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The Tribe of Asher
26: 44-47

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

REFLECT: What meaningful 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 that group 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?

We need to remember that blessedness is intended for service and not for luxury.



1. The First Census in the past found **the tribe** of **Asher** being **numbered at 41,500** (**to see link click Ak – Numbering the Tribes**). The banner of **the tribe of Asher** is a flourishing tree because **their** promised portion of land was promised to be fruitful and prolific. **Asher** was **Jacob's** eighth son. **His** mother was **Leah's** maidservant, **Zilpah**, and **he** was **her** second and last child with **Ya'akov**. When

Asher was born, **Leah** said: **“How happy am I?” The women will call me blessed (Genesis 30:13).** Therefore, **Asher’s** name means *happy* or *blessed* and **Jacob’s** prophecy for **the tribe** of **Asher** certainly came true when **they** settled along the rich slopes of the Galilean coastland north of Mount Carmel **(Joshua 19:24-31)**. **Asher’s** territory was known as one of the most fertile parts of Canaan, abounding in wheat and olive **oil**.

Ya’akov prophesied that **Asher’s bread** would **be rich**; saying: **he will provide delicacies fit for a king (49:20)**. The Hebrew word for **rich**, or oil here is *shmeinah, which literally means fat or oily.* **Moses** also used this same word when **he** said: **Most blessed of sons of Asher; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him bathe his feet in *shmeinah,* or in oil (Deuteronomy 33:24a).** This particular word is found one hundred and ninety times in the TaNaKh and it is *always*, without exception, used of olive oil. This points out that the territory he had was suitable to grow olive trees, and in **Joshua 19:24-31**, we learn that **Asher** received land along the Mediterranean coast. His land was north of Manasseh, northwest of Zebulun, and west of Naphtali. To this day the territory along the coastline is rich with olive trees.

So even though **Asher** would be **blessed**, **he** would share **his blessing** with **his brothers**, and as you read **his** story you will find out that **he** lived up to **Jacob’s** prophecy pretty well. Not perfect – but pretty well. **He** is an example of someone who is **blessed** and wants to share those **blessings**. There are **three important words** in **49:20** the prophecy of **Ya’akov** that illustrate this.

Asher’s bread (49:20a): The first important word is ***lechem*** or **bread** – meaning *the basic sustenance of life*. That is why **Jews** say *ha-motzi* at the beginning of a meal. Because no matter what it is you are eating there is probably some form of **bread** on the table. So it is a general **blessing** for thanking **ADONAI** for all that **He** provides: Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, *Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, Melekh ha-olam* – who brings forth **bread** from the earth, *Ha-motzi **lechem** min ha’aretz (Amein).*

It is also interesting to note that *beth-lechem* means *house of bread*, and **Bethlehem** was the place where **Jesus** was born (see the prophecy in **Micah 5:2**). **Yeshua** said: **I AM the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty (John 6:35)**; therefore, the place where **He** was born is known as *the house of bread.*

Will be with oil (49:20b): The second important word used is ***shmeinah***, or **his bread will be with** *shmeinah*, which should be translated olive **oil** because of the context. **Asher** settled in the area known as Haifa in northern **Isra'el**. It is still a beautiful coastline with fertile grounds and olive trees all around. Olive **oil** from the heart of olive country (It also has great surfing see promisedlandthemovie.com and view the trailer). In biblical times, the abundant olive **oil** was used for cooking, but it also had several other uses like for light and medicine. Thus, of all the tribes, **Asher** will be the one with a lot of *shmeinah*, and **he** shared **it** with all the other tribes. **Moses** would later prophesy: **May Asher be most blessed of sons, may he bathe his feet in *shmeinah* (Deuteronomy 33:24).** Meaning, that olive **oil** would be so plentiful that **the Asherites** could **bathe their** feet in it.

He will provide delicacies fit for a king (49:20c): The third important word is ***ma'adan*** translated here as **delicacies**, as in **First Samuel 15:32; Lamentations 4:5**, or **delight** in **Proverbs 29:17**. *Gan 'Edhen* is translated the garden of Eden. But it was also called *gan adan* . . . the garden of paradise . . . the garden of feasting **(Genesis 2-3)**. All that is captured in this Hebrew word *ma'adan*. So **Asher** will have **bread**, made with olive **oil**, yet **he** will share these royal **delicacies** of paradise with **his** brothers.



2. The Second Census in the present: The descendants of Asher by their three clans: through Imnah, the Imnaite clan; through Ishvi, the Ishvite clan; through Beriah, the Beriite clan; and through two sub-clans ofBeriah: through Heber, the Heberite clan; and through Malkiel, the Malkielite clan. The name of Asher's daughter was Serah. The fact that she was named shows us that **she** was prominent, for other **sons of Jacob** had daughters, but they are not named. **These were the clans of Asher those numbered were 53,400 (26:44-47),** an increase of **11,900** from **the First Census** (see **Ai – The First Census: The Old Generation of Rebellion**), or 29 percent, the same as **Benjamin**, only trailing **Manasseh's** 63 percent. Before entering the Promised Land, **Moses** had prophesied: **Most blessed of sons is Asher – may he be the favorite of his brothers, and may he dip his foot in oil (33:24).** The

exaggerated metaphor of bathing one's **foot in oil** suggests abundant prosperity. Even though olive groves were abundant in their territory of **Asher**, it seems that here the **oil**, which often symbolizes **blessing** in the TaNaKh **(Deuteronomy 32:13; Job 29:5-6** and **11)**, provides a metaphor of prosperity in general. **The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze. As your days, so will your strength be (33:25).** The **iron and bronze** bolts refer to bolts that held a city gate in place as an essential means of defending themselves. The basic idea here is, "May your land be as secure as if it were locked up with **bolts** of **iron and bronze.**[604] This tribe would enjoy many **children**, **brotherly** love, prosperity and security, and **ADONAI** would give **them** daily strength to accomplish **their** work. What more could anyone want?[605]

However, **their** prosperity seemed to be **their** undoing. **They** failed to drive out the **Canaanites** in the region of Tyre and Sidon, and **because of this the people of Asher lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land (Judges 1:31-32)**. In the time of **Deborah** and **Barak**, **Asher remained on the coast and stayed in its coves** rather than join the fight against Jabin, a Canaanite king **(Judges 5:17)**. The reason for **their** decline is unclear, although it could have been for **their** love of, and proximity to, the luxury of the Phoenicians.[606] So, although **Asher** was richly **blessed**, **they** did not act admirably for a time in **their** history; when the time for action came, **they** failed to trust in **God** and honor **His** plan. By the time of King David, **they** had faded into insignificance. We lose our witness in the world when we become one with **the world (First John 2:15-16)**. **Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God (James 4:4).**

Later in **Judges**, **Asher** did respond to **Gideon's** call to repel the Midianites, Amalekites, and others from the East **(Judges 6:35)**. In another important gesture, **Asher** accepted **Hezekiah's** invitation to the tribes from the northern kingdom of Isra'el to join **the Passover** celebration in **Jerusalem (Second Chronicles 30:11)**. This was considered an act of humility, proof of a contrite heart before **God**.

After the Babylonian captivity and even the dispersion after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the tribe of **Asher** did not lose its identity. There are no "lost tribes," and there will always be a believing remnant. As an example, the **prophetess Anna** was from the tribe of **Asher** and **she** gave **thanks to God** for the birth of **Jesus** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Au – Jesus Presented in the Temple**).

Have you had some **blessings** lately? Family, friends, job, or your health? But it is one thing to be **blessed**, and it is quite another to be willing to share those blessings (see my commentary on **The Life of Chris II – The Rich Young Ruler**). **Yeshua** said: **Freely you have received – freely give (Matthew 10:8).** We need to have a light touch on the things of this **world**. The richness of **the Lord** means sharing our **blessings** with others around us – especially if those **blessings** have nothing to do with money.

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** during the Messianic Kingdom, **Asher will have one portion; it will border the territory of Dan from east to west (Ezekiel 48:2).** Thus, descendants of **Asher** will live up to **their** forbearer's name of *blessed*.[607] **How blessed are those who reject the advice of the wicked, don't stand in the way of sinners or sit where scoffers sit. Their delight is in ADONAI's Torah; in His Torah they meditate day and night (Psalm 1:1-2 CJB).** We need to remember that *blessedness is intended for service and not for luxury*. The most fundamental meaning of Scripture is this: **Blessed is the one** who **blesses** because **God** is a **God** of **blessing**.[608]

*Dear heavenly **Father**, How wonderful **You** are! The tribe of **Asher** received some excellent **blessings**, to be **fruitful and prolific** (**Genesis 30:13)** and **Mose**s added having **prosperity and security** (**Deuteronomy 33:24).** Those are very good **blessings**, but **they** are only temporary, for this lifetime. Being prosperous and **blessed** in this life has some advantages; but those advantages last for such a short time. When **Your children** turn **their** gaze to focus on how Awesome **You** are, it gives **us** an eternal joy and peace that is far more valuable than any short-lived earthly prosperity. It is a **blessing** to share this **blessing** with others. **Blessings** that are eternal are so much more valuable! How wonderful **God's** gracious gift of every spiritual **blessing** thru **our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah (Ephesians 1:3b-c).***

*Blessing that lasts for all eternity is when someone hears the message of your gospel, puts their trust in You and then you seal him with your promised Ruach ha-Kodesh, which opens the door for them to be "in Christ" and guarantees their redemption! **After you heard the message of truth – the Good News of your***

salvation – and when you put your trust in Him, you were sealed with the promised Ruach Ha'Kodesh. He is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the redemption of His possession – to His glorious praise! (Ephesians 1:13-14). *In* ***Messiah Yeshua's*** *holy* ***Name*** *and power of* ***His*** *resurrection Amen*