numbers 25
10. Numbers 16
11. Deuteronomy 33:17:-  
 "His firstling bullock, majesty is his;  
 And his horns are the horns of the wild ox;  
 With them he shall gore the peoples all of them, even  
     the ends of the earth;  
 And they are the ten thousands of Ephraim,  
 And they are the thousands of Manasseh."
12. Midrash Tanhuma, Genesis Rabbah.
13. Midrash Tanhuma, Genesis Rabbah, Yalkut Shimoni.
14. "From Simeon there would be the scribes in the synagogues  
 and the students and the teachers of the Mishnah from the  
 tribe of Levi, engaged in the study of Torah in the houses  
 of study." (These would be scattered by the nature of the  
 profession.)
15. Genesis 38
16. Genesis 37:26:  
 "And Judah said unto his brethern: "What profit is it if  
 we slay our brother and conceal his blood?"
17. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Daniel was saved  
 from the lion's den and the others from the fiery furnace.
18. Deuteronomy 33:18, 19:-  
 "And of Zebulun he said:  
 Rejoice, Zebulun in thy going out,  
 And Issachar in thy tents.  
 They shall call peoples unto the mountain;  
 There shall they offer sacrifices of righteousness;  
 For they shall suck the abundance of the seas,  
 And the hidden treasures of the sand."
19. Genesis Rabbah XCVIII:11 (in the Soncino edition)
20. Judges 5:15:-  
 "And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah;  
 As was Issachar, so was Barak;  
 Into the valley they rushed forth at his feet..."



21. Proverbs 4:2, Proverbs 3:18  
 "For I give you good doctrine;  
 Forsake ye not my teaching."  
 "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her,  
 And happy is everyone that holdeth her fast."
22. Selected verses from Judges 13 -- Judges 16.
23. Isaiah 26:8, Isaiah 33:2, Psalm 130:4-5:  
 "Yea, in the way of Thy judgments,  
 O Lord, have we waited for Thee;  
 To Thy name and to Thy memorial is the desire of our soul."  
 "O Lord, be gracious unto us;  
 We have waited for Thee;  
 Be Thou their arm every morning,  
 Our salvation also in the time of trouble."  
 "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities,  
 O Lord, who could stand?  
 For with Thee there is forgiveness,  
 That Thou mayest be feared."
24. Deuteronomy 33:20:  
 "And of Gad he said:  
 Blessed be He that enlargeth Gad;  
 He dwelleth as a lioness,  
 And teareth the arm, yea the crown of the head."
25. Midrash Hagadol quotes R. Judah (Shabbat 80:2) on various kinds of oils.
26. Midrash Hagadol, Midrash Tanhuma, Genesis Rabbah.
27. Midrash Hagadol, Genesis Rabbah.
28. Genesis Rabbah.
29. Midrash Hagadol.
30. With reference to Psalm 120:4 -  
 "Sharp arrows of the mighty,  
 With coals of broom."  
 Slander is compared to sharp arrows. As arrows smite from far away, so words of slander spoken in Rome are carried out in Syria. Slander is also compared to a broom fire. Just as a broom fire may continue to burn from within, though extinguished on the outside, so he who receives slander, may continue to burn inside though he appears outwardly to be pacified.

31. The re-reading of  $\text{לִבְיָדָה} - \text{לִבְיָדָה}$  is supported by the verse in Judges 5:7

$\text{לִבְיָדָה} \text{ לִבְיָדָה} \text{ לִבְיָדָה} \text{ לִבְיָדָה} \text{ לִבְיָדָה}$   
 $\text{לִבְיָדָה} \text{ לִבְיָדָה} \text{ לִבְיָדָה} \text{ לִבְיָדָה} \text{ לִבְיָדָה}$

"The rulers ceased in Israel, they ceased,  
 Until thou didst arise, Deborah  
 That thou didst arise a mother in Israel."

Here we would expect to find  $\text{לִבְיָדָה}$ , but it appears as  $\text{לִבְיָדָה}$ .

32. Deuteronomy 33:16 -

"And for the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof,  
 And the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush;  
 Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph,  
 And upon the crown of the head of him that is prince among his brethren."

33. Psalm 84:3, Psalm 132:6, Micah 5:1 -

"My soul yearneth, yea, even pineth for the courts of the Lord;  
 My heart and my flesh sing for joy unto the living God."

"Lo, we heard of it as being in Ephrath;  
 We found it in the field of the wood."

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
 Which are little to be among the thousands of Judah,  
 Out of thee shall one come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel;  
 Whose goings forth are from of old, from ancient days."

34. Levi was the third tribe, Macedonia was the third Kingdom.

$\text{לֵוִי}$  has three letters,  $\text{מַכְדוֹנְיָה}$  has three letters.  
 The descendants of Levi sacrificed cows, the Macedonians write with the horn of an ox. Levi's descendants, the Hasmoneans were therefore pitted against the Macedonians (the Seleucid Greeks.)

35. The Lord reveals to Rachel that she is to give birth to twins. The Rabbis separate the verse into parts, each part indicating the birth of two, adding up to twelve. Also, note the numerical value of  $\text{יב}$  in Genesis 25:22 is twelve.



36. Twelve astrological signs, twelve months of the year, which is equal to the order of the world, so Midrash Hagadol. Midrash Tanhuma: twelve hours in a day, twelve hours in a night, twelve months in a year, twelve constellations, twelve stones in the garment of the high priest.
37. Isaac left off with  $\text{לֹא עָלָה}$  ;  
 Jacob started with  $\text{לֹא עָלָה}$  ;  
 Jacob ended with  $\text{לֹא עָלָה}$  ;  
 Moses started with  $\text{לֹא עָלָה}$  ;  
 Moses ended with  $\text{לֹא עָלָה}$  ;  
 David began with  $\text{לֹא עָלָה}$  .
38. Psalm 57:3 -  
 "I will cry unto God Most High;  
 Unto God that accomplisheth it for me."
39. Psalm 25:4:-  
 "Show me Thy ways, O Lord;  
 Teach me Thy paths."
40. The other Midrashim discuss this in the material dealing with Benjamin's blessing.
41. Daniel 12:4
42. On  $\text{לֹא עָלָה}$   $\text{לֹא עָלָה}$   $\text{לֹא עָלָה}$  , Jacob distributed honors to each of his sons. God demonstrated his agreement with Jacob's comments by causing Moses to bless the tribes with similar blessings.
- On  $\text{לֹא עָלָה}$   $\text{לֹא עָלָה}$   $\text{לֹא עָלָה}$  , "he (Jacob) gave Judah the strength of a lion, Joseph the strength of an ox... Thus he included all of them in the end with an appropriate word for each of them..."
43. Interpreting Psalm 57:3, the Rabbis state that Jacob called to God when he blessed his sons, asking God to give each of the sons what was fitting.
44. In the material on Reuben, Zebulun, Issachar, Gad, Joseph.
45. The comments regarding their misdeeds in the selling of Joseph into slavery and their destruction of Shechem will result in their being poor and scattered.

46. This is even more the case in the material on Benjamin where the various collections use the comments as references to a number of later biblical descendants of the tribe and follow the idea through phrase by phrase.

47. Reuben - "כְּחֵן וְכִסְיִי אֶלֶן" read as connected with the word אֶלֶן, a mourner, one who grieves. Thus "כְּחֵן" is interpreted as "the beginning of my grief."

"כִּי אֵין מִלִּי" - different grammatical readings yield "Nothing of your sin shall remain."

Simeon and Levi - "כִּי יִכְרְמוּ" seen as coming from the Greek

root יכרמון meaning swords.

"וְהָיָה לָנוּ" interpreted as a wall (for proselytes) which

had been razed.

Judah - Transposition of "יְבִרְאוּ לֵיהֶם" to "יְבִרְאוּ לֵיהֶם" to indicate the fact that the nations would bring gifts to the Messiah.

Asher - "אֶשְׂרֵי אֶשְׂרֵי" - The reading of אֶשְׂרֵי — אֶשְׂרֵי meaning eight, to indicate that descendants of Asher produced wearers of the eight garments of the high priest.

48. Midrash Hagadol on "אֶשְׂרֵי אֶשְׂרֵי" Midrash Tanhuma and Midrash Hagadol on "אֶשְׂרֵי אֶשְׂרֵי" and Yalkut Shimoni on "אֶשְׂרֵי אֶשְׂרֵי".

49. "זָהָב זָהָב" seen as coming from the root זָהָב, meaning fine gold, to indicate the fact that Joseph wore garments of gold.

"וְהָיָה לָנוּ" read as "וְהָיָה לָנוּ" enough, that Joseph had suffered enough.

### Chapter III

#### Conclusion

The collections which have been examined originate in different periods and in different parts of the world. Despite these factors it has become clear that they all contain a great deal of the same material. This fact is worthy of further investigation.

It is possible to view the types of interpretations utilized by the editors of the collections as characteristic of certain periods. Retention of any material by even the later collections indicates the feeling that this material was still relevant and applicable to life in the 11th through 15th century as well as in the 5th and 6th century.<sup>1</sup> The appearance of material in early collections, but not in the late ones may be an indication that the material was deemed unimportant by the later redactors. In addition there is some material which appears in the later texts which are not to be found in the earlier texts. This could be evidence of another early text which is no longer extant.

It could also indicate an original interpretation on the part of the later editor.

At this juncture it should be noted that not all of the material found in Genesis Rabbah and Midrash Tanhuma is the same. Indeed there are many places where the two collections contain

completely different interpretations. This is also true of the two later collections, Yalkut Shimoni and Midrash Hagadol.

Although certain specific themes are discernible,<sup>2</sup> the same theory applies here as applied to other data pointed out -- the texts share the interpretations and although they may originate in early times, their relevancy at later dates cannot be disputed. Therefore, the interpretations common to all of the collections are technically characteristic of all the Midrashim and their dates and places of origin. The only two major thematic areas which are emphasized in the earlier collections more than the later ones are the geographical and agricultural themes. This may be understood as resulting from the lack of familiarity and concern with the geography of Eretz Yisrael, and with agriculture with which few Jews in the middle ages had experience.

The Rabbis who are quoted in the collections are generally men who flourished in the third and fourth centuries of the Common Era. The veracity of some of the names which appear is doubtful. For the most part, however, the names and the statements are believable and find their way into the various collections. There are many instances of early material (by virtue of the name attached to it) being found in later collections but not in earlier ones. One such incident is to be found in Yalkut Shimoni.<sup>3</sup> Such instances are evidence of other early

sources. Sometimes these sources are cited, and sometimes they are not.<sup>4</sup>

There are words and terms as well as methods which are peculiar to each of the collections. The large number of quotes from the Talmud are parallels to Talmudic material is characteristic of Midrash Hagadol. Here, too, there is a good deal of Aramaic utilized. Genesis Rabbah contains the same type of material, but not necessarily on the same texts, and often not to as great an extent. Yalkut Shimoni uses some Aramaic, but it is not as extensive as its use in Midrash Hagadol.

The Genesis Rabbah text contains one or two Greek words, which are labelled as such. These interpretations remain as part of the material in Midrash Tanhuma and Midrash Hagadol.<sup>5</sup> There are also a few names which reflect a foreign influence<sup>6</sup> which appear in Genesis Rabbah and again in Midrash Hagadol. This tells little more than the other data regarding common sources.

On the subject of terminology, there are several observations to be made. Despite the common character of this whole body of Midrash there are some formulae and even individual words which are to be found exclusively in certain collections. This indicates a certain amount of input on the part of the redactor or editor. As was mentioned before, the style of

drawing upon Talmudic or Mishnaic material is found in Midrash Hagadol and Genesis Rabbah.

In the same way, each of the collections has its own stylistic "personality." The use of the proem in Midrash Tanhuma and the reference back to other material contained in Yalkut Shimoni are marks which distinguish these from the other collections.

Yalkut Shimoni utilizes a certain method of dialogue in the text.<sup>7</sup> Also interesting here is the use of the term *ל'א'פ'א* to refer to God in place of the usual *א'פ'א*. Whether this is a reflection of that period's usage or a peculiarity of this author is unclear.

Also curious is one particular usage in Midrash Hagadol. On the verses dealing with Naphtali, this collection does a great deal with a comparison of two heroines of the Jewish people. Esther and Deborah to hinds. As part of this comparison we read:

*א'פ'א ב'ל א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א*  
*"א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א א'פ'א"*

"And Esther did not move her feet until Haman and his ten sons were crucified."

First, the biblical text relates that Haman was hanged. But aside from the discrepancy between the Midrash and the Bible, and one must contend with the fact that Midrash Hagadol emanates from 13th century Yemen, and its Moslem influences.



One might expect this of a text compiled in a Christian state. A possible explanation is that the tradition from which Midrash Hagadol drew originated from a Christian state or from Roman-occupied Palestine which knew of crucifixion as a means of punishment first-hand. This, then, adds to the above-stated theory that aside from the extant material available today there may have been other material from which the redactor drew.

Every step along the way it has become apparent that the texts which have been dealt with are parallel in many respects. Thus it has become obvious that certain material common to the texts find their origin in the earlier collections and are drawn upon by the later collections. This holds true for much of the material to be found in Midrash Hagadol and Yalkut Shimoni that is also found in Genesis Rabbah and/or Midrash Tanhuma. Where common material in Genesis Rabbah and Midrash Tanhuma is concerned, it is conceivable that the text was drawn from an earlier common source and did not necessarily find its origin in Genesis Rabbah and make its way into Midrash Tanhuma.

As far as material in Midrash Hagadol or Yalkut Shimoni which does not appear in the earlier two collections, it is quite clear that other sources were utilized. This becomes particularly clear in some of the Midrash Hagadol material.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, the following may be set forth as a theory for the sources of the Midrashim which have been discussed: 1) There are some common traditions which originate in the early collections and are then borrowed by the later ones. 2) There is some common source independent of these collections from which they draw. 3) There are some original text interpretations to be found in each collection. 4) There is also some internal borrowing.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the fact that the Rabbis who appear in the Midrashim span a number of centuries, they can be treated as a unit when dealing with their general viewpoint which comes to light through these texts. They set forth certain values which are commonly recognized as "rabbinic values" and are to be found in the major rabbinic works. These include the need to study Torah,<sup>10</sup> the importance of labor,<sup>11</sup> the significance of true repentance,<sup>12</sup> the value of self-respect and self-preservation,<sup>13</sup> the importance of the individual and his rights,<sup>14</sup> the obligations which come with being a Jew,<sup>15</sup> the urgency of being a united people,<sup>16</sup> the importance of self-control,<sup>17</sup> the significance of Eretz Yisrael,<sup>18</sup> the central role that the Messiah and the Messianic age play in Judaism,<sup>19</sup> and the overriding, all-pervasive role of God in Jewish life and the operation of the universe.<sup>20</sup> Almost no stone goes unturned in the Rabbi's attempt to relate the words of Jacob to issues and matters which concerned people in their day and age. The Rabbi's



interpretations so augment "Jacob's blessings" that they hold great meaning and significance even to our own day.

Footnotes -- Chapter III

1. The dates generally accepted for the collections are:

Genesis Rabbah 400 - 500 C.E.  
 Midrash Tanhuma 775-900 C.E.  
 Yalkut Shimoni 1200 - 1300  
 Midrash Hagadol 1300 - 1400

2. Messianic theme, relating the material to other biblical characters, halachic references, references to agriculture or geographic location, the supremacy of certain tribes.
3. The appearance of a story about R. Matia B. Harash in the Yalkut Shimoni commentary on Joseph. R. Matia B. Harash was a second century tanna who was known as a great tzadik. This particular story is found in none of the other collections.
4. The comment "מקורו (נח) ח" in the commentary to Midrash Hagadol is not an uncommon one.
5. The interpretation of "מכירת הברכה" as coming from "מכירת", the Greek word for sword.
6. R. Luliani B. Turin, for instance.

7. "אין אצלו בקין שהיה את אלוהים, אלא  
 היכן היה אלוהים? אלא שפניו, רבנו של עולם,  
 אני והבן הבאנו דורון שפניו, אלו קדוה ואלו  
 היצר הרע - בפניו נפא - אין הקדוש אין היצר  
 היכן הוא, אלא שפניו, רבנו של עולם, גדול  
 ענין חנוכה (בראשית ד, יח) ע"א יבא ענין גדול  
 מצד רבנו של עולם שפניו שפניו שפניו  
 מצד תחומי שפניו... אלא שאלו הקדוש  
 אלא אין חנוכה ענין חנוכה אין חנוכה חנוכה  
 חנוכה חנוכה..."

"For we find with Cain when he killed his brother. He (God) said to him, "Where is Abel, your brother?" He said to Him, "Master of the Universe, Abel and I each brought you a gift, his you accepted and mine you returned..." The Holy One said to him, "I will tell you where he is." He said to Him, "Master of the Universe, my punishment is greater than I can bear (Genesis 4:13). My punishment should be no greater than that of the 600,000 who will sin before you in the desert... You will forgive them immediately..." At that moment the Holy One said, "If I don't forgive Cain, immediately, I will lock the door to all repentance..."

God is portrayed here as very "human." This style is characteristic of Yalkut Shimoni and appears elsewhere in the collection as well.

8. In the notes to Midrash Hagadol the expression "the source has disappeared" occurs a number of times.
9. See Yalkut Shimoni #161 (ל'ס"ד) on "ל'ס"ד | שמוע אפ"ה" and "ל'ס"ד | שמוע אפ"ה" and "ל'ס"ד | שמוע אפ"ה"
10. This may be found in material on Issachar and elsewhere.
11. This appears as a major factor in the treatment of Zebulun.
12. This is especially clear in the material on Judah.
13. Some of the material on Dan and Benjamin.
14. Some of the texts dealing with Judah.
15. The introductory verses, among others.
16. The comments on the opening passages.
17. The material on Simeon and Levi.
18. All of the texts which connect parts of the biblical verses to territory in the Land of Israel.
19. Throughout the Midrashim, but especially in the material on Judah.
20. Throughout the sources.

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