



THE DOWNRIVER DISCIPLES PROJECT

explores what the Bible says about the

TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

WHO ARE THE TWELVE SONS OF ISRAEL?

The Twelve Sons of Israel are the male children of Jacob, who was the son of Isaac and grandson of [Abraham](#) (1). The Israelites are descendants of these Twelve Sons of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel after wrestling all night with [God](#) (2). In Hebrew, the name "Israel" can be defined as "a man who wrestles with God" ([Genesis 32:22-31](#)).

By birth order, the Twelve Sons of Jacob/Israel and their respective mothers are listed in the chart below:

#	SON	MOTHER	SCRIPTURE
1	Reuben	Leah	Genesis 29:32
2	Simeon	Leah	Genesis 29:33
3	Levi	Leah	Genesis 29:34
4	Judah	Leah	Genesis 29:35
5	Dan	Bilhah/Rachel	Genesis 30:4-6
6	Naphtali	Bilhah/Rachel	Genesis 30:7-8
7	Gad	Zilpah/Leah	Genesis 30:10-11
8	Asher	Zilpah/Leah	Genesis 30:12-13
9	Issachar	Leah	Genesis 30:17-18
10	Zebulun	Leah	Genesis 30:19-20
11	Joseph	Rachel	Genesis 30:22-24
12	Benjamin	Rachel	Genesis 35:16-18

The Twelve Sons are also summarized in the following Bible verses: [Genesis 35:22-26](#), [Genesis 49:3-27](#), [Exodus 1:1-5](#) and [1 Chronicles 2:1-2](#).

www.downriverdisciples.com/twelve-tribes-of-israel

In [Genesis 35:11-12](#), God told Israel, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and [kings](#) (3) will be among your descendants. The [land](#) (4) I gave to Abraham ([Genesis 15:17-21](#)) and Isaac ([Genesis 26:1-6](#)), I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you."

WHO ARE THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL?

The Twelve Tribes of Israel are derived from the Twelve Sons of Israel, but differ in this manner:

- ◆ The Tribe of Levi was not enrolled in the Canaan land distribution, as God placed them in charge of the priestly duties ([Joshua 14:4](#)).
- ◆ The Tribe of Joseph was divided into the two tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim ([Joshua 14:4](#)).

CHART ONE: According to the land apportionment in Canaan, the Twelve Tribes of Israel are:

1	Reuben	7	Asher
2	Simeon	8	Issachar
3	Judah	9	Zebulun
4	Dan	10	Benjamin
5	Naphtali	11	Ephraim
6	Gad	12	Manasseh

CHART TWO: Others prefer the "traditional" alignment of the Tribes. This version includes the Levites and combines Ephraim with Manasseh under the Tribe of Joseph. Using this method, the Twelve Tribes of Israel are:

1	Reuben	7	Gad
2	Simeon	8	Asher
3	Levi	9	Issachar
4	Judah	10	Zebulun
5	Dan	11	Joseph ◆ Ephraim ◆ Manasseh
6	Naphtali	12	Benjamin

HOW BIG WERE THE TWELVE TRIBES?

In [Numbers 1](#), it is recorded that the Lord commanded a Census of the Twelve Tribes of Israel to take place. This was to include "all the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army" (not including women, children, elderly, infirmed, etc). Below are the Census results:

#	TRIBE	STRENGTH	BIBLE VERSE
1	Reuben	46,500	Numbers 1:20-21
2	Simeon	59,300	Numbers 1:22-23
3	Gad	45,650	Numbers 1:24-25
4	Judah	74,600	Numbers 1:26-27
5	Issachar	54,400	Numbers 1:28-29
6	Zebulun	57,400	Numbers 1:30-31
7	Ephraim	40,500	Numbers 1:32-33
8	Manasseh	32,200	Numbers 1:34-35
9	Benjamin	35,400	Numbers 1:36-37
10	Dan	62,700	Numbers 1:38-39
11	Asher	41,500	Numbers 1:40-41
12	Naphtali	41,500	Numbers 1:42-43
	TOTALS	603,550	Numbers 1:44-46

ARRANGEMENT OF THE TRIBES

The Lord said to [Moses](#) (5) and Aaron: “The Israelites are to camp around the tent of meeting some distance from it, each of them under their standard and holding the banners of their family” ([Numbers 2:1-2](#)).

#	CAMP	TRIBE	LEADER	DIR/ORDER	STRENGTH	VERSE
1	Judah	Judah	Nahshon	East	74,600	Numbers 2:3-4
2	Judah	Issachar	Nethanel	East	54,400	Numbers 2:5-6
3	Judah	Zebulun	Eliab	East	57,400	Numbers 2:7-8
-	JUDAH	MARCH	ORDER	FIRST	186,400	Numbers 2:9
4	Reuben	Reuben	Elizur	South	46,500	Numbers 2:10-11
5	Reuben	Simeon	Shelumiel	South	59,300	Numbers 2:12-13
6	Reuben	Gad	Eliasaph	South	45,650	Numbers 2:14-15
-	REUBEN	MARCH	ORDER	SECOND	151,450	Numbers 2:16
-	LEVITES	-	-	-	-	Numbers 2:17
7	Ephraim	Ephraim	Elishama	West	40,500	Numbers 2:18-19
8	Ephraim	Manasseh	Gamaliel	West	32,200	Numbers 2:20-21
9	Ephraim	Benjamin	Abidan	West	35,400	Numbers 2:22-23
-	EPHRAIM	MARCH	ORDER	THIRD	108,100	Numbers 2:24
10	Dan	Dan	Ahiezer	North	62,700	Numbers 2:25-26
11	Dan	Asher	Pagiel	North	41,500	Numbers 2:27-28
12	Dan	Naphtali	Ahira	North	53,400	Numbers 2:29-30
-	DAN	MARCH	ORDER	FOURTH	157,600	Numbers 2:31
-	-	-	TOTAL		603,550	Numbers 2:32

LET'S COUNT THEM AGAIN

In [Numbers 26](#), the Lord commanded a second Census of the Twelve Tribes of Israel to take place. Like the first Census in [Numbers 1](#), this was to include "all the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army" (not including women, children, elderly, infirmed, etc). Below are the results of the second Census:

#	TRIBE	STRENGTH	VERSE
1	Reuben	43,730	Numbers 26:5-7
2	Simeon	22,200	Numbers 26:12-14
3	Gad	40,500	Numbers 26:15-18
4	Judah	76,500	Numbers 26:19-22
5	Issachar	64,300	Numbers 26:23-25
6	Zebulun	60,500	Numbers 26:26-27
7	Manasseh	52,000	Numbers 26:29-34
8	Ephraim	32,500	Numbers 26:35-37
9	Benjamin	45,600	Numbers 26:38-41
10	Dan	64,400	Numbers 26:42-43
11	Asher	53,400	Numbers 26:44-47
12	Naphtali	45,400	Numbers 26:48-50
--	TOTALS	601,730	Numbers 26:51

In [Numbers 26:57-62](#), all Levites one month or older were counted. They numbered 23,000, but were not included with the other Israelites in the above chart because they received no inheritance among them.

To follow the Twelve Tribes of Israel as they prepare to take Canaan, consider exploring www.downriverdisciples.com/promised-land as well as the footnotes on the following page.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/father-of-many-nations>
- (2) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/image-of-god>
- (3) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/kings-of-israel-and-judah>
- (4) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/promised-land>
- (5) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/moses>