

12 TRIBES OF ISRAEL


Symbols & Meaning





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Symbol	Name	Meaning
	<p>Reuben</p>	<p>The eldest son of Jacob and firstborn of Jacob and Leah, his name means “See, a Son!” and his tribe’s symbol is water or a mandrake plant.</p> <p>Jacob blessed Reuben as his “might and the beginning of his strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.” Moses blessed the Tribe of Reuben that it might live and that its men might not be few.</p> <p>Its inheritance was east of the Dead Sea. In the Camp of Israel, Reuben’s position was south of the Tabernacle and it was called the Camp of Reuben. When Israel marched, the Tribe of Reuben started after Judah.</p>


	<p>Simeon</p>	<p>The second son of Jacob and Leah, Simeon was a close sibling of Levi and Dinah. His name means “Hearing”—God has heard—and his symbol is a gate or the Gate of Shechem.</p> <p>At Israel’s wilderness wanderings, the Tribe of Simeon camped south of the Tabernacle next to Reuben. It settled beyond the River Jordan with half the Tribe of Manasseh.</p> <p>Rabbinic literature claims that beggars and elementary school teachers came from the Tribe of Simeon, and that many of the “mixed multitude” that came with Israel out of Egypt intermarried with the Tribe of Simeon.</p>
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	<p style="text-align: center;">Levi</p>	<p>The third son of Jacob and Leah, his name means “Attached” or “Joined,” because Leah believed that by giving birth to another son Jacob would now become attached to her.</p> <p>His tribe’s symbol is the High Priest’s breastplate because from Levi came Israel’s priests, while the work of ministering in the Tabernacle and the Temple belonged to the Levites.</p> <p>The Levites’ role was to assist the priests in offering sacrifices, performing music, and teaching the Law of Moses.</p> <p>Their inheritance spread throughout forty-eight cities within the borders of Israel’s twelve tribes.</p>
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	<p style="text-align: center;">Judah</p>	<p>The fourth son of Jacob and Leah, his name means “He Will Praise” and his symbol is a lion.</p> <p>Jacob blessed Judah that his brothers would praise him, that his hand would be on the necks of his enemies, that his siblings would bow before him, and that the scepter would not depart from him nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh came, to whom would be the gathering of the people.</p> <p>Moses blessed the Tribe of Judah that God would hear Judah’s cry and bring him to his people, that he would defend Judah’s cause and be his help against his enemies.</p>
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	<p>Dan</p>	<p>The fifth son of Jacob and firstborn of Rachel's handmaiden Bilhah, his name means "Judge" and his symbol is a snake, or, alternatively, the scales of justice.</p> <p>Jacob blessed Dan that he would judge his people and be as a snake in the roadside. Moses blessed the Tribe of Dan as a lion's cub springing from Bashan.</p> <p>Because Dan was identified with idolatry in Israel's Northern Kingdom, it was looked on as a black sheep.</p> <p>A tradition exists that the Antichrist will come from Dan. It is the only tribe not mentioned among God's 144,000 servants in the Book of Revelation.</p>
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	<p>Naphtali</p>	<p>The sixth son of Jacob and second son of Jacob and Bilhah, his name means "My Struggle" and his symbol is the doe.</p> <p>Jacob blessed Naphtali that he would be as a hind let loose, which gives birth to beautiful fawns; or, in other words, which sends forth beautiful words of wisdom and counsel.</p> <p>Moses blessed the Tribe of Naphtali that it would be sated with favors and blessings.</p> <p>Naphtali was a swift runner and came first to Jacob with the news that Joseph, whom they had sold as a slave, was still alive when the brothers returned from meeting with Joseph in Egypt.</p>
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	<p>Gad</p>	<p>The seventh son of Jacob and firstborn of Leah's handmaiden Zilpah, his name means "Good Fortune" and his symbol is a tent or tents, as in a battlefield camp.</p> <p>Gad was himself the father of seven sons. Because of Gad's great strength, Joseph did not present him to Pharaoh lest he might appoint Gad as one of his guards.</p> <p>Jacob blessed him that although he would be attacked by a band of raiders, he would attack them at their heels.</p> <p>Moses commended the Tribe Gad for carrying out Jehovah's righteous will and fulfilling his judgments concerning Israel.</p>
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	<p>Asher</p>	<p>The eighth son of Jacob, Gad's younger brother, his name means "Happiness" and his symbol is a tree. Jacob blessed Asher that his food would be rich and that he would provide delicacies fit for a king.</p> <p>Moses blessed the Tribe of Asher that it might be favored by its fellow-tribes and its feet bathed in oil.</p> <p>Asher's land was so fertile that in times of scarcity, and especially in the Sabbatical Year, Asher provided all Israel with olive oil.</p> <p>The Asherites were renowned for wisdom and their women were so beautiful that priests and princes sought them in marriage.</p>
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	<p>Issachar</p>	<p>The ninth son of Jacob and fifth son of Jacob and Leah, his name means “There is a reward” and his symbol is a donkey.</p> <p>Jacob blessed Issachar that he would be as a sturdy donkey when he sees how good the countryside is and how pleasant the land, that he would bend his shoulder to the load and submit himself to hard labor.</p> <p>Moses mentioned the Tribe of Issachar together with the Tribe of Zebulun as those who would feast on the abundance of the seas and on treasures hidden in the earth.</p> <p>The people of this tribe occupied themselves with the study of the Law.</p>
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	<p>Zebulun</p>	<p>The tenth son of Jacob and sixth son of Jacob and Leah, his name means “Dwelling” and his symbol is a ship. Jacob blessed Zebulun that he would live by the seashore and become a haven for ships.</p> <p>Moses blessed the Tribe of Zebulun that it might feast on the abundance of the sea and on treasures hidden in the earth.</p> <p>In the Song of Deborah, Zebulun is described as sending to the battle those who handle the “rod of the scribe” that is, a stylus used to inscribe clay tablets or to write on papyrus.</p> <p>Those wielding it would have associated with teachers of the Law.</p>
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	<p>Joseph</p>	<p>The eleventh son of Jacob and first son of Jacob and Rachel, his name means “He will increase” and his symbol is a sheaf of grain.</p> <p>Jacob blessed Joseph that he might be as a fruitful bough by a well whose branches run over the wall, that his bow might abide in strength, and that his hands might be made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob.</p> <p>Jacob blessed him that God would bless him with the blessings of heaven above and of the deep beneath, that his blessings might prevail above the blessings of his progenitors to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.</p>
	<p>Benjamin</p>	<p>The twelfth son of Jacob and second son of Jacob and Rachel, his mother named him Ben-Oni or “Son of My Sorrows” as she lay dying in childbirth.</p> <p>Jacob renamed him Benjamin, “Son of the Right Hand,” and his symbol is a wolf. Jacob said of him, “Benjamin is a ravaging wolf.</p> <p>In the morning, he devours the prey, and in the evening he divides the spoil.” Moses blessed the Tribe of Benjamin that God might be a shield to them all the day long.</p> <p>The Benjaminites were skilled as archers and as left-handed warriors, who would attack their enemies unawares.</p>