

**Rufinus**

(Tyrannius Rufinus Aquiliensis)

*DE BENEDICTIONE PATRIARCHORUM*

(1.2 , 408)

[4<sup>th</sup> Century]

You ask what we are to understand about the patriarch, Juda, from *Genesis* 49.11. Israel, the father of Juda, the Patriarch, foresees what is going to happen to each of his sons and says of this one: "... tying his colt to the vine, and the colt of his she-ass to the branch of the vine." This you have translated: "... and to sack-cloth the colt of his she-ass." Now the Greek [...] means not so much "branch" (as in our versions), but those little barbs and tendrils by which the growing branch anchors itself, and hangs from the branches of a tree or from poles or from other types of support which, I think, gardeners call "climbing-frames". And, held up by these growths, safe from the danger of falling, the branch grows heavy with fruit, or runs to wood. This leads me to think that in the ancient Latin copies the Greek word, or something like it, was transcribed, and in time scribes who did not understand it thought that "helici" should be emended to "cilicium" (sack-cloth).

In this instance, it is not difficult to correct the translator's error. But, unless we discuss the whole chapter, it is not easy to find any intelligible sense in the passage. Commentaries on the whole of this chapter would have presented something more meaty and much clearer if they had begun from the opening of the benedictions...

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