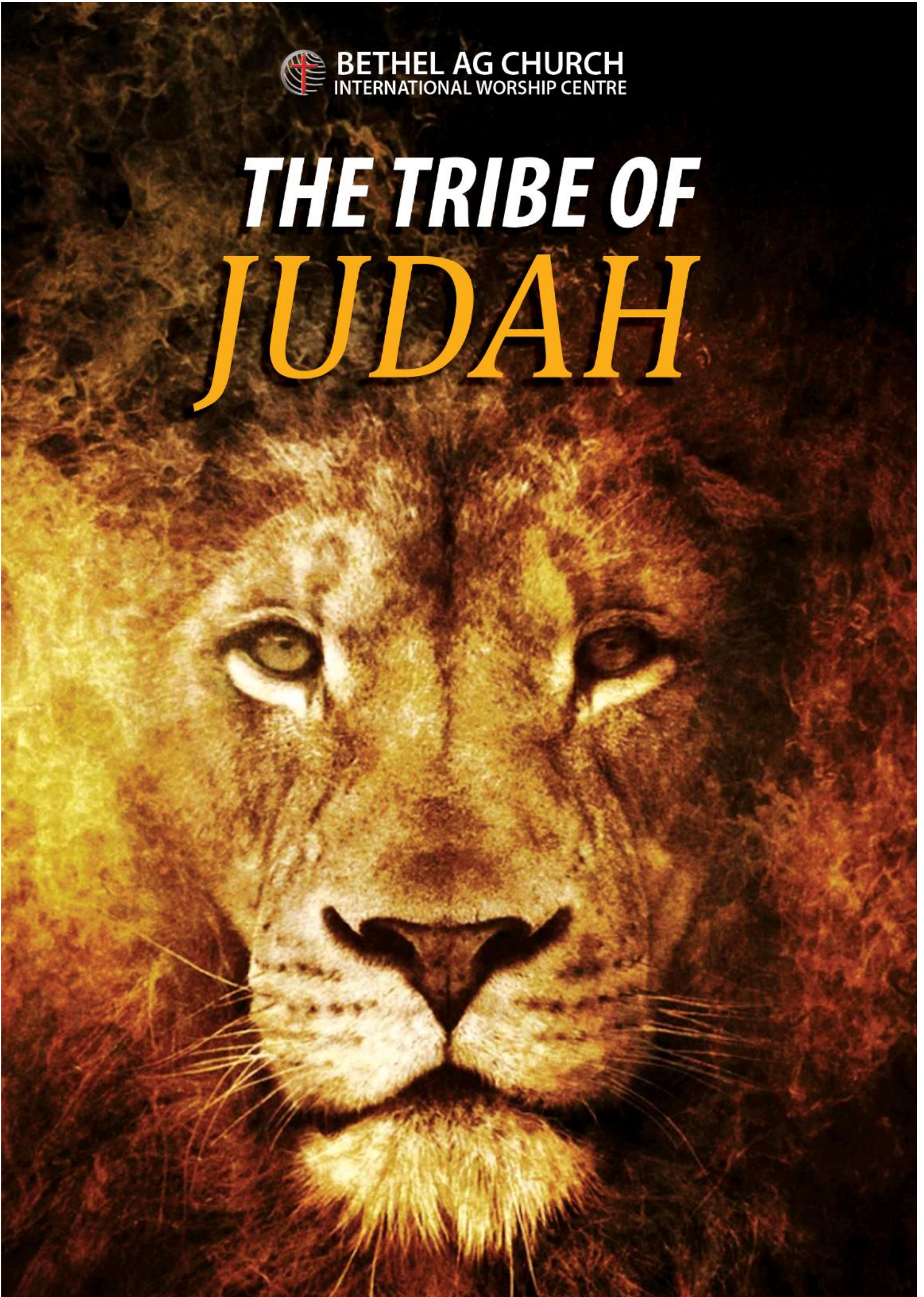




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# ***THE TRIBE OF JUDAH***





<b>Meaning of Judah:</b>	Praise
<b>His Family:</b>	Fourth son of Jacob, born to Leah
<b>Jacob's Blessing upon Judah:</b>	<i>"...You are a lion's cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lie down, like a lioness – who dares to rouse him? The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his." (Genesis 49:8-10)</i>
<b>Moses' Blessing upon Judah:</b>	<i>"Hear, Lord, the cry of Judah; bring him to this people. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh, be his help against his foes!" (Deuteronomy 33:7)</i>
<b>Significant people from this tribe:</b>	Leaders like Caleb, David, Zerubbabel were from the tribe of Judah, as were prophets like Amos, Micah, Isaiah, and Zephaniah. Lord Jesus Christ the Messiah was a descendant of Judah through the royal lineage of King David ( <b>Matthew 1</b> ). Christ was born in Bethlehem as Micah prophesied: <i>"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel." (Micah 5:2)</i>

## Who is Judah and what blessings did Jacob pronounce upon him?

Judah was the fourth son of Leah and Jacob. On the birth of her fourth son, Leah praised the Lord. When her first three sons were born, Leah expressed her desire that her husband would love her thereafter. But now having lost hope of any change in Jacob's heart towards her, she did not express any more yearnings for his affection. So, this time she took her eyes off her husband and focused on the Lord, the only One who stood with her all along. In a way, Judah's birth drew Leah closer to God.

Jacob's blessing upon Judah is the longest blessing pronounced (Joseph also receives a similar blessing) among all the 12 sons and it is as follows: *"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 lie down, like a lioness – who dares to rouse him? The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk" (Genesis 49:8-12)*

## **Why did Judah receive a positive blessing in contrast to the first three brothers?**

The first three brothers Reuben, Simeon, and Levi disqualified themselves by their unrighteous behaviour. Reuben, the firstborn, violated his father's wife, while Simeon and Levi went on to deceive and kill the men of Shechem in revenge for the rape of their sister and plundered their city. God hated wickedness and unrighteousness. However, there are a few problems with thinking that righteousness "earns" the blessing of God, or that lack of righteousness forfeits it. Their father Jacob was far from pure, yet he was clearly chosen and blessed.

Also, Judah was not someone we could easily equate with righteousness either. Read what he does in **Genesis 38** with his widowed daughter in law Tamar, a Canaanite woman. It's another scandalous story like Reuben! But Judah's blessing came as a result of his willingness, to repent and to take responsibility for his mistakes.

## **What is the significance of Jacob's blessings upon Judah?**

Jacob's prophecy highlights three things that would take place in the life of Judah and his generations.

- Judah would be honoured and respected by the rest of his brothers. He would be strong and courageous and would fight his enemies, while his brothers would bow down before him. Jacob compares Judah first, to a lion's cub that comes back victorious after its first kill and then, to a full-grown lion, with the king of beasts to signify his courage and strength.
- The firstborn right to the throne would be for Judah as it was said in the prophecy that the "scepter" would not depart from Judah. While Levi would get the priesthood and intercede for the people. Judah would get the kingship and rule over the people. All the kings would come from Judah after the order of King David; and eventually in the plan of God, the King of kings, the Messiah, would also come from him the One who would command the obedience of all the nations.
- Judah would enjoy great riches and prosperity. In highly descriptive words, Jacob said that Judah would enjoy great wealth and would be satisfied beyond all measure – symbolic of the vine and wine! The tribe of Judah and Joseph are the only two tribes who received vast lands as inheritance after they crossed over to the Promised land under the leadership of Joshua.

## **Are there insights in the Scriptures that reveal Judah's leadership among his brothers?**

In **Genesis 37:26-27**, Judah shows leadership abilities by saving his brother Joseph's life by convincing the other brothers to sell Joseph to some Ishmaelite rather than to kill him. Later in Egypt, he pledged responsibility for Benjamin in **Genesis 43:3-10** and pleaded with Joseph for Benjamin's life in **Genesis 44:18-34**. Judah was always associated with leading the battle against the enemies of God. (Refer **Judges 1: 1-19**)



## **Out of the twelve tribes, why was the tribe of Judah chosen to be the line through whom the Messiah would be born?**

The choice of Judah over all the other brothers is a bit of a mystery and the Bible does not give an explicit reason for it. Some have suggested it's because of Judah's repentance when he was caught in the sin of adultery with his own widowed daughter in law, Tamar. Some others have suggested that it's because of his self-sacrifice to offer his own life as a slave to Pharaoh instead of his brother Benjamin. He acted as a redeemer in saving Benjamin's life just like he saved Joseph's life from the pit. Some others have suggested it could be because of his mother Leah, who gave sacrificial praise to God, in the midst of an unloved home.

**Hebrews 7:13-14**, *"He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. **For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah**, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests."*

**I Chronicles 28:4**, *"Yet the Lord, the God of Israel, chose me [David] from my whole family to be king over Israel forever. **He chose Judah as leader, and from the tribe of Judah he chose my family**, and from my father's sons he was pleased to make me king over all Israel"*

***"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples". (Genesis 49:10) – What does this mean?***

A scepter is a symbol of majesty and royal authority, and Jacob's blessing is a Messianic prophecy that "Shiloh" or the Messiah, would come from the tribe of Judah. The tribe of Levi became the priestly tribe, and Judah was the royal tribe.

In **Psalm 60:7** and **108:8**, God calls Judah his 'scepter', and another key prophetic passage that refers to the Messiah as a scepter is in **Numbers 24:17**, *"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel..."*

And Jesus Christ the Messiah would be that great and glorious King prophesied in **Isaiah 11:1**, which says, *"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots."*

And a direct reference of Jesus Christ as the Lion of Judah mentioned in **Revelation 5:5**, *"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."*

**"The second part of Jacob's blessings upon Judah - *"He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes"* - what does it mean?**

This part of the blessing is pronounced in a very rich poetic and prophetic passage that points towards the abundant blessings upon the generations of Judah and to the redemptive work of our Messiah. The mention of the donkey, vine, branch, and blood of grapes all point towards the coming of the Messianic Kingdom on Earth. Jesus fulfilled these prophetic predictions as He came riding on a donkey to Jerusalem with people shouting *"Hosana in the Highest"* as they recognized Jesus as the King of Judah when He became the King (**Matthew 21:9**). He said He is the true vine and by His sacrificial blood we have new life of His abundance in His kingdom on Earth and in Heaven. (**John 15:1, Ephesians 1:7**)

[**Note:** In the ancient Middle Eastern world, leaders rode on horses if they rode to war, but they rode on donkeys when they came in peace (**1 Kings 1:33, Judges 5:10; 10:4; 12:14, 2 Samuel 16:2, Zechariah 9:9-10**) – Our Lord rode a donkey to Jerusalem to represent the King who came in peace to bring Salvation but very soon He will come riding on a white horse to judge the world (**Revelation 19:11-16**)]

**How do we understand the paradox of Jesus as the 'Lion of Judah' and as the 'Lamb of God'?**

Actually, a lamb is one of the most prolific, significant Biblical symbols. The word first appears in **Genesis 22** when Isaac asked his father Abraham, *"Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"* Abraham responds, *"God will provide himself the lamb"* (**Genesis 22:7-8**). In one sense, providing a lamb is the theme of the whole Bible. The human race needed a substitute sacrifice. We needed a Saviour. Every Old Testament sacrifice foreshadowed the need for a vicarious offering. In the New Testament, John the Baptist introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world (**John 1:29**). In the gospels, Jesus never referred to himself as the Lamb, but He did say that He had come *"to give his life a ransom for many"* (**Matthew 20:28**).

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus is continually called as the Lamb of God even though He is the Son of God, the Root of Jesse, the Lion of Judah, and the King of kings. If Jesus had not become the Lamb of God, there wouldn't be a multitude of saints gathered around the throne singing His praises. Therefore, every created being in Heaven will be singing, *"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever"* (**Revelation 5:13**). Our Saviour became a man to provide Salvation to all. The King became the servant to model a life of submission. The Lion became the Lamb to show us a lifestyle of humility.

Paul explained it in Philippians: *“He [Jesus], being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted him ... (Philippians 2:6-9).*

## **What are the life applications that we can learn from the Tribe of Judah?**

### **True repentance brings great blessings**

Judah and his tribe have much to show about what God’s grace can do in our lives when we turn to the Lord in humble repentance. When Judah repented, God forgave him and blessed him. If we yield our hearts and lives to the Lord, we also will enjoy the unending showers of His blessings.

*“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14)*

*“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” (Acts 3:19)*

### **Humility in Leadership**

The tribe of Judah, which is the tribe of royalty, embodies the quality of gratitude and humility – the ability to acknowledge one’s wrongdoings, as well as one’s position as a recipient of blessings. The quality of humility is an essential characteristic of a leader. Judah was willing to sacrifice himself to end the cycle of moral deception, which had been growing in the family. He also decided to rise and fight against all inequalities against the kingdom of God. A careful reader comprehends how God’s chosen, King David, learnt from his great ancestor, Judah, how to be a humble leader and was thus known as the man after God’s own heart.

### **Develop a mind-set of our Lord Jesus Christ**

Even though Jesus is the Lion of Judah, He decided to be the Sacrifice and to lay down His life for others. The Lamb of God willingly *“made Himself nothing”* for us; He became a servant so He could redeem us. The Believer bears a responsibility to yield to the Spirit’s leading (**Ephesians 4:30**) and to allow the Holy Spirit to transform and renew the mind (**Romans 12:1-2**).

Are we equally willing to become a sacrifice of praise to him through our attitudes, words, and actions?

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