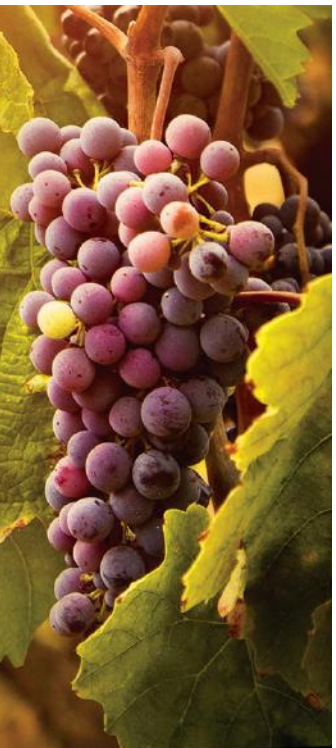




**BETHEL AG CHURCH**  
INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP CENTRE



# **THE TRIBE OF** **Joseph**

**(Ephraim & Manasseh)**

# **& Benjamin**



# Tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin

	Joseph		Benjamin
	Ephraim	Manasseh	
Meaning of the Name:	<i>Double fruitfulness</i>	<i>God has made me forget</i>	<i>Son of the right hand</i>
Family:	Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob, born to Rachel.  Ephraim was the 2nd born of Joseph and Manasseh the 1st born of Joseph.		Twelfth son of Jacob, born to Rachel.
Jacob's Blessing:	Joseph is "a fruitful vine" (Gen.49:22). Jacob blessed Joseph's sons saying that Ephraim would be greater than Manasseh the firstborn.		"Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he dives the plunder". (Gen. 49:27)
Moses' Blessing:	"May the Lord bless (Joseph's) land... with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness." (Deut.33:13-17).		"Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him, for he shields him all day long." (Deut.33:12)
Significant People:	Joshua, Samuel, Deborah	Gideon, Jephthah	King Saul, Mordecai, Apostle Paul

## Tribe of Joseph (Ephraim & Manasseh)

### What was Jacob's prophecy on Joseph?

When Jacob directed a prophecy towards each of his sons, he gave Joseph one of the longest prophecy mentioned in **Genesis 49:22-26** (NIV), "Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall. With bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility. But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, because of your father's God, who helps you, because of Almighty, who blesses you with blessings of the skies above, blessings of the deep springs below, blessings of the bosom and womb. Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers."



## What is the significance of the prophecy?

One of the great significances that emerges from the prophecy is that of **Joseph's faithfulness and fruitfulness**. Joseph is compared to a fruitful vine. God prospered him in the land of his affliction (**Genesis 41:52**). Joseph's fruitfulness was ultimately manifested through Joseph's two sons – Ephraim and Manasseh. Technically, there is no tribe of Joseph. Instead, Joseph received a "double blessing" and his two sons: Ephraim and Manasseh, each became his own tribe (**Genesis 48; Joshua 14:4; Ezekiel 47:13**). The Bible does, on some occasions, refer to them together as "tribe of Joseph" (**Numbers 13:11; 36:5; Revelation 7:8**).

Then Jacob proceeded to remind the other brothers of their ill treatment of Joseph. They were among the "archers" who attacked Joseph with bitterness and hostility, along with Potiphar's wife, whose false accusations sent him to prison for two years (**Genesis 39; 41:1**). Jacob described Joseph as attacked by envy, revenge, temptation, ingratitude; yet still, by the grace of God, he triumphed over all opposition. But through all these troubles, Joseph's strength is compared to a bow that remained steady. That is, his faith did not fail, but he stood his ground and emerged a conqueror.

Jacob ended the prophecy for the tribe of Joseph with a series of blessings. Jewish history tells us that the territory of the tribe of Joseph was one of the most valuable parts of the country, and the house of Joseph became the most dominant group in the Kingdom of Israel. Joseph reminds us that all blessings, both temporal and spiritual, come from God.

In **Joshua 14-17**, the tribes of Judah and Joseph (Ephraim and West Manasseh) were distributed first and together took up the majority of the land of Canaan (*Reason: Among the twelve sons, the birth right goes to Joseph and leadership goes to Judah*). The land left over after the distribution to Judah and Joseph was to be surveyed by members of the other tribes and was then distributed to them by lot (**Joshua 18-19**). In **Numbers 26**, the total population of Ephraim and Manasseh was 85,200 while Judah's was 76,500 fulfilling the prophecy of Jacob.

## Why Jacob blessed Ephraim the younger one over the firstborn Manasseh?

Manasseh and Ephraim were Joseph's sons born to him by Aseneth in the land of his affliction – Egypt; so he named them according to his experiences. He named his first son 'Manasseh', which is interpreted to mean, '*God has made me forget all my toil*', and the second he named, 'Ephraim' – '*God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction*.' But when Joseph brought his sons to be blessed by his father, his father prophetically reversed the order of their birth. He crossed his hands and blessed them, placed his right hand on Ephraim's head, thus making Ephraim the firstborn (**Genesis 48:15-16**).

By his actions, Jacob placed fruitfulness before forgetfulness, because no matter what you go through in life, if your story doesn't change, you will always remember your pain and may be bitter. If Joseph hadn't come to a point in his life experience, where he moved from rejection, betrayal, and abandonment, to the 'throne of Egypt', it would have been difficult for him to forget all that he went through in Egypt. If he was still in the pit of despair, every day would have been to him, a reminder of his desolation. So, there must be fruitfulness for there to be forgetfulness, not the other way round.

**Note:** After 400 years of blessings, like many of the other tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh disobeyed God by not expelling the Canaanites out of the land assigned to them (**Joshua 16:10**). They finally turned to worship of Baal, and God remembered their sin of idolatry in **Hosea 13:12**. They were the first to be taken into Assyrian captivity. But a remnant from the tribe of Ephraim and Manasseh turned to God, during the reign of King Asa and settled in Jerusalem (**2 Chronicles 15:9**).

### **Life Applications:**

#### **1. God is able to make you fruitful in the midst of your afflictions.**

God has a plan to bear fruit in our lives, not just despite the affliction and struggles that we wish would leave our lives, but through those very struggles. God uses them as the actual conduit for this fruitfulness. It is the God of Joseph's story that causes me to hope in the midst of struggle.

Affliction and fruitfulness are always united in the economy of God. It is the Law of the Spiritual Harvest that *"except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit."*

#### **2. Like Joseph we must patiently wait for His timings to be fruitful.**

Humanly speaking, it must have been extremely difficult to wait for God's timing but Joseph waited on God during his trials without seeking either revenge or self-advancement. Finally, God lifted him to a place of honor where he could be a blessing to others.

**1 Peter 5:6**, *"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."*

**John 15:16**, *"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain ... "*

### **Tribe of Benjamin**

During the birth of Jacob's son, Joseph,, Rachel had asked God to give her this second son. Her desire had been fulfilled, but Benjamin's birth brought upon her great trouble and left Jacob heartbroken over the death of his favourite wife, Rachel. Yet Jacob chose to draw strength from the birth of this son, born to him while he was well advanced in years. Benjamin was the son on whom he could lean, 'the son of his right hand'. To Jacob, the birth of Benjamin his 12th son signified strength in his old age.

Within his family, Benjamin took the place of his long-lost brother, Joseph. Benjamin was greatly loved by his father, Jacob; he was fiercely protected by his older brothers, and happily reunited with his own blood brother, Joseph.

## What was the significance of Jacob's prophecy over Benjamin?

Jacob prophesied "*Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder*" (**Genesis 49:27**).

Jacob referred to the "son of his right hand" as a famished, hungry wolf, wild and desperate. This wolf would greedily attack his prey and selfishly consume it till he had enough. And after he got all he wanted, he would choose to split up what was left over. In other words, Jacob was saying that Benjamin could not be controlled and that in his selfishness, he would do whatever he chose.

### This small tribe has played several important roles in Israel's history.

- A national civil war broke out in the camps of Israel, and Benjamin stood against the rest of Israel to justify the evil (sexual immorality) they had done; due to this incident, God's wrath came on the tribe of Benjamites (**Judges 20:14–21:24**).
- King Saul, the first anointed king of Israel, was from Benjamin (**1 Samuel 9:1-2**). Saul is an example of a Benjamite who started out well, but ended in total disaster due to his headstrong ways. Saul became rebellious and stirred God's wrath against him so much that "*the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit tormented him.*" (**1 Samuel 16:14**). This impressive Benjamite did not make the best use of the power God granted him, and he lost his opportunity to be the King God wanted him to be.
- The tribe was also loyal to David's descendants when the northern tribes separated (**1 Kings 12:16–24**). They were known for their ambidextrous warriors who remained a blessing to the tribe of Judah - **1 Chronicles 12:2** says, "*they were armed with bows and were able to shoot arrows or to sling stones right-handed or left-handed; they were relatives of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin.*"
- The other remarkable people from the tribe of Benjamin are Mordecai and Esther. Two of them saved Jewish people from annihilation at the hands of Haman.

Also, in the New Testament – apostle Paul himself was a Benjamite whom God chose for the purpose of carrying the Gospel to the Gentiles (**Romans 11:1, Philipians 3:5**). From the very Benjamite tribe, who had earlier incurred the wrath of God and the judgment of Israel, came these individuals who submitted to God and obediently followed Him.



### Life applications:

#### **Allow the Holy Spirit to mould our lives for His purposes.**

God can mould and utilize any temperaments – whether it be phlegmatic, choleric, sanguine or melancholy – when that person has surrendered completely to the Lord. Let us determine in our hearts to be a clay in the Potter's hand, willing to be moulded for His purposes like Apostle Paul.

#### **May God grant us a host of Benjamins who will tear in pieces the armies of darkness!**

Every child of God will face spiritual warfare (**Ephesians 6:11-12**) and God has given us the weapons we need to bring down the strongholds of the enemy.

**2 Corinthians 10:4** says we are given weapons that has divine power to demolish every strongholds of Satan and we are called to walk in obedience to His Word that makes us victorious.

### Final Conclusion

As we conclude our series on “The Twelve Tribes of Israel”, let us remember the major lessons from each tribe. Some were negative, while others were positive. We learned to avoid inconsistencies in our faith and practice like the tribe of Reuben. We were warned of the dangers of excessive anger and divided loyalties like the tribe of Simeon and Levi. We were urged to refrain from idolatry and sexual immorality like the tribe of Dan. In addition, we saw the tragedy of wasted potential from the tribe of Asher. On the other hand, we were urged to practice humility and to show courageous leadership like the tribe of Gad, Naphtali, and Judah. We were prompted to be trust worthy promise-keepers and wise workers like the tribes of Zebulun & Issachar. We discovered that children of God are undeservedly blessed and are the chosen ministers of God like the tribe of Joseph and Benjamin.

But the even greater lesson of this study is about the faithfulness of our God. Even though all of the tribes were eventually conquered and dispersed, the LORD's promise to Israel remains intact. His covenant to restore and bless the nations of the world through Israel is eternal.

The sons who originally gathered around their aged father's deathbed scarcely realized that their descendants would play such a crucial role in the development of God's redemptive plan. We as followers of Lord Jesus must rejoice in the wide-range of majestic plans of God over His people as it says in **Romans 11:33**, *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”* He promised that He will surely be with us until the end of the ages and will never leave us nor forsake us (**Matthew 28:20**).