

Some of the difficult interpretative challenges in Genesis 49

1. **Historical context:** Exile? Persian period? Ptolemaic? Other
2. **Relationship with the rest of Genesis:** unclear at best, given the many rare words and unclear images
3. The idea of “**Joseph vs. Judah**” in the chapter:
 - A. As “northern” (Joseph) vs. “southern” (Judah)
 - B. As “priestly (Joseph) vs. “royal” (Judah)
 - C. As superior (Joseph) and inferior (Judah)
4. The astounding number of **words unique here in the Hebrew Bible or in Genesis** and extremely rare elsewhere in the Bible, leaving interpretation uncertain.
5. The use of **words like *shechem* (49.25) or *shiloh* (49.10) that have multiple meanings and references beyond this chapter**, making their meaning here difficult to pin down.
6. The relationship **between this chapter and other biblical references to the named sons of Jacob:** linguistically, historically, theologically.
7. The relationship between **Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33**, Moses’ blessings on the tribal heads.
8. The **structure of the chapter:** chiasmic or a loose collection
9. The relationship between **seemingly backward-looking imagery and forward-looking imagery:** are we to hear Jacob speaking “prophetically”?
10. The relationships **among the individual blessings**, including ambiguous verbal links.
11. **Is Genesis 49.10 meant to be “messianic,”** as interpreted by many Christians?