

Hope of Israel Ministries (Ecclesia of YEHOVAH):

Iceland: The Tribe of Benjamin

The Icelanders are the descendants of the Israelite tribe of Benjamin. The Icelanders are of Norse-Celtic ancestry, and are thus closely related to the peoples of the British Isles. In fact Iceland seems to be genetically as closely related to the United Kingdom as to Norway (88% Viking and 12% Germanic) and Denmark (60% Viking and 40% Germanic).

by Mikkel Stjernholm Kragh

YEHOVAH God's Protected Favourite

When Moses blessed the 12 tribes of Israel, we read:

"And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:12).

Iceland has thus not been invaded since the first Icelandic parliament (the Althing) was formed in 930 AD. The same can hardly be said of any other North-West European people!

YEHOVAH God offers protection and safety to Benjamin. In the Gospels and the book of Acts, the LORD protected his people from the onslaught of the Jews and Romans, especially in the siege of Jerusalem by the armies of Titus, as Jeremiah and the Messiah prophesied. But what of Dwelling "between his shoulders"? There is a double meaning. The **JFB Commentary** says, "that is, on his sides or borders." **The Pulpit Commentary** says, "to be carried on the back; (cf. 1Sam 17:6) and as a father might thus bear his child," The God of Israel is with Joseph and Benjamin. Psalm 80 says, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth....Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come *and* save us." (vv.1-2). Notice Benjamin is in the middle. Genesis 49 writes that Joseph is helped by YEHOVAH God and YEHOVAH dwells among them, "from thence *is* the shepherd, the stone of Israel:" (v. 24). Benjamin dwells between the shoulders of Joseph, Ephraim (Britain, Canada) and Manasseh (USA). His borders are protected by YEHOVAH God *through Joseph*. Benjamin is "carried on his back" like a father to a child. Today the Tribe of Benjamin is protected in the realm of the British, though distinct and separate are still

protected. Quebec throughout its history has been helped by Ephraimite Canada, and many of its Prime Ministers have been from Norman (Benjaminite) Quebec, hence ruling with YEHOVAH God!

The Smallest of the Tribes of Israel

After the 12th century B.C., the tribe of Benjamin was numerically the smallest of the tribes of Israel. The tribe's territory was also one of the smallest, but also one of the most important.

Likewise are the Icelanders one of the smallest North-West European peoples. They must, at least, be the smallest North-West European people with an independent country of their own. (The Faroe Islanders are numerically smaller, but do not have full independence.) With a population of only 332,529 and an area of 40,000 square miles, it is the most sparsely populated country in Europe.



Icelandic Men and Women of Different Origins

In 874 A.D. the Norwegian chief Ingolfur Arnarson was the first to settle permanently on Iceland. The later Norse settlers were primarily Norwegians, but there were also Danes, Swedes, and Norse-Gaels among them.

Geneticists from Oxford University have shown that the Icelanders, by and large, descend from Norse men and Celtic women. These geneticists write that,

”numerous slaves were captured by the Vikings in their raids on the coastlines of the British Isles, and many of the slaves were taken to Iceland. The majority of these slaves seem likely to have been female”.

According to the study, which was based on analysis of mitochondrial DNA, only 37% of the female settlers of Iceland originated from the Nordic countries but 62% from the British Isles. Mitochondrial DNA is only inherited from mother to child and therefore most Icelanders can trace the genotypes of their mitochondria the females, back to the settlers who came to Iceland in the ninth and tenth century. The genotypes of 467 Icelanders was compared to genotypes of 1019 people from Scotland and Ireland. The study was also aimed at retrieving knowledge on the origin of populations of other North Atlantic islands. The main results are that genotypes of Nordic origins have a frequency of 35% at Orkney islands but only 11% on Southern island and 12% on the Scottish island of Skye.

The first results from this study was published in ***American Journal of Human Genetics***. That article described research done on mitochondrial DNA which showed that more than half of the female settlers of Iceland had their ancestral roots in the British Isles.

The second milestone was later published in the same journal. The genotypes of male Y chromosomes were compared in Icelanders, Scandinavians and inhabitants of the British Isles. The Y chromosome only exists in males and therefore most Icelandic males can trace the ancestry of their Y chromosome genotypes back to the male founders. Those results showed that 80% of the male settlers originated from Norway and other Scandinavian countries, but only 19% to the British Isles.

The presence of Celtic stock among the first arrivals in Iceland is confirmed by numerous written references in both the ***Book of Settlements*** and the ***Book of Icelanders***. In the former is found a comprehensive list of 400 names, of which at least 60 are distinctly Celtic. Though Irish female slaves were undoubtedly among the entourage of the very first settlers, also included were Irish wives and servants acquired through decades of intermingling and intermarriage with the native Irish. Before these Norse Vikings even set sail for the north Atlantic, part of the Irish element among its number had already become largely integrated. With regard to the actual slaves, it seems likely that these were more numerous among the subsequent waves of settlers, as ever-increasing levels of manpower were needed for the settlement process. One of the most comprehensive works on the subject of the Irish in Iceland is ***Gaelic Influence in Iceland*** by Gísli Sigurdsson, who astutely surveys, assesses and places in context previous work in the area, combining it with his own perspective on the subject. Sigurdsson suggests that slaves may have comprised as much as 30–40% of the population (a conservative estimate largely borne out by scientific analysis). By the eleventh century slavery was on the decline, and it had all but ceased as a practice by the twelfth century, but not before bestowing on Iceland a rich and varied genetic heritage.

Benjamite Men and Women of Different Origins

Like the modern Icelanders, the tribe of Benjamin's men and women also descended from different tribes.

In the 12th century B.C., when the tribe of Benjamin was at war against the rest of the tribes of Israel, all the Benjamite women were killed, and only 600 Benjamite men survived (see Judges chapter 19-21). In order that the tribe of Benjamin would be able to survive, the 11 tribes fetched 400 young female virgins in Jabesh-Gilead, and let the Benjamite men take them for wives. Thus the tribe of Benjamin survived (see Judges chapter 21).

When the patriarch Israel blessed his 12 sons, he said of Benjamin:

”Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil” (Genesis 49:27).

This prophecy was both fulfilled in the tribe of Benjamin in the 12th century B.C., and

also in the formation of Icelandic people in the 10th century A.D., because they are one and the same tribe!

As early as the 13th century the Icelandic historian Snorre Sturlasson wrote in ***The Chronicle of the Kings of Norway*** (also called ***Heimskringla***) that the ancestors of the Norsemen had trekked to Scandinavia from the Caucasus region and “Turkland” south of the Caucasus under a chief called Odin.

When Rolf (Rollo) led his body of Vikings from Norway to the Outer Hebrides of Scotland and thence later to northern France, where they became known as Normans, his brother Jarl-Hrollang at that same time led another party of these same Vikings to Iceland and he with fellow Vikings became the founders of the Icelandic nation, and as the Benjamin element predominated in the Normans, the same is true of those who went to Iceland, for they were the very same race of people.

In Jewett’s work on ***The Normans***, the author, after describing the expedition of Rolf to the Scottish Hebrides and thence to France, and the emigration of his brother Turf-Emar and his Vikings to the Orkney Islands, says (pp. 32, 92):

“Rolf’s brother, who went to Iceland while Rolf came to Normandy...established in that storm-bound little country a nation of scholars and record-makers. This company came in time to be renowned as the beginners of one of the most remarkable republics the World has ever known, with a unique government by its aristocracy, and a natural development of literature unsurpassed in any day. There, where there were no foreign customs to influence or prevent, the Norse nature and genius had their perfect flowering.”

When those Vikings who had previously left Norway and settled in the Hebrides of Scotland heard of some of their brother Vikings settling in Iceland, many of them left the Scottish Isles and went to Iceland also. As it was also from these isles that Rolf and his Vikings sailed for that land which was afterwards called Normandy, the Hebrides of Scotland were therefore to a large extent a cradle of both the Norman and Icelandic peoples, hence a cradle of modern Benjamin.

As is well known, the bulk of the Normans crossed over to England at the time of William the Conqueror in the eleventh century. But on arrival in Britain the Normans did not settle down as a body or tribe in one particular district; they gradually scattered themselves over the British Isles, and became English, Scotch, Irish and Welsh. There is now no body of people known as Normans or even representing the Normans under any name whatever, for they have become entirely absorbed into the great British nation.

But in Iceland the matter is altogether different. The Vikings who settled there have not mixed with any other people, or been absorbed into any other race; and no other races have ever settled and remained in Iceland. The origin of the Icelandic people is indisputable, for as the well-known Icelander, Dr. Jon Stefansson says:

“We possess the records and genealogies of many hundreds of the most

prominent of these settlers, in the Book of Land-takes (Land-namabok). No other nation possesses so full and detailed records of its beginnings.”

Iceland is the most isolated country in Europe, and Icelandic intermarriages with other nationalities have been very rare. The present population of Iceland is almost exclusively Icelandic, the number of foreigners being exceedingly few. Consequently, the proportion of Benjamin blood in Icelanders to-day is as high as it was in the veins of the first settlers who came to the island more than a thousand years ago. Even those Vikings of Dacian descent who remained on the Norwegian coasts have now so intermarried with other people of Gothic origin that the Benjamin element can hardly be said to predominate. Iceland is therefore the only nation to-day who can be said to represent Benjamin.

After Iceland, the Benjamin element is next strongest in the population of the four small groups of islands between Iceland and Great Britain, viz., the Faroe Islands, and the Scottish Isles of Shetland, Orkney and Outer Hebrides, and these are doubtless included in the prophecy of Isaiah 24,14-16. These islands are like giant “stepping stones” between Iceland and Scotland and are a connecting link between the Icelanders and the British. It is worthy of note, too, that until comparatively recently (end of the 18th century) the language spoken in the outlying Scottish island of Foula was neither Gaelic nor English, but Norse, i.e., practically the same as the language of Iceland, which has remained almost unchanged for a thousand years. “Even today, where the Scots speech differs from ordinary English in the pronunciation of a word, it is identical with that of Icelandic” (***Chambers’ Encyclopaedia***). While Benjamite blood is thus by no means exclusively confined to Iceland, nevertheless, it is definitely strongest and purest there. Benjamin is therefore centered in Iceland.

The nation of Iceland is Benjamin in particular, although, of course, there is also a considerable Benjamite element in Norway, Scotland and central Canada.

Benjamin and Joseph

The patriarch Benjamin had only one full brother, Joseph. Their mother was Rachel. The other 10 patriarchs had the same father, but different mothers.

Those that study the tribes of Israel almost all agree that Great Britain is of Joseph, and of the Ephraim branch of Joseph in particular. (Ephraim was Joseph’s son.)

A Swiss DNA analysis institute which compares the DNA of modern indigenous European peoples with the DNA of antique people has shown that the United Kingdom is 75% Celtic, 13% Germanic^[1], and 12% Viking, while the Irish Republic is 88% Celtic and 12% Viking.

The Icelanders, who, as mentioned above, are of Norse-Celtic ancestry, are thus closely related to the peoples of the British Isles. In fact Iceland seems to be genetically as closely related to the United Kingdom as to Norway (88% Viking and 12% Germanic) and Denmark (60% Viking and 40% Germanic).

There has always been a strong relationship between the descendants of Benjamin and Joseph. This was first revealed in the story of Joseph. As the first son of Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel, Joseph was highly favored by Jacob, which caused jealousy and anger among Joseph's brothers. They captured him, put him in a pit, and sold him to slave traders, who took him to Egypt where he became the slave of Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. Through a series of adventures involving dreams, Joseph came to the attention of Pharaoh. By correctly interpreting the Pharaoh's dream of seven fat years of plenty followed by seven lean years of famine, Joseph rose to a place of great prominence in Egypt, that of vizier or prime minister.

Citizens of all the nearby countries came to Egypt to buy grain because the famine had struck them so sorely -- and the descendants of Abraham and Isaac were no exception. The ten sons of Jacob must have found it confusing and frightening to go into Egypt to buy grain so that the family could survive the drought. The streets teemed with people foreign to them. To make matters desperate, the stern, mighty Egyptian ruler who oversaw the distribution of grain suddenly accused them of being spies! They tried to tell the official that they were just shepherds from Canaan in need of food. Their confusion must have deepened when he asked about their family back in Canaan. Ultimately, one of the brothers, Simeon, was bound and placed in prison as a hostage until they returned with proof of their story. And what strange proof this man wanted! He demanded they bring their youngest brother down into Egypt.

As a result the other brothers, according to *The International Bible Commentary* by F. F. Bruce, p.142,

"...learned to feel a solicitude [carefulness] for Benjamin as a result of their unbrotherly attitudes and actions towards Joseph and their subsequent remorse. Benjamin became the protected son of Israel, and in prophecy we see this protection continuing into the end time, 'And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders (Deuteronomy 33:12)."

As the brothers discussed their predicament, they began to admit that their sin against Joseph was the reason for their dilemma. Of course, they had not recognized the Egyptian ruler as their brother, Joseph. It is a strange quirk in people that, when placed under severe stress, they begin to consider their sins and shortcomings. The sons of Jacob began to feel chastened.

Upon their return to Egypt, with Benjamin in tow, they were well-treated. Simeon was restored to them, and Joseph took them into his own house and fed them. Benjamin, however, received five times the food that the rest received. In addition, each brother was given a new garment, but Benjamin received three hundred pieces of silver and five new sets of clothing!

Genesis 45:1-2 reveals how Joseph really viewed his meeting with his brothers:

"Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, 'Make everyone go out from me!' So no one stood with

him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it."

And in verses 14-15, he expresses his feelings for Benjamin specifically: "Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him."

Just as Joseph yearned to see his younger brother and prepared a means of physical safety for him, the Messiah prepares a place for us in his Father's everlasting Kingdom. He longs to see us there, just as Joseph yearned for Benjamin. Undoubtedly, there will be tears of great joy when we are finally united with our Elder Brother and Savior.

Geography of Benjamin and Iceland

When the 12 tribes of Israel lived in the land of Israel, Benjamin's territory was around Jerusalem, which was the main city in Benjamin's territory. Benjamin shared borders with Ephraim, Dan, Judah, and Reuben.



Like Benjamin shared borders with Ephraim, so is one of Iceland's closest neighbors the United Kingdom, which is the tribe of Ephraim. Like Benjamin shared borders with Dan and Judah, so was Iceland a part of the Kingdom of Denmark between 1380 and 1944. Denmark consists of the tribe of Dan through the Danes, and the tribe of Judah through the Jutes.

Writes Adam Rutherford --

"Again when the Tribes were arranged round the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, Ephraim Benjamin and Manasseh formed a separate group, on the west side. Then in Psalm 80:2 these three tribes are again grouped, 'Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh' -- with Benjamin in the middle. Ephraim and Manasseh were the two most important and influential tribes

of Israel (as distinct from Judah). Britain and the U.S.A. are now the two greatest and most influential Israel nations, and Iceland (Benjamin) lies geographically within meridians between these two great nations. 'Benjamin' therefore is still between 'Ephraim' and 'Manasseh' -- between the two mighty 'shoulders' of modern Israel" (*Iceland's Great Inheritance*, footnote, p.37).

Stig Bergmann of Norway writes:

"Iceland is of the family of Benjamin. The name Iceland [Island] is derived from Is-aac, Is-ra-el. Iceland is the youngest of the nations of Europe. Benjamin, Gen. 49:27, was the youngest of Jacob's sons. The family of Benjamin had a wolf in its shield. Iceland's founder was also called 'wolf': Ing-wolf, Ing-ulf of Fjordane. The Vikings, the sea wolves, were of the family of Benjamin. They populated the Norwegian Westland, the Shetlands, the Orkney Islands, the Faroe Islands, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Hebrides (the Hebrews), Isle of Man, Iceland, Greenland and Vinland.

"The Galileans of Jesus' time were Benjamites, and they were the only of the tribes of Israel to meet Jesus alive. After Jesus' Ascension they had to leave the Jews and brought the Gospel with them to 'the North' and the other tribes. They were the last to arrive. They had their own dialect. That is why there today is a difference between the East Norwegian and West Norwegian languages. Isaiah 24:14-16 speaks of these islands. Snorre's *Royal Sagas* are the chronicle of the family of Benjamin" (Stig Bergmann: *Israelfolket*, p. 8 (2007)).

Benjamin and Dan

Not only were Benjamin and Dan neighboring tribes, but in the Biblical lists of the tribes there sometimes is a special connection between Benjamin and Dan. When the 12 tribes are listed in the Bible, the tribes which have a common mother are usually listed together, i.e. Joseph and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher, etc. But in some places Dan is mentioned together with Joseph and Benjamin. In Ezekiel's description of the gates of the New Jerusalem, there are three gates on the east side:

"and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan" (Ezekiel 48:32).

Here Gad, Asher, and Naphtali are listed separately (Ezekiel 48:34).

In 1st Chronicles, Dan is again listed along with Joseph and Benjamin, while Naphtali, Gad, and Asher are mentioned separately:

"These are the sons of Israel; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, Dan, Joseph, and Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher" (1 Chronicles 2:1-2).

This is another Biblical parallel to Iceland's special relationship with Denmark.

Adam Rutherford's Iceland Book

Adam Rutherford, a scholar on the tribes of Israel, wrote in May 1937 the book ***Iceland's Great Inheritance***, where he identified the Icelanders as the descendants of the tribe of Benjamin. By calculating "the seven times", Rutherford calculated that Iceland would gain complete independence around 1941.

The seven times are 2,520 years (7 x 360 years) where Israel, after having sinned, was liable to be oppressed by other nations. Rutherford counted 2,520 years from the fall of Jerusalem in 603 B.C., and arrived at 1918 A.D., and 2,520 years from the final deportation of Benjamin in 580 B.C., and arrived at 1941 A.D.

In 1918 Iceland gained independence within a personal union with Denmark.

Adam Rutherford wrote in his book from 1937:

"The black clouds of trouble are gathering fast over the nations of Continental Europe and Asia and it is but a short time till the terrible holocaust foretold will be precipitated, but Iceland will be 'the bright spot' on Earth, for the Creator has arranged for Iceland to be free from militarism and from religious controversies in order that this little nation may be a Christian example to the great nations of the World. Through the deliverance of Iceland the Almighty will demonstrate to the World His great love and care over a defenseless nation who worship Him in sincerity and truth" (Adam Rutherford: ***Iceland's Great Inheritance***, p. 13).

Some prophetic words from 1937! Note that Rutherford actually used the word "holocaust"!

When Germany occupied Denmark in 1940, the United Kingdom occupied Iceland. In 1941 the British forces were replaced by American troops, within an agreement with the Icelandic Home Rule. In 1944 Iceland completely seceded from Denmark and became an independent republic.

-- Edited by John D. Keyser.

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Footnote:

[1] iGENEA uses "Teutonic" and "Germanic tribesmen" interchangeably

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