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The Tribe of Zebulun

26: 26-27

The tribe of Zebulun DIG: What does the Second Census tell us about Zebulan's historical roots? Why did the tribe of Zebulan increase from the First Census? Why would the wilderness generation want to know they had common historical roots from their parents, but a separate identity from the Exodus generation?

REFLECT: What meaningful group (tribe) are you a member of? How does being a part of that group help to support you and make you grow spiritually? How does being a part of it enable you to help others? What can you do to make sure that the positive parts of your past are accentuated in your relationship with God?

The people and territory of Zebulun will become a haven for ships, just as Galilee was a haven for Yeshua before the cross.



1. The First Census in the past found **the tribe** of **Zebulun** being **numbered at 57,400** (to see link click [Ak](#) - **Numbering the Tribes**). Ya'akov prophesied to the sixth son of Leah first and said: **Zebulun will live by the seashore and become a haven for ships; his border will extend toward Sidon (49:13)**. The shortest of all the bedside blessings, this is not a curse leveled at **Zebulun** because of **his** vain flirtation with the Phoenicians,

but a word of praise and promise addressed to this **tribe**.⁵⁸⁶ The need for a **near historical** and a **far eschatological** view of this prophecy is vital because initially **Zebulun** had no border **by the seashore** (see the commentary on **Genesis Lh - Zebulun Will Live by the Seashore and Become a Haven for Ships**).

In the **near historical future** we know that **Zebulun's** borders did *not* **extend** to the **seashore (Joshua 19:10-16)**. **Zebulun** was separated from **the Mediterranean Sea** by the tribe of **Asher** on the west, and from the **Sea** of Galilee (Kinnereth) by the tribe of Naphtali on the east (**Joshua 19:24-31**). But **Asher** never fully settled the northern peninsula. They failed to possess **the land . . . and did not drive out those living in Akko or Sidon or Ahlab or Akzib or Helbah or Aphek or Rehob. The Asherites lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land because they did not drive them out (Judges 1:31-32)**. Therefore, the tribe of **Zebulun** ended up having an expanded influence in northern **Isra'el**. The word **seashore** is plural, and it became a double fulfillment because **Zebulun** then had access to both **the Mediterranean Sea** and the Sea of Galilee.

The influence of **Zebulun's** trading also **extended** northward **toward** the Phoenicians and the city of **Sidon (Isaiah 23:4 and Ezekiel 28:22)**. They would do business with the Phoenicians, and therefore, would be enriched with trade from **the sea**. In fact, one of the key highways of the ancient world, **the way of the sea**, or the *via maris*, passed right through the territory of **Zebulun**. As a result, the rich crops **Zebulun** and members of **his tribe** were exported by the Phoenicians.



2. The Second Census in the present: The descendants of Zebulun by their **three clans**, were: through Sered, **the Saredite clan**; through Elon, **the Elonite clan**; and through Jahleel, **the Jahleelite clan**. These were the clans of the Zebulun, those numbered were 60,500 (26:26-27), an increase of 3,100 from the First Census (see [Ai - The First Census: The Old Generation of Rebellion](#)), or five percent. Zebulun and Issachar are described as two **tribes** who will receive rich **blessings** from **land and sea** (see the commentary on [Deuteronomy Ge - Rejoice Zebulun, in Your Going Out, Issachar, in Your Tents](#)). **Moses** prophesied: **Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and Issachar, in your tents (Deut 33:18)**. The two phrases **going out**, and **in your tents**, cover all of daily life, a merism (polar elements that signify a totality): *going to work, coming home to rest*. **Moshe** was **blessing** every aspect of **their** lives, what we might call *the routine tasks of life*.⁵⁸⁷ **Peoples they call to the mountain - there they offer righteous sacrifices. For they suckle the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand (Deuteronomy 33:19)**. This is a picture of worship followed by a communal feast, but **the Jews** had to bring **their sacrifices to Mount Tabor (Joshua 19:12 and 22; Judges 4:6-12)**, and later the Temple, where they could enjoy family feasts. **Zebulun** is

seen as an obedient, contented, secure **tribe**, and the increase of **their** population revealed how much **the LORD** had **blessed them**.

Isaiah also gives us a prophetic promise through **Zebulun**. How unexpected! Why not through Judah? **God** will reach **Isra'el** and all **the Gentile nations**. Speaking of the darkness of **his** day, **the prophet** writes: **Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past God humbled the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, but in the future He will honor the Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan. Jacob's prophecy would be fulfilled by a tribe living on the edge of the nations - Zebulun. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy (Isaiah 9:1-3a).** But how?

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of ADONAI, the LORD of heaven's angelic armies, will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:6-7).

We also know that the tribe of **Zebulun** was a **haven** for **Yeshua**. When Joseph and Mary returned from Egypt when **Yeshua** was an infant, **Galilee** was their **haven** of safety (**Matthew 2:13-23**). Although **Yeshua** was of the tribe of Judah, **He** grew up in Nazareth, in **Zebulun**, and lived there about thirty years before **He** started **His** ministry, much of which took place in the territory of **Zebulun (Matthew 4:12-17)**. Eleven of the twelve apostles were from **Galilee** (Judas was not). Also, when the Jewish religious leaders were plotting to kill **Him**, **He** took refuge in **Galilee (John 7:1 and 9)**.

3. The Messianic Kingdom in the future: The lists of names and numbers are the material and tangible signs of **God's** blessing, **God's** faithfulness to past promises, and the surety of **God's** future promise keeping (see **[Ae - Stars of Heaven, Grains of Sand, and the Promises of God](#)**). When **Joshua** led **the Israelites** into **the Promised Land**, **Zebulun** and **Issachar** had no outlet to **the Mediterranean Sea**. But during the Messianic Kingdom, **they** will have plenty of access to **the sea** (see the commentary on **[Genesis Lh - Zebulun Will Live by the Seashore and Become a Haven for Ships](#)**) because the topography of **Isra'el** will change at that time. The massive Millennial River will begin at the Temple then **flow** down to the city of **Jerusalem**, where it splits, **half** heading **east** to **the Dead Sea**, and the other **half** heading west to **the Mediterranean Sea**. Rivers will

characterize the Millennial **Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:8; Ezeke'el 47:1-12)**. Therefore, **ships** will sail on the Millennial River in the Kingdom. But while there may be **ships** on the Mediterranean, there will be no **ships** of war. **No galley with oars will ride them, no mighty ship will sail them** (see the commentary on [Isaiah Ge - Your Eyes Will See the King in His Beauty](#)).

So, a key part of **Jacob's blessing** referred to the Messianic Kingdom. **Zebulun will live by the seashore and become a haven for ships during that time (Ezeke'el 48:26)**. So, because of this, it appears that in some way **Zebulun** will have a special ministry to the unbelieving Gentiles, and many will be saved. **The people and territory of Zebulun** will become **a haven for ships**, just as **Galilee** was **a haven** for **Yeshua** before the cross.

The Psalmist describes how **God** came to **Israel's** rescue and ours as well. **He** paints four pictures taken from life, yet intended to represent **Israel's** and our experience. The fourth of these parables speaks about **Israel's** and our smallness when compared to **ADONAI**. **Some went out to the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters. They saw the works of the LORD, His wonderful deeds in the deep; For He spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits end**, literally, *all their wisdom was swallowed up* (**Psalm 107:23-27**). The hurricane shakes us into seeing that in a world of frightening forces, we live by permission and not by good management.⁵⁸⁸ We come to the end of ourselves, or our **wits end**. All of our supposed skills to manage our lives become useless. We need to believe that it is **God** who has **His** hands on the helm of our **ship**.

Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper and the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and He guided them to their desired haven (Ps 107:28-30). This will be the message of the tribe of **Zebulun** during the thousand-year reign of **Messiah**. **Their** message will point unbelieving **Gentiles** to **Messiah**, and **He** will become a **haven** for those who have come to their **wits end**, who are weary of trying to steer their own **ship**.

Let them give thanks to ADONAI of His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for mankind. He calmed the storm and delivered them from their danger, guiding them safely to their destination. Let them exalt Him in the assembly of the people and praise Him in the council of the elders (Psalm 107:31-32). The tribe of **Zebulun** will

finally live **by the seashore**, but **they** will become **fishers of men** (**Matthew 4:18-20**).

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being such an awesome and loving Heavenly **Father**! It is such a joy to serve **You**! **Your** holiness means that **You** never do anything wrong, so when **Your Word** tells me to do something, it is absolutely the wisest and best action to follow. Just as **Your** being a rest for **Zebulun** is promised (**Psalms 107:28-32**); so those who put their trust in **You**, letting **You** steer their lives, will find great joy and a peaceful rest in **You**.*

*It is a wonderful privilege to serve **You** and to experience the joy of sharing how wonderful and loving you are. We lift up before **You** right now those in our family and friends who have only head knowledge of **You**, for they have not yet decided to make **You** their **Lord**. Please open their eyes to see **You** in your Awesome holiness that they may fall in love with **You** and desire to serve **You** with all their hearts as their **Lord** and **Savior**. **For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart it is believed for righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation. For the Scripture says: Whoever trusts in Him will not be put to shame (Romans 10:9-11).***

***You** opened the eyes of **Hagar (Genesis 21:19)**, **Balaam (Numbers 22:31)**, and **Elisha's servant (Second Kings 6:17)**. Please open the thinking of these family members and friends to recognize how short life on earth is and how much more important it is to live with eternity in view. May they be willing to live for **You** on earth that they may gain an eternity of peace and joy with you in heaven. Whatever suffering occurs on earth because my love for **You**, is well worth the joy for all eternity of living with **You** in heaven where there will never be any crying nor pain (**Revelation 21:4**). **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18)**. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*