

SIMEON AND LEVI

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In Exodus 34:6-7, God showed his glory to Moses: “And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.” This basic nature of God is also declared in Romans 11:22, which says, “*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*” Many examples that teach us about God’s goodness and severity are found in the Old Testament scriptures, and we need to know them well. “*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*” (Rom 15:4). We can learn much from what is written about the lack of a land inheritance for the tribes of Simeon and Levi.

Simeon’s inheritance within Judah

After conquering Canaan, the land was divided by lot among the tribes of Israel. Joshua 19:1 says, “*And the second lot came forth to Simeon, even for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah.*” The inheritance of the tribe of Simeon included Beersheba, Moladah, Hazar-shual, Balah, Azem, Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, Ziklag, Bethmarcaboth, Hazar-susah, Bethlebaoth and Sharuhem, “thirteen cities and their villages” (Josh 19:2-6). Their inheritance also included “Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Ashan; four cities and their villages: and all the villages that were round about these cities to Baalathbeer, Ramath of the south. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families” (Josh 19:7-8). Why did Simeon have their inheritance among the tribe of Judah? One reason that “out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon” was that “*the part of the children of Judah was too much for them: therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them*” (Josh 19:9). But that has more to do with why Simeon’s inheritance was included *in Judah* as opposed to being within the inheritance of some other tribe. Judah had by far the largest territory of all the tribes and they could easily accommodate Simeon within their inheritance. But a more basic question is, Why did Simeon not have their own distinct territory like the other tribes?

Levi like Simeon

Levi was the only other tribe with no inheritance of their own, and that was because they had the Lord as their inheritance (Num 18:20-24; Deut 10:8-9; 12:12; 14:27-29; 18:1-2ff; Josh 13:14,33; 14:3-4). So why did Simeon receive

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no inheritance of their own? The basic answer is that Simeon had a small population that did not merit having its own inheritance. Concerning the children of Simeon, 1 Chronicles 4:24-27 says that “*neither did all their family multiply, like to the children of Judah.*” But there was another underlying reason why Simeon did not receive their own territory, a reason that also explains why God had not blessed Simeon with a large population. God could have increased Simeon if it had been His will. But that was *not* God’s will. Why?

The curse of Simeon and Levi

We find the answer in Genesis chapter 34. “And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her. And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife” (Gen 34:1-4). Shechem’s father Hamor then came to Jacob to ask him to give Dinah to his son (Gen 34:5-12). Jacob’s sons compelled all the males of their city to be circumcised as a condition for the marriage to take place (Gen 34:13-24). Three days later, Simeon and Levi killed Shechem, Hamor, and all the males of their city with the sword, took all the spoil from the city, and brought Dinah back with them (Gen 34:25-29). Jacob rebuked Simeon and Levi for their actions (Gen 34:30-31). At the end of his life, Jacob prophesied concerning all 12 tribes of his sons, including Levi and Simeon. In Genesis 49:5-7, Jacob prophesied of these two men: “Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. *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.*” God brought this prophecy to pass by not blessing Simeon with many descendants. As Jacob foretold, neither Levi nor Simeon had their own inheritance, but were indeed divided and scattered in Israel. All the other tribes had their own territory. Only Levi and Simeon did not. Once gain, “all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor 10:11). The next verse reminds us to remain humble and examine ourselves lest we also end up on the receiving end of God’s punishment: “*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (1 Cor 10:12). As 2 Peter 2:9 says, “*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.*”