

# The 12 Tribes of Israel

**Why should be know about the  
12 Tribes?**



# Jacob

- Originally mentioned in the EA lecture
  - The 3 principle rounds of which.....
- Genesis 28:10-20
  - was on his way to find a wife after being told his brother (Essau) was going to kill him





# Jacob

- Marries two women (Leah and Rachel) - Gen 29:15
- Is heading back to his land when he wrestles with God
- Named Israel...





## Leah

1. Reuben
2. Simeon
3. Levi
4. Judah
9. Issachar
10. Zebulun

## Zilpah

7. Gad
8. Asher

## Rachel

11. Joseph
12. Benjamin

## Bilhah

5. Dan
6. Naphtali

# Reuben

- Mother: Leah
- Meaning: “See, a son” - she named him Reuben; for she said, “Because the LORD has looked on my affliction; surely now my husband will love me.”
- Symbol: Water or mandrake plant
- Location: Outside of the Promised Land - East of the Jordan
- Jacob’s Blessing: My might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling on power
  - Slept with Jacob’s wife Bilhah (Rachel’s handmaiden)
- Moses Blessing: Let Reuben live and not die, nor his people be few
- Notable: intervened on Joseph’s behalf.

# Simeon

- Mother: Leah
- Meaning: “Hearing” - God has heard - Because the LORD has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also”; and she named him Simeon.
- Symbol: Either a Gate or a word
- Location: Inside the land of Judah
- Jacob’s Blessing: Their swords (along with Levi) are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council...for they have killed men in they ranger. I will scatter them
- Moses Blessing: Not mentioned by Moses
- Notable: Was held by Joseph as guarantee to see Benjamin. Tribe know to be shepherds which is why they are probably scattered and dispersed

# Levi

- Mother: Leah
- Meaning: “Attached” - Leah thought this would “attach” Jacob to her. “Now this time my husband will be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons”; therefore he was named Levi.
- Symbol: Breastplate of the High Priest
- Location: with the Temple
- Jacob’s Blessing: Were rebuked for killing the people of Shechem
- Moses Blessing: Bless all his skills, Lord, and be pleased with the work of his hands
- Notable: They were the priests in the Temple and responsible for taking care of it. Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Ezra, Ezekiel, John the Baptist, and Barnabas.



# Judah

- Mother: Leah
- Meaning: “Praise” - “This time I will praise the LORD”; therefore she named him Judah
- Symbol: Lion
- Location: in the South. Contains Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, and Gaza
- Jacob’s Blessing: 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
- Moses Blessing: Hear, Lord, the cry of Judah; bring him to his people. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh, be his help against his foes!
- Notable: Convinced his brothers to sell Joseph rather than kill him. Slept with his Daughter-in-law Tamar. Judah led the tribes into the promised land. Camped on the East Side of the Tabernacle-The only side with an entrance. Caleb, David, Zerubbabel, Amos, Micah, and Isaiah.

# Dan

- Mother: Bilhah -
- Meaning: “Judge” - Rachel said: “God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son”
- Symbol: Snake or Scales of Justice
- Location: in the Northern part of the South. Contains Joppa (Tel-Aviv today)
- Jacob’s Blessing: Dan will provide justice for his people...Dan will be a snake by the roadside.
- Moses Blessing: Dan is a lion’s cub, springing out of Bashan.
- Notable: Samson - King Jeroboam built a pagan temple in Dan. Was considered Idolaters



# Naphtali

- Mother: Bilhah
- Meaning: “My Struggle” - Then Rachel said, “With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed”; so she named him Naphtali.
- Symbol: Deer
- Location: Northern Kingdom - West and North-West of the Sea of Galilee - The Hill Country of Galilee
- Jacob’s Blessing: Naphtali is a doe let loose; he bears beautiful fawns (or gives beautiful words).
- Moses Blessing: Naphtali is “full of blessing”
- Notable: Tribe is praised for its courage. Tribe assisted Gideon in Battle. Supported David against King Saul.

# Gad

- Mother: Zilpah
- Meaning: “Good Fortune” or “warrior”- Then Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. And Leah said, “Good fortune!” so she named him Gad.
- Symbol: Tents like a battlefield camp.
- Location: on the Eastern Side of the Jordan. Fertile lands good for animals
- Jacob’s Blessing: Gad will be attacked by a band of raiders, but he will attack them at their heels
- Moses Blessing: Gad carries “out the Lord’s righteous will, and his judgements concerning Israel”
- Notable: Gadites who supported David were described as “brave warriors, ready for battle and able to hand the shield and spear”



# Asher

- Mother: Zilpah
- Meaning: “Happy” - Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. And Leah said, “Happy am I! For the women will call me happy”; so she named him Asher.
- Symbol: Tree
- Location: Northern Kingdom along the Mediterranean Sea. Right below Tyre.
- Jacob’s Blessing: Asher’s good will be rich; he will provide delicacies fit for a king
- Moses Blessing: Let [Asher] be favored by his brothers, and let him bathe his feet in oil
- Notable: The prophetess Anna, who recognized the infant Jesus as the Messiah, was from this tribe

# Issachar

- Mother: Leah
- Meaning: “There is a reward” - Leah said, “God has given me my hire because I gave my maid to my husband”; so she named him Issachar.
- Symbol: Donkey or Sun and Moon
- Location: Northern Kingdom. South and South/West of Sea of Galilee
- Jacob’s Blessing: Issachar is a sturdy donkey....When he sees how good the countryside is, and how pleasant the land, he will bend his shoulder to the load and submit himself to hard labor
- Moses Blessing: Mentioned along with Zebulun as those who will “feast on the abundance of the seas, and the treasures hidden in the sand”
- Notable: According to 1 Chronicles 12:32 Of Issachar, those who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, two hundred chiefs, and all their kindred under their command



# Zebulun

- Mother: Leah
- Meaning: “Dwelling” - “God has endowed me with a good dowry; now my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons”; so she named him Zebulun.
- Symbol: Ship
- Location: Northern Kingdom. West of Sea of Galilee. Between Naphtali and Asher.
- Jacob’s Blessing: Zebulun will live by the seashore and become a haven for ships.
- Moses Blessing: Mentioned along with Issachar as those who will “feast on the abundance of the seas, and the treasures hidden in the sand”
- Notable: According to 1 Chronicles 12:33 they supported David with “Undivided Loyalty” or “Of Zebulun, fifty thousand seasoned troops, equipped for battle with all the weapons of war, to help David with singleness of purpose.”

# Joseph

- Mother: Rachel
- Meaning: “He will Increase” - she conceived and bore a son, and said, “God has taken away my reproach”; and she named him Joseph, saying, “May the LORD add to me another son!”
- Symbol: Head of grain or grapevine
- Location: Joseph’s land was divided between his sons: Manasseh and Ephraim. Manasseh received two large portions of land on the east and west banks of the Jordan. Ephraim received a small portion right below the Western Manasseh. It included the place of Bethel where God made covenant with Jacob (Dream)
- Jacob’s Blessing: Joseph is a “fruitful vine”. Jacob blessed Ephraim and said he would be greater than Manasseh.
- Moses Blessing: May the Lord bless [Joseph’s] land....with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness.
- Notable: Sold into slavery. Ascended to the 2nd highest place of Egypt. Jeroboam, Joshua, Deborah, and Samuel were from Ephraim. Gideon was from Manasseh.

# Benjamin

- Mother: Rachel
- Meaning: “Son of my Sorrow” or “Son of my Right Hand” - As her soul was departing (for she died), she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.
- Symbol: Wolf
- Location: Northern most part of the Southern Kingdom. Connected to the Dead Sea. Just north of Jerusalem (depending on the map). Jericho is in this location.
- Jacob’s Blessing: Benjamin is a “ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening, he divides the plunder.”
- Moses Blessing: Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him, for he shields him all day long.
- Notable: Tribe nearly destroyed by Civil War. Saul, Jeremiah, Mordecai, and the apostle Paul.



**THE TRIBAL ALLOTMENTS OF ISRAEL**

JOSH. 13:8-19:49

- City
- City (uncertain location)
- ▲ Mountain peak

