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The Tribe of Benjamin
26: 38-41

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

REFLECT: What meaningful group 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?

Benjamin is a ravenous wolf.



1. The First Census in the past found **the tribe** of **Benjamin** being **numbered at 35,400** (**to see link click Ak – Numbering the Tribes**). The banner of **the**

tribe of Benjamin has a **wolf** on it, to indicate the warlike nature of **the tribe**. On **his** deathbed, **Jacob** prophesied: **Benjamin is a ravenous wolf (Genesis 49:27a).** The word **ravenous** comes from the Hebrew *tref or trefah,* meaning *a wolf that tears apart his prey.* Sometimes *tref* is used in a generic sense. For example, there is *kosher* food, and anything else is *treff*. But the word *trefah* actually comes from the Hebrew word meaning *to tear.* In the Torah, if an animal, even a *kosher* animal, is *torn apart* and killed, it is *trefah*. In other words, there is no such thing as *kosher* road-kill even if it's a nice prime rib. It would not be prepared in a way that the Torah commands **(Leviticus 11:1-46; 17:1-16)**, with the core thought being: **Be sure you do not eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat (Deuteronomy 12:23).** That's why hunting is not normally a Jewish thing. When someone shoots their prey, it is *torn apart* and automatically becomes *unkosher*. In the TaNaKh, **Jews** would set a snare for a kosher animal and capture it. Then they could kill in the ritual way, by draining **the blood**.

Therefore, **Benjamin is a wolf** who *tears apart*, and there are some very interesting people from **the tribe** of **Benjamin** who fulfilled **Jacob's** prophecy. One is **Ehud**, a famous warrior and one of the judges **(Judges 3:15-30)**. **Sha'ul** the first king of **Isra'el** was also a **Benjamite (First Samuel 9:1-2)**, and for better or worse, fulfilled this prophecy of **Jacob**. **Saul's son Jonathan**, a great warrior, **became one spirit with David (First Samuel 18:1).** In addition, both **Mordecai** and **Esther** were from **the tribe** of **Benjamin (Esther 2:5-7)**. They were warriors of that generation whom **ADONAI** used to deliver **Isra'el** from **her** enemies like **a ravenous wolf** (see **Esther Bm – The Jews Struck Down All Their Enemies with the Sword, Killing and Destroying Them**).

The warlike nature of **the** small **tribe** of **Binyamin** became well known, as exhibited in **their** swordsmen. This **tribe** was so aggressive and successful that they would be able to share **their** plunder with **the** other **tribes**. This seems like a strange prophecy for a **son** whom **Jacob** especially **loved**, but it was both a promise and a warning. **The tribe** of **Benjamin** would be courageous and strong, successful in warfare, but at the same time it might become cruel and **ravenous**.

So, it seems that **Benjamin's tribe** had its dark side. The warlike nature came out not only in defense of **his** country, but also in depravity within **his** country. In **Judges 19–21 Benjamin** took up an offense against **the** other eleven **tribes** of **Isra'el**, and civil war ensued. This period had the reputation of **everyone doing what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25)**. What led to this was the

horrific abuse and death of an unnamed Levite's concubine **(Judges 19:10-28)**. **The** eleven **tribes** turned against **the tribe** of **Benjamin** and nearly annihilated **them** because of **their** refusal to give up the perpetrators **(Judges 20:1** to **21:25)**.[593] Thank **God they** were not destroyed, otherwise we would not have had **Mordecai** (see the commentary on **Esther Bh – The King Gave His Signet Ring to Mordecai**), or **Paul**. Eventually **they** all restored **Benjamin's tribe**, greatly diminished due to the war, and the country reunited.

In the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder (49:27b). Both attributes, devouring **the prey** and dividing **the plunder**, were later evident in **the tribe**. Although the smallest of **the tribes**, in the **near historical future**, **they** would become famous for **their** courage, fierceness and power. After the conquest of Canaan, **they** received the territory between **the tribes** of **Ephraim** and **Judah**. It has been a war-zone throughout **Israel's** history. **The tribe** of **Benjamin themselves** became known as **a** warrior **tribe (Judges 5:14, 20:14-21; 2 Samuel 2; First Chronicles 8:40** and **12; 2 Chronicles 14:8, 17:7; Psalm 68:27)**.



2. The Second Census in the present: The descendants of Benjamin by their five clans were: of Bela, the Belaite clan; through Ashbel, the Ashbelite clan; through Ahiram, the Ahiramite clan; through Shupham, the Shuphamite clan; and through Hupham, the Huphamite clan. Moses goes back to **the** first **son, Bela**, and describes the **two sub-clans** of **Ard and Na'aman; through Ard, the Ardite clan; and through Na'aman, the Na'amanite clan. These were the clans of Benjamin, by their families; those numbered were 45,600 (26:38-41),** a considerable increase of **10,200** from **the First Census** (see **Ai – The First Census: The Old Generation of Rebellion**), or 29 percent, the second largest increase of all **the tribes**. Although the **Benjamites** were very courageous, that was not where **their** safety lay. The prophecy of **Moses** shed some light on this. **He** prophesied: **Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in Him, for He shields him all day long, and the one**

ADONAI loves rests between His shoulders (Deut 33:12). This last phrase literally means *he **rests** on the Lord's back.* This pictures a **Father** carrying **His beloved** on **His** back, and therefore a beautiful metaphor for **God's** protective, fatherly care of **Benjamin**.[594] **The** little **tribe** of **Benjamin** was situated next to **Judah's** northern boundary, and the city of **Jerusalem** was on the northern border of **Judah** and the southern border of **Benjamin**. Since the Sanctuary would be in **Jerusalem**, **Benjamin** would be close to **the LORD**, who dwelt there with **His people**.[595]

Unlike **the blessing** in **Genesis 49**, which depicts **Benjamin** as **a ravenous wolf,** in **Deuteronomy Moses** pronounces a tender **blessing** on **Benjamin** – **Jacob's** youngest **son** – one reminiscent of **Benjamin's** close relationship with **his father (Genesis 42:4** and **38, 44:18-34). For Benjamin, Moshe** said: **The beloved of ADONAI rests securely beside Him. He shields him all day long. Between His shoulders he rests. Benjamin** can rest securely on the shoulders of **YHVH** who **shields him** from all threats. The anthropomorphism of **resting between the shoulders of ADONAI** brings to mind the figure of a father carrying his young son on his shoulders. Here, **Moses** rejoices that **the tribe** of **Benjamin** will dwell safely in peace among **the people of God**, no longer in conflict during the Messianic Kingdom (see the commentary on **Isaiah Ge – Your Eyes Will See the King in His Beauty**).[596]

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**). In the **far eschatological future**, **the tribe** of **Benjamin** will **have one portion** of land in the Messianic Kingdom, extending **from the east side to the west side (Ezekiel 48:23).** When you look at **Jacob's** family I think it would be fair to say that it was very dysfunctional, but even with all **their** problems, **the sons of Isra'el** believed in **the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**, and all fourteen **sons** are found in the Messianic Kingdom **(Ezeki'el 47:13, 48:1-29)**. Not one was lost. **Yeshua** talked about eternal security for those who believe, trust and have faith in **Him. He** said: **My sheep hear My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand; I and the Father are one (John 10:27-30).**

*Dear Heavenly Father, how fantastic you are, our always-loving, always-caring Holy Heavenly **Father**! What a beautiful picture of tender care that **the Spirit of God** painted of **You** when **He** inspired Moses to write the blessing for **Benjamin, the one ADONAI loves rests between His shoulders (Deuteronomy 33:12),** literally meaning **he rests** on **the Lord's** back. It is a picture of great security when a young child is carried on their dad's shoulders, resting on his back. The father is not only close by, but is right there holding on. The child does not even need to call out for help, for her dad is closer than even nearby, her dad is right there, holding onto her and protecting her.*

*What a wonderful comfort to be held close to **You** by **Your** mighty arms and to rest securely on **Your shoulders**! When problems and trials come, one thing that makes them harder is facing the problem all alone; but when daddy is near it brings such comfort. Problems seem so much easier to handle and much smaller when your children realize that an All-loving, Almighty **Daddy** is right there. When the focus is on the problem, then the problem seems big; but instead when **Your** child wisely focuses on your Almighty power, **love** and strength, then the problem becomes small. **O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. My flesh longs for You in a dry and weary land, where there is no water (Psalms 63:1-2).***

***David** focused on your great **lovingkindness** and that kept **him** from falling into the trap of pity. How very wise of **David** that even when **his** life was in danger, instead of focusing on the problem, David looked up to **You** and praised **You**! **He** focused **his** mind off of the hard and dangerous situation that **he** was in and lifted **his** heart to concentrate on how very Awesome and Wonderful **You** always are! **Since Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You. So I will bless You as long as I live. In Your name I lift up my hands (Psalms 63:3-4).** Making time to praise **You** and to meditate on **Your Word** is like feasting on a rich meal. **My soul is satisfied as with fat and oil, so my mouth praises You with joyful lips (Psalms 63:6).** Thank **You** for carrying me (**Isaiah 41:13, 46:4, 63:9).** Praise **You** so very much for **Your** everlasting **love** that holds me tight in **Your hands (John 10:27-30).** I l**ove** to worship and to praise **You!** In **Messiah Yeshua's** almighty **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*