

Benjamin is a Ravenous Wolf, He Devours the Prey and Divides the Plunder

49: 27

DIG: Who was Benjamin's mother and why is that important? What happened to Benjamin when Joseph left the scene? What two tribes made up the southern kingdom of Judah? How do we know that Benjamin was favored from his allotment of land? What does the word ravenous mean and how does it apply to the Torah? Who were some famous Benjamites? Who was the famous Benjamite in the B'rit Chadashah and what did he have to give up to follow Jesus? Although the Benjamites were very courageous, where did their safety lay? How many sons of Jacob were lost?

REFLECT: Like Rabbi Sha'ul, do you have a zeal for what Yeshua has done in your life? Or are you hiding your **light under a bowl** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Df - You are the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World**)? What have you given up to follow the Messiah? What would you give up to follow Him? Just how far would you go to proclaim His name?

Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder (49:27).

In **Genesis 49** the patriarch **Jacob**, sensing his impending death, gathers his sons to his bedside to bless them. Each son became the progenitor of the twelve tribes of Isra'el. **Benjamin**, as the youngest, receives his father's blessing last. He was the second son of **Jacob's** favorite wife **Rachel** (see **Hg - Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel**), but she died in childbirth (see **Ij - The Birth of Benjamin and the Death of Rachel**).

As all his boys grew up, the fact that **Ya'akov** favored **Joseph** over all his other brothers made them so mad they wanted to kill him (excluding his full brother **Benjamin**). They didn't actually kill him, but they sold **Yosef** off to slave traders going down to Egypt. But they wanted **Jacob** to think **Joseph** was dead, and for all intents and purposes - he was dead to **Ya'**. As a result, **Binyamin**, named *the son of my right hand* or *son of my strength* (**35:18**), became the major focus of **Jacob's** life.

The fact that **Benjamin** would be seen as being special to **Jacob** is clearly seen in the territorial allotments. All of the tribes were given different territories. Eventually there were two main divisions of land. After the death of Solomon (**First Kings 11:41-43**), ten of the tribes ended up in what became known as the northern kingdom of Isra'el (**First Kings 12:1-20a**), and two of the tribes ended up in what became known as the southern kingdom of Judah (**First Kings 14:21**). The two tribes of Judah and **Benjamin** made up the Southern Kingdom, where Judah made up almost all of the land. But even though **Benjamin** was probably less than ten percent of the whole southern kingdom of Judah, it includes the most holy spot on planet earth - the sacred city of Yerushalayim.

Later, Moses prophesied about **Benjamin** saying: **Let the beloved of ADONAI rest secure in Him, for He shields him day after day, and the one the LORD loves rests between His shoulders (Deuteronomy 33:12)**. What an interesting way to put it. **Benjamin rests between the shoulders of God**. So in a metaphorical sense, Jerusalem lies between the Judean Mountains, or the shoulder blades of **God**. At the very center, or the very heart, if you will, of **HaShem**. **Benjamin** will have the place where **El Shaddai** dwells.

Benjamin is a ravenous wolf (49:27a). The word **ravenous** comes from the Hebrew *tref* or *trefah*, meaning *a wolf that tears apart his prey*. Sometimes *tref* is used in a generic sense. For example, there is *kosher* food, and anything else is *tref*. But the word *trefah* actually comes from the Hebrew word meaning *to tear*. In the Torah, if an animal, even a *kosher* animal, is *torn apart* and killed, it is *trefah*. In other words, there is no such thing as *kosher* road-kill even if it's a nice prime rib. It would not be prepared in a way that the Torah commands (**Leviticus 11:1-46; 17:1-16**), with the core thought being: **Be sure you do not eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat (Deuteronomy 12:23)**. That's why hunting is not normally a Jewish thing. When someone shoots their prey, it is *torn apart* and automatically becomes *unkosher*. In the TaNaKh, Jews would set a snare for a *kosher* animal and capture it. Then they could kill in the ritual way, by draining the **blood**.

So **Benjamin is a wolf who tears apart**, and there are some very interesting people from the tribe of **Benjamin** who fulfill **Jacob's** prophesy. One is **Ehud**, famous warrior and one of the judges (**Judges 3:15-30**). **Sha'ul** the first king of Isra'el was also a **Benjamite (First Samuel 9:1-2)**, and for better or worse, fulfilled this prophesy of **Jacob**. Saul's son **Jonathan**, a great warrior, **became one spirit with David (First Samuel 18:1)**. In addition, both **Mordecai** and **Esther** were from the tribe of **Benjamin (Esther 2:5-7)**. They were warriors of that generation whom **ADONAI** used to deliver Isra'el from her enemies like a **ravenous wolf (see Esther Bm - The Jews Struck Down All Their Enemies with the Sword, Killing and Destroying Them)**.

And in the B'rit Chadashah, Rabbi Sha'ul, an often overlooked son of **Benjamin (Roman 11:1)**, would later become known as the apostle **Sha'ul (Acts 9:1-18)**. In **Philippians** he gives a brief testimony of his ultra orthodox background. **Though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Isra'el, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the Torah, a Pharisee; as for zeal, and thinking that he was being faithful to God, persecuting the messianic community; as for righteousness based on legalism, not sinless, but blameless (Philippians 3:4-6)**. In other words, a zealot from the tribe of zealots; a warrior from the tribe of warriors. **But**, in the very next sentence he describes the consequences of his former life.

But the things that used to be advantages for me, I have come to consider a disadvantage because of the Messiah (Philippians 3:7 CJB). Normally what happens in these situations is that the Jewish community turns its back on you, your children will have nothing to do with you and your spouse divorces you. Not a pretty picture. In **First Corinthians 7**, Rabbi Sha'ul seems to talk about this. When the unbeliever leaves the believer, what can you do? Maybe this was part of his testimony. I'm sure that Mrs. Sha'ul, wife of an ultra Orthodox rabbi, wasn't too pleased with his revelation and probably couldn't go along with his change of theology. So it is as if he is saying, "Whatever the cost, I have put those things aside for my relationship with **the Meshiach**." **Jesus Himself** had said: **Anyone who loves their father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me (Matthew 10:37)**. Sha'ul understood this and gave up everything to follow **the Messiah**. And like a **ravenous wolf**, this **son of Benjamin** tore things up and turned things upside down for **Yeshua** in the first century. This seems like it was part of **Benjamin's** blessing.

The warlike nature of the small tribe of **Binyamin** became well known, as exhibited in **their** swordsmen. This tribe was so aggressive and successful that they would be able to share **their plunder** with the other tribes. This seems like a strange prophecy for a **son** whom **Jacob** especially loved, but it was both a promise and a warning. The tribe of **Benjamin** would be courageous and strong, successful in warfare, but at the same time it might become cruel and **ravenous**.

So it seems that **Benjamin's** tribe had its dark side. The warlike nature came out not only in defense of **his** country, but also in depravity within **his** country. In **Judges 19-21** **Benjamin** took up an offence against the other eleven tribes of Isra'el, and civil war ensued. This period had the reputation of everyone doing what was right in his own eyes (**Judges 21:25**). What led to this was the horrific abuse and death of an unnamed Levite's concubine

(Judges 19:10-28). The eleven tribes turned against the tribe of Benjamin and nearly annihilated them because of their refusal to give up the perpetrators (Judges 20:1 to 21:25).⁸⁰¹ Eventually they all restored Binyamin's tribe, greatly diminished due to the war, and the country reunited.

Although the Benjamites were very courageous, that was not where their safety lay. The prophecy of Moses shed some light on this. He prophesied: **Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in Him, for He shields him all day long, and the one ADONAI loves rests between His shoulders (Deuteronomy 33:12)**. This last phrase literally means *he rests on the Lord's back*. This pictures a Father carrying His beloved on His back, and therefore a beautiful metaphor for God's protective, fatherly care of Benjamin.⁸⁰²

In the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder (49:27b). Both attributes, devouring the prey and dividing the plunder, were later evident in the tribe. Although the smallest of the tribes, in the **near historical future**, they would become famous for their courage, fierceness and power. After the conquest of Canaan, they received the territory between the tribes of Ephraim and Judah. It has been a war-zone throughout Israel's history. The tribe of Benjamin themselves became known as a warrior tribe (Judges 5:14, 20:14-21; Second Samuel 2; First Chronicles 8:40 and 12; Second Chronicles 14:8, 17:7; Psalm 68:27).

In the **far eschatological future**, the tribe of Benjamin will have one portion in the messianic Kingdom, extending from the east side to the west side (Ezekiel 48:23). When you look at Jacob's family I think it would be fair to say that it was very dysfunctional, but even with all their problems, the sons of Isra'el believed in the God of Abraham and Isaac, and all fourteen sons are found in the millennial Kingdom (Ezekiel 47:13, 48:1-29). Not one was lost. Yeshua talked about eternal security for those who believe, trust and have faith in Him. He said: **My sheep hear My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand; I and the Father are one (John 10:27-30)**.