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Jacob's Family

Jacob and his family played a pivotal role in the fulfillment of the promises originally made to Abraham; that he would inherit a new land, become a great nation and through him all families of the earth would be blessed. As you read through this publication issue you can see the initial, methodical unfolding of God's wisdom as He fulfills His promises through Jacob and his family. Jacob might not have been the person you'd have chosen for this role. After all, He and his twin brother Esau were raised in a home where sibling rivalry, deceit and favoritism were rife. In fact there was such hostility between these brothers that Jacob left home as Esau vowed to kill him; certainly not the atmosphere we'd expect of a godly family.

Jacob was sent some 500 miles north to take a wife from his mother's kinsmen while Esau's wrath subsided. As he began this journey (leaving the promised land) he had a dream, where he saw a ladder reaching into heaven with angels going up and down. The Lord spoke to Jacob; revisiting the promises given to Abraham and ensuring him that, *"I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."* Gen 28:15 Jacob set up the stone he had used as a pillow, anointed it with oil and called the place, Bethel. He vowed, if the Lord would be with him, take care of him and return him to this land, then he'd make the Lord his God.

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After 20 years of hard, but profitable labor, Jacob returned to Canaan a rich man with his wives, children and abundant flocks and herds. God tells him to return to Bethel and build an

altar. In preparation for worship, Jacob directed his family to put away their foreign gods, purify themselves and change their garments—and they appear to have willingly complied. God appears to Jacob once again at Bethel where He blesses him, reiterates the Abrahamic promises, and significantly, confirms his name change to Israel. (Gen 35:1-7)

I believe we can learn from these two events at Bethel. Jacob's fortunes were certainly down as he fled from Canaan, he was alone and afraid when God appeared to him and reassured him. When Jacob needed the Lord, the Lord was there for him and he in turn vowed to make the Lord his God at Bethel. Later when he returned to Canaan his circumstances were considerably different; he was rich and abundantly blessed. All too often when things are going well, God's rightful place in our hearts seems to slip, but not Jacob's. He said to his wives: 1. God has been with me. 2. Your father cheated me, but God didn't let him hurt me. 3. God has taken away your father's livestock and given them to me. (Gen 31:4-9) Hundreds of years later Joshua would utter his famous statement, *"as for me and my house we will serve the Lord."* Josh 24::15c Jacob gave God full credit and glory for his good fortune and ensured that his family knew the true source of their blessings and to whom to be thankful. Like Jacob and Joshua, we should teach our families about the Lord and His lovingkindness, and resolve: *"as for me and my family we will serve the Lord."*

As Jacob returned to Canaan he expected that sooner or later he'd encounter his brother Esau. So he took preemptive action by sending ahead messengers to greet Esau and perhaps get a feel for his "friendliness," surely Esau didn't still hold a grudge against him! But when the messengers returned they reported that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men, *"then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed . . ."* Gen 32:7 Animosity between siblings can last a lifetime and Jacob knew he had every reason to be afraid. Jacob's caravan of wives, children and thousands of animals must have been a sight to see,

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but such a vast entourage also meant there was no escaping a face to face meeting with Esau. So Jacob, did what every God fearing person should do—he poured out his heart in prayer (Gen 32:9-12). This is the occasion when Jacob wrestled with an angel, incurred a thigh injury and his name was changed to Israel. Next day, his prayer was answered, Genesis 33:4 states, *“Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him and they wept.”* Blood may be thicker than water, but contrast that to God’s steadfast faithfulness and lovingkindness.

Jacob loved his family, even though they strove mightily at times, and they all seemed to respect him as the family patriarch, particularly late in life. We see this respectful obedience in the family’s preparation for worship at Bethel, but even more clearly as the sons reasoned with Israel about returning to Egypt to buy grain. (Gen 42:37-43:15) Here we see Reuben and Judah respectfully reasoning with their father, and their approach worked.

Jacob’s family may seem to be far removed from our setting today, but surprisingly, he and his family experienced many of the same problems faced by families throughout the ages, such as favoritism, jealousy, resentment, deceit, etc. We encourage you to consider the example of this family and benefit in your pursuit of a godly home.

Jacob’s Wives

Ron Gray

Jacob was sent by his parents to his uncle’s house in Paddan-aram to save his life (at the hand of his brother Esau), and to establish himself and start a family. By God’s provi-

dence, he arrived at the well where his cousin watered her sheep. He was warmly welcomed into his uncle Laban’s house and began to work for him, tending his flocks. Laban had two daughters Leah and Rachel. *“Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance”* (Gen 29:17) and it didn’t take long for Jacob to fall in love with her.

After a month of working, Laban asked, *“what shall your wages be?”* Jacob replied, *“I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.”* Seven years later, after an evening wedding feast, Laban brought his daughter to Jacob. Those seven years seemed to him but a few days because of his love for Rachel. The next morning Jacob awoke to find that his bride was not the beautiful girl he loved, but her older sister Leah. To this literal *“rude awakening,”* Jacob confronted his devious father-in-law. *“What is this you have done to me?”* Laban told Jacob their custom was that the oldest must marry first, but for seven more years of service, he could have the beautiful Rachel. Jacob agreed to work for seven more years and after a week, married Rachel.

While in Paddan-aram, Jacob’s family grew. God saw that Jacob loved Rachel and that *“Leah was hated.”* Gen 29:31 So God allowed Leah to bear children, while Rachel was barren. Leah had four sons which caused Rachel to envy her sister. Rachel lashed out at Jacob *“Give me children, or I shall die!”* Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, *“Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”* Gen 30:1-2

Then Rachel gave her servant Bilhah to

Jacob as wife to bear children for her. *Bilhah conceived and bore a son. Rachel said, 'God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son. Therefore she named him Dan. Bilhah conceived again and Rachel named him Naphtali.'* Gen 30:4-8 Leah became concerned that she was no longer able to bear children, so she gave her servant Zilpah to Jacob as wife (Gen 30:9).

The jealousy and competition for Jacob's love raged on between the two sisters. The problems that arise from this situation would be addressed later on in God's word: *"And you shall not take a woman as a rival wife to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is still alive."* Lev 18:18)

Even in small matters the sisters could not coexist peacefully. Each looked upon the other as hindering her own progress with the husband they shared. Leah bore Jacob two more sons and his only daughter Dinah. Then Rachel conceived and bore a son called Joseph. Rachel said, *"May the Lord add to me another son!"* (Gen 30:23).

After the birth of Joseph, Jacob told Laban he was ready to take his wives and children to his own country. For once, the sisters agreed on something. They *said to him, 'Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has indeed devoured our money. All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do.'*" Gen 31:14-16

The family left with their flocks, heading for the hill country of Gilead. Nearing home, Esau come with 400 men to meet them.

Jacob feared the worst and prepared gifts for his brother. He lined up the family with Zilpah and Bilhah in the lead with their children followed by Leah and her children, and in the rear with him was Rachel and Joseph. How would you feel if you were a wife or child there on that day? How precious were the ones in front, compared to those in the back of the procession?

Rachel finally got her wish by bearing Jacob his twelfth son, but she died during childbirth with Benjamin. Jacob buried his beloved Rachel on the road to Bethlehem.

The wives of Jacob seemed to have lived a blessed life, but were not able to recognize that fact. Leah blamed Rachel for taking away her husband. This could have referred to his marriage to Rachel or that Jacob only had eyes for Rachel. Either way, Leah was always second to Rachel. Perhaps Jacob reflected on that after Rachel's death, since he was buried alongside Leah.

Rachel felt that she was in a wrestling match with Leah and tried desperately to win the struggle. Though she was so loved, she fretted over the fact that she was childless, while Leah had many children. Even Jacob told her that was a matter for the Lord. Rachel wanted "more." When she had Joseph, she didn't really rejoice, and just asked the Lord for another son.

Looking at the wives of Jacob, we see so much self-made misery: envy, jealousy, favoritism, and scheming. They had a good home, a hard working, prosperous husband and children who needed a loving hand rather than an evil eye. They should have been contented with the blessings that God

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showered down upon them.

“But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.” (1 Tim 6:6-8).

“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” Phil 4:11-13).

Reuben

Ephriam Davis

“Behold a son.” Reuben’s very name was chosen by Leah, his mother, the “first” wife of Jacob. She remained unloved, while her sister Rachel was loved by “her” husband. Most of us are aware that sibling rivalries, jealousies, and complex family conflicts occur. We might ask ourselves, is this something new that has just evolved to plague and distress us? In this article, we will examine three historical learning events from Reuben’s life as well as from the lives of his descendants to help answer this question: First, his right of firstborn preeminence; second, his role in a plot to kill his brother Joseph; and third, the prideful rebellious motivations of some descendants.

First: Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn son, would have had the birthright and blessing that was customarily given to the firstborn. However, Reuben, like his uncle Esau (Gen

25:29-34) in a moment of weakness committed an act that evidently cost him his birthright as well. (Gen 35:22 & 49:1-4) Reuben laid with Bilhah who was one of Jacob’s concubines. Bilhah was the maid Rachel had given Jacob as wife, a surrogate to bear a child for her since at this point she was barren. (Gen 30:1-6) This was a desperate measure to try and eliminate the negative cultural stigma and compete with Leah, who was already “ahead in the game with a score of four sons to none.” Clearly these kinds of relationships were in violation of God’s original intent for marriage. (Mt 19:4-6) Why did Reuben even think of going in to Bilhah to commit this unholy act? Is it possible that Reuben rationalized in his mind that it was acceptable since technically she was not legally Jacob’s wife? Ultimately, Reuben forfeited his birthright and blessing as the firstborn because of this single act.

Second: The historical account of Jacob’s favoritism towards Joseph over all his sons, including Reuben, in regards to his special gift of the coat-of-many colors, as well as Joseph’s two prophetic dreams and respective interpretations concerning the subservient sheaves, sun, moon, and eleven stars are very well known. It arguably, epitomizes the level of envy, hate and animosity that existed in this dysfunctional family, more than any other. (Gen 37:1-11) Reuben did at least one positive thing at this point, in that he intervened and proposed a plan to save Joseph’s life, after most of the brothers conspired together to kill him. (Gen 37:18-21) Reuben convinced his brothers not to kill Joseph, but to cast him into a pit instead. While it is not completely clear

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why, evidently Reuben left his brothers at the pit scene for some period of time. (Gen 37:22-30) He intended to return later and take Joseph back to his father, but he was too late.

Third: Reuben was the father of four sons, Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. (Gen 46:8-9) This number was included in the 70-person total of the house of Jacob that traveled to Egypt at the time of the famine. (Gen 45:5) From these four individuals came the descendants that made up the tribal families of the Reubenites. The LORD had commanded Moses to take a second census of the children of Israel after they had come out of Egyptian bondage; the number of Reubenite fighting men alone had grown to 43,730. (Num 26:1-7) Of particular interest are the descendants of the Palluite family who contended against Moses and Aaron, which effectively and more importantly translates into a contention against the LORD. *“And the son of Pallu was Eliab. The sons of Eliab were Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. These are the Dathan and Abiram, representatives of the congregation, who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the Lord; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah when that company died, when the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men; and they became a sign.”* Num 26:8-11 It is important for us to recognize that, even today when we hear faithful men teach from God’s word, we should receive it, search the scriptures and once verified (Acts 17:10-11), respond to it as absolute truth. *“For this reason, we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you*

heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” 1 Thes 2:13

In truth, complex family conflicts are the painful consequences of unwise choices and are not new. They continue to be perpetuated in relationships at all local, national and worldwide societal levels even into the current 21st century, when God’s laws for living peacefully are either not known, plainly ignored or just entirely rejected. (Hos 4:6)

Simeon & Levi

Russ Ward

Simeon and Levi were the second and third sons of Jacob by Leah. To her they became a symbol that God has looked down upon her with favor in contrast to Rachel. In these two sons Leah hoped that Jacob would draw closer to her because she could bring him children and Rachel was barren. But as with many things in life, one can’t secure or substitute one relationship with another. (Gen 29:33-34)

Simeon and Levi as men are more often than not identified by their actions against Hamor the Hivite. Hamor had a son named Shechem who was drawn to their sister Dinah. Shechem defiled Dinah and lay with her, subsequently going to his father to secure Dinah for his wife. Regardless of his request for Dinah, the actions of Shechem toward her was displeasing to Jacob and his family, which led to bitter hatred in the hearts of Simeon & Levi.

Hamor proposed that there be an un-

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derstanding between them allowing Jacob's family to stay in the region and to intermingle their children in marriage. The sons of Jacob told Hamor that unless the men of his city are circumcised, as they themselves were, there could be no such understanding between them. Hamor presented the men of the city with the opportunity to take Jacob's wealth and that their agreeing to be circumcised was a small price to pay. On the third day after the circumcision procedure while the men were incapacitated, Simeon and Levi rose up against the city killing all the men. Jacob's sons took the spoils of the city and rescued their sister. (Gen 34:27-29)

Jacob would leave the region traveling south to Bethel and his displeasure for his two son's action was remembered when they received the blessing given by their Father before his death. (Gen 49:5-7) The scriptures define for us the attitude and disposition of these two men in their actions against Hamor. The KJV uses the following language, "*instruments of cruelty are within their habitation,*" "*in anger they slew a man,*" "*their anger was fierce and their wrath was cruel.*" Both the ASV and the ESV use "*weapons of violence are their swords.*" Whichever translation one uses the corresponding result is the same, and they are passed over for the blessing.

We overrate ourselves by believing that we would not be filled with similar anger at having a daughter or sister taken and treated in such a manner; even if the guilty party intended to mitigate his actions with a proposal of marriage. With that thought in mind we would be just as guilty as Simeon & Levi. They had no right to choose the course

of action they took, rather that was held by Jacob himself. They took it on themselves to destroy a whole community for the actions of one man. The rendering and wording of Jacob's remembrance of their actions speaks loudly to the reader even years after the act was committed. The compelling story also has lasting implications not only upon these men and the future of their lineage, but also upon the lineage of the coming Christ. There are lessons to be learned, some direct and some I believe have subtle but direct undertones.

Simeon & Levi follow in the footsteps of distrust, anger and self justification established between Jacob's wives. This daily subjugation to a dysfunctional household establishes to some degree the world view of the children of Leah. They supersede the rights of Jacob and take revenge, not only themselves, but they compound these actions by bringing their other brothers into the fray when they share in taking the spoils of the city. They execute revenge not only upon the accused, but also upon the innocent men of the city and in effect leave widows and orphans in their wake. In their haste to make right the wrongful act of Shechem, they forever remove themselves from the blessings that would have been rightfully theirs which was taken from Reuben and subsequently given to Judah. The finality of their actions is pronounced by Jacob (Gen 49:5-7) and revealed within the tribes some 400 years later when Levi as the priestly tribe received no land inheritance and Simeon's inheritance was dispersed in the midst of Judah, where they shared lands and cities.

The importance of this story is reflected not only in the validity of the Messiah coming

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through the lineage of Judah, but secondary aspects should not be overlooked. The nature of God and His will to have such a nature reflected in those that would draw near to Him is unwavering and unchanging. Justice, not revenge, righteous anger, rather than unrighteous acts of anger, respect for authority, rather than impulsive rights of indignation - all are there for us to see and to remember in those times when we find ourselves rising to a level of anger and passionate retribution.

Judah

Jon Hall

Judah's home life, as a child and young man, was not one that we would think of as a normal loving family. There was favoritism of one wife over the other, which is probably not as strange as the simple fact of having two wives to begin with. There was competition among Rachel and Leah for Jacob's attention and love, and sexual relations with the handmaids to try to gain favor with Jacob. Judah, one of thirteen children from four different mothers residing together in one household, is the fourth son of Jacob and Leah. In the following accounts of Judah, there seem to be both positive and negative attributes shown of a Godly home.

Our first detailed account of Judah is as a young man in the field with his brothers, tending his father's flock. Joseph comes to check on his brothers, only to find that they, including Judah, are plotting to murder him. However, Judah sees an opportunity and declares that they should make a profit from this situation. Instead of killing Joseph, they

should sell him. It's hard to tell for sure, but Judah may have had some positive motive here, along with his desire to profit from the situation. He says to his brothers; *"let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, and our flesh."* Gen 37:27 Either Judah was just saying what he thought would persuade his brothers, or he truly felt some compassion for his brother. Either way, both Judah and Rueben, who intended to save Joseph, go along with deceiving Jacob when they bring Joseph's bloody tunic to their father.

If we reason that Judah was entreating his brothers to sell Joseph for the cause of saving him from death; then we can see a slightly positive example in Judah. There are two additional lessons we can learn from this account. First, even in a group, it is possible to stand against what the group wants to do, when evil is planned. This is shown in the actions of Reuben, even when the group is the rest of his brothers. Second, the group can have a significant negative influence on others, and cause us to go along with a plan we wouldn't ordinarily go along with. This is seen as Rueben and Judah go along with the deception of Jacob.

When Judah has a family of his own, he again serves as a good and bad example for a Godly home. Judah has three sons. One of these sons, Er, is given a wife; Tamar. However, Er is wicked in the sight of God and is killed due to his wickedness. We have many examples of wicked people in God's word, that were not killed, so it makes one wonder what type of son Judah raised in Er. Judah attempts to do what is right, and sends Onan to Tamar, to raise up an heir. But Onan is also wicked and refuses to fulfill his responsi-

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bility, and is also killed. So far, Judah's family isn't doing so well at being a Godly family. Judah has a younger son, so he tells Tamar to wait for him to grow up. However, Judah doesn't keep his word for a reason we're not told. After Judah's wife dies, he finds Tamar with her face covered, and thinks her a harlot. So he makes an agreement to go in to her and has sexual relations with her. Tamar becomes pregnant. When later confronted with the items he had given her, he confesses them to be his and states that *"Tamar had been more righteous than he."*

In this account we learn two lessons about Godly homes. First, we need to place great priority on raising our children in godly homes. We're not told anything specific about Er or Onan's rearing, but from their actions as adults, it's hard to imagine they had a strong Godly home. This isn't a sure conclusion, for children always have free will to make their own choices when they grow up; and unfortunately many have gone astray despite being raised in Godly homes. Second, it's never too late to own up to our mistakes and do the right thing. Judah could have told a lie to try to cover up this whole sad affair, but he didn't. Instead he admitted that he had been wrong.

Finally, later on we see good and bad examples from members of the tribe of Judah. First, when the twelve men go to spy out the land, only Caleb, who was of the tribe of Judah, and Joshua stand firm to encourage Israel to take the land. They stand firm, even when the others are cowering in fear and discouraging Israel from taking the land. As another bad example we have Achan, also of the tribe of Judah, who takes

of the accursed things after the fall of Jericho. Before Joshua is made aware of this situation, Israel is defeated at Ai and 36 Israelites are killed.

In general, it is hard to point to any specific evidence that the lack of a Godly family led to the betrayal of Joseph by his brothers, the death of Judah's two sons, or the sin of Achan. However, one might argue that there seems to have been something missing from the raising of these children, as they surely departed from the ways of the Lord. Proverbs 22:6 says, *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."* No family is perfect in their effort to have a godly family, however, what amount of thought, time and effort do we dedicate to endeavoring to be as close to what God would have our families to be?

Dan & Naphtali

Gary Mangus

Dan and Naphtali were the fifth and sixth sons of Jacob. Very little is mentioned about them in the scriptures, yet we can learn important family lessons from them.

Rachel was Jacob's favorite wife, yet her sister Leah was the first to bear children and initially provided Jacob with four sons. In Genesis 30, Rachel is desperate to provide Jacob with children, so she gives him Bilhah, her maidservant, as her surrogate, to bear her children. Bilhah bears two sons; Rachel calls the first one Dan (means judge) for *"God has judged me and given me a son."* The second she named Naphtali (means wrestling) for *"I have wrestled with*

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my sister and have prevailed.”

As the boys grew, the favoritism shown by their father for Rachel and the jealousy between wives was felt by the children. Thankfully they also witnessed their father’s faith and love of God, and how they were blessed in Canaan and later in Egypt. As Dan and Naphtali dwelt in Egypt their clans multiplied greatly.

When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, the tribe of Dan was in charge of the rear guard along with Asher and Naphtali. So both the tribes of Dan and Naphtali had to be skilled warriors to protect Israel from a rear attack while camping at night or traveling during the day.

Tribe of Dan

When Moses gave his final blessings to the children of Israel, of Dan he said, *“Dan is a lion’s cub that leaps from Bashan.”* Deut 33:22 From this imagery we could say that Dan would be strong, warlike, and would journey forth, by leaps. In the song of Deborah and Barak, after the battle against the Canaanites, the song asks, *“Why did Dan remain in ships?”* Judg 5:17 Thus the tribe of Dan appears to have been active in trade and commerce on the Mediterranean Sea.

Jacob’s final blessing in Genesis 49:16-18, prophesied that *“Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel.”* Indeed, Samson, the most infamous descendant from the tribe of Dan, judged Israel for twenty years (Judg 13). The second part said that *“Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that his rider falls backward.”* This gives the idea of trickery, to snare one’s opponent by attacking a hidden weakness.

Samson used cunning and craft in dealing with the Philistines, as in the mischief of the foxes. This could also be a typical trait of the tribe of Dan. The third part of the prophecy is *“I wait for your salvation, O LORD.”* As this prophecy states, Dan must *“wait”* for God’s salvation. The tribe of Dan received the last lot cast for their inheritance, receiving a tract of land that was smaller than the other land grants, but was fertile and bordering the Mediterranean Sea. (Josh 19:40-48). However they never fully occupied their inheritance (Judg 1:34).

While scouting for a more suitable territory, some Danites came to the prosperous city of Laish, in the far north of Israel, which they destroyed and captured. In the process they come into contact with idolatry. They rebuilt the city, named it Dan and set up a carved image; thus earning the dubious distinction of most likely being the first tribe to openly practice idolatry.

After Solomon’s reign the Kingdom split into Israel’s ten northern tribes and Judah’s two southern tribes. King Jeroboam was afraid that those who lived in his northern kingdom would go to worship at Jerusalem (in the southern kingdom). So he built two altars, each with a golden calf, one at Bethel in the south and Dan in the north. Sadly, this man-made worship at Dan has been one of its lasting legacies. (In 1 Kgs 12:25-33)

Tribe of Naphtali

In Jacob’s blessing, Naphtali is said to *“use beautiful words.”* Gen 49:21 Here Jacob may be saying that Naphtali was able to give eloquent speeches, and good, godly advice. This view is echoed by Moses in his

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blessing of the tribe found in Deuteronomy 33 where he declares they were fully blessed by the Lord. Thus, it appears that this tribe was special and found favor with the Lord. This trait was a product of the heart, character, and nature of the son Naphtali.

As the Israelites advanced into Canaan, the tribe earned a reputation for their fierceness in battle. They were a tribe of warriors that were swift, and efficient in battle, like *"a deer let loose"*, from Jacob's blessing. Gen 49:21 In Judges 4, after the Canaanites had oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, Deborah was judging Israel and through her God calls Barak, a man of Naphtali, to deliver the Israelites. Barak was hesitant to engage the Canaanite forces without Deborah's presence on the battle field. And she agreed to go with him but you, *"will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."* Gen 4:8 Deborah went with Barak and 10,000 men from Naphtali and Zebulun. *"And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak by the edge of the sword."* Judg 4:15 This was a great victory for Israel. The bravery of Naphtali is extolled in Judges 5:18 as: *"a people who risked their lives to the death; on the heights of the field."*

Later, Naphtali responded to Gideon's call to repel the invading Midianite army (Judg 6:5). Along with Asher and Manasseh, Naphtali followed Gideon into battle and defeated the Midianites. (Judg 7:23).

When David became king over all of Israel, the tribe of Naphtali provided *"1,000 officers, together with 37,000 men carrying shields and spears."* 1 Chron 12:34-40 When Solomon was building the temple, he hired

Huram, a man whose mother was a Naphthalite, to do the bronze work (1 Kings 7:13-47).

Jesus started His ministry in Naphtali, in the area of Galilee, and called His first disciples from its shores (Mt 4:13-22).

The people of Naphtali were swift, fearless, humble, warriors for the LORD, and their faith in the LORD was strong. They were not afraid of taking the hard path (or the high ground). They spoke with wisdom and offered good godly advice. It is evident they strove after the LORD. We can learn from this tribe that they were able to resist the temptations from the Canaanites. Like them, we must guard against idols and not let something replace God in our hearts.

Gad and Asher

Craig Sweet

According to the Bible, very little is known about the men, Gad and Asher. Therefore, to understand their family environment, we can learn a lot about them by looking at their parents. Laban deceived Jacob by giving him Leah on his wedding night when he was supposed to have given him Rachel. Zilpah (their mother) is first mentioned in Gen 29:24 where she is identified as a servant of Laban.

Deception is a common trait in this family, and the dynamics of Jacob's family are quite interesting. You have Jacob who leads his household under the oversight of his uncle Laban. Jacob is resentful, being made to take Leah as his wife who also happens to be his first cousin. Then you have Zilpah who is

the hand-me-down servant of Laban given to Leah as a servant. Leah did not think she could have any more children, so she gave Zilpah to Jacob as another wife. Zilpah and Jacob had two sons, Gad and Asher who were his seventh and eighth sons. When Gad and Asher enter this world, they have a host of deceptive examples, plus two mothers; a birth mother (Zilpah) and their mother's master as a mother (Leah). Is it possible that Leah would treat Gad and Asher differently than she did her own birth sons? Even today, when combined families join, it is very difficult to manage a household where there are additional authority figures involved besides the biological parents. Step-parents often struggle to build a respectful relationship with children when their biological parents still have a relationship with them. This would be the case with Leah and Zilpah towards Gad and Asher.

When Zilpah bore Gad, Leah named him Gad and according to the ESV version of Genesis 33:11, she named him that because she felt *"good fortune has come!"* Zilpah did not name her own son. It is interesting that the King James Version of the same verse records that Leah said, *"A troop cometh: and she called his name Gad."* This appears to be quite different in the two versions, but if you look at the blessings of Jacob to Gad in Genesis 49, it indicates that Gad's descendants are to be warriors. Later, these warriors helped conquer Canaan (Deut 33:20-21). The tribe of Gad is one of the tribes that settled on the east side of the Jordan River.

When Zilpah had her second son, Leah said *"Happy am I! For women will call me*

happy." So, she named him Asher. Gen 30:12 Again, Zilpah did not get to name her son. When the time came for Jacob to bless Asher, he told him his *"food will be rich and will yield royal delicacies."* Gen 49:20 If you look at the land given to the Tribe of Asher, it was some of the most fertile land of all of Canaan, being on the western and coastal area of Galilee (Josh 19:24-31).

Family dynamics are always interesting when siblings compete for attention. In Genesis 37, we note Joseph at age 17 is in the field with some of his brothers, two of which were Gad and Asher. Joseph brings Jacob a "bad report" of what these boys were up to (Gen 37:2). It does not give the reason for the bad report, but it was obvious they were doing something they should not have been doing. Right after Joseph "tattles" to his father, Jacob responds with the coat of many colors. This was a difficult family dynamic; Gad and Asher were living in a house where their father loved one of their half-brothers more than them. Gad and Asher had enough family challenges to deal with in addition to a painful dynamic of favoritism.

No matter what family challenges a person faces in their early years, anyone can overcome a difficult childhood. Gad is recorded to have had seven sons and is the father of a tribe of warriors who were well respected among the tribes of Israel. *"From the Gadites there came over to David in the stronghold in the wilderness, mighty men of valor, men trained for war, who could handle shield and spear, and whose faces were like the faces of lions, and they were as swift as the gazelles on the mountains."* 1 Chron 12:8

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Asher is recorded to have had four sons, but his legacy, in the end, was not as favorable. Moses blesses the tribe of Asher with a blessing of prosperity (Deut 33:24). However, the tribe of Asher fails to rid the land of the Canaanites so they end up living among them (Judg 1:31-32). When the tribe is requested to aid in the fight against Jabin, they stayed home (Judg 5:17). The reason is not known, but the fact that they decided to not support the rest of the family, does not cast a favorable light on Asher's family. Later, though, the tribe of Asher does respond to the call of Gideon to fight several enemies (Judg 6:35). Asher is a good example that choices made by each generation can have a powerful impact on future generations.

In the end, like Gad and Asher, we all decide who and what kind of person we will be regardless of the homes we grew up in. To lead a God centered home is a decision we all must make. Either we will live our lives for God or we will choose to do things that God would not approve of. In either case, in the end God, will be just and we will receive our just reward.

Issachar and Zebulun

Aaron Lumpkin

It would be easy to look at Issachar and Zebulun, individuals of whom almost nothing is recorded in Scripture, and conclude that there simply isn't much to know about them and move on. A deeper study, however, offers some other clues as we try to unlock the mystery of these obscure sons of Jacob.

Both Issachar and Zebulun were born of Leah, her 5th and 6th sons, but born sometime

after Leah initially stopped bearing children. They also came after both Rachel and Leah's handmaids bore 2 sons each to Jacob, and thus were numbers 9 and 10 in the birth order of Jacob's sons. While the rivalry between the brothers in their family was abundant, Scripture almost always groups these two brothers and their descendants together, suggesting a strong bond between Issachar and Zebulun and their subsequent tribes.

As God's people marched *en masse* from Egypt toward the promised land, they did so in an orderly fashion, as directed by the Lord Himself (Num 2). The Ark of the Covenant rightfully led the procession, but following the Ark was an army composed of the fighting men of the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. Judah's leadership is logical as the blessing and preeminence is given to Judah by Jacob. But Issachar and Zebulun join the tribe of Judah in the prestigious vanguard of the army of Israel (Num 2:1-9). At this point, none of the children of Israel are professional soldiers who have earned such a great distinction in battle. The inclusion of the sons of Issachar and Zebulun in this lead army with Judah suggests that their fathers might not have behaved in the same egregious manner that Rueben, Simeon, and Levi, the first 3 sons of Leah, did (Gen 34, 35:22).

In addition to their prominent spot in the marching order, Issachar and Zebulun also camped on the East side of the Israelite encampment along with Judah, their next closest brother by Leah. In most cultures throughout human history, the direction of East is highly esteemed. Ever since our

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Creator spoke it so, the sun dawns each day in the East, providing light and warmth that sustain life as we know it. The Tabernacle faced East (Ex 27:14ff) as did the Temple (Ezk 44:1). When Israel camped, Moses and Aaron and the priests set up their tents just to the east of the Tabernacle (Num 3:38), in the place of honor, with the rest of the Levites surrounding the Tabernacle in the other cardinal directions. Beyond Moses and Aaron, however, the clans of Issachar and Zebulun joined Judah in camping toward the rising sun. The other 9 tribes had their assigned locations on the remaining 3 sides. Although it provides no specific details, this blessing given to these tribes is a credit not to themselves but to their tribal fathers.

Perhaps the greatest tribute to these two sons of Jacob, however, is seen in the division of the promised land by Joshua (Jos 15-20). Despite being the 3rd and 4th largest tribes at the time of the Conquest, Issachar and Zebulun receive among the smallest allotments of land. The land they received, though, was in many aspects the best land in all of Canaan! Much of their allotted territory was comprised of the Jezreel Valley, as well as the adjacent Harod Valley. This fertile region was – and is even today – the breadbasket of Israel. The plains were well-watered yet well-drained, full of rich soil that was ideal for growing wheat, barley, flax, and other grains. The surrounding hills were full of vineyards and olive orchards, and were well-suited for grazing sheep and goats. Important trade routes cut through the territories of Issachar and Zebulun, making it easy to profit from their agricultural bounty. Speaking strictly from an economic perspective, these two

tribes were given the best land of any tribes. I find it impossible to accept that this was anything but intentional. Since the division of the land was influenced heavily by Jacob's prophecy concerning his sons (Gen 49), it seems logical to conclude that Issachar and Zebulun's favorable inheritance reflects upon their good character.

The absence of direct information about these men offers us a valuable lesson. While Scripture overflows with colorful stories of godly men and women, we likely know little to nothing about the vast majority of God's people throughout the Bible story. As then, most of us are not in the limelight or may not be known throughout the brotherhood. History will probably not record our names as pillars of the Church, nor remember any specific deed we do. Our service and actions will likely only be known in a small circle. To our God, however, our deeds will live on in perpetuity. Nothing that Issachar and Zebulun specifically did was passed down through the ages, but that doesn't mean that they didn't do anything significant. The rich blessings bestowed on the descendants of these two tribal fathers suggest that Issachar and Zebulun were men who followed their God and brought honor to their father Jacob. Even Jesus tried to teach his disciples this lesson of not seeking personal glory. When James and John sought esteemed positions at Jesus's side He gently told them *"Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant."* (Mt 20:26). Issachar and Zebulun missed out on Jacob's greatest blessing, which fell to Judah, and the birth-

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right, which was given to Joseph. This doesn't mean they weren't a valuable part of the family. They quietly filled their role in the family of Israel, not seeking preeminence or glory. We would be wise to follow their inconspicuous example in our own lives.

Dinah

Carol Fertig

No one knows what was going on in the mind of Dinah, Jacob's daughter, when she decided to visit the world outside her family's tents. She was undeniably responsible for a series of disasters that adversely affected her family. The story recorded in Genesis 34 tells what happened to Dinah, her family, and a whole other group of people because of her jaunt. When the prince of the land in which Jacob was living saw Dinah *"...he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her."* 34:2 Shechem, the prince, loved Dinah and told his father Hamor to get her for his wife. Scripture says that Jacob knew what happened, but waited for his sons to come from the field. Hamor went to Jacob to ask not only for Dinah to be Shechem's wife, but for his people and Jacob's to intermarry. Jacob's sons agreed, but only if the men of Shechem would be circumcised. The men agreed, and while they recovered from the procedure, Dinah's two brothers killed Shechem and all the men of the city. Jacob's sons then plundered the city, taking the wealth and capturing their women and children. Jacob was dismayed at this turn of events, but not the way one might expect. This family was certainly dysfunctional, and Jacob as father/patriarch did not fulfill his

responsibilities concerning the heinous assault on his daughter. The reputation of the people of God was affected by the terrible revenge enacted by Dinah's brothers

Jacob did not love Leah, nor did he want to marry her, so there was surely a lot of resentment toward her as well as toward her father when he was tricked into the marriage. But Genesis 29:31 says that *"When the Lord saw that Leah was 'hated,' he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren."* The barren woman in that society was a figure of reproach and scorn, so there was basis for plenty of ill feeling. Rachel and Leah then insisted that their maids bear children to Jacob also, further complicating matters. After bearing six sons, Leah gave birth to Dinah who was her last child. There were six full brothers to Dinah and six half-brothers. The scripture records a daily event in the lives of Jacob's family in Genesis 30:14-16 which shows their lives were still run by jealousy and unseemly activity. Leah's son brought her some mandrakes (plant used for food) he had found, and Rachel wanted some of them. Rachel bargained for the plants by offering Jacob's affection to Leah for the night. Leah put it like this to Jacob when he came in from the field: *"You must come in to me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes."* Gen 30:16 That Jacob would agree to such a thing makes him seem weak and pliable in the hands of these women. That would be nothing new to him, seeing that his mother engineered his receiving the blessing from his father Isaac which rightfully belonged to his older brother Esau. This family was not interested in the welfare of the family unit, but each

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was for himself.

The descendants of Abraham had known for generations they would attain land from God and would grow into a populous nation. They knew all the world would be blessed through them, so they understood they had a place to fulfill in the destiny of the world. They would have been accustomed to keeping themselves separate, so it was an unusual, unexpected thing that Dinah would have gone out to see the women of the land in which they were living. Was Dinah not cared for properly, not watched over? Or was she watched over so closely that she rebelled and decided to break away to see what she was missing? It seems sad that not one word from Dinah was recorded, so we have no idea what influenced her to do what she did. There is absolutely no description of the girl or anything about her nature or personality recorded.

Jacob might have handled things differently than his sons did, if he had acted when he first discovered the rape of his daughter. We don't know how much time elapsed between the rape and the brothers' return from the fields, but it seems Jacob had no plan to put to them. He made no move to recover her from Shechem, nor to seek justice for the terrible crime against her. He should have been her protector, but his sons were the ones who spoke to Shechem and Hamor, setting up the bloody revenge they would take. (Gen 34:11-13) Their anger and indignation had been building since the event, and they would not be denied avenging their sister's rape. Jacob's concern seems to be more for himself and his reputation and safety than for the harm to the girl.

He said, “. . . You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. My numbers are few and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household.” By contrast, his sons replied, “. . . 'Should he treat our sister like a prostitute?’” Gen 34:30-31 Jacob's concern was for himself; his sons' concern was for their sister. Decisive action by Jacob might have avoided the whole debacle. None of them approached God about the problem!

Jacob's fears from the people around them were unfounded. God told him to go to Bethel to live and to make an altar there. Jacob took all the foreign gods from his people and purified them to go on to Bethel. Genesis 35:5 says *“And as they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.”* God's plan for these people would be carried out, regardless of how the people around them felt.

There are echoes of other Bible stories in this sad story of Dinah: Samson and the Philistine woman, Tamar and Amnon. A strong family is insurance against many problems. We can mitigate the risk to our children by using our time with them wisely, as in Deuteronomy 6:6-7: *“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”* An active and trustworthy father is key to providing confidence and security for

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families. It is by design that we consider God our Father, since He is our protector and provider, but we must always look to Him to guide our decisions and actions and look to the big picture: salvation in eternity. When we take vengeance (or revenge) ourselves, we are stepping on God's toes: *"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'"* Rom 12:19

Joseph

Bud Baxley

Joseph's name means "God adds" – this becomes clear when one undertakes a study of Jacob, Joseph's father. Jacob had multiple wives but his favorite was Rachel. Joseph was the eldest of two sons by Rachel. (Gen 30:24) I have divided Joseph's life into four different, but continuing episodes.

1 – Gen 37:1-4 When Joseph was 17 years old, tending his father's flock with his brothers we learn that Jacob loved him more than all his other sons and so indicated these feelings by making him the famous "coat (tunic) of many colors." Joseph's actions either knowingly or unknowingly led his brothers to hate him. So much so that they planned to kill him by an act of premeditated murder. Only because of Rueben's intervention was this plan thwarted. Instead Joseph was sold into slavery, to a caravan of Ishmaelites traveling to Egypt. At this point Joseph's life changed from the "favored son" to that of a slave who was eventually sold to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard.

2 – Gen 39:1-20 Joseph was a diligent worker and faithful servant. So much so that

Potiphar entrusted him with all of his household affairs. God was with Joseph and blessed Potiphar through him. Because he was young and handsome (39:6), Potiphar's wife cast longing eyes on him and suggested he "lie with her." The temptation offered to Joseph was undoubtedly strong but Joseph resisted day by day. In Verse 9 Joseph gives us more insight into his developing character when he tells Potiphar's wife *"No one is greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God."* We are not told when Joseph began to recognize his obligations to God, but we know he understood the great sinful temptation he was being presented with and would not disappoint his God. Recognizing these advances were not going to stop he fled, leaving his garment in her hand. Her false accusations resulted in his imprisonment (Verse 20).

3 – Gen 39:21 - 41:37 Once again, the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy. While in prison he showed himself to be the same person he was while in Potiphar's house. A young man of considerable character who impressed the keeper of the prison, so much that he like Potiphar gave Joseph responsibility for all the prisoners in his care. Verse 23 tells us the keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority. We see that God was with Joseph and he prospered. After two years, Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's two dreams, which had to do with seven years of plenty in Egypt, followed by seven years of famine. Joseph could very easily have taken personal credit for his abil-

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ity to interpret these dreams. Instead he replied to Pharaoh in 41:16 *"It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."* Once more in verse 25 Joseph gives God the credit when he says to Pharaoh, *"The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do."* In verses 33-36 Joseph further relates what Pharaoh should do to prepare for the coming famine. All of this is received well by Pharaoh and his servants, prompting Pharaoh to ask the question *"Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?"* Gen 41:38 Joseph is made administrator to prepare for what was to come and was set over all Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. Joseph was 30 years old at this time. Because of God's plan for Joseph and because he recognized God for who He was, Joseph was blessed beyond measure with increased wisdom, strength, and understanding.

4 – Gen 42-50 The famine was over all the face of the earth according to 41:56. This resulted in Joseph's brothers being sent by Jacob to Egypt to purchase grain. At the first meeting between Joseph and his brothers they did not recognize him and he did not reveal who he was. After testing them in several ways, Joseph sends them to Canaan telling them if they wanted any more grain, to bring their youngest brother Benjamin when they returned. In verses 42:21-22 they remember what they had done to Joseph, the anguish caused to him and also to Jacob their father. Eventually they return to Egypt (Gen 43). After receiving his brothers and seeing Benjamin in (Gen 45) Joseph, no longer able to restrain himself, makes himself known to his brothers. He relates all

that has happened to him and tells them in 45:7-8 that it was not them who sent him to Egypt but it was God's plan all along. They are then sent back to Canaan to bring Jacob and his entire household to Egypt.

Final thoughts...

As you read through these chapters of Joseph's life it's easy to see how his parents' actions initially caused some of Joseph's early problems with his brothers. Joseph, being young and easily influenced unknowingly added fuel to the fire with the revealing of two dreams to his brothers and parents of their bowing down before him. This should give all parents pause to think about how even well-meaning influences can sometimes result in negative feelings among siblings. God is the ultimate example for us to emulate...He loves all of His children equally and will always do what He knows is best for us. (John 3:16) In some ways, Joseph's story is like a modern day, made for TV drama about one family's issues, trials and tribulations which thankfully because it was God's plan, ends on a happy note. More importantly to all Christians, Joseph's story illustrates that God has a plan. A plan which for a period of time we may not always understand. As His children, we must learn to TRUST God and place our FAITH in Him every day especially during hard and difficult times remembering what Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-29 *"Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

Joseph exhibited serious negative character traits at an early age, placing himself at

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odds with those closest to him. But to his credit and God's influence and help, he overcame those while developing a number of positive character traits during the later years his life. As I see him, these traits below were certainly at play throughout his lifetime. What others could you add to the list?

Decisions / actions made in younger years can have long lasting effects – (see 2 Tim 2:22)

Perseverance when life looks dark and forbidding – (see Eph 6:18)

Patience – (see 2 Tim 2:23-25)

Honesty – Fairness – Honor – (see 2 Cor 8:21; Phil 4:8)

Benjamin

Mark Gray

At the end of Jacob's life, he gathers his sons around and issues prophecies regarding each. Benjamin, his youngest son, is told, *"Benjamin is a ravenous wolf, in the morning devouring the prey and at evening dividing the spoil."* Gen 49:27 This seems odd at first because although we know little about Benjamin the man, we know quite a bit about how Jacob and his brothers felt about him. Benjamin was the baby of the family and was originally named Ben-Oni ("son of my sorrow") by his mother as she was dying while giving birth to him. Jacob apparently did not care for this name and called him Benjamin, meaning "son of the right hand" (Gen 35:16-20). When famine hit, Jacob learned that grain was for sale in Egypt and sent ten of his sons to buy some (Gen 42:1-3). Jacob still thought Joseph was dead and *"did not send Benjamin... for he*

feared that harm might happen to him." Gen 42:4 Benjamin was the only remaining son of Jacob's favorite wife Rachel. He did not want to lose him and demonstrates the care and protection he had for his youngest son. Even the brothers who sold Joseph into slavery looked out for Benjamin. Eventually Benjamin did go to Egypt with his brothers and is nearly imprisoned for theft, but Judah volunteers to be punished and enslaved in place of his brother (Gen 44:34). Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and sends them back home to bring back the rest of the family. They are given a change of clothes for the journey, but *"to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five changes of clothes."* Gen 45:22 Everyone looks out for baby brother.

The tribe of Benjamin has much more recorded than their namesake. The tribe was never the biggest, but were known for their skills in combat. They also had a tendency to be left-handed or at least ambidextrous, ironic considering Benjamin means "son of the right hand." Ehud, the 2nd judge, was also left handed, as well as 700 chosen who *"could sling a stone at a hair and not miss."* Judg 3:15; 20:16 Some of David's mighty men were of Benjamin and *"could shoot arrows and sling stones with either the right or the left hand."* 1 Chron 12:2 Perhaps this expertise is what Jacob meant when he called Benjamin a "ravenous wolf."

Conversely there is an extremely dark chapter in the history of the tribe of Benjamin. A Levite and his concubine were traveling and chose to spend the night in Gibeah in Benjamin's territory. While dining, certain

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“worthless fellows surrounded the house, beating on the door” asking for the Levite to come out “that we may know him.” This is eerily similar to the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. Instead the concubine was sent out and was raped to death (Judg 19:12-30). The Levite sent pieces of the brutalized concubine to the other tribes to summon them to war. 400,000 “men who drew the sword” gathered for justice. They went to Gibeah and demanded that the men who committed this awful crime be given up *“that we may put them to death and purge evil from Israel.”* But the Benjamites would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the people of Israel” Judg 20:13 The tribe chose to enter a civil war over their worthless kinsmen, rather than deliver them to justice. For the first two days the smaller army of Benjamin won each battle, but the third day Benjamin was routed. The tribe was virtually wiped out except for *“six hundred men [that] turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months.”* Judg 20:47

From the remnant of 600, the tribe survived and gained notoriety in a much better way. The first king of Israel, Saul, came from this tribe. When he was chosen, he understood that Benjamin’s history was against him and told Samuel, *“Am I not a Benjamite, from the least of the tribes of Israel? And is not my clan the humblest of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin?”* 1 Sam 9:21 Mordecai and Esther who saved the Jews from extinction from Haman were Benjamites (Esth 2:5) Paul the apostle was also from Benjamin (Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5). Perhaps these heroes emerging after the tribe’s near extinc-

tion is what Jacob was referring to when he said, *“...at evening dividing the spoil.”*

Since we know very little about the man Benjamin it is difficult to draw lessons based upon him. We do know that he was protected both by his father and brothers as the baby of the family. Perhaps this protection granted to Benjamin brought about the need to protect and fight in his descendants. We know that they were good warriors. Rather than use this for the glory of God, they failed (like all their Israelite cousins) to eliminate the Canaanites in the Promised Land (Judg 1:21). We need to remember what God has commanded us to do. We cannot grow lax just because we have done “most” of what is required. They also chose to protect the wrong people. Only a very few men in Gibeah committed the heinous crime, but the tribe chose to shield them from justice rather than deliver them. This decision very nearly wiped out the tribe. We need to be careful how we protect our children and family. We cannot defend sinful behavior because we love our family members; in fact, if we really loved them we want them to repent. We also cannot place our family ahead of what God requires of us or eventually they will usurp God’s first and foremost position in our lives. Let us use our protective tendencies to shield from evil and build up godliness.

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