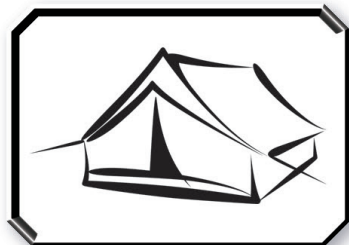
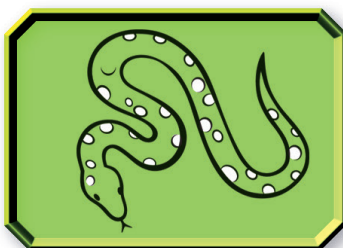
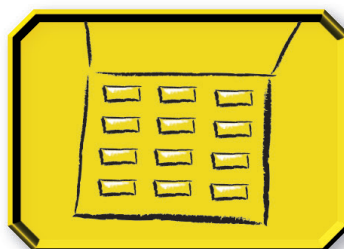
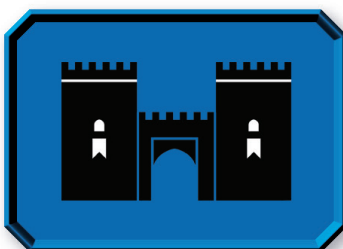


12 TRIBES' COLORS, SYMBOLS, AND FASCINATING FACTS

TWELVE TRIBES of Israel



ROSE
PUBLISHING

TWELVE TRIBES

of Israel

The 12 tribes of Israel were the family groups descended from the biblical patriarch Jacob. The tribes are important because God worked through the tribes to fulfill his purposes—especially his purpose of bringing from the tribe of Judah, Jesus the Savior, the Lion of Judah.

- ♥ In the book of Genesis, we see God blessing and working through a family: Jacob and his 12 sons. (God renames Jacob as “Israel.”)
- ♥ Then God works through a nation: Israel—the descendants of Jacob’s sons arranged into 12 tribes. God brings them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.
- ♥ In the New Testament, we notice God working through a different group of 12: Jesus’ 12 disciples. They spread the good news of salvation.
- ♥ In the book of Revelation, we are reminded of a remnant of 144,000 people sealed by God—12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel.

BREASTPLATE OF THE HIGH PRIEST

In the Old Testament, the high priest wore a breastplate made of gold with 12 inlaid, precious stones inscribed with the names of the tribes.

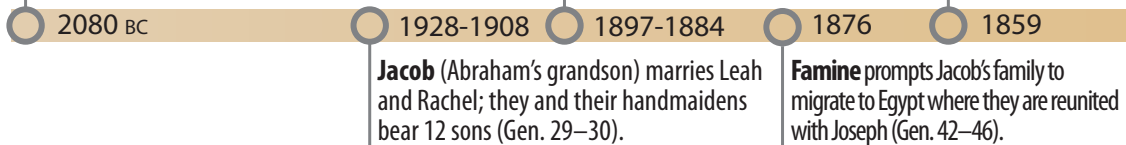
- ♥ Exodus 28:15–30 lists the stones right to left, as Hebrew is read right to left. The tribal names inscribed on the stones may have followed the order of how the tribes marched in the wilderness (Num. 2–3).
- ♥ Instead of Levi and Joseph, the tribes of Joseph’s sons—Manasseh and Ephraim—were represented on the breastplate.
- ♥ The exact identity and color of some of the stones remain uncertain.

Zebulun	Issachar	Judah
Gad	Simeon	Reuben
Benjamin	Manasseh	Ephraim
Naphtali	Asher	Dan

Abraham is called by God to go to Canaan; God makes a covenant with Abraham that Abraham’s descendants will be “a great nation” (Gen. 12:1–7).

Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers. In Egypt, he rises to prominence (Gen. 37–41).

Jacob blesses his son Joseph on his deathbed (Gen. 49).

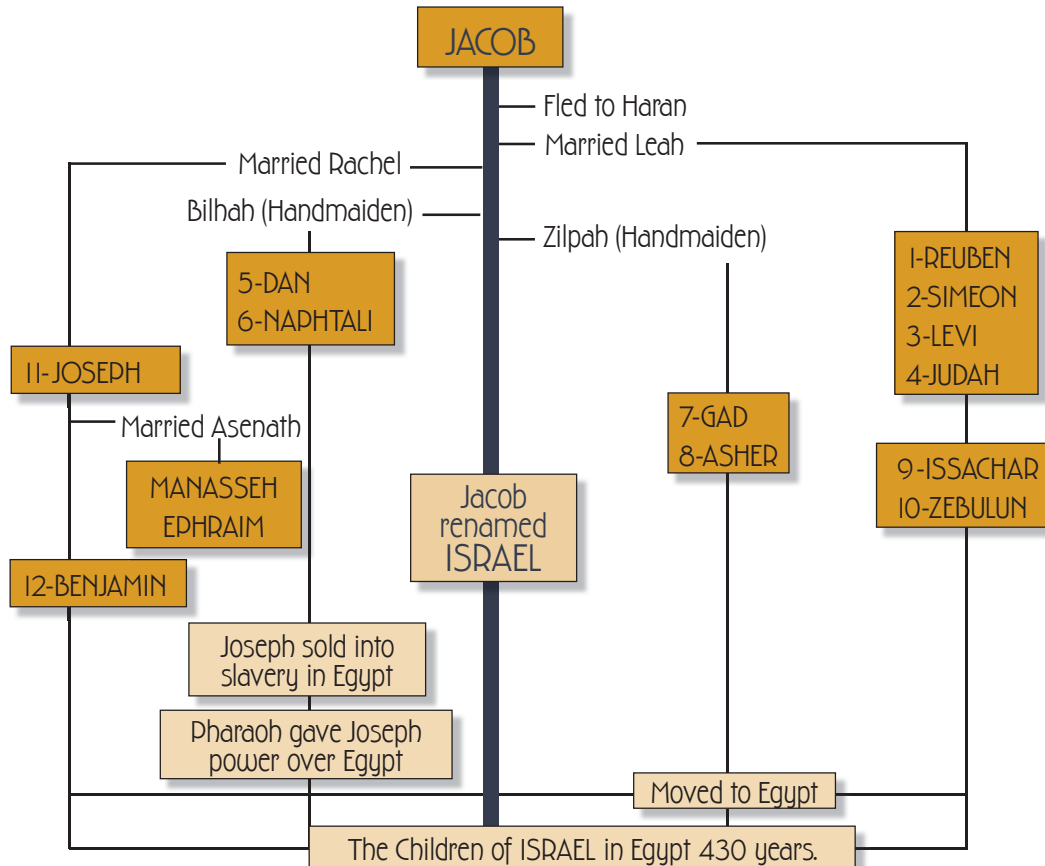


Dates are approximate

—|—

“I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.... through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.”—Genesis 22:17-18

THE FAMILY OF JACOB (ISRAEL)



ns on his

The Exodus: Moses leads the Israelites (Jacob's descendants) out of Egypt (Ex. 3–14).*

First census of Israelite tribes at Sinai (Num. 1–3).

Second census in Moab (Num. 26). Moses blesses tribes before his death (Deut. 33).

Era o

1446

1406-1405

13

In Egypt: Jacob's descendants remain there 430 years, part of that time in slavery.

Wilderness Wanderings: Israelites live in the wilderness for 40 years.

Tabernacle built at Sinai (Ex. 26). Tribes camp around tabernacle under their family banners (Num. 2).

Joshua leads the tribes into Canaan and divides the land among the tribes (Josh. 1).

*Some scholars date the exodus at c



REUBEN

Size: First Census: 46,500. Second Census: 43,730.

Location: The tribe settled outside the Promised Land, east of the Jordan River in rich pasture lands suitable for their large herds and flocks (Num. 32:1). Included Mt. Nebo from which Moses viewed the Promised Land.

Jacob's Blessing: Jacob called his firstborn "my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power." But Reuben had relations with Bilhah, Rachel's handmaiden (Gen. 35:22), so Jacob rebuked him saying that he is "unstable as water" and he will "no longer excel" (Gen. 49:3–4 NKJV).

Moses' Blessing: "Let Reuben live and not die, nor his people be few" (Deut. 33:6).

Notable: Reuben intervened on behalf of Joseph to save him from being killed by his brothers. Nevertheless, when Reuben returned, he discovered that his brothers had sold Joseph to slave traders (Gen. 37).

The tribe of Reuben kept their word by helping the other tribes conquer the Promised Land, though they themselves settled outside the land (Num. 32; Josh. 1:12–18). Yet at other times, they seemed indecisive and failed to assist in battle (Judg. 5:15–17).

Meaning: "See, a son!"

Symbol: Water
(or mandrake plant;
Gen. 30:14)

Stone/Color:
Turquoise
(or emerald) /
Greenish-blue

Family: First son of
Jacob, born to Leah

"... you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.... Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do."—James 1:5–6

of Judges begins*

50

1051

King Saul unites the tribes into one kingdom (1 Sam. 9–11).

King David conquers Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5).

1011

960

King Solomon builds the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6).

Kingdom splits: Southern tribes become Kingdom of Judah; Northern tribes become Kingdom of Israel.

931

1290. For this "low date," the dates for wilderness wanderings and beginning of the era of judges would slide to the right 156 years.



SIMEON

Meaning: “Hearing”—
God has heard

Symbol: Gate, like the
gate of Shechem
(or a sword)

Stone/Color: Lapis
lazuli (or sapphire) /
Blue

Family: Second son of
Jacob, born to Leah

“Do not take
revenge, my dear
friends, but leave
room for God’s
wrath, for it is
written: ‘It is mine to
avenge; I will repay,’
says the Lord.... Do
not be overcome by
evil, but overcome
evil with good.”
—Rom. 12:19-21

Size: First Census: 59,300. Second Census: 22,200.
Between the two censuses—a span of 40 years—the
size of the tribe significantly decreased. Though it’s
not clear why, it’s possible that they suffered more
severely than the other tribes from the plagues
recorded in the book of Numbers (See Num. 25).

Location: Enclave of land in Judah, likely with
scattered settlements in Judah. Included Beersheba.

Jacob’s Blessing: Along with his brother Levi,
Simeon attacked the people of the city of Shechem
to avenge the assault on his sister Dinah
(Gen. 34:24–31). Jacob rebuked Levi and Simeon
saying, “their swords are weapons of violence. Let me
not enter their council ... for they have killed men in
their anger.... I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse
them in Israel” (Gen. 49:5–7).

Moses’ Blessing: Moses does not mention the tribe
of Simeon.

Notable: When Jacob’s sons went to Egypt to buy
food during a famine, Joseph imprisoned Simeon as
a guarantee that Benjamin, their youngest brother,
would be brought to Joseph (Gen. 42–43).

The tribe was known for being shepherds, often
migrating in search of pasturelands for their flocks,
possibly a fulfillment of Jacob’s prophecy that
Simeon will be scattered and dispersed
(1 Chron. 4:24–43).

12 tribes become Kingdom of Judah;
Kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 12).

722

Assyria conquers Kingdom
of Israel (2 Kings 17).

586

Babylonia conquers Kingdom of Judah, destroys temple, exiles people to
Babylon (2 Kings 25). In exile, distinctions between the tribes become less
important. The people become known as Jews.

538-516 BC

Persia conquers Babylonia and allows the Jews to
return to the land and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem
(2 Chron. 36:23).

s, compressing the era of judges.