

## THE LION OF JUDAH

***Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals”*** (Revelation 5:5). To find out what the Lion of the tribe of Judah truly represents we need to go back to the first person referred to as a lion in the Bible. When Jacob blessed his sons, this is what he said.... ***“Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. You are a lion’s cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his”*** (Genesis 49:8-10).

According to rabbinical teaching (ref. Rabbi Shoshana Gelfand), each of the twelve tribes in Israel has a symbol associated with it. Benjamin is a wolf; Dan is a snake, Zebulum is a ship, and the symbol given to the tribe of Judah is that of the **lion**. Eventually all Jews came to be known by the name Judah - ‘Yehudah’. In fact the Hebrew word for Jew “Yehudi” comes from the name Judah. I’m sure you remember when Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, and over the years he managed to become second in command under Pharaoh in the land of Egypt. Then many years later there was a drought in Canaan, so Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt and appeared before Joseph begging him for food. Of course, they don’t recognise him, and therefore, they had no idea that their fate lay in the hands of the very person who they had betrayed years earlier. But Joseph had a plan, so he insisted that they go back home to Canaan and return to him at a later date, only this time their youngest brother Benjamin should accompany them. Note, after Joseph had gone missing Benjamin became Jacob’s favourite son.

At first Jacob refuses to let Benjamin go. But once he's promised that Benjamin will be well looked after and that he will be returned safely, the father changes his mind. However, when the brothers (including Benjamin), reappear before Joseph, he plants a silver goblet in Benjamin's sack. As a result, the brothers try to flee Egypt and Joseph has them brought back and accuses them of stealing. They deny that they've stolen anything and allow themselves to be searched. Of course, when the goblet is found in Benjamin's sack, Joseph declares that the rest of the brothers may go but Benjamin will need to remain a slave in Egypt.

You must remember that Joseph is merely testing his brothers. Will they, yet again, allow a treasured member of the family to become a slave in Egypt? Or will they take responsibility for each other and risk becoming slaves themselves by defending their brother Benjamin? Now this is where it becomes really interesting! Judah steps forward and gives an impassioned speech to Joseph, begging him to let Benjamin go. He even offers himself as a substitute for Benjamin. He tells Joseph that he is prepared to stay and become a slave in place of Benjamin. You must remember that this is the climax of the book of Genesis! But throughout the entire Book there has been a single unanswered question that's still churning around in every reader's mind. And it's a question God asked which had never been answered! Way back at the beginning of the book of Genesis after Cain kills his brother Abel, God asks him, **"Where is your brother?"** Clearly God knows that Abel is lying there dead, so His question is an attempt to get Cain to take responsibility for what he has done. God was looking for some expression of remorse and taking of responsibility. But Cain's response to God's question is simply, **"Am I my brother's keeper?"** The rest of the book of Genesis appears to consist of God waiting for someone to answer that question, **"Am I my brother's keeper?"** The answer of course, from all of God's children, should be an emphatic "yes." We are each other's keepers!

Throughout the entire book of Genesis we have waited for someone to step forward, and say exactly that! So who eventually rises to the challenge? Judah! Judah boldly steps forward. Judah takes responsibility for his brother Benjamin. Judah offers to give himself in exchange so that he can save his brother. Judah's selfless actions reunite his family. And hence, Judah becomes a role model for the responsibility of one Jew to another. Let me ask you, *"Who is this pointing to? Who would eventually, not only substitute Himself for fellow Jews but for the gentiles as well?"* Judah was a forerunner of Jesus Christ - from whom Jesus would get His pedigree. ***"Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."***

Every believer can embrace the symbol of Judah - the Lion - and what it represents. Every believer should step forward and take responsibility for his/hers brothers and sisters in Christ. Have you ever offered to sacrifice 'self' in order to save your brothers and sisters in the Lord (both near and far). In Christ, you too are from the tribe of Judah (the same bloodline), and therefore, you can rightly embrace the symbol of the LION! Yet, if we read on, the lion symbol has a deeper significance than taking responsibility for others. Proverbs 28:1 declares, ***"The wicked flee when no one pursues, But the righteous are bold as a lion."*** There are many scriptures that symbolically refer to young lions (Isaiah 5:29, 11:6, 31:4; Ezekiel 19:2, 19:6, 38:13; Hosea 5:14; Amos 3:4; Micah 5:8; Naham 2:13). But the verse that stands out is Genesis 49:8, when Jacob blesses his son Judah... ***"Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. You are a lion's cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son."*** Notice, Jacob calls Judah a lion's cub - a young lion! I believe there is something significant about the inherent characteristics of a young lion. So what are they, and how can we related to them in the context of our Lord Jesus Christ?

**The lion**, in relation to the Lord, is an image of the absolute fearlessness and invincible strength with which He stands by us, to teach the truth and to protect us from evil. We have only to trust Him, and we will be safe. In Psalm 104:21 it says, ***“The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God.”*** The lions are meant to be the angels of heaven; and their roaring after their prey, is described as the desire of the angels for renewed love and wisdom from the Lord. The angels are called young lions, and the Lord a Lion. The angels, like young lions, constantly seek food. So they look to the Lord for nourishment.

Notice how young lions are fierce, they roar loudly, and are characterised by their hunger! They seek food all the time - not milk but meat! Together with the angels in heaven, we should be like young lions, ever hungry for the Lord. We must move away from desiring milk, to strong meat for spiritual food. We should have tasted of the Lord, and as a result, desire nothing else. Psalm 34:8-10 (Amplified) states, ***“O taste and see that the Lord [our God] is good! Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) is the man who trusts and takes refuge in Him. O fear the Lord, you His saints [revere and worship Him]! For there is no want to those who truly revere and worship Him with godly fear. The young lions lack food and suffer hunger, but they who seek (inquire of and require) the Lord [by right of their need and on the authority of His Word], none of them shall lack any beneficial thing.”***

You are what you eat! When we partake of the Bread of Life (the Lion of Judah), we become just like Him. Consequently, we shall lack nothing! What's more, we become as fierce to God's enemies as Christ is! Having disarmed the devil, He made an open spectacle of him, defeating him in it (the cross). What the devil never realised is that when the Lord's flesh was being torn apart, he was in fact tearing himself apart. His powers and principalities were being devoured by the work of his own hands.

Now, the young lions rule and reign in this life. ***“Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed.”*** Notice that it says, “has triumphed.” There is no more that Jesus can do! As young lions, it is now up to us! We are to take the kingdom of God by force. We are to dismantle the gates of hell. We are to enforce the devil’s defeat. Remember, the devil only goes around ***“like a roaring lion”*** (1 Peter 5:8), So our roar is far greater than his! Our words are more powerful than his! And our authority is more sovereign than his! ***“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his”*** (Genesis 49:10).

Children of God, *young lions of the tribe of Judah*, go forth and devour your prey. And whenever and wherever you boldly exercise your **authority** in Christ (in the realm of the spirit), remember that the angels in heaven (the other young lions) are there to back you up. For as you fearlessly speak the word of God, they will harken to His voice and draw along side you. They will help you to establish the victory. Hallelujah!