

Biblical Passages That Refer to God's Fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant And a Brief Explanation of Each One

by
Earle Craig

Introduction to the Prophets

And the Uses of the Names Jacob, Israel, Judah, and Ephraim

Some Statistics and Suggestions to Keep in Mind:

There are seventeen books of the prophets in the Old Testament:

1. Isaiah
2. Jeremiah
3. Lamentations (by Jeremiah)
4. Ezekiel
5. Daniel
6. Hosea
7. Joel
8. Amos
9. Obadiah
10. Jonah
11. Micah
12. Nahum
13. Habakkuk
14. Zephaniah
15. Haggai
16. Zechariah
17. Malachi

In these books, there are four names of Old Testament individuals which are used multiple times to refer to all the Jews or a portion of them:

1. **Jacob** – 84 times
2. **Israel** – 481 times
3. **Judah** – 278 times
4. **Ephraim** – 57 times

Jacob most likely always refers to the entire nation of the Jews, and two of the 84 times it appears in the phrase “God of **Jacob**.”

Israel may refer to the entire nation of the Jews, but it could also mean only the ten tribes of the northern Kingdom of **Israel**. There are 71 times when it appears in the phrase “God of **Israel**,” which probably has the same meaning as “God of **Jacob**.”

Judah most likely refers to only the southern Kingdom of **Judah**, and never do the prophets use the phrase “God of **Judah**.”

Ephraim may refer to the entire nation of Jews or to only the northern Kingdom of **Israel**. As with **Judah**, the phrase “God of **Ephraim**” is not used by the prophets.

Jacob and **Israel** appear together in thirty-eight verses, and most likely they are synonymous, referring simply to all the Jews. Two of these verses also contain the name **Judah**, which probably denotes the southern Kingdom of **Judah**.

Jacob and **Judah** appear together in five verses, but these verses do not contain the name **Israel**.

Jacob and **Ephraim** appear together in only one verse, which includes the name **Judah**.

Israel and **Judah**, probably referring to the ten northern tribes and the one southern tribe respectively, appear together in sixty-one verses, and these verses contain no other names.

Israel and **Ephraim**, probably referring to the ten northern tribes, are used together in the same verse fourteen times, and four of these verses also contain the name **Judah**, the name of the one southern tribe.

Ephraim and **Judah**, probably referring to the ten northern tribes and the one southern tribe respectively, appear together in the same verse nine times, and four of these verses include the name **Israel**, which may refer to all the tribes or only the ten northern ones.

An Historical Survey of the Nation of Israel and the Four Important Names:

As I mention in the suggestions above, a split occurs among the twelve tribes named for the twelve sons of **Jacob**, and on one side of the division, the tribes acquire the name **Israel** while on the other side, the single tribe uses the name **Judah**. (We will see that this “single” tribe, while referred to as the “one” tribe, is actually two tribes.) However, since **Israel**, the name to which God changed **Jacob**’s after he wrestled with the angel of God in Genesis 32:28, refers often in the Old Testament to the entire ethnic group of the Jews, it is a little confusing and sometimes difficult to interpret when an author or speaker uses it to mean only the tribes who separated themselves from **Judah**. In addition, we will see that the name **Ephraim** takes on special significance in relationship to both the entire nation of Israel and the tribes who separated themselves from **Judah**. Consequently, in order to interpret correctly all four names—**Jacob**, **Israel**, **Judah**, and **Ephraim**—in the books of the prophets, it is helpful to examine the history of these names as they pertain to the tribes who descend from their ancestor **Jacob** and as they relate to God’s fulfilling the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants. One conclusion we can draw from the Old Testament is that, regardless of what period of time we are considering, the theological and biblical center of the world is Jerusalem and the land of Israel, because the persistent ethnic and national center of God’s attention is His chosen people, the Jews, and their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who will rule them and the world when he returns to Jerusalem.

I will include several maps in our history lesson of the Jews. One of my Old Testament seminary professors drilled it into our heads that it is impossible to overemphasize the importance of knowing the geographies of both the Ancient Near East of Old Testament Israel and the modern Middle East in order to understand the Bible overall and God’s purposes in the last days as Jesus’ return approaches. As we seek to understand the Jews’ history and the development of the meanings of the above four important names, I hope to provide the reader with as good an overview as possible of these two important geographies, both ancient and modern, along with an explanation of the Old Testament’s uses of these names which figure prominently and sometimes rather confusingly in the prophets regarding God’s chosen people, the Jews.

Let us start with the map of the modern Middle East—



Notice first that Israel is the small (!), light yellow country near the far left of the map, and that mainly Arab and Muslim countries (starting clockwise at 12 o' clock—Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt) surround it. The Jews' only completely friendly geographical space which borders the modern state of Israel is the Mediterranean Sea to the west. Otherwise, at one time or another during the last century, these other contiguous countries have attacked and been hostile towards the Jews. Some of them, e.g., Hezbollah, a proxy group funded and supplied by Iran, in southern Lebanon, and Syria are still hostile towards them. Beyond these four countries lie other potential or present enemies of the Jews—Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. In fact, there are

around 100 million Arabs who live within 400 miles of the 7 million Jews in Israel.

Other elements of interest on this map of the modern Middle East is that the Black Sea with Ukraine (off the actual map) on its northern shore is due north of Turkey. The southern border of Russia is also north, contiguous with the much smaller countries of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan and on the other side of the Caucasus Mountains which form a land bridge between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. If Russia ever wants to join the Middle Eastern countries in attacking Israel, they only have to march through either the Darial Pass or the Derbent Pass of these mountains, and certainly the three relatively tiny and weak countries would not stop them. Other countries unfriendly to Israel are also somewhat close—Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Oman, and Sudan. In addition, of course, there are the Muslim Arabs and their organizations within the borders of Israel, namely Hamas and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the former whose clerics call for the annihilation of the Jews and the latter whose charter still does the same. Therefore, it is obvious that Israel needs friends in order to survive. But it is also essential that followers of the God of the Old Testament and the New Testament remember that the Bible informs us, by means of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants, that the Jews' greatest friend is God, the transcendent creator of the universe and author of the story of human history.

In the previous parts, 1 & 2, of our survey of the Abrahamic Covenant, we learned that, around 2000 B.C., God promised eventually to make Abraham's descendants through Isaac and **Jacob** the most powerful nation in the world. He also promised to grant eternal life to Abraham and all other sinful humans who imitate his faith. Nevertheless, the Old Testament, especially the prophets, concentrates on the first promise, so that studying the origins of the names **Jacob**, **Israel**, **Judah**, and **Ephraim** will help tremendously in understanding how the prophets make use of them and how God is going to remain the greatest advocate and supporter of the Jews.

God repeated the first promise to Abraham's son Isaac and his grandson **Jacob**, who became the father of twelve sons, from whom are descended the twelve tribes of **Israel**. We will look at his sons

more carefully, but the first thing to notice is that the name **Jacob** can easily be used to refer to the entire ethnic group of Jews. In addition, we have learned that, around 1500 B.C., God led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and made the Mosaic Covenant with them at Mt. Sinai, to the effect that both their inward and outward obedience was (and is) intended to reveal to the rest of the world, to the Gentiles, who God is and that the descendants of **Jacob** are His chosen people *as an ethnic group*. In other words, no other race or group of people can claim that their biology and ancestry sets them apart *for God's sake* as a special and unique group whom God has promised to elevate to a position of ascendancy above all others. And finally, around 1000 B.C., God communicated to King David, a member of the tribe of **Judah**, that the “great nation” which He will make of the Jewish people will be a monarchy, with one of David’s descendants as their permanent king, the Messiah (which means “Anointed One”). Therefore, so far, we can say that, while **Jacob** in the prophets can easily refer to all the Jews, **Judah** can just as easily denote only the tribe by this name and from which the Jews’ ruler and king originates. When we consider the book of the prophet Jeremiah, we will learn about the New Covenant which God has promised to make with the Jews.

Consequently, I am suggesting that, in order to understand the prophets, Isaiah through Malachi, and especially their use of the names **Jacob**, **Israel**, **Judah**, and **Ephraim**, we need to consider more of the Old Testament history of the Jews that includes **Israel** and **Ephraim**. We will look first at Genesis 32:22-31 to understand the name **Israel** and then come back to Genesis 29 & 30, along with Genesis 35, to learn about **Judah**. In Genesis 32, **Jacob** is returning from the land north of the promised land where he has acquired two wives and eleven sons (by four women, as we will see). He has separated his family, servants, and cattle from himself as they approach the area where he expects to encounter his brother, Esau, from whom he stole his father’s, Isaac’s, blessing and who he suspects is still angry enough with him to kill him—and his family! **Jacob** has prepared a large gift for Esau and sent his family ahead, ordering his servants to present the gift to him in an attempt to assuage his anger, while they should also tell Esau that their master is right behind them. Meanwhile, **Jacob** is alone, and God meets him in Genesis 32:22-31—

Genesis 32:22 Now [Jacob] arose that same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

32:23 He took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had.

32:24 Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.

32:25 When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob’s thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him.

32:26 Then he said, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.” But he said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

32:27 So he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.”

32:28 He said, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.”

32:29 Then Jacob asked him and said, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And he blessed him there.

32:30 So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved.”

32:31 Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh.

We see in this passage that **Jacob** wrestles with a man, who is most likely a theophany, a manifestation of God in the form of a man. Like the burning bush in Exodus 3:2, this man is an “angel of Yahweh” (*mal’ak Yahweh*, מַלְאָכֵי יְהוָה; *angelos kuriou*, ἄγγελος κυρίου in the Greek Septuagint). After God and **Jacob** finish their wrestling match, He changes his name to **Israel** (*Yisra’el*, יִשְׂרָאֵל; *Israel*, Ἰσραήλ in the Greek Septuagint), which means “The one who wrestles with God.” And the reason God expresses for changing his name is, “you have striven with God and with men, and you have prevailed” (v. 28). **Jacob** struggled with his brother-in-law Laban as he sought to marry Rachel and ended up having to marry her sister Leah also. Here he wrestles with God and does

not let go of Him until He blesses him. In both cases, **Jacob** is ultimately able to obtain what he wants, but, as the name *Yisra'el* (**Israel**) indicates, he has had to work hard at acquiring both his favorite wife and God's blessing.

This change of names from **Jacob**, which means "the one who usurps or replaces," to **Israel**, "the one who wrestles with God," and the reason for it very possibly predicts the history of the Jews. No other ethnic group has spent as much time (at least 3500 years!) and energy struggling with themselves, with other ethnic groups who have persecuted them, and with God, as they seek to grasp exactly how to understand and relate to God, who is *their* God, because they are His chosen people and as they pursue God's ultimate blessing of becoming a "great nation" according to His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12. And they will continue to wrestle until Jesus returns, establishes the restored Kingdom of Israel, and they finally live *as a whole nation of people of faith* on the land of Israel in complete and permanent peace, prosperity, and security. For our purposes, we can see how the Old Testament and the prophets can easily use this new name **Israel** as a substitute for the old name **Jacob** and referring to the entirety of the Jews, descended from him and his twelve sons and, therefore, members of the twelve tribes of **Israel**.

Next, we go backwards to Genesis 29 & 30, to **Jacob's** twelve sons and the passage which describes their births. He is living north of the land of **Israel**, the land of Canaan as it was called in his day, and he has married two women, Leah and Rachel. He loves Rachel more than Leah, and Genesis 29:31-30:24 describes how four women become involved in producing eleven of **Jacob's** twelve sons. I have underlined the names of the four women, put in bold letters the names of their sons, and added the meanings of the latter in brackets.

- Genesis 29:31** Now Yahweh saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.
- 29:32** Leah conceived and bore a son and named him **Reuben** [=See, a son!], for she said, "Because Yahweh has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me."
- 29:33** Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because Yahweh has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." So she named him **Simeon** [=He heard].
- 29:34** She conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named **Levi** [=Joined to me],
- 29:35** And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise Yahweh." Therefore she named him **Judah** [=Praise]. Then she stopped bearing.
- 30:1** Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die."
- 30:2** Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"
- 30:3** She said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children."
- 30:4** So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her.
- 30:5** Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.
- 30:6** Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son." Therefore she named him **Dan** [=He judged].
- 30:7** Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.
- 30:8** So Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and I have indeed prevailed." And she named him **Naphtali** [=I wrestled].
- 30:9** When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.
- 30:10** Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.
- 30:11** Then Leah said, "How fortunate!" So she named him **Gad** [=Fortunate!].
- 30:12** Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.
- 30:13** Then Leah said, "Happy am I! For women will call me happy." So she named him **Asher** [=Happiness!].

- 30:14 Now in the days of wheat harvest **Reuben** went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."
- 30:15 But she said to her, "Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? And would you take my son's mandrakes also?" So Rachel said, "Therefore he may lie with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes."
- 30:16 When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, then Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night.
- 30:17 God gave heed to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.
- 30:18 Then Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my maid to my husband." So she named him **Issachar** [=Wages].
- 30:19 Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob.
- 30:20 Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good gift; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him **Zebulun** [=He dwells].
- 30:21 Afterward she bore a daughter and named her Dinah.
- 30:22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb.
- 30:23 So she conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach."
- 30:24 She named him **Joseph** [=May He give], saying, "May Yahweh give me another son."

And, indeed, one more son is born to Rachel when the family returns to the land of Canaan in Genesis 35:16-20,

- Genesis 35:16 Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe labor.
- 35:17 When she was in severe labor the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for now you have another son."
- 35:18 It came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni [=Son of my sorrow]; but his father called him **Benjamin** [=Son of my right hand].
- 35:19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).
- 35:20 Jacob set up a pillar over her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.

And Genesis 35:22-26 summarizes the births of the twelve sons, and the numbers in brackets, for example [1.], refer to the birth order of the sons, while, as above, I have underlined their mother's names and bolded the sons names. The descendants of these sons become the twelve tribes of **Israel**.

Genesis 35:22 ...Now there were twelve sons of Jacob —

35:23 the sons of Leah:

- [1.] **Reuben**, Jacob's firstborn, then
- [2.] **Simeon** and
- [3.] **Levi** and
- [4.] **Judah** and
- [9.] **Issachar** and
- [10.] **Zebulun**;

35:24 the sons of Rachel:

- [11.] **Joseph** and
- [13.] **Manasseh**
- [14.] **Ephraim**
- [12.] **Benjamin**;

35:25 and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid:

- [5.] **Dan** and
- [6.] **Naphtali**;

35:26 and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid:

- [7.] **Gad** and
- [8.] **Asher**.

I am adding to this list Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and **Ephraim**. We will learn in Genesis 48 that **Jacob**, their grandfather, adopts them as his own sons and even replaces his firstborn son, Reuben, with Joseph's second born son, **Ephraim**. This has significant repercussions for the history of the tribes of Israel.

Thus, we learn that **Judah** is the name of one of **Jacob's** sons and the patriarch of a tribe of **Israel**, so that we can see how the prophets easily use this name, **Judah**, to refer to only this tribe. However, as I suggested above, we will find out that there is much more to this tribe and name regarding God's promise to Abraham to make his descendants a "great nation." Continuing with the story of **Jacob** and his sons, after he makes it obvious that Joseph is his favorite son, the other brothers, out of envy, sell Joseph into slavery in Egypt where he marries Asenath, the daughter of an Egyptian pagan priest. And by her, in Genesis 41, Joseph has two sons, Manasseh, his firstborn, and **Ephraim**, whom I included in the list above in Genesis 35 of **Jacob's** sons. As a result, another important passage for understanding in the prophets the names **Jacob**, **Israel**, **Judah**, and **Ephraim** is when **Jacob**, who has moved to Egypt with his entire family, blesses Joseph and his two sons in Genesis 48. I will put in bold letters **Jacob's** name (and his new name **Israel**) along with **Ephraim's** name, because theirs are the important ones in this passage for our purposes.

Genesis 48:1 Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, "Behold, your father is sick."

So he took his two sons Manasseh [=Making to forget] and **Ephraim** [=Fruitfulness] with him.

48:2 When it was told to **Jacob**, "Behold, your son Joseph has come to you," **Israel** collected his strength and sat up in the bed.

48:3 Then **Jacob** said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me,

48:4 and He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.'

48:5 "Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; **Ephraim** and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are.

48:6 "But your offspring that have been born after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance.

48:7 "Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

48:8 When **Israel** saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?"

48:9 Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." So he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them."

48:10 Now the eyes of **Israel** were so dim from age that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them.

48:11 **Israel** said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well."

48:12 Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground.

48:13 Joseph took them both, **Ephraim** with his right hand toward **Israel's** left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward **Israel's** right, and brought them close to him.

48:14 But **Israel** stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of **Ephraim**, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn.

48:15 He blessed Joseph, and said,
"The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,

48:16 The angel who has redeemed me from all evil,
Bless the lads;
And may my name live on in them,
And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;
And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

48:17 When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on **Ephraim's** head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from **Ephraim's** head to Manasseh's head.

48:18 Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head."

- 48:19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."
- 48:20 He blessed them that day, saying,
"By you **Israel** will pronounce blessing, saying,
'May God make you like **Ephraim** and Manasseh!'"
Thus he put **Ephraim** before Manasseh.
- 48:21 Then **Israel** said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers."
- 48:22 "I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

Notice that this passage begins with calling Joseph's father **Jacob**, but then it switches to **Israel** throughout the rest of the passage. In other words, the author confirms that **Jacob** and **Israel** are one and the same person, the father and immediate patriarch of the twelve sons and twelve tribes of the people who are the Jews, i.e. the nation of **Israel**. By the way, the only use of this last phrase in the Bible to refer to the Jews is in the apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians, when he identifies himself as a *bona fide* Jew by saying that he was and is "circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, and as to the Law [Mosaic Covenant], a Pharisee" (cf. Philippians 3:5). The Bible never uses the phrase "the nation of **Jacob**."

The gist of **Jacob's** words and actions above is that he makes four major changes in his relationship with all his sons:

1. The first change is that he adopts Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and **Ephraim**, as his sons. **Jacob** says in v. 5, "Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; **Ephraim** and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are" (emphasis mine). And we notice that **Jacob** names **Ephraim**, the younger of the two, before Manasseh, and mentions them in parallel with Reuben and Simeon, his actual firstborn and second-born, providing a hint of what he is about to do when he blesses them.
2. The second change is that **Jacob** blesses Joseph and substitutes him for his firstborn Reuben, which will become clearer in the next passage we consider, Genesis 49. Verse 15 begins, "He blessed Joseph..." and **Jacob** confirms this change in v. 22 when he tells Joseph, "I give you one portion more than your brothers," which is in line with the Ancient Near Eastern tradition whereby the firstborn son receives a double portion of the father's inheritance in comparison to his brothers.
3. The third change is that, by adopting as Joseph's sons and blessing **Ephraim** and Manasseh, he substitutes them for their father, whom he has substituted for his firstborn Reuben.
4. The fourth change is that he grants the younger **Ephraim** ascendancy over his older brother, Manasseh. The author says in the last line of v. 20, "Thus he put **Ephraim** before Manasseh," thereby, on the basis of #1-#3 above, making **Ephraim** his "firstborn" in place of Reuben.

These changes will have substantial ramifications when the Israelites enter the land of Canaan after the Exodus and the land is divided up amongst all the tribes of **Israel**. And we see how the prophets can easily use the name **Ephraim** to refer to all the Jews, because he is now **Jacob's** firstborn son. But, as I have suggested already, there is also the possibility that they use **Ephraim** to denote only the northern Kingdom of Israel, because his descendants will be included in the ten tribes who split from the tribe of **Judah** during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam.

Now we consider Genesis 49:1-28, when **Jacob** calls all his sons together to bless them and to predict the future of their descendants. Again, I will put in bold letters the names of **Jacob** and **Israel**, as well as that of **Judah**.

- Genesis 49:1** Then **Jacob** summoned his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come.
- 49:2** “Gather together and hear, O sons of **Jacob**;
And listen to **Israel** your father.
- 49:3** “Reuben, you are my firstborn;
My might and the beginning of my strength,
Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.
- 49:4** “Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence,
Because you went up to your father’s bed;
Then you defiled it — he went up to my couch.
- 49:5** “Simeon and Levi are brothers;
Their swords are implements of violence.
- 49:6** “Let my soul not enter into their council;
Let not my glory be united with their assembly;
Because in their anger they slew men,
And in their self-will they lamed oxen.
- 49:7** “Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel.
I will disperse them in **Jacob**,
And scatter them in **Israel**.
- 49:8** “**Judah**, your brothers shall praise you;
Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
Your father’s sons shall bow down to you.
- 49:9** “**Judah** is a lion’s whelp;
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He couches, he lies down as a lion,
And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?
- 49:10** “The scepter shall not depart from **Judah**,
Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes,
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
- 49:11** “He ties his foal to the vine,
And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine;
He washes his garments in wine,
And his robes in the blood of grapes.
- 49:12** “His eyes are dull from wine,
And his teeth white from milk.
- 49:13** “Zebulun will dwell at the seashore;
And he shall be a haven for ships,
And his flank shall be toward Sidon.
- 49:14** “Issachar is a strong donkey,
Lying down between the sheepfolds.
- 49:15** “When he saw that a resting place was good
And that the land was pleasant,
He bowed his shoulder to bear burdens,
And became a slave at forced labor.
- 49:16** “Dan shall judge his people,
As one of the tribes of **Israel**.
- 49:17** “Dan shall be a serpent in the way,
A horned snake in the path,
That bites the horse’s heels,
So that his rider falls backward.
- 49:18** “For Your salvation I wait, Yahweh.
- 49:19** “As for Gad, raiders shall raid him,
But he will raid at their heels.
- 49:20** “As for Asher, his food shall be rich,

- And he will yield royal dainties.
- 49:21 “Naphtali is a doe let loose,
He gives beautiful words.
- 49:22 “Joseph is a fruitful bough,
A fruitful bough by a spring;
Its branches run over a wall.
- 49:23 “The archers bitterly attacked him,
And shot at him and harassed him;
- 49:24 But his bow remained firm,
And his arms were agile,
From the hands of the Mighty One of **Jacob**
(From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of **Israel**),
- 49:25 From the God of your father who helps you,
And by the Almighty who blesses you
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.
- 49:26 “The blessings of your father
Have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors
Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills;
May they be on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.
- 49:27 “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
In the morning he devours the prey,
And in the evening he divides the spoil.”
- 49:28 All these are the twelve tribes of **Israel**, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him.

We notice in v. 2 that **Jacob** calls himself **Israel**, but later in v. 7 he uses these names to refer to the entire ethnic group of Jews, which we will explore in a moment. We should also notice that he tells his sons “what will befall [them, i.e., their descendants] in the days to come.” The Hebrew phrase is *be’ahareet hayyameem* (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים), literally “in the last of the days.” The Greek Septuagint translates the phrase with *ep’ eschaton ton haymeron* (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν), also meaning “in the last of the days.” I think that **Jacob** is referring to the destiny of each tribe as it pertains to God’s fulfilling His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and **Jacob** to make the nation of **Israel** the most powerful one in human history. This means that, regardless of what the Jews do in the course of their history, even disobeying God on occasion that results in His temporary judgment and harsh disciplinary actions (which the prophets of Isaiah through Malachi will be more than glad to discuss), **Jacob’s** predictions will come true in that all the tribes will experience God’s *shalom* in the final Kingdom of **Israel** under the leadership of their Messiah, whom we know to be Jesus of Nazareth. Likewise, God’s future for the Jews of enduring and permanent safety and prosperity on the land of **Israel** is a major theme of the prophets.

In vs. 3-4 above, **Jacob** takes away from Reuben the “preeminence,” i.e., his ultimate blessing, which by the tradition of Ancient Near Eastern culture, belonged to this firstborn son, and he gives it to Joseph. Reuben has “defiled” his father’s bed by sleeping with Rachel’s handmaiden, Bilhah, thereby losing his right to be considered his firstborn son. And **Jacob** says of Joseph in v. 26 at the end of the longest statement to his sons, “The blessings of your father [**Jacob**] have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors [Abraham and Isaac] up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; may they be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.” **Jacob** is passing on to Joseph the many blessings which God has given him. And this is instead of granting them to Reuben. Consequently, he is substituting Joseph for Reuben. **Jacob** now considers Joseph to be his firstborn son. Therefore, by extrapolation, **Ephraim**, Joseph’s younger son, whom **Jacob** adopted and granted ascendancy over his older brother Manasseh, becomes his ultimate

firstborn son among all the other sons of **Jacob**. We will see how this plays out in the history of the twelve (really thirteen) tribes. But, again, we can understand how the Old Testament prophets easily use the name **Ephraim**, because he is the new firstborn son, to represent all the people of **Israel**.

We also notice that the second longest statement of **Jacob's** blessings and predictions is in regard to **Judah**. He declares unequivocally that his "brothers will praise" him, and his "father's sons shall bow down to" him. In addition, **Judah's** "hand shall be on the neck of [his] enemies," and "the scepter shall not depart from [him], nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,...and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." Clearly, **Judah** will eventually conquer all his enemies and rule over not only his fellow Jews, but also the Gentiles. The upshot of this prediction is that a descendant of **Judah**, first David and eventually Jesus, obtains the role of king when God fulfills His promise to Abraham to make his descendants, the Jews, a "great nation" during the messianic and millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Consequently, even though **Judah** is not **Jacob's** firstborn son, his status is great and his predicted responsibility is beyond that of any of his brothers, even of **Ephraim**. We will also see the significance of this in a moment when we consider the divided kingdom after Solomon's reign.

Plus, we should take into account what **Jacob** states regarding Simeon and Levi, and therefore their descendants. In v. 7, he says that God "will disperse them in **Jacob** and scatter them in Israel." **Jacob** provides the reason in vs. 5-6 for this dispersal, "5 ... Their swords are implements of violence. 6 "Let my soul not enter into their council. Let not my glory be united with their assembly, because in their anger they slew men, and in their self-will they lamed oxen." Genesis 34 tells the story of these brothers' violence. When their sister Dinah was raped by a Hivite in the land of Canaan, these two brothers took her vindication upon themselves and killed every man in her attacker's city. And **Jacob** says here in v. 6 that he wants nothing to do with such extreme anger which has led to such disproportionate justice, which is really injustice. The consequence for their actions is that they lose the right to obtain their own area within the land of Israel.

Here, in v. 7, **Jacob** uses his two names, **Jacob** and **Israel**, to refer to the whole group of people who are the Jews. He says that God is going to distribute the members of the tribes of Simeon, **Jacob's** second born, and Levi, his third born, among the other tribes of his sons. We will see that Simeon's descendants become absorbed into **Judah**, and Levi's descendants will be priests without any of the land of Israel to claim for their own. Therefore, the Levites will dwell in the cities and villages of all the tribes as teachers of Gods' Torah and intercessors for the people when they have the opportunity to serve in Solomon's temple in Jerusalem.

Finally, while I suggested above that, in Genesis 48, when **Jacob** adopted Joseph's sons, **Ephraim** and Manasseh, he was in effect creating a thirteen-tribe nation, nevertheless the author has no problem in Genesis 49:28 reverting to the idea of "twelve tribes," because only Joseph is mentioned in this series of predictions.

We can summarize the main ideas of Genesis 48 and 49 this way:

1. The twelve tribes of Israel are now thirteen with the inclusion of **Ephraim** and Manasseh as Joseph's sons who have become **Jacob's** sons.
2. Having put **Ephraim** ahead of the older Manasseh, and having given Joseph his ultimate blessing and the preeminence that normally Reuben would enjoy, **Jacob** has made **Ephraim** his new firstborn son.
3. **Judah** will be the leader and ruler of all his sons as well as of the world. And we should note that this is in spite of **Ephraim's** prominence as the firstborn. In other words, to a degree God honors traditions within societies and cultures, even within religious communities, but He certainly is not bound by them nor elevates them to the status of moral goodness.

The blessings and predictions of Genesis 48 and 49 will have far reaching ramifications for the history of the twelve (now thirteen) tribes of **Israel**, and we will learn of some of these as we continue our historical survey of the Jewish people.

After **Jacob** and his family move to Egypt, and during the four hundred years which the Israelites spend there, these thirteen tribes grow into a veritable nation. Then, at the time of Moses' birth, the king of the Egyptians, who is called Pharaoh, fears that this large group of Semitic foreigners may rise up and take over his nation, and he makes them slaves in order to bring them under his total control. However, with God's sovereign guidance, Moses leads the people of **Israel** out of Egypt and across the Sinai Desert, where, around 1500 B.C., they are poised to enter the land of Canaan and make it their own, i.e., the land of **Israel**. As this process takes place, their new leader, Joshua, divides the land among the thirteen tribes. The details which identify exactly where each tribe should dwell are described in the book of Joshua, chapters 13-19. Below is map of the resultant tribal divisions.



The first thing to notice is that the name of Levi does not appear anywhere on the map. We remember that **Jacob** predicted in Genesis 48:7 that God would scatter this tribe among the other tribes. And by making the Levites the priests of the nation of Israel under the umbrella of the Mosaic Covenant forty-years earlier at Mt. Sinai, God informs Moses that he is not to assign any portion of the land of Israel to them. Joshua 13:14 & 33 state this explicitly:

Joshua 13:14 Only to the tribe of Levi [Moses] did not give an inheritance; the offerings by fire to Yahweh, the God of Israel, are their inheritance, as He spoke to him.

Joshua 13:33 But the tribe of Levi, Moses did not give an inheritance; Yahweh, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as He had promised to them.

This is in line with what Moses says in Deuteronomy 18:1-2:

Deuteronomy 18:1 "The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they shall eat Yahweh's offerings by fire and His portion.

18:2 "They shall have no inheritance among their countrymen; Yahweh is their inheritance, as He promised them.

In Genesis 49:5-7, **Jacob** states that the reason why Levi will become dispersed among the other tribes is because of Simeon's and his extreme anger and the unreasonable vengeance they took on all the men of the city where their sister Dinah was violated. In these passages of Joshua and Deuteronomy, the reason is that God is appointing the Levites to be His priests for the Jews. This is quite an honor for the descendants of a man who overreacted in such a harsh and angry manner, which reveals God's grace and mercy in spite of man's sinfulness. Therefore, the Levites, acting as God's priests in the tabernacle which the Israelites built in the desert and in the temple which they eventually build in Jerusalem, also dwell as God's teachers throughout the land of **Israel** among the other twelve tribes, which fits with **Jacob's** prediction in Genesis 49:7 that God would "scatter them in **Israel**."

The second thing to notice about the above map of the tribal division of the land is that Simeon was assigned certain cities which all reside within the borders of the tribe of **Judah**. Joshua 19:1-9 relates the part of the land given to the tribe of Simeon:

Joshua 19:1 Then the second lot fell to Simeon, to the tribe of the sons of Simeon according to their families, and their inheritance was in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Judah.
19:2 So they had as their inheritance Beersheba or Sheba and Moladah,
19:3 and Hazar-shual and Balah and Ezem,
19:4 and Eltolad and Bethul and Hormah,
19:5 and Ziklag and Beth-marcaboth and Hazar-susah,
19:6 and Beth-lebaoth and Sharuhem; thirteen cities with their villages;
19:7 Ain, Rimmon and Ether and Ashan; four cities with their villages;
19:8 and all the villages which were around these cities as far as Baalath-beer, Ramah of the Negev. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Simeon according to their families.
19:9 The inheritance of the sons of Simeon was taken from the portion of the sons of Judah, for the share of the sons of Judah was too large for them; so the sons of Simeon received an inheritance in the midst of Judah's inheritance.

In other words, like Levi, the tribe of Simeon have no delineated area within the land. They have only cities, but these cities are within the area allotted to **Judah**, for, as v. 9 above says, "the share of the sons of **Judah** was too large for them; so the sons of Simeon received an inheritance in the midst of **Judah's** inheritance." It seems that God intentionally gave **Judah** more land than they needed, and His reason was to accommodate the tribe of Simeon within the same area. This, too, is in accordance with **Jacob's** prediction regarding Simeon in Genesis 49:7 that God would "scatter them in Israel." Only, in this case, **Israel** is the single tribe of **Judah**. Therefore, I think that eventually Simeon simply gets absorbed into **Judah** and effectively disappears. But we will see that there is another reason why **Judah** obtains more land than they need. It will be so that they are the sole tribe of the southern Kingdom of **Judah** and the only tribe ruled by the Davidic king.

The third thing to notice on the map is that most of the tribes are in the north portion of the land while **Judah** (and Simeon) occupy the whole of the south. This north-south division will play an important role approximately six hundred years later and for an additional three hundred years after the nation of **Israel** becomes a monarchy.

The fourth thing to notice on the map is that **Ephraim**, **Jacob's** substitute for Reuben as his firstborn, possesses an area in the northern portion of the land of Israel. What is striking about this is that, when the tribes split into two kingdoms approximately six hundred years later, around 900 B.C., the tribe of **Jacob's** designated firstborn son, **Ephraim**, and therefore the tribe which has "preeminence" among all the other tribes, will separate themselves from the Davidic king and the Davidic Covenant, i.e., from the tribe of **Judah**, whom **Jacob** predicted would rule all the tribes and the world. Therefore, it stands to reason that, if God is eventually going to make Abraham's, Isaac's, and **Jacob's** descendants the most powerful nation in the world, then He must reunite the preeminent tribe of **Jacob's** firstborn son **Ephraim** with the ruling tribe **Judah**. We will see in the books of the prophets that this is exactly what God intends to do, thus making the separation of these two tribes around 900 B.C. a point of reference for His fulfilling His promises to Abraham. And we should also note that **Ephraim** is one of the ten tribes of the north, so that, as the adopted firstborn son of **Jacob**, his name easily becomes representative of them in the prophets.

Before we leave the book of Joshua, we should note that, as the Israelites are conquering the land of Canaan so that it becomes the land of **Israel**, we have the first evidence in chapter 11, verse 21 of dividing the land between the ten northern tribes and the southern tribe of **Judah** (plus Simeon):

Joshua 11:21 Then Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the hill country of Judah and from all the hill country of Israel.

In Joshua 10 the Israelites complete their conquest of the southern portion of the land, and then in chapter 11 they achieve the same goal in the northern portion. Verse 21 above describes how the Israelites finally defeat the people whose presence in the land had frightened them forty years earlier to the point that, even with such a strong leader as Moses encouraging them, they refused to obey God and invade and destroy the indigenous people. This resulted in their being disciplined by God and spending forty years in the wilderness before their next attempt. Now Joshua and the Israelites are accomplishing what they should have done with the generation who died in the desert. They are defeating the Anakim.

We also notice that these people live in the “hill country,” which begins at “Hebron” in the south. But they also are living in the hill country of the north, because the verse says that Joshua “cut off” these giants “from all the hill country of **Judah** and all the hill country of Israel.” And we have learned from the division of the land which occurs a little later in the book of Joshua that **Judah** is in the south, while the other tribes, here called **Israel**, occupy the northern portion of the land.

Observe the topographical map of the land of **Israel** below and notice the range of hills called the “Central Mountains” in the middle of the country.



Consequently, the author of Joshua must mean that the Anakim occupied the middle of the land of Canaan in these Central Mountains, which are relatively low-lying hills that rise to a maximum of 1,019 meters (about 3,000 feet) and stretch from the Valley of Jezreel southwest of the Sea of Galilee in the north to the Negev Desert just west of the Dead Sea in the south. In order to identify the full length of the area in which the Anakim lived, the author of Joshua describes the southern portion as “the hill country of **Judah**” and the northern portion as “the hill country of Israel.”

But would we not expect the word **Israel** to mean all thirteen tribes who descend from **Jacob**, whose name God changed to **Israel**? Indeed, we would, but somebody, whether Joshua or someone else, and at least four hundred years after **Jacob** and approximately six hundred years before the division of the kingdoms, has decided to identify (rather confusingly) the northern tribes and their apportioned areas as **Israel**, while he labels the southern tribe, which must include Simeon, less confusingly as **Judah**. Therefore, just from this verse, we should not be surprised if the prophets, starting around 800 B.C. and approximately seven hundred years after the conquest of the land, use the name

Israel (and even **Jacob**?) to refer to only the northern tribes and to distinguish them from the (mainly) southern tribe of **Judah**. (An interesting detail on this topographical map is that the Dead Sea in the

south is 400 meters (about 1200 feet) below sea level, which makes it the lowest point on the earth. The map does not indicate it, but, in the north, the Sea of Galilee, i.e., the “Sea of Kinneret,” is 215 meters (about 700 feet) below sea level, making it the lowest fresh water lake on earth.)

After the conquest of the land under Joshua around 1500 B.C., the monarchy and dynasty of David, which will come into existence through the Davidic Covenant five hundred years later, is approaching. However, Saul, whom God ultimately rejects, is king before him and hears from messengers that the men of the city of Jabesh-gilead are afraid to fight the Ammonites who have laid siege to it (cf. 1 Samuel 11). Saul’s response to the men’s fear is in vs. 6-8,

1 Samuel 11:6 Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard these words, and he became very angry.

11:7 He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, “Whoever does not come out after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen.” Then the dread of Yahweh fell on the people, and they came out as one man.

11:8 He numbered them in Bezek; and the sons of Israel were 300,000, and the men of Judah 30,000.

Here is another example before the division into two kingdoms of a distinction being made between **Israel** and **Judah**. The author of 1 Samuel calls the northern tribes **Israel** and says that Saul is able to muster 300,000 men from them. Then he calls the southern tribe **Judah**, and Saul is able to enlist 30,000 men from it. Therefore, we find here the same distinction (and possible confusion) as in the book of Joshua, when we would expect the first name **Israel** to refer to all the tribes, including **Judah**.

The same is true soon afterwards when God is in the process of installing David as the first king of a permanent dynasty among the Jews. David and his men have been fighting a “long war” against those who are still loyal to Saul. And Abner, one of Saul’s generals, is accused of doing wrong towards him (cf. 2 Samuel 3:1-8). He then turns against the king as revealed by the following passage:

2 Samuel 3:9 “May God do so to Abner, and more also, if as Yahweh has sworn to David, I [Abner] do not accomplish this for him,

3:10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba.”

Abner is now committed to making David king in place of Saul, and, in v. 10, he provides a geographical description of the land over which David will rule. It is the land occupied by **Israel** and **Judah**, and it extends “from Dan,” the northernmost city on the border of Naphtali and East Manasseh on the map of the tribes above, “even to Beersheba,” which is south of Hebron and in the middle of the tribe of **Judah**.

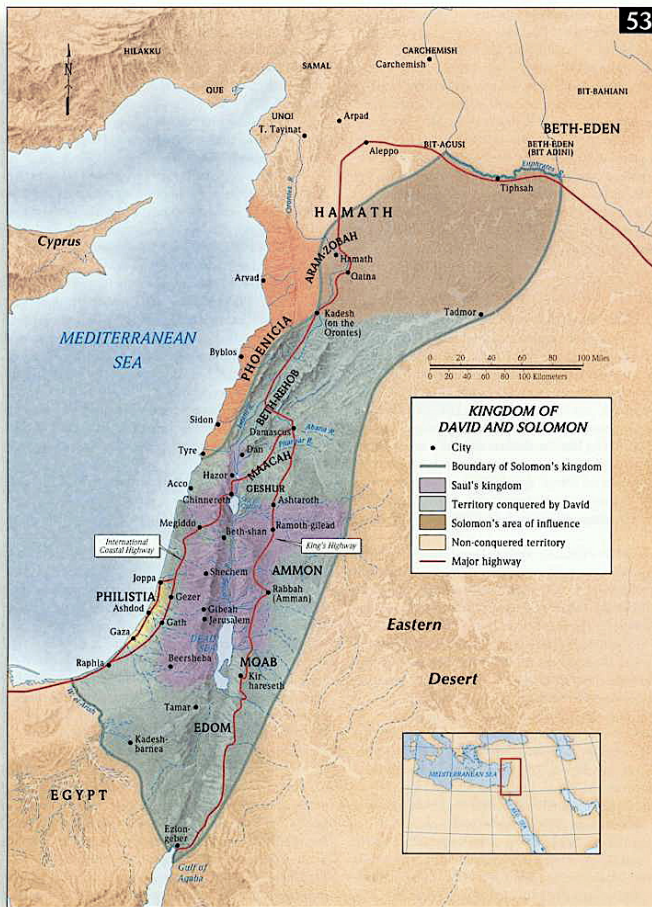
Similarly, once David becomes king in 1000 B.C., the same author records:

2 Samuel 5:5 At Hebron he [David] reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.

In other words, David began his role as king by ruling over **Judah** from the city of Hebron, and after he conquered Jerusalem, he ruled both the northern area of **Israel** and the southern area of **Judah**. Thus, it was at this time that the Israelites finally gained Jerusalem as their capital city when David conquered the Jebusites as described in the verses after the one above:

- 2 Samuel 5:6 Now the king [David] and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, and they said to David, “You shall not come in here, but the blind and lame will turn you away”; thinking, “David cannot enter here.”
- 5:7 Nevertheless, David captured the stronghold of Zion, that is the city of David.
- 5:8 David said on that day, “Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him reach the lame and the blind, who are hated by David’s soul, through the water tunnel.” Therefore they say, “The blind or the lame shall not come into the house.”
- 5:9 So David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built all around from the Millo and inward.
- 5:10 David became greater and greater, for Yahweh God of hosts was with him.

David reigned as king of the Jews from 1000-961 B.C., and Solomon, his son, succeeded him and ruled the entire nation of Israel from 961-922 B.C. The geographical extent of their kingdoms can be seen on the map below. Notice that the southern border for both David and Solomon is the Sinai Desert, including Ezion-geber, which is modern-day Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba, while the northern border of Solomon’s influence is the Euphrates River and the city of Tiphshah in modern-day Iraq.



However, God was not pleased with Solomon, because he did not obey Him as his father David had done. He married many “foreign women” when God warned him not to do so, and these women, who worshiped pagan gods, turned his heart away from Yahweh.

1 Kings 11:9-13 describe God’s response and the consequences which He brings about for Solomon:

1 Kings 11:9 Now Yahweh was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from Yahweh, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 11:10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what Yahweh had commanded.

11:11 So Yahweh said to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes [in the Mosaic Covenant], which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.

11:12 “Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.

11:13 “However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.”

We see that Solomon’s disobedience is going to result in a divided people of **Israel**, using this name to refer to all thirteen tribes. It will be at this point in the Jews’ history that the words **Israel** and **Judah** take on not only a geographical meaning of north and south, but also a political one of two kingdoms. The Kingdom of **Israel** under David and Solomon splits into the *northern* Kingdom of

Israel, with their own set of kings who are not descendants of David and, therefore, not a part of the Davidic Covenant, and the *southern* Kingdom of **Judah**, whose kings do descend from David as a continuation of God's promise to him that his kingdom will last into perpetuity (cf. 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17). The author of 1 Kings describes this division of kingdoms as communicated by the prophet Ahijah to the first king of the northern tribes, Jeroboam:

- 1 Kings 11:26 Then Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king.
- 11:27 Now this was the reason why he rebelled against the king: Solomon built the Millo, and closed up the breach of the city of his father David.
- 11:28 Now the man Jeroboam was a valiant warrior, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious, he appointed him over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph.
- 11:29 It came about at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had clothed himself with a new cloak; and both of them were alone in the field.
- 11:30 Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him and tore it into twelve pieces.
- 11:31 He said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes.
- 11:32 (but he will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel),
- 11:33 'because they have forsaken Me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon; and they have not walked in My ways, doing what is right in My sight and observing My statutes and My ordinances, as his father David did.
- 11:34 'Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, who observed My commandments and My statutes;
- 11:35 but I will take the kingdom from his son's hand and give it to you, even ten tribes.
- 11:36 'But to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen for Myself to put My name.
- 11:37 'I will take you, and you shall reign over whatever you desire, and you shall be king over Israel.
- 11:38 'Then it will be, that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.
- 11:39 'Thus I will afflict the descendants of David for this, but not always.'"
- 11:40 Solomon sought therefore to put Jeroboam to death; but Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt to Shishak king of Egypt, and he was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

In v. 26, it is probably no coincidence that Jeroboam is from the tribe of **Ephraim**, when it was **Ephraim**, Joseph's younger son, whom **Jacob** adopted, blessed, and granted preeminence as his newly designated firstborn (cf. Genesis 48 above). Thus, the first king of the northern tribes, while a servant of the Davidic king Solomon, is from the tribe with the greatest status and whose land lies just north of **Judah**. In other words, if a descendant of David will not be ruling the northern tribes, it might as well be a descendant of **Ephraim** who at least begins ruling them. As it turns out, Jeroboam's son, Nadab, succeeded him as king, but he was assassinated by Baasha of the tribe of Issachar, who then took his place. And thus it continued in the northern kingdom that various men, whose tribal affiliations are not mentioned in the Bible, become their kings. However, I think we can assume that none of them is from the tribe of **Judah** as will become clearer from the rest of this passage.

In v. 28, Solomon appoints Jeroboam "over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph," probably denoting the men from both the tribes of Joseph's sons, **Ephraim** and Manasseh, who are working on the building project in Jerusalem mentioned in v. 27. When the prophet Ahijah explains the situation

to Jeroboam, he says in v. 31 that God is going to give him “ten tribes” over whom he will rule, and then in v. 32, God says that Solomon (a descendant of “My servant David” and, like David, technically a Son of God according to the Davidic Covenant) will rule over one tribe. He mentions the same thing in vs. 35-36 and refers to Jerusalem being the city where He has chosen to place His name. This is an important reason why the Davidic kingdom of **Judah** will continue, even though it will be separated from the other ten tribes. Jerusalem and the Davidic Covenant, with the dynasty beginning with David, are united in God’s mind for the duration of the existence of the Jewish people and His fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a “great nation.”

This also means that the “ten tribes” of the northern Kingdom of **Israel** include:

1. **Ephraim**
2. Dan
3. Benjamin (eventually)
4. Manasseh
5. Issachar
6. Zebulun
7. Asher
8. Naphtali
9. Gad
10. Reuben

Therefore, the “one tribe” of the Kingdom of **Judah** over whom the Davidic kings rule is:

1. **Judah** (along with Simeon who has been assimilated into it)

This obviously leaves one more tribe, Levi, whose members are dispersed throughout all the other tribes and living in various cities and villages in accordance with **Jacob’s** prediction in Genesis 49:7, which we looked at above.

The author of 1 Kings also says in v. 32 that God has chosen the city of Jerusalem “from all the tribes of **Israel**.” Here **Israel** refers to all the Jewish people, and not just the northern tribes and their ensuing kingdom. Then, in v. 37, God tells Jeroboam that he “shall be king over **Israel**,” so that He now uses the name **Israel** to refer to only the ten northern tribes and does not include **Judah** (and Simeon). God also assures Jeroboam that, if he will obey Him as David did, that his “house,” i.e., his descendants, will endure as kings of these ten tribes, so that He “will give **Israel**” to him. Again, **Israel** means all the tribes excluding **Judah**. However, Jeroboam rebels against God, resulting in only his son succeeding him, and then men from other tribes, or at least other families, take over the throne of the northern kingdom (cf. 1 Kings 15-2 Kings 15). And even if Jeroboam had not disobeyed Him, God does say in v. 39, “Thus I will afflict the descendants of David for this, but not always.” The last clause in Hebrew is *’ak l’o kol hayyameem* (אֲכַלְּוֹ כָּל־הַיָּמִים), literally “only not all the days.” I think that God is saying that **Judah** and their king will be on their own for a while, but regardless of how well Jeroboam obeys him, and regardless of how long his descendants rule the northern tribes, God will eventually expand the Davidic Kingdom to include all thirteen tribes. We will see that the prophets declare exactly this last idea, and we now know from the New Testament that it will happen when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of **Israel** (cf. Acts 1:6-8; Revelation 19-20). This is also in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant whereby the Jews become a “great nation” and in accordance with the Davidic Covenant whereby they are ruled by a final and permanent king—their Messiah. In other words, the tribes cannot remain divided forever. God has promised and guaranteed to make them a united kingdom with the person whom we now know to be Jesus of Nazareth ruling over them.

When Solomon dies in 922 B.C., his son Rehoboam becomes king of all thirteen tribes and the whole land of **Israel**. However, true to God’s prediction, he is unreasonable and cruel, thus offending

the northern tribes to the point that they rebel against him and choose to form their own kingdom. We find their words of disapproval in 1 Kings 12:16-17,

1 Kings 12:16 When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying,
“What portion do we have in David?
We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse;
To your tents, O Israel!
Now look after your own house, David!”
So Israel departed to their tents.
12:17 But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

Notice, in v. 16, the author labels the northern ten tribes as “all **Israel**,” and they even call themselves “**Israel**” and designate the one southern tribe, i.e., **Judah**, as “David,” because his descendant has become their king according to the Davidic Covenant. The author of 1 Kings also states in v. 16, “So **Israel** departed to their tents” in the north, while in vs. 17 we read, “But as for the sons of **Israel** who lived in the cities of **Judah**, Rehoboam reigned over them.” Therefore, in v. 16, the author means the northern ten tribes when he uses the word **Israel**. However, in v. 17, he means the entire nation of **Israel**, i.e., all thirteen tribes, and indicates that Rehoboam ruled over the ones of them “who lived in the cities of **Judah**,” i.e., the tribe of **Judah** (plus Simeon, which has been assimilated into **Judah**). In other words, it is **Judah**, and not the other ten tribes, whose king is Rehoboam. Therefore, in two consecutive verses, the word **Israel** has two different meanings, which will be the very thing for which we will have to be on the lookout when reading through the books of the prophets.

Within this same chapter of 1 Kings we should also consider vs. 20-21:

1 Kings 12:20 It came about when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David.
12:21 Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

In v. 20 “all **Israel**” and in v. 21 “the house of **Israel**” obviously refer to only the ten tribes who make Jeroboam their king and whom Rehoboam wants back as part of his kingdom. Thus, the northern tribes complete their goal of forming their own kingdom, but verse 21 mentions the antipathy which exists between the two kingdoms from their beginning until the destruction of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. We see also that, initially, Rehoboam had control of the tribe just north of **Judah**, Benjamin, but the border between the southern and northern kingdoms changed often according to how the conflict between them was evolving during approximately the two hundred years of their co-existence.

Below are two maps of the divided kingdom, the green portion in the north representing ten tribes and called the Kingdom of **Israel**, and the purple/orange portion in the south consisting of one tribe (along with the absorbed tribe of Simeon) and called the Kingdom of **Judah**.



The left map shows the topography of the land and is a little larger in scale. The city names and area names of the right map are much easier to read. We can see that Jerusalem is very near the northern border of **Judah**, and that this kingdom extends south past Beersheba to Kadesh-barnea. We recall that David originally ruled **Judah** in Hebron, approximately twenty miles south of Jerusalem. The border between the two kingdoms is only a few miles north of Jerusalem, and eventually Samaria becomes the capital of the Kingdom of **Israel**. These two kingdoms are surrounded by Philistia on the southwest, Phoenicia on the northwest, Aram and its capital Damascus on the northeast, and Ammon, Moab, and Edom on the east.

On the next page is a chart of the united and divided kingdoms with their prophets, kings, and related passages. In the Prophet column, the names in bold letters designate prophets who have books in the Old Testament. If there is (I) next to the name, the prophet addresses his message mainly to **Israel** in the north, while (J) indicates that he speaks mainly to **Judah** in the south. Obadiah shows (E) because his message was for Edom, a Gentile nation and the descendants of Esau, **Jacob's** brother. In the OT Passage column, the first passage listed pertains to **Israel's** king where appropriate, while the second passage refers to **Judah's** king.

United Kingdom

<u>Date (B.C.)</u>	<u>Prophet</u>	<u>King</u>	<u>OT Passage</u>
1100	Samuel		1 Samuel 1-24
1000	Saul Gad, Nathan	Saul (1025-1006) David (1006-968) Solomon (968-928)	1 Samuel 9-31 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2 2 Samuel 12-1 Kings 11
Divided Kingdom			
		<u>Israel's King</u>	<u>Judah's King</u>
	Shemaiah Ahijah (I)	Jeroboam I (930-909)	Rehoboam (930-913)
		Nadab (909-908)	Abijah (913-910)
900	Jehu (I)	Baasha (908-886)	Asa (910-869)
		Elah (886-885)	Jehoshaphat (872-848)
		Zimri (885)	
		Tibni (885-880)	
		Omri (885-874)	
	Elijah (I) (870-850) Micaiah (I)	Ahab (874-853)	
	Obadiah (E) (853-841)	Ahaziah (853-852)	
	Elisha (I) (850-800)	Joram (852-841)	Jehoram (848-841)
	Joel (I&J) (835-796)	Jehu (841-814)	Ahaziah (841)
			Athaliah (841-835) Joash (835-796)
800		Jehoahaz (814-798) Jehoash (798-782)	Amaziah (796-767)
	Jonah (I&J) (793-760)	Jeroboam 2 (793-753)	Azariah (792-740) (Uzziah)
	Amos (I) (760-750)		
	Hosea (I) (753-715)	Zechariah (753) Shallum (752) Menahem (752-742)	Jotham (750-735)
	Micah (J) (742-687)	Pekahiah (742-740)	Ahaz (735-715)
	Isaiah (J) (740-700)	Pekah (752-732)	
	Assyria destroys the northern Kingdom of Israel		
700		Hoshea (732-722)	
	Nahum (J) (663-612)		Hezekiah (715-687) Manasseh (687-642) Amon (642-640) Josiah (640-609)
	Zephaniah (J) (640-621)		
	Jeremiah (J) (627-586)		
	Habakkuk (J) (612-588)		
	Huldah (J)		Jehoahaz (609) Jehoiakim (609-598) Jehoiachin (598-597) Zedekiah (597-586)
600	Daniel (J) (605-535)		
	Ezekiel (J) (593-571)		
	Lamentations (585)		
	Haggai (520)	Babylon destroys the southern Kingdom of Judah	
500	Zechariah (520-480)		Ezra 5:1; 6:14
	Malachi (430)		Ezra 5:1; 6:14

The chart shows that the northern Kingdom of **Israel** lasts from 930 B.C., when Jeroboam begins his rule, to 722 B.C., when the Assyrians invade from the north and destroy it, taking most of its inhabitants into exile into what today is northern Iraq. Similarly, the time of the Kingdom of **Judah** is from 930 B.C., when Rehoboam succeeds Solomon, until 586 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem, its temple, and the kingdom, taking most of the people into captivity and marching them to Babylon on the Euphrates River (central Iraq today). But it will be these exiles (and very possibly some from the Assyrian captivity) who return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple and the city around the middle of the 6th century B.C. During this time, Haggai and Zechariah will speak to the people on behalf of God, and then Malachi will do so in the next century.

If we lay the map of the portions of the land of **Israel** originally granted to the tribes beside one of the maps of the two kingdoms, we can see that the ten northern tribes coincide with the Kingdom of **Israel**, while the tribe of **Judah** (plus Simeon) covers the same area as that of its kingdom, except for Philistia.



We know from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah that, around the middle of the 6th century B.C., exiles from the Babylonian captivity begin returning to the land of **Israel**. They rebuild Jerusalem and its walls, and they also rebuild the temple. However, a king never rules over the Jews again, and eventually the Roman Empire conquers Jerusalem in 63 B.C., so that this is the government which is in authority over the land of the Jews when Jesus makes his first appearance. We are now waiting for his second appearance when **Jacob's** and the Old Testament prophets' predictions will be completely fulfilled in regard to the tribes of **Israel** and God's promise to Abraham to make them the most powerful nation in history.

In conclusion, the main points of this historical survey that I would like to stress for our purposes are:

1. **Jacob**, who lived around 1900 B.C., was Abraham's grandson and the father of twelve sons from whom the twelve tribes of **Israel** are descended. Therefore, his name can easily be used as a synecdoche (a part for the whole) of the Jewish people.
2. God changed **Jacob's** name to **Israel**, so that it too can easily be used to refer to all the Jewish people.
3. **Jacob's** descendants, the Jews, are unique in that they are the only ethnic group who have been set apart by God for the purpose of revealing Him, His character, and His instructions both to the Jews and to the Gentiles.

4. **Judah** was **Jacob's** fourth son, from whom David was a descendant, who was the first king of a line of kings, which will eventually culminate in a final and permanent king. We know this final king to be Jesus of Nazareth.
5. After the whole family has moved to Egypt and **Jacob** is about to die, he blesses Joseph, thus substituting him for his firstborn son Reuben. But he also adopts Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and **Ephraim**, and grants ascendancy to the younger **Ephraim**, resulting in his acquiring the status of being **Jacob's** firstborn son. This also means that the *twelve* tribes of **Israel** have effectively become the *thirteen* tribes of **Israel**.
6. **Jacob** predicts that **Judah** will rule his brothers and conquer their enemies.
7. Around 1500 B.C., when Moses and Joshua divide the land of Canaan among the thirteen tribes of **Israel**, **Judah** receives a huge portion of the land in the south, and Simeon is absorbed into **Judah**. The other tribes, including **Ephraim**, receive their portions in the north.
8. Starting with the book of Joshua, the area occupied by the northern ten tribes is labelled **Israel**, and the area occupied by **Judah** and Simeon is labelled **Judah**.
9. Around 900 B.C., when Solomon disobeys God, He decides to divide the kingdom into the northern Kingdom of **Israel** with its own set of kings, starting with Jeroboam from the tribe of **Ephraim**, and the southern Kingdom of **Judah** with descendants of David ruling over it, starting with Solomon's son, Rehoboam.
10. The northern Kingdom of **Israel** with its ten tribes disappears in 722 B.C. at the hands of the Assyrians, while the southern Kingdom of **Judah** is destroyed and taken into exile by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

This means that, in the books of the prophets, Isaiah through Malachi,

1. **Jacob** and **Israel** could easily refer to all the Jews or only the northern ten tribes, who comprise the Kingdom of **Israel**.
2. **Judah** most likely refers to only the southern tribe that includes Simeon and who constitute the Kingdom of **Judah**.
3. **Ephraim**, like **Jacob** and **Israel**, could refer to all the Jews or only the northern ten tribes of the Kingdom of **Israel**.

Obviously, the context in which these names appear will have to be examined carefully to determine exactly how a prophet is using them. And here is a good example all four names, which I have bolded, in context, which we will study when we look at the book of Ezekiel:

[Ezekiel 37:15](#) The word of Yahweh came again to me saying,

[37:16](#) "And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, 'For **Judah** and for the sons of **Israel**, his companions'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of **Ephraim** and all the house of **Israel**, his companions.'

[37:17](#) "Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand.

[37:18](#) "When the sons of your people speak to you saying, 'Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?'

[37:19](#) say to them, 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of **Ephraim**, and the tribes of **Israel**, his companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of **Judah**, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.'"

[37:20](#) "The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.

[37:21](#) "Say to them, 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Behold, I will take the sons of **Israel** from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;

- 37:22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of **Israel**; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.
- 37:23 “They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.
- 37:24 “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them.
- 37:25 “They will live on the land that I gave to **Jacob** My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever.
- 37:26 “I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever.
- 37:27 “My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.
- 37:28 “And the nations will know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies **Israel**, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.””