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A STUDY ON THE GEMS OF GOD, And the Tribes they represent

Throughout the Bible, precious gems are used to represent and display the personality of God and reflect the multifaceted characteristics of His resplendent radiance and the brilliance of His glory. No created being can fully fathom, no aspect of God's creation can adequately reveal the greatness of God, and who He really is. If He could transmit into visible and audible language His unutterable love for the creatures He has made, we would be unable to contain it. And so, He displays in countless ways pieces of Himself for us to ponder, to delve deeply into, and to learn about Him, so that our minds can grow big enough to grasp at least a measure of the unfathomable mysteries of God. And as we do this, our joy and appreciation of Him, our capacity for knowing and returning love back to Him, and our continuing maturity of character development never ends.

So, as we begin this study about the jewels of God's kingdom of light and the twelve tribes of Israel they represent, may this be another pathway for learning about the nature and character of the God we love and serve – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This will not be an exhaustive study, but hopefully one that will perk your interest, and at least open the eyes of your heart to continue learning in this area which is not often made a matter of contemplation.

The first significant factor in this study on the Biblical meaning and use of precious jewels is that the holy city, the New Jerusalem, and the throne room of God are apparently made entirely of jewels and gold. No other building materials are mentioned. The second factor to contemplate is that this makes the holy city entirely fireproof, and impervious to destruction. No wonder the city and God's people within it will remain unharmed during the fires which will destroy the earth and the wicked at the end of the millennium. This is why we must be cleansed from every fragment of sin before Jesus comes in all His glory, for we cannot stand before a holy God with the defilement of sin still in our souls. We were created to be God's jewels! Now, while Jesus is still in the heavenly Sanctuary, is the time to permit Him to cleanse us, to polish and refine us; to cut and shape and mold and make us into gems that reflect His glory, so that with undimmed luster we will radiate the beauty of His character forever.

In this study we will examine the deeper meanings of the gems God chose to be placed upon the breastplate of the High Priest, which exemplify the unique characteristics of the twelve tribes of Israel. (Ex. 28:17-20). "The fact that each of the twelve tribes was represented by a gem of its own, different from the others, suggests that every individual Christian has his own distinct personality, his own beauty in Heaven's sight. God does not expect us to be alike. He honors us for what we are and what we can do for Him.... Each name on a separate jewel also suggests that God thinks of His people as distinct individuals, known, loved, and cared for by Him." 1 BC 648.

"In the breastplate of the High Priest there were many stones, but each stone had its special light, adding to the beauty of the whole. Every stone had its special significance, bearing its important message from God. So there are many minds, but one Mind. In the church there are many members, each having its peculiar characteristics, but they form one family." EW 378, 9.

"Well organized work must be done in the church, that its members may understand how to impart light to others and thus strengthen their own faith and increase their knowledge. As they impart that which they have received from God, they will be confirmed in the faith. A working church is a living church. We are built up as living stones, and every stone is to emit light. Every Christian is compared to a precious stone that catches the glory of God and reflects it." 6 T 435.

As we shall see, each beautiful gem reflects a side of God which He desires to display in the lives of His faithful children. Thus each gem displayed on the breastplate of the high priest represents one tribe of the twelve, who together make up the composite of the children of Israel. The Scriptures calls these twelve tribes God's "inheritance."

"When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He divided all mankind, He set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For the LORD's portion is His people, Jacob His allotted inheritance." Deut. 32:8, 9.

Just as Jesus ran the gamut of human experience and overcame in all things common to man, so the family of Jacob apparently represent all of mankind, and thus they set the tone for the whole human race. This is why all who accept Jesus as their personal Savior become spiritual Jews (Gal. 3:6-9; 26-29; Rom. 9:6-8), and why the remnant of God's people are said to be members of the twelve victorious tribes which are listed in Rev. 7:4-8.

"God selected these twelve sons of Jacob because their hereditary dispositions and personality development together formed a microcosm of all humanity. They represent every kind of person who has ever lived." Leslie Hardinge, With Jesus in His Sanctuary, p. 298.

Now we will study the twelve tribes of Israel, and their specific gem as displayed upon the breastplate of the high priest.

Gem #1 – Ruby

Color: Deep red. From Heb. “edem” – from which “Adam” is derived, which means to show blood (in the face), flush or turn rosy.

Meaning: Flame; striking fire from a metal forged; sparkling. To transmit light, to pervade and hence to glow; a glowing ember. When held against the sun has an appearance like a burning coal. From a root word meaning, to turn; an angle (of a street or wall).

Tribe – Judah

Meaning: Praised or celebrated, especially directed toward God. From a root word meaning “an open hand,” indicating power, means, direction, etc.; also, to use the hand(s), especially to revere or worship.

Work - Bearing with the sins and weaknesses of others, and allowing them to see what Jesus can do in persons whose lives are cleansed, washed and saved by the blood of Jesus. Interceding for others, even those who sin against us. Service through sacrifice; being open, honest and humble, willing to be a servant-leader, using God’s gifts to bless and help those around us.

The tribe of Judah is distinguished by its leadership in the family of God. The name means, “Praise,” and reflects the attitude of Leah when she gave birth to this, her fourth son. Even his name reflects the outward and upward focus of Leah at the time of Judah’s birth, instead of selfishly desiring to capture the love of Jacob away from her sister, Rachel.

Judah had his share of weaknesses, as we all do. But as an overcomer, he transcended those weaknesses and became the progenitor of Christ, and of all the kings of Israel. His main strength was displayed when he interceded for the life of Benjamin in Egypt, volunteering to take his place and let him go free. In this sense, he was taking the sin of all the brothers upon himself, and standing in for them. This was a type of Christ, who takes our place before the accusations of the evil one, and before the watching universe, sets us free to go back to our Father’s house.

To be in the tribe of Judah means to bare one's soul and live life openly and sacrificially for others. It means to walk before God in humility, acknowledging one's weaknesses, but leaning upon the arm of His strength. It means being close to Jesus and washed by His blood, transformed by association with Him and learning to go through pain without giving up the faith, and allowing others to see what can take place as we allow Him to teach us His way. By these experiences is learned the price which our salvation has cost the King of heaven, and we bow humbly before Him, casting our crowns at His feet, and using the wisdom we have learned through these experiences to serve others and bring them, also, to the foot of the cross where the ruby-red blood flows to wash away the sins of all humanity.

The members of the tribe of Judah have a need for shepherding others – a flock to tend, and a place to work for Jesus. They are self-effacing, and can suffer from having a low opinion of themselves. They tend to feel invisible in a group, but they shine when sharing their faith, and lose their self-consciousness in an outward focus and a task to do for God in service for Him and others.

Inspirational texts:

“Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. You are a lion's cub, O Judah;... The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until He come to whom it belongs.... He will wash His garments in wine, His robes in the blood of grapes.” Gen. 49:8-11. (See Isa. 63:1-6).

“And this he said about Judah: ‘Hear, O Lord, the cry of Judah: bring him to his people. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh, be his help against his foes!’” Deut. 33:7. “Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.... He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. After the suffering of His soul, He will see the result of His suffering and be satisfied (NIV mg.); by His knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give Him a portion among the great, and He will divide the spoils with the strong, because He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” Isa. 53:4-12.

“As one with us, He must bear the burden of our guilt and woe. The Sinless One must feel the shame of sin. The peace-lover must dwell with strife, the truth must abide with falsehood, purity with vileness. Every sin, every discord, every defiling lust that transgression had brought, was torture to His spirit.” DA 111.

“From Judah will come the cornerstone, from him the tent peg, from him the battle bow, from him every ruler. Together they will be like mighty men.... Because the Lord is with them, they will fight and overthrow the horsemen. I will strengthen the house of Judah.” Zech. 10:4-6.

“See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed.... Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.... And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy...because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.... Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!’ Rev. 5:5-12.

Gemstone Texts:

“Blessed is the man who finds wisdom – the man who gains understanding. For she is more... precious than rubies. Nothing you desire can compare with her.” Pr 3:13-15.
“Lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel.” Pr. 20:15.

“A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life... She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue (on her tongue is the law of kindness – KJV).” Pr. 31:10-12, 26.

“I will make your battlements (Strong’s – home, sanctuary, dwelling, fortress, family line, etc.) of rubies.” Isa. 54:12.

Conclusion: The root word for ruby is the same as that of Adam, and also Edom (compare with Isa 63:1-6). It means to flush or be filled with blood. This, no doubt, comes from the creation of Adam, when at first he was formed out of the clay of earth, and was as pale as death. But when God breathed into him the breath of life, blood flowed through his body, and the rosy glow of life pulsed through him. So, when we are dead in trespasses and sins, we need the life of God to flow through us, creating within us spiritual life. God has designated the tribe of Judah, as leaders in the tribes of Israel, to be a type of firstfruits, representing the second Adam, Christ, who came to rectify

what the first Adam did by his failure to be obedient to his high calling as the ruler of this earth. By their example, the tribe of Judah is to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and exemplify His life of self-sacrifice and servant-leadership. Like Jesus, the Lamb of God, the tribe of Judah will share their leadership gifts by enabling others to become leaders in their own right (Rev. 5:9, 10), thus glorifying God by restoring the purpose of the entire human race to have dominion over the earth from which they were created.

As the members of the spiritual tribe of Judah triumph over their sinful tendencies and weaknesses through the blood of Jesus, they will become the leaders God designed they should be, able to share the wisdom they have learned, and setting an example which will bring the message of salvation to their children and family members, as well as to the whole family of God.

Gem #2 – Topaz

Color: Yellow or greenish-gold; olive; transparent – a yellow variety of sapphire.

Meaning: To shimmer, as oil; utility or useability; to furnish what is needed.

Tribe – Issachar

Meaning: He will bring a reward; from two words, meaning, “to lift:” – accept, advance, arise, bear up, bring forth, carry, furnish, give, help, hold up, honorable; and, payment (of a contract): - salary, fare, maintenance; compensation, benefit:- hire, price, reward, wages, worth.

Work – To display the faithfulness of God in carrying burdens without complaining, criticizing, or grumbling. Serving with a cheerful spirit, faithful to duty, helping to lift the load of others around them. Facilitating wherever needed, enabling others in the family of God to do their tasks and fulfill their calling in ways that would be difficult or even impossible without the help of the members of the tribe of Issachar.

This tribe distinguishes itself by faithful performance of duties that are a blessing and help to all around them. Whether the task is spiritual, mental or physical, they can be counted on to do the job well, and with a good spirit. When Jacob placed blessings upon his sons, he describes Issachar’s character as being likened to a strong, lean-boned donkey who crouches down between two burdens, or as the Strong’s concordance puts it, two “sheepfolds.” (Gen. 49:14). As their name indicates, they lift the burdens of everyday life, in the home, in the church, and at the workplace. Because they are able to provide such a variety of services, it is tempting to load too much on their shoulders.

But in the family of God, all must bear their share of burdens. All must contribute their abilities and gifts, each interacting with the others around them, for the smooth running of the “wheels within wheels” that we find in Ezekiel 1:16, where we see the activities of heaven described.

In his blessing upon Issachar, Jacob goes on to say, “When he sees how good is his resting place and how pleasant is his land, he will bend his shoulder to the burden and submit to forced labor (NIV), or tribute (KJV). In the Strong’s concordance, this word means: a burdensome task almost causing one to faint, or waste away with fatigue, fear, grief or discouragement. This graphically describes the dedication of the tribe of Issachar, and their determination to carry out a task that is given to them.

An example of their willingness to help is found in Judges 5:15. “The princes of Issachar were with Deborah; yes, Issachar was with Barak, rushing after him into the valley.” In the list of the members of the tribe of Issachar found in 1 Chron. 7:2-4, many are identified as “fighting men ready for battle, for they had many wives and children.” So we can see that the men of Issachar were family men, willing to give their lives for the protection of those whose safety resided in their care.

Where do the members of the tribe of Issachar find the stamina and dedication to carry out this kind of service? The gem in the breastplate of the High Priest gives us the answer to that query. The topaz is golden yellow or olive colored, which is the color of the oil which feeds the lampstands in the Sanctuary. As David says many times in Psalms, only God can be our help and strength and enable us to fulfill the calling of service for Him.

Texts of Inspiration -

“Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.” Ps. 54:4.

“I lift up my eyes to the hills--where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.” Ps. 121:1, 2.

“May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May He send you help from the Sanctuary and grant you support from Zion.” Ps. 20:1, 2.

Conclusion: The golden color of the topaz on the breastplate of our heavenly High Priest as he stands before the radiant glory of God, reminds us that our lives are as

jewels, created to shine with the reflection of the golden light from the throne of God in steady, unobstructed selfless service for Him and for others. Truly, the rewards we receive from our labors in the Master's vineyard are worth far beyond anything we may have sacrificed. Walking with Him in this life, and living with Him throughout eternity makes the price of heaven cheap enough, no matter what our trials here may be.

And our Savior has walked the pathway before us, smoothing the way for our feet, and carrying the heaviest part of the load. How can we complain, when our lives are illuminated and cheered by His presence, and the cup He holds to our lips is sweetened by His own precious blood? Let us go on with lighter steps, running the race that is set before us with perseverance, for we know that our light affliction here yields an abundant harvest in the eternity beyond.

Gem #3 – Beryl

Color: Green, or bluish green; the emerald is a type of beryl.

Meaning: To lighten; lightening, gleam, flashing sword, bright, glitter.

Tribe – Zebulun

Meaning: (Strong's) - Habitation; to inclose, reside, dwell with. (NIV) - Princely mansion; lofty, or magnificent dwelling;- heavens, lofty throne. From root word meaning: To honor; exalt; lift up or carry an object, especially bringing presents.

Work – To inspire, organize, and mobilize the body of Christ to carry the gospel message to the community and to the world. To recognize and channel the existing spiritual gifts of the church into action, and to gather the materials necessary to accomplish the task. To coordinate the various activities and diversities of personalities into a functioning army of soul winners who know not only the doctrines, but have been introduced to a personal God who loves them and longs for a loving fellowship with them.

When Leah gave birth to Zebulun, she said, "God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor." Gen. 30:20. Later, his father said of him, "Zebulun will live by the seashore and become a haven for ships; his border will extend toward Sidon." Gen. 49:13. Sidon is a Phoenician port city on the Mediterranean Sea, which marked the northern limit of Canaan. The Sidonian divinities included Baal and Ashtoreth, which infiltrated into God's people and were worshipped in Israel in the period of the kings. (8 BC 1012 1013.)

When Moses blessed the people before his death on Mount Nebo, he placed Zebulun and Issachar together in that order, even though Zebulun was the younger of the last two sons of Leah.

“About Zebulun he said: ‘Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and you, Issachar, in your tents. They will summon peoples to the mountain and there offer sacrifices of righteousness; they will feast on the abundance of the seas, on the treasures hidden in the sand.’” Deut. 33:18, 19.

Zebulun is also mentioned by Deborah as fearless warriors who fought valiantly in the battle with Jabin, a Canaanite king: “The people of Zebulun risked their very lives...on the heights of the field.” Judges 5:18. Their military prowess is also noted in 1 Chron. 12:33: “Men of Zebulun, experienced soldiers prepared for battle with every type of weapon, to help David with undivided loyalty.”

All these Scriptural references indicate that Zebulun was a tribe of strong, dedicated warriors, unafraid to face the foe, and zealous for the cause of God and the honor of His name. The fact that they were noted for bringing their own weapons indicates that they were unselfish, and willing to expend themselves and their resources whenever the need arose.

What a wonderful asset to the church of God are these type of people, for they are willing to take on a task and see it through until victory and success is realized. Of course, they make strong leaders, for their zeal and enthusiasm is contagious, and their cheerfulness, energy, and buoyancy encourages the lagging spirits of others. They have drive and direction, and are bubbling with ideas, which they immediately put into action. No wonder their gemstone is described as bright and gleaming, like a flashing sword.

But they are deeply committed to spiritual goals, as well. They feel driven to bring people to “the mountain of the Lord’s house” (Isa. 2:2), and to a knowledge of Him. The gift of evangelism is a high priority to those in this tribe, and they are unfulfilled if they cannot be sharing their faith with others. They want to go where the people are, evaluate their needs, and connect them with truth. And they instinctively assume leadership of others to accomplish this goal, mobilizing the church for action, and inspiring the body of Christ to let their light shine for the Lord. As such, the tribe of Zebulun represents the part of God that works tirelessly to seek and to save the lost, regardless of the cost. It is the side of God that inspires His church for action, and calls them into specific ministry for Him. It is God manifested in the person of His Son, willing to expose Himself and His throne to the scrutiny of the universe so that all creation can

see that His ways, His laws and His character are perfect, just and good, and that His zeal is a manifestation of His love, exercised to protect, guard and guide His people into paths of safety.

Texts of Inspiration:

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over His kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.” Isa. 9:6, 7.

“Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The Zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.” Isa. 37:31, 32.

“The Lord will march out like a mighty man, like a warrior He will stir up His zeal; with a shout He will raise the battle cry and will triumph over His enemies.” Isa. 42:13.

“I endure scorn for your sake, and shame covers my face. I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother’s sons; for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.” Ps. 69:7-9.

When Jesus cleansed the temple of money changers and sellers of sacrificial animals, “His disciples remembered that it is written: ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’” John 2:17.

While the Israelites were staying in Shittim and the men of Israel began to indulge in sexual immorality with the Moabite women, Phinehas, son of Eleazar the High Priest, took a spear and drove it through an Israelite man and a Moabite woman who were indulging right before the eyes of Moses and the whole assembly. Then:

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for my honor among them, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them. Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him. He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites.’” Num. 25:11-13.

Conclusion: The tribe of Zebulun has the wonderful privilege of modeling the zeal of God for the honor of His name, and for the propagation of His truth to the world as they use their gifts of leadership to help the body of Christ mobilize for action in the cause of God.

Gem # 4 – Turquoise

Color: Sky blue or greenish blue.

Meaning: Sky blue represents the canopy over the earth which reminds us of God's loving protection. Green reminds us that those who are actuated by the Spirit of Christ are always productive, fruit-bearing, and growing in the Lord.

"He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul." Ps. 23:2, 3.

"The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green." Ps. 92:12-14.

"The righteous will flourish like a green leaf." Pr. 11:28.

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." Jer. 17:7, 8.

"I am like a green pine tree; your fruitfulness comes from me." Hos. 14:9.

Tribe – Reuben

Meaning: To see joyfully a son, or builder of the family.

When Leah saw her first-born, she was delighted, for she saw in him one who would build up the family. She felt that she would be important in the eyes of her husband as one who could produce children for him, and sons to help him carry the burdens and labor of the family responsibilities. Perhaps Jacob felt the same way as he looked upon the innocent face of his first son, for he mentioned this in his blessing upon Reuben at the end of his life. "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power." Gen. 49:3. But because of

Reuben's indiscretion with Bilhah (Gen. 49:4), his father predicted, through the inspiration of the Spirit of God, that the tribe of Reuben would be characterized by instability.

In spite of this weakness, this tribe will represent a whole group of those who overcome by the blood of Jesus, and become all that they were meant to be. Perhaps Jacob was disappointed in the life record of his first son, but God's love encompasses the weaknesses of every human being, for He knows that we are dust, and He makes

provision for our infirmities by the sacrifice of His Son to redeem us back from the enemy of our souls.

Work – Because Reuben was displaced in the family lineage and inheritance, and did not receive the birthright of the firstborn, this tribe is more sympathetic and understanding of others who feel a loss of their place in the family, on the job, in society or groups, etc. Reubenites champion the unappreciated, the lonely, the cast out, the struggling ones. What a wonderful trait of character to have, and to use for the glory of God and the blessing of those who need their help!

Members of this tribe are especially sensitive to the needs of family members, and want to be protective and helpful. This extends itself to the church family, as well. They are zealous to maintain the rights of others, and to watch for those who are about to slip out the back door because of disaffection or discouragement. They have a dogged determination to see that others have the proper opportunities and tools to fulfill their calling, and to know, understand, and follow the pathway that God has marked out for them. They have special gifts of insight which help others see better ways of using their particular gifts and talents. Their leadership gifts inspire, enable, and equip the body of Christ to actively pursue the individual and collective goals of the group or church to which they belong.

In addition to these gifts, Reubenites have cheerful, bright personalities, making them a pleasure to have in any group. They are gifted and creative, and add sparkle to the conversation. They respond best to gentle encouragement, and need to be appreciated for their gifts and input. Give them a place to shine, a place to share their unique gifts and abilities, and their contribution will prove to be a blessing to all.

Texts of Inspiration:

“You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised.” Heb. 10:34-36.

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” Prov. 31:8, 9.

“To the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, ‘Remember the command that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you: “The Lord your

God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.” Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, fully armed, must cross over ahead of your brothers. You are to help your brothers until the Lord gives them rest, as He has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them.” Josh. 12-15.

“Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh and said to them, ‘You have done all that Moses...commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded....You have not deserted your brothers but have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you. Now...return to your homes in the land that Moses...gave you on the other side of the Jordan.’” Josh. 22:1-4.

Conclusion: Because of the instable feelings of Leah’s while the baby was still in the womb, she passed on this characteristic to Rueben. When Jacob blessed his sons before his death, we see his evaluation of Rueben as: “Unstable as water, you will not excel.” Gen. 49:4. In the uncleansed Reubenite, this instability is manifested as an inability to utilize their gifts to the maximum of their potential, and this weakness often shows up in unfinished projects, unfulfilled aspirations, and a lack of “stick-to-it-iveness” to persevere through apparent impossibilities. But when this weakness is cleansed through a connection with Jesus, the tribe of Reuben is gifted with leadership and valor, which inspires and enables others to see and utilize their gifts more vigorously for the cause of God. They are a blessing in the family for their sparkle and cheerfulness, their insights and creative suggestions, and their willingness to help wherever the need arises. Their caring and understanding is comforting and healing, and their counsel and companionship is to be valued and appreciated. As Moses said in his blessings upon the tribes of Israel: “Let Reuben live and not die, nor his men be few.”

Gem # 5 – Sapphire

Color: Deep Blue

Meaning: Used for scratching; to score with a mark, record, inscribe, declare, show, speak, talk, write. The sapphire was said to be the foundation stone of the throne of God: “Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under His feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire (Strong’s #68), clear as the sky itself.” Ex. 24:9, 10. “Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was figure like that of a man.” Eze. 1:26. “I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of sapphire above the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim.” Eze. 10:1.

It appears that the two tablets upon which God wrote the ten commandments were also of sapphire, for it is the same Hebrew word which is used here for the foundation of the

throne of God. “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Chisel out two stone (#68) tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.’” Ex. 34:1. This would be consistent with the meaning of the word, sapphire – “to scratch, score, mark, record, inscribe, write,” etc.

What is the significance of this for the tribe of Simeon, whose name this stone represents? It would certainly indicate that they have a very high calling to have the law of God inscribed upon the tablets of their hearts, and God’s throne established in the citadel of their minds, so that their lives would be a symbol of the victory over the flesh which God desires to give to every son and daughter of Adam. This is further revealed in the deep blue color of the sapphire, which is a symbol of obedience to the law of God. The beauty of such a life is a reflection of the light of God’s throne shining through them, sharing the peace and joy which obedience brings.

Tribe – Simeon

Meaning: Strong’s - To hear intelligently (often with the implication of attention, obedience, etc.; causing to tell, etc.): - attentively, carefully, certainly, consent, consider, be content, declare, diligently, discern, give ear, listen, be obedient, perceive, proclaim, publish, report, shew forth, tell, understand, witness.

NIV – “He has heard, or obedient one.” (Plus all of the above meanings.)

When Leah named her son Simeon, she exclaimed, “Because the Lord heard that I am not loved, He gave me this one too.” Gen. 29:33. In Proverbs 30:20, 23, we read: “Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up:”, one of which is “an unloved woman who is married.” Certainly the state of affairs in the household of Jacob was too heavy for a child to bear, as his mother expressed her extreme sorrow for the situation in which she found herself. Even while Simeon was in the womb, he no doubt bore her grief, heard her weeping, shared her sorrow and perhaps her anger. This caused him to also be unusually sensitive to personal pain and rejection, and he later coped with his feelings through anger and striking back. But his sensitivity also created within him a high discernment level, and this sense of discernment became, in the hands of his heavenly Father, a source of his sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and an intense desire to make wrong things right and use his high gifts of leadership to reconcile others to God.

Work – Although the history of the tribe of Simeon is sordid with examples of the unrighteous anger and unbridled lust which nearly brought about their decimation, they are among those who are accounted worthy to have a place in the kingdom of heaven, and in the twelve tribes that make up the 144,000 (Rev. 7:7). All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and He understands why each person has the peculiar problems which mark their character. In the case of Simeon, his very first beginnings in the womb give the clue to his frustration, anger, and lustfulness.

His mother, Leah, felt unloved and unappreciated by her husband, and she passed on those feelings to her second son, Simeon. Thus from the womb, he felt unaccepted by his father, and took out his feelings on others around him. His anger was all about making things right that he perceived to be unfair or wrong; his lust was an attempt to achieve intimacy and acceptance in licentious ways. Biblical examples are: the slaughter of the Shechemites, led by Simeon and Levi (Gen. 34:30); in extra-biblical Jewish writings, it is Simeon and Levi who plot to destroy Joseph, and Simeon who binds him before he was lowered into the pit. He was, no doubt, driven by his jealousy of the favorite son of his father, Jacob. Then we cannot ignore that a Simeonite, “Zimri son of Salu, the leader of a Simeonite family,(Num. 25:14), was slain publically for his open sin with a Midianite woman in the devastating apostasy at Baal of Peor.

But what does all this have to do with work? The answer is, that every wrong trait of character can be turned around for good under the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, anger, when cleansed and turned around for God, can become zeal for righteousness and for God’s cause. A person with such holy zeal can be a fearless warrior for God and for His truth. When humbled by seeing his own weaknesses and need of God’s grace, such a person can see the sins of others with compassion and longsuffering, and make a valiant witness for the love and mercy of a God who forgives all types of sin, and rescues everyone who is willing to come to Him for a cleansed and changed life.

Even God’s disciplinary measures are given to bring about the righteous character that can receive the rewards of holy living and productive lives. In the case of the Simeonites, their lack of a tribal inheritance of their own (Gen. 49:7), forced them to live among the other tribes, mainly in the territory of the tribe of Judah (Josh.19:1, 9), and to help care for and rear the children of the other tribes. Humbling though this may have been, it must have helped them develop the characteristics of patience, faithfulness, purity, and affection that is needed to work successfully with children. This kind of service encouraged an outward focus, and interactions with others which would help the Simeonites to learn new skills in positive relationships. In this way, the curse worked out blessings for all concerned. Thus the Simeonites could be overcomers in the family of God, and be prepared for larger duties and greater responsibilities which would allow them use their high gifts of discernment and leadership to become valiant defenders of truth in the family of God.

Texts of Inspiration

“You, O LORD, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Turn to me and have mercy on me: grant your strength to your servant and save the son of your maidservant.” Ps. 86:15, 16.

“Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion....

“The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.... He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on His children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust....

“But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD’s love is with those who fear Him, and His righteousness with their children’s children—with those who keep His covenant and remember to obey His precepts.” Ps. 103:2-18.

Conclusion: Although the tribe of Simeon ended up being the smallest of all the tribes, and was scattered among the children of Israel, God has given this tribe some of His most precious qualities. A converted Simeon is an all-or-nothing worker for God, ardent in devotion, terrible in wrath, reflecting the character of God in maintaining His law and defending His territory and His people with unmitigated energy, decisiveness and exactness. Simeons have good leadership qualities, but do not generally aspire to leadership positions. They are sociable, but also need time alone for projects and personal study. In the softer side of their natures they are good with children, maintaining discipline and order, while giving love and nurturing. The church of God is blessed when having the ministry of God-fearing Simeons.

Gem # 6 – Sardonyx

Color: A layer of red quartz over a layer of white quartz. Often has a black or dark blue ground forming the base. They appear as a mass of varicolored stratified quartz. This gem is formed by water saturating the parent rocks containing the solutions which later crystallize into these gems. The crystals were deposited, layer upon layer, yet remain discretely separate.

Meaning: The word “sardonyx” comes from a root word meaning: to strike down, stamp, conquer, disband: - beat down, break down, overcome, smite (Str. 1986, Heb.); hardness or callousness (4457, Gr.) It seems significant that the gem chosen to represent the tribe of Gad is formed in much the same way as the tribe itself -- varicolored layers formed over time, representing the stages of character development during the childhood of individuals who make up this tribe. Whatever the parents are going through, children receive the mold of character from these experiences. Only God

can change these childhood impressions, once they are formed and hardened into the persons that we become.

Tribe – Gad

Meaning: Fortune: -- a troop (Strong's – 1408); from a root meaning “to crowd upon, attack, invade, overcome.” (Strong's – 1464.) Interestingly, a form of this word is found in the word “Armageddon,” which is a combination of two Hebrew words: 2022 = “har” – a mountain or range of hills, and 4023 = “megiddow” – rendezvous – which is taken from 1413 – “gadad,” meaning “to crowd, gash assemble (by troops), gather (together in troops).”

We can only conjecture what Leah might have had in mind when she named this son of her maidservant, Zilpah, “Gad.” Perhaps her only thought was to express her feelings of good fortune at the birth of this fifth son into her household. But as we look back at the history of this tribe, we can see that the name was prophetic of his characteristics and the future of the tribe itself. In order to understand this tribe better, we will need to add the inspired prophecy of Jacob as he blessed his sons on his deathbed. Of Gad, he said, “A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last.” Gen. 49:19. This would indicate that at the beginning of his life, Gad would be overcome by the weaknesses in his character which he had allowed to rule him, but in the end he would reconsider his waywardness and the price he had paid by not following the path of virtue, and be an overcomer by the blood of the Lamb.

Another point to consider in understanding the weakness of the tribe of Gad is their desire to seek for fortune in a worldly sense, rather in the spiritual fortunes of the righteous. While money itself is not a sin, making it the object of life is sinful, and leads to a self-centered existence. Those who place the seeking after money and fortune first in their lives are sure to founder on the shoals of worldly living, and be overcome by sinful indulgences of one kind or another.

But fortunately for Gad, the prophecy ends on a positive note: “He shall overcome at the last.” What a blessing it is to know that there is hope for everyone who will come to Jesus for healing from sin of every hue. To the weary soul, weighted down with the burden of sin and perhaps of a wasted life, Jesus says: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matt. 11:28-30.

Work – These strong people have great potential for good or evil. Born leaders, they will lead, either for God or against Him. The varied colors of their character have formed over time, and will take time to come under the cleansing grace of the blood of Christ. But once dedicated to Him, they are determined workers for God, immovable and unafraid to stand up for Jesus and witness for Him regardless of the consequences to themselves. As such, they are valiant soldiers for Christ and represent Him by their bold stand for truth.

Moses' evaluation of the tribe of Gad in his farewell address to the nation is quite descriptive: "Blessed is he who enlarges Gad's domain! Gad lives there like a lion, tearing at arm or head. He chose the best land for himself; the leader's portion was kept for him. When the heads of the people assembled, he carried out the Lord's righteous will, and his judgments concerning Israel." Deut. 33:20, 21. Perhaps Moses was thinking here of the request of the Gadites, along with the tribe of Rueben and the half-tribe of Manasseh, to claim the rich pasture land on the east side of the Jordan. (See Num. 32.) At that time, Moses consented on the basis that they help the other tribes conquer their inheritances before going back and settling down in their own cities. This they faithfully did, and without complaint carried out Moses' commission to them (Josh. 22:1-4).

Significantly, Elijah is the major example in the Bible of a Spirit-filled Gadite, and he performed valiantly for His God. As a reward for his service, Elijah became one of the two who were translated from this earth without seeing death. And there will be 12,000 members of the spiritual tribe of Gad who will be translated at the end of time, victorious at last over the sins of the flesh and the ravages of the evil one.

Texts of Inspiration

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 Jno. 1:9.

"Come now, and let us reason together:... though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. 1:18.

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away." Hos. 14:4.

"They cried to God in the battle, and He was entreated of them; because they put their trust in Him." 1 Chron. 5:20.

"The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?... Take off his filthy clothes.' Then he said to Joshua, 'See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.'

Then....the angel of the Lord gave this charge to Joshua: 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: "If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here....In that day each of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig tree, declares the Lord Almighty.'" Zech. 3:2-10.

"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty." Zech. 4:6.

Conclusion: The tribe of Gad distinguishes itself by being strong and mighty warriors. They are defenders of territory, whether spiritual or physical. They are sensitive to boundaries, whether their own, or that of others for whom they feel responsible. They make valiant and brave workers for God when converted and dedicated to His cause. They are generally well liked, and respected for their friendliness and leadership qualities. When unconverted, they are driven to acquisitions and money, and prone to worldliness. But when the love and mercy of God captures their hearts, they become faithful and true leaders for Him.

Gem # 7 – Zircon or Jacinth

Color: Multicolored, especially blue. May be pale yellow or flame colored; transparent like pure honey shining through gold. A most brilliant gem. Might contain clouds which make the stone look as if filled with its own dust. Zircons may be carefully heated to clear their discolorations of internal imperfections completely, and then polished to resemble diamonds. A jacinth is a type of zircon, and is deep blue in color. It is the eleventh stone listed in the foundation of the New Jerusalem.

Meaning: Originally, this stone represented the tribe of Ephraim, the second son of Joseph, who was chosen by Jacob to receive the birthright blessing (Gen. 48:14-19). Accordingly, the tribe of Ephraim became prosperous and numerous, and blessed with the double portion of Jacob's blessings, which were given to Joseph, his favorite son. But Ephraim's character did not measure up to the virtuous life of his father, Joseph, and eventually he became worldly, and lacked spiritual values. The book of Hosea is written mainly to the tribe of Ephraim, to plead with them to come back to God and leave their worldly pursuits, but this miraculous change did not happen, and they lost their status as spiritual leaders in the Israelite nation. Eventually God pronounces the sad judgment, "Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone." Hos. 4:17. Consequently we see in the roster of the 144,000, that the name of Ephraim is omitted, and the name of Joseph takes its place. So from here on in our study, the name and tribe of Joseph will be inserted in place of the tribe of Ephraim.

It is interesting to note that the zircon is of many colors, as was Joseph's now- infamous coat which caused his brothers to be so jealous of him. The coat of many colors was given to him to signify that he was the chosen leader among his brothers, preferred by his father above the other sons. I believe it has a deeper significance spiritually, in that "many colors" could represent the rainbow around God's throne, and perhaps also the many colors and gems that composed Lucifer's covering before he fell (Eze. 28:13). It would seem that the many-colored coat was meant to exemplify, as it did with Lucifer, that all the varied colors of the best characteristics of all the tribes were found in one person – namely Joseph – thus testifying of Jacob's preference of him above all the others.

But fortunately, God is no respecter of persons, and has no special favorites. He sees beauty in each person, and everyone, because of sin, must be purified to allow the luster of the character of Christ – who is the only One in the universe who perfectly represents all the varied colors of the character of God – to shine through.

It is also interesting to note that the zircon can be purified until it resembles a diamond in clarity and brilliance. Before that, it may have "certain clouds which make the stone look as if filled with its own dust." Likewise, Joseph's character was exemplary, even as a young man. But God allowed him to be purified by the years of trial in Egypt before he was ready to be used to purge all the brothers of their childhood jealousies and sins against one another. How wise is our God in dealing with our infirmities!

Tribe – Joseph

Meaning: When Rachel produced her first-born son, she named him Joseph, which means: let Him add; adding; to continue, come more, conceive again, get more, increase. Obviously Rachel was delighted in at last having a son of her very own, and she looked forward to having other sons in the future, now that God had opened her womb. She must have thought that the years of her barrenness were over, and that her future would be filled with many more little ones. So "she named him Joseph, and said, 'May the Lord add to me another son.'" Gen. 30:24.

Actually, God did answer that prayer, for another son was given to Rachel just before her death during childbirth. But her dreams of a large family were cut short, and the sadness that descended over Jacob at that time never was completely lifted, for the pain in his heart from the death of his beloved wife, Rachel, was never fully healed (Gen. 48:7).

Why did God allow this tragedy to come into the life of Jacob, His chosen servant? We know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). What good could come to Joseph and Benjamin

as a result of the death of their mother? While it is not recorded in Scripture just why God permitted Rachel's death, we do have some clues that can help discover some possibilities.

It is God's purpose to root out of every family the inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil that are like dry rot in the foundation of a building. If unchecked, it will sooner or later bring the whole building down. In the family of Jacob, there was a major thread of lying that needed to be cleansed. Joseph was chosen not only by his father, but by God as well, to be a part of this cleansing. Had Rachel been allowed to live, she might have passed on this tendency to her children, as well as to increase the feud between the two sisters and their families, now that Rachel was also bearing children.

That the sin of lying was in Rachel's character was made obvious when she lied to her father about his family gods (Gen. 31:35); and this was after the birth of Joseph. While it is true that Leah started out in the marriage by subterfuge, to my knowledge no other sins of prevarication are recorded against her. Perhaps the fact that God permitted her to eventually become the head wife and mother may indicate that her character was more worthy and capable of holding firm to godly virtues than was Rachel's. At any rate, Rachel was permitted to be laid away, and the dynamics of the family of Jacob changed forever.

Now Joseph was no longer the oldest son of the favored wife; he was now the youngest son of the clan, and no matter how Jacob might try to exalt him to the top of the family chain, he was not so regarded by the older sons. It is often recognized that in many ways, Joseph was a type of Christ, as savior of his family. And even here, the analogy holds, for Jesus also was the youngest son of a family of older sons who did not look very kindly upon him, and often made His life difficult. And eventually, because of his virtuous example and connection with his father, an attempt was made upon his life by the hands of his own brothers, just as Jesus was killed for similar reasons by His own people.

Finally, after years of preparation, Joseph becomes ruler of all Egypt, under Pharaoh. Then the saga of the brothers begins. Each one is tested to see if character development has taken place. Is there now love and respect where there was once jealousy and hate? Is there remorse for sin where there was once pride and a haughty spirit? Is there truthfulness where there was once dissimulation? After the tests are over and the brothers have proved themselves worthy, Joseph reveals himself, and healing takes place after years of suffering and remorse. Would that every family story would turn out in so positive a manner! But then, each of us can be a type of "Joseph," and be a bridge across troubled waters for the healing of our families!

Work – The tribe of Joseph is obviously gifted in leadership, administration, and money management.

His father's parting blessing bequeaths these things to him: "Joseph is a fruitful vine...near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall. With bitterness archers attacked him;...But his bow remained steady...because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob,..because of your father's God who helps you, because of the Almighty, who blesses you with blessings of the heavens above, blessings of the deep that lies below, blessings of the breast and womb....Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers." Gen. 49:22-26.

Moses also is lavish in his praise and blessings upon the tribe of Joseph: "Let the Lord bless his land with the precious dew from heaven above and with the deep waters that lie below; with the best the sun brings forth and the finest the moon can yield; with the choicest gifts of the ancient mountains and the fruitfulness of the everlasting hills; with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favor of Him who dwelt in the burning bush. Let all theses rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers.

"In majesty he is like a firstborn bull; his horns are the horns of a wild ox. With them he will gore the nations, even those at the ends of the earth. Such are the ten thousands of Ephraim; such are the thousands of Manasseh." Deut. 33:13-17.

Blessed as they are with so many gifts, members of the tribe of Joseph tend to excel in whatever they choose to do. They are generally professionals, and are respected for their abilities and intelligence. They are steady and dependable, faithful to their marriage partners, their families, and their God. They project a calm appearance and demeanor, and are trusted by those who know them. Their only weakness seems to be an affinity toward being caught up by beliefs that are highly intellectual, but stray from the solid ground of truth. But a close relationship with Jesus, and a humble attitude toward the special gifts they have received from God, will prevent this from happening, and will allow God to use them in mighty ways for His glory.

Texts of Inspiration:

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers." Ps. 1:1-3.

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, O Lord; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.” Ps. 119:9-16.

Conclusion: The tribe of Joseph is especially blessed in many ways with high intelligence, leadership, and professional qualities. Satan will try to abort these gifts for his own advantage, through pride and self-sufficiency. But as long as a person of high gifts looks to Jesus for his or her Guide and inspiration, the evil one will not be able to lure the humble, trusting child of God into unsafe paths. Then there will be no danger of such a one being deceived and leading others astray. Instead, the life will be an example of the life of Jesus, and will shine brilliantly for Him in the darkness of the closing hours of earth’s history.

Gem # 8 – Agate

Color: Gray-blue, with a white belt around it like marble. Also: Bands or layers of various colors blended together, the base being chalcedony mixed with jasper, amethyst, quartz opal, etc.

Meaning: Subdivision into flashes or streamers, meaning to flame. Like the tribe of Joseph, the stone representing the tribe of his son, Manasseh, is mixed with various colors. But the construction and colors are more subdued and blended. This corresponds with the characteristics of the tribe itself, which never obtained the flashy brightness of his younger brother, Ephraim, or the high giftedness of his father, Joseph. But he received the stable and dependable character and financial acumen of Joseph, as well as the moral virtues and loyal nature.

Tribe – Manasseh

Meaning: “One that makes to forget.” (NIV Concord.). When Joseph named his firstborn, he said, “It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.” Gen. 41:51. When he named his second son, Ephraim, he said, “It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.” V. 52. Although we know very little about the childhood of these boys, these words of the father, and the characteristics of the sons, give us some clues about the difference in the two sons and their tribes.

It would seem that Joseph's feelings for his firstborn are more tender and bonding, in helping him to forget all his troubles, and all his father's household. That is an all-encompassing statement, and invests a lot of emotional attachment into this child. Therefore, Manasseh could assimilate the good qualities of his father, such as stability, calmness, emotional security, industriousness, etc. We can just imagine him going with his father as much as possible in his work, learning from him, becoming much like his father, and each enjoying the other's companionship.

On the other hand, Joseph's words about Ephraim have more of an emphasis on fruitfulness, or success. Perhaps this indicates that Joseph's relationship with his second son was more mixed with enjoying the good things inherent with being the son of the highest ruler in the land of Egypt, under Pharaoh, and therefore developing an affinity for the wealthy lifestyle he enjoyed as a child.

Whether these observations are true or not, we cannot prove. But the history of the tribes thereafter gives evidence that these traits of character, learned in childhood, followed them until the end of time, for Ephraim is not in the roster of the 144,000, but Manasseh will be numbered among the overcomers.

Work – Manasseh is like a deep well, quiet and unassuming, but whose steadiness and reliability exemplify their firm devotion and reliance upon God for the success of their endeavors. Not possessing the flashiness of the younger brother, they make up their value by their loyalty and genuine concern for others, quietly ministering and giving of themselves and their resources without attempting to gain recognition by their endeavors. Careful with money, and frugal with their resources, they are successful and unselfish stewards of the gifts God has given them, to bless those around them who need their help.

If they have a weakness, it would be in their intolerance of people whom they see as being lazy, unproductive or spendthrifts. Manassehs are generally respectful of their fathers, and try to emulate them and often look up to them, and thus are also respectful of God and other authorities. If they are unable to do this, they can harbor resentment toward those in authority who are perceived to be unworthy of the positions of leadership which they hold.

Texts of Inspiration:

“The Lord loves the just and will not forsake His faithful ones. They will be protected forever....The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever.” Ps. 37:28, 29.

“Let those who love the Lord hate evil, for He guards the lives of His faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.” Ps. 97:10.

“He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty. A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.” Pr. 28:19, 20.

Conclusion: When Jacob gave his blessing to Ephraim and Manasseh, he said, “The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads” (Gen. 48:16). This blessing was prized by Manasseh and his descendants. “Although they lived at a distance from the center of the nation, and from the temple, and though they had become a part of the northern kingdom, yet they took an interest in all the reforms instituted by the good kings of Judah....Little is recorded of the tribe of Manasseh after the settlement in Canaan, but it is gratifying, that faint and scattered as the passages are that refer to that tribe, they all indicate a desire on the part of many to serve the Lord....Gideon, the greatest of the judges, was of the tribe of Manasseh.” (Excerpts taken from *The Cross and its Shadow*, by S.N. Haskell.)

Although members of the tribe of Manasseh may feel that theirs is a less flashy tribe than some of the others, yet their bedrock character and dependable, loyal, and faithful nature makes them a vital part of the whole family of God, and an honor to the efficacy of the blood of Jesus, which cleanses us from all iniquity and sin.

Gem # 9 – Amethyst

Color: Crystalline quartz of a purple color; wine-colored. Often crystallizes in hexagon prisms, with several shades of purple along its length. May show faults, cloudiness, feathers, cracks, and patchiness within the stone.

Meaning: This stone represents a tribe whose latent greatness and royal destiny is often hidden by visible defects of character which hamper their growth and development in fulfilling the blue print of leadership which God has invested in them. But through the trials that God sends them to reveal their defects, the kingly gifts emerge and they take their place as strong leaders in the family of God, powerful in the Word, unflinching in their stand for truth, highly discerning in perceiving error, and bold in defending the cause of God. Their love for God becomes outward-focused as they take responsibility as shepherds of the flock.

Tribe – Benjamin

Meaning: Benjamin’s first nine months of existence in his mother’s womb gave him a solid undergirding and strong identity from which he could draw for the rest of his life. During Rachel’s pregnancy with Benjamin, she was filled with a new sense of hope and

confidence in her ability to produce more children. She saw the child she was carrying to be a promise for her future as a mother in Israel, and a tangible evidence of the removal of the curse of childlessness which had grieved her for so long.

But as she lay dying from the trauma of Benjamin's birth, Rachel expressed her disappointment and sorrow by naming her son, "Ben-Oni." The Hebrew word, Ben, means, "a son, as builder of the family name; to begin to build, obtain children, make repair." The word, Oni, accurately reflects her grief that her dreams would be unrealized, for Oni means, "to exert oneself in vain; to come to naught, nothingness, trouble, affliction, sorrow, unjust."

Jacob, realizing that this name would follow him and color his future throughout life, quickly renamed him Benjamin, which means, "Son of my right hand." Surely God inspired this change of identity for him, reemphasizing the purpose of his conception to be a prince and leader in Israel. But many years would go by before this calling would be realized. God's plan for his life would lead through much tribulation for his refinement. There were weaknesses, both inherited and cultivated, which must be rooted out in order for the tribe bearing his name to be registered among the overcomers in God's book of life.

How Jacob must have doted on this little son of Rachel! But Jacob's love for Benjamin could not completely wipe away the effects of his mother's death. Forever he would live with the knowledge that it was his birth that caused this tragic loss to his family. An adored companion for Jacob, and a loving and devoted mother for Joseph and Benjamin, was gone forever. And her death marked the beginning of long years of family problems and strife, culminating in the disappearance of Joseph at the hands of his jealous older brothers.

Then, there were the personal family dynamics that changed after his mother's death. Although Benjamin held a special place in his father's heart, yet as the youngest child in the family, he was obliged to be under the authority of Jacob's three remaining wives, and to the influence of their sons. The Scriptures make no comment about the feelings of the family members toward Benjamin; but it would not be unreasonable to assume that the jealousy the older brothers manifested toward Joseph may have spilled over to Benjamin as well. Without his mother to protect him, he must learn to fend for himself within the family structure.

Growing up with the reality that his birth had caused his mother's death, coupled with the undercurrent of hostile feelings from his half- brothers, no doubt made the task of

formulating a positive identity for his life quite challenging. But God in His wisdom had provided for Benjamin through his mother a deep inner strength which would enable him to rise above adversity, and become a victor in the end.

In looking back from the vantage point of history, it seems that Rachel's death may have been permitted by God to stop the advancement of the pride and sense of triumph which she felt over Leah in bearing children. This tendency in Rachel is expressed at the birth of her maidservant, Bilhah's, son, Naphtali, as she says: "I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won." Gen. 30:8. This characteristic was evidently passed on to Benjamin, for in Jacob's last blessing upon his sons, he says, "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder." Gen. 49:27. Rachel's determination to conquer and rise above her sister's success in bearing children was passed on to Benjamin as an unrelenting drive to overcome perceived obstacles or personal challenges at any cost to himself or others.

While this can be a very good aspect of character in the person who is controlled by the Holy Spirit, it can be a serious defect when driven by the lusts of the flesh. Therefore, the humbling position Benjamin had to maintain in his family was undoubtedly beneficial for his own salvation in helping him overcome pride and arrogance toward others.

There were other character defects which were passed on to Benjamin, as well. It was Rachel who first offered her maid to Jacob. It was Rachel who stole her father's gods, hid them in her tent, and then lie about their whereabouts. This last act was done after the birth of Joseph, and before Benjamin's conception. These weaknesses brought about a lowered concept of the sanctity of marital purity in their home, and revealed a lack of understanding and respect for the holiness of God's laws. When these weaknesses combined with Benjamin's lack of mothering, and his unfulfilled need for intimacy, his descendants evidently inherited strong sensual drives that were later displayed in a very sad story which is recorded in Judges, chapters 19 – 21. This tragic incident resulted in the other 11 tribes nearly decimating the tribe of Benjamin.

Why did God allow the Israelite armies to go to war with the tribe of Benjamin? It seems that this tribe had deteriorated morally to the place where sexual impurity and criminal behavior was openly practiced without restraint. Such a condition could not be tolerated, for sin is like a cancer which spreads throughout the body if not checked in time. God saw great potential in this important tribe, and in His infinite wisdom He allowed the moral evil of sodomy and corruption to be excised in the early stages of their history. This humbling experience was needed to get the Benjamites back on track with God.

Except for this one serious departure from the plan of God, the tribe of Benjamin is spoken well of in the Bible. Some beautiful promises are scattered throughout Scripture which give glimpses of the favor of God for this tribe. Moses, in his final blessing upon the children of Israel, says of Benjamin: "Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in Him, for He shields him all day long, and the one the Lord loves rests between His shoulders." Deut. 33:12. This beautiful promise reflects God's compassion and tender mercies for Benjamin, and is a precious promise of God's healing for the little boy who had lost his mother and perhaps many times dreamed of what it would have been like to rest secure in his mother's protective and loving arms. For all those who have been wounded by the loss or inadequacies of parental relationships for any reason, this is a wonderful promise of the perfect parenting available through the unfailing love and wisdom of our Heavenly Father!

"Hear my voice when I call, O Lord; be merciful to me and answer me....Do not hide your face from me;..Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me. Teach me your way, O Lord; lead me in a straight path." Ps. 27:7-11.

As the years went by, the tribe of Benjamin assumed a position of leadership among the tribes. Although comparatively few in number, their inherent gifts blended well with the larger tribe of Judah, and eventually these two tribes were the remaining ones who comprised the faithful remnant. Just as the original Judah was given the care of Benjamin when going down to Egypt to visit Joseph, so in the end, the two tribes joined as one. David mentions this as he describes the procession of God's people into the sanctuary: "There is the little tribe of Benjamin, leading them, there the great throng of Judah's princes." Ps. 68:27.

Who could have imagined that as the ten tribes of Israel drifted into apostasy, the little tribe of Benjamin would remain true to God and stand beside the princely tribe of Judah and become what is now known as the kingdom of Judah! This is why we must never judge others from outward appearances, or even from serious weaknesses and sinful tendencies. We cannot see the future of any man, woman, or child as God can. Only He can judge accurately, for He knows what He can do if we but respond to His love and saving grace!

Work –

What can be learned from the history of Benjamin that will provide insights for those who comprise this spiritual tribe? Benjamins can display some very headstrong characteristics at times, and a pride of opinion which may lead to a disregard for the feelings of others. They are outspoken, and will vigorously defend their position with unerring accuracy and lawyer-like precision. This trait of character may have developed as a result of being the youngest in a large, boisterous family where his opinions were

not valued as highly as those of his older brothers. Consequently, his high discernment and leadership gifts may have found little place for expression. But as water becomes more powerful when flowing through a restricted area, so, strong drives restricted can provide the motivation for greater and more powerful achievements. To keep this power from being destructive, God has given Benjamin a Scriptural prescription for success and healing. Found in Obadiah verse 19, we read these four significant words: "Benjamin will possess Gilead."

In the hill country of Gilead, which is located on the east side of the Jordan within the territories allotted to the tribes of Gad and Manasseh, is an area where mulberry, or balsam trees grow which produce aromatic exudates used for medicinal purposes. The prophet Jeremiah refers to this healing balm as he cries out to God for his people, who have come under judgment for their sins.

"Since my people are crushed, I am crushed; I mourn, and horror grips me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?" Jer. 8:21, 22. Obviously, Jeremiah is speaking not of physical wounds, but of the need for emotional and spiritual healing during a time of great sorrow and distress.

Webster's Dictionary defines balsam as: "Any healing or soothing agent or agency; as the balsam of tender words." Such healing is needed to a greater or lesser degree by everyone, for we all have times of sorrow and distress; and at such times we need the prayers and words of encouragement from those who love us and reach out to touch our lives in positive ways. The kindness of others can be like a healing balm to the suffering of our souls. Even Jesus sought comfort and understanding from His disciples during His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In Psalms 84:4-7, we read: "Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca (weeping), they make it a place of springs....They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion."

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word for "Baca," is the same word which is also translated "Mulberry," or "balsam." The difference, then, in those who go through trials with a positive outlook is that by praising God and encouraging one another, they make their time of suffering "a place of springs," and "they go from strength to strength." Praise and trust in God can turn the darkest experience into a high point in our spiritual life. Then we won't be tempted to take our frustrations out on other people. Instead, we

can pass on to them the blessings we receive in our walk with Jesus. We, too, like Benjamin, can “possess Gilead,” and share the healing we receive from its balm with other fellow travelers on the journey to heaven.

There is one more significant area in the life of Benjamin which we should address in order to round out our understanding of him as an individual. A boy growing up without adequate mothering finds that his attitudes, emotional reactions and ways of coping in female relationships reflect the attitudes he learned in his growing-up years. Having been deprived of the deep emotional bonding he needed in childhood, he will seek for such attachments in adulthood.

Thus, in relationships with women, Benjamites are ardent, sensitive, caring and loyal. But if repulsed, they are easily wounded and find it hard to re-bond and reestablish trust. Like the original Benjamin, they have learned that significant female relationships may fail you, which makes trust difficult. As a way of coping they may distance themselves and seem unavailable, which can make it difficult to build a stable, emotionally safe environment for a life-partner. But their need for companionship and bonding is great, and when controlled by the grace of God, they can provide strong leadership for their families without losing the precious gifts of tenderness and compassion, which makes a safe place for their wife and children to flourish.

Texts of Inspiration

“To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Cor. 12:7-10.

“Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.” 2 Tim. 2:23-26.

“But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of

many witnesses.... I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Tim. 6:11-14.

Conclusion: For one who is a Benjamite, the watchword is complete surrender to God, and humility toward others, learning to put the needs of others before oneself. Follow the example of Paul, the most notable Benjamite in the Bible, in ardent service for God, proclaiming the gospel of Christ fearlessly, yet maintaining Christlike love and empathy for all, as a faithful under-shepherd of the flock of Christ. Though Paul was possibly the greatest apostle in the New Testament, he humbly referred to himself as "the chief of sinners," for he was ever mindful of the life he had lived before his conversion. To further keep him humble, God allowed him to have a chronic affliction. Yet no one was more influential in building up of the body of Christ than was this famous member of the tribe of Benjamin, the apostle Paul. Three other notable Benjamites in the Bible were King Saul, Mordecai, and Esther. With the exception of King Saul, these Benjamite heroes are worthy of our emulation!

Gem # 10 – Chrysolite

Color: Gold, varying from yellow to olive green.

Meaning: Lofty; craggy rock, a fortress--a ragged stone, stronghold. Rock of the Divisions (Strong's Conc.) To destroy, shatter; to be crushed, shattered, destroyed (NIV).

The tribe of Dan, the first son of Rachel's handmaid, Bilhah, fell because of their strong tendencies toward judgmentalism. This no doubt comes from Rachel's attitude at his birth, when she said, "God has vindicated me." As a result, he became vindictive in nature, and failed to overcome this character defect. Jacob said of Dan at the time of his farewell blessings, "Dan will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider tumbles backward." Gen. 49:16, 17.

Jeremiah refers to this trait again in Jer. 8:15-17: "We hoped for peace but no good has come, for a time of healing, but there was only terror. The snorting of the enemy's horses is heard from Dan; at the neighing of their stallions the whole land trembles. They have come to devour the land and everything in it, the city and all who live there. 'See, I will send venomous snakes among you, vipers that be charmed, and they will bite you,' declares the Lord."

David defines this trait as verbal warfare and attacks: "Rescue me, O Lord, from evil men; protect me from men of violence, who devise evil plans in their hearts and stir up

war every day. They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent's; the poison of vipers is on their lips." Ps. 40:1-3.

God is very much against criticizing and attacking others, because it is the trait of the old serpent, the devil, who is the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10). So while Dan was given the good gift of being able to judge fairly and provide justice in Israel, he apparently did not seek the Lord's guidance in using this gift appropriately, and thus lost his position among the tribes, as is apparent in the roster of the 144,000, where Dan is missing, and the tribe of Levi takes his place.

So from this point, we will consider the chrysolite stone as representing the tribe of Levi.

Tribe – Levi

Meaning: Heb. - To be joined, attached, bound to. Gr. – Wild cow, or person pledged for a debt or vow.

The first three sons of Jacob and Leah – Rueben, Simeon and Levi – were born during the early years of their marriage, when the sting of Leah's deception was still rankling in Jacob's mind and affecting his ability and desire to be bonded to her, and probably to some extent to her sons. Therefore, the names of each of these three sons, and their character development, are deeply affected by the longing Leah had to be accepted by her husband. With Rueben, she still had hope; with Simeon she felt unloved; but with Levi, she regained courage that her husband would at last become attached to her. It is interesting to note that the name "Levi" in Greek means "Wild cow," which in Hebrew is the meaning of the name, "Leah." And so it became, for the attachment Leah desired from her husband, actually became the attachment of this third son to herself.

It has been my observation over the years, that members of the spiritual tribe of Levi (and I am one of these), have a strong bond with their mothers, but generally not with their fathers. While this may not be true in every case, it has been my experience, and those with whom I am acquainted. To some extent, this seems often true of those of the tribe of Simeon. So let's go to Scripture to see why this might be true.

One important reason might be that while Leah was pregnant with Levi, her thought focus must have been the need for Jacob to become attached to her. It was rather a self-focus, although understandable.

So the child within her was being programmed to be attached to his mother because of her need which was transmitted to him. She might also have been thinking of how unfair

her plight seemed, and longing for vindication and justice to be done for her, since she had now produced three children, and Rachel had produced none. Similarly, her thoughts while carrying Simeon were self-focused – “I am unloved.” So these two boys were very much alike in character, and became cohorts in evil later on in their lives.

They became angry, vindictive, sensitive to unfairness or wrong as they perceived it. This was especially played out in their dealings with the men of Shechem after the violation of their sister, Dinah. These traits also displayed themselves in the leadership role they played in abduction of Joseph. These are the major acts which caused Jacob to virtually disown them in a sense when he blessed his sons before his death. Note these statements, which were spoken to both Simeon and Levi:

“Simeon and Levi are brothers—their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men kin their anger and hamstrung oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel.” Gen. 49:6, 7.

Can you imagine being Simeon and Levi, listening to the good things said about the other sons, and being the only ones who received no commendation from their father, and virtually being disowned by him just before he died? What a legacy to receive and pass on their progeny!

But fortunately, God did not forsake them; and while they received no specific inheritance of land in Israel, they were accepted and provided for because of their ministry to the other tribes. Simeonites became caretakers of children, and Levites of the Sanctuary.

What did the Levites do to receive the distinction of priests? That story goes back, of course, to the performance of the Levites at the crisis of the golden calf at the base of Mt. Sinai. Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were of the tribe of Levi, and thus were already the designated leaders of the Israelites in their journey from Egypt to Canaan. But the whole tribe of Levi responded to the challenge given by Moses to join him in cleansing the camp of the evil resulting from the worship of the golden calf.

“Whoever is for the Lord, come to me.’ And all the Levites rallied to him....The Levites did as Moses commanded....Then Moses said, ‘You have been set apart to the Lord,..and He has blessed you this day.’ Ex. 32:26-29.

As a result of their faithfulness, the tribe of Levi became the spiritual leaders of the whole Israelite nation, and their attachment to their mothers and desire to protect and

vindicate her rights were transferred to God and became the core of their desire to be attached to God and defend His character and His law. What a wonderful God we have, that He can take our weaknesses and make them strengths when they are dedicated to Him!

Work –

The Scriptures are full of the designated work of the priests and Levites, and I am not going to go deeply into this subject, since this is not the purpose of this study. In brief, there were various levels of duties which were well defined. The priests were chosen from the lineage of Aaron, and performed only the priestly duties in the Sanctuary. The rest of the Levites performed other tasks which were needed in the care and functioning of the Sanctuary services, such as assisting the priests in the court, assembling and disassembling the Sanctuary, general caretaking of the Sanctuary, etc. The priests also acted as judges in Israel, and were in charge of the six cities of refuge, which were scattered throughout the nation. So from a position of severe discipline and almost rejection, the Levites rose to become leaders in Israel, and protectors of the sacred law of God, and His place of worship. This should encourage all who feel that their lives have been less than exemplary to strive for excellence in God's service, and to realize that God accepts our repentance and our efforts to please and honor Him.

Texts of Inspiration

“About Levi he said: “Your Thummim and Urim belong to the man you favored. You tested him at Massah; you contended with him at the waters of Meribah. He said of His father and mother, ‘I have no regard for them.’ He did not recognize his brothers or acknowledge his own children, but he watched over your word and guarded your covenant. He teaches your precepts to Jacob and your law to Israel....Bless all his skills, O Lord, and be pleased with the work of his hands. Smite the loins of those who rise up against him; strike his foes till they rise no more.” Deut. 33:8-11.

“My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin. For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction—because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty.” Mal. 2:5-7.

Conclusion:

Members of the tribe of Levi, the once-rejected son, under the training of the Holy Spirit become respected leaders in Israel. It is a success story each of us should desire to

emulate. And so we can through our connection with Jesus, who restores us to the blueprint plan He has for each one who comes to Him for healing from the wounds sin has made. Members of this tribe are especially devoted to spiritual things, have a love for the study of the Sanctuary, and are aware of an internal calling to work for God, sometimes early in their lives. Their greatest weakness is anger toward those they perceive to be in the wrong, and a desire to vindicate their position. Before conversion they can be worldly and ruthless, but after conversion they feel their calling deep within to work in some capacity for God, and they surface as spiritual leaders in one way or another. They feel called to study deeply into the Word of God and discover gems of truth for themselves and others. They have high spiritual discernment, and a sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures and in their hearts. Thus, their spiritual calling is felt by those around them, and people seek them out for counsel. It is imperative for members of this tribe to maintain humility and connection with Jesus to avoid spiritual pride and disdain for those whom they feel are unspiritual, or wrong in their conclusions about spiritual things. Through humble, loving service for others, members of this tribe can do a great work for God.

Gem # 11 – Onyx

Color: Red, Brown, or yellow ground covered by white veins, sometimes stripes, spots, or eyes. A type of sardonyx. The snowy onyx bears the name of Asher. Meaning: The Onyx is the stone directed by God to be upon the shoulder pieces of the ephod worn by the High Priest. On these stones were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel – six on one stone, and six on the other. These were written as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. Each successive High Priest beginning with Aaron was to “bear the names on his shoulders as a memorial before the Lord.” Ex. 28:12. The varicolored nature of the onyx suggests that the various tribes could depend upon the steady character of Asher, representing Jesus, who bears on His shoulders the responsibility for all the tribes.

Tribe – Asher

Meaning – Happy one!

When Leah saw that Rachel’s maid, Bilhah, bore Jacob two sons, she gave Jacob her maid, Zilpah, also as his wife. Asher was the second son of Zilpah, and when Leah saw this child, she exclaimed, “How happy I am!” and named him, “Asher.” This name reflects the characteristics of the tribe of Asher, and thus has many good qualities which are inherent in the word, “happy.” They are gentle, unassuming, hard-working, cheerful, non-demanding, non-critical pleasant members of the family of God, who add calmness and a peaceful atmosphere to any situation. They are willing workers, not expecting applause for what they do, but grateful and happy when they receive encouragement, support and approval from those they serve. They reflect the steady, unfailing love of

God, His sympathy and care for the human race, and the joy that abounds in His heart for His children.

Work –

Ashers are willing to use whatever gifts God has given for the good of others. They are conscientious, and work uncomplainingly and bear responsibility well. They tend not to have quite the spiritual depth as some of the other tribes, but they love and serve God and others faithfully, and do not seem to need to delve deeply into hours of intense study to receive the sustenance and assurance needed to stay connected with God. And the light they have within them they share willingly with others.

Texts of Inspiration:

“Asher’s food will be rich; he will provide delicacies fit for a king.” Gen. 49:20.

“Most blessed of sons is Asher; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him bathe his feet in oil. The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze, and your strength will equal your days....The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” Deut. 33:24, 27.

Conclusion:

Because of their happy, congenial dispositions, Ashers usually get along pleasantly with others. Thus, they serve well in whatever place they are assigned. They may have a bit of a naïve side because they are unsuspecting, and do not think ill of those around them. But give an Asher a job to do, and you can be assured it will be done. Those in the tribe of Asher should guard against being too trusting in accepting the spiritual premises of others who claim to have new light on the established pillars of our faith. Many errors go around that may sound good, but have subtle ideas from the evil one. We must all be good “Bereans,” and search the Scriptures carefully for ourselves. But our wonderful God understands each of us and will provide what we need to remain solidly planted in His truth until He comes. Precious is the promise given to Asher: “Your strength will be equal to your days....The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Gem # 12 – Jasper

Color: Rich Leaf Green

Meaning – Strong’s – “to polish.”

Revelation 4:3 says that the appearance of God the Father has the appearance of Jasper and Carnelian (a red stone), which is the first stone on the breastplate, and Jasper is the last. Revelation 21:11 says that the holy city “shone with the glory of God...like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.” “The wall was made of Jasper” (v. 18), and “the first foundation was Jasper” (v. 19). The Jasper “probably describes a bright, flashing light, more notable for its brilliance than its color.” 7 BC 767.

Tribe – Naphtali

Meaning: Wrestling; to have a struggle

When Rachel’s maid, Bilhah, bore a second son to Jacob, Rachel said, “I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won. So she named him Naphtali.” Gen. 30:8. With this beginning, Naphtali saw himself to have an important place in the family. He was a “star,” so to speak, in the eyes of his mother, Bilhah, and Rachel, his surrogate mother. Therefore, the expectations were high for him. He was to shine, be pleasing, be a leader in the family, be a winner. His cheerful, outgoing personality must have augmented these goals, for his father blessed him with the statement, “Naphtali is a hind (or doe) set free; he utters beautiful words.” Gen. 49:21.

To be a doe set free would indicate that Naphtali was not one to press heavy burdens upon, in contrast with Issachar, who was described as a donkey who would “bend his shoulder to the burden and submit to forced labor.” Vs. 15. Deer are typically sprinters, beautiful, flashy, and gifted with agility and speed. But you don’t hitch them to a plow or wagon and expect the same results as that of a horse or donkey. A Naphtali, then, would not win with brute force, or physical prowess. A Naphtali personality is an encourager, gifted with words, reaching out to others by his or her winning personality and special gift of expression.

But this does not mean that this tribe is weak in their work for the Lord, or cannot be relied upon when God’s cause demands action and bravery. After the battle against Sisera led by Deborah and Barak, Deborah sang, “The people of Zebulun risked their very lives; so did Naphtali on the heights of the field.” Judges 5:18. What a blessing it is to have members of the spiritual tribe of Naphtali as a part of the family of God! No wonder Moses said when he blessed the tribes: “Naphtali is abounding with the favor of the Lord and is full of His blessing.” Deut. 33:23.

Work –

Because the walls and first foundation stone of the New Jerusalem are of Jasper (Rev. 21:18, 19), and the whole city shines with a brilliance like a Jasper (v. 11), we can see that in giving Naphtali this stone on the breastplate of the High Priest, this tribe

represents the nurturing, protecting side of God, who cares for all His creatures alike, and makes safe boundaries for them which are in harmony with His love for each person, from the least to the greatest. He cares for, surrounds, and works in behalf of the good of each of His children as though there were not another person upon the earth. His great heart of love beats in unison with their needs, their feelings, and their dependence upon Him for His constant watchcare. They are never alone, for He is always there, drawing them into fellowship and communion with Himself. He is their chief glory, and as they reflect that glory they are enabled to represent Him in their service for those around them.

In a special sense, this tribe bears and feels the responsibility for all the tribes, and for seeing that no one is left out of God's love and protection. Their task is a happy, fulfilling one as they express God's character, protection, and empathetic nurturing for His whole family. These are the people who feel a responsibility to shepherd the members of the family of God, and to keep the sheep from straying from truth and holy living, and thus shining light upon the path for God's people to follow all the way to the city of God.

Texts of Inspiration:

"Those who are wise (mg.—Those who impart wisdom) will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness like the stars for ever and ever." Dan. 12:3.

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn (KJV-rising). Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you." Isa. 60:1-4.

"For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God....

"I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest till He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth." Isa. 62:1-7.

Conclusion:

Members of the tribe of Naphtali are significant in the family of God because of their sparkling personalities, and their ability to make others feel comfortable and accepted in their presence. They are warm, outgoing and friendly. They gather others around them, and tend to be quite entertaining. They have a way with words, both in speaking

and writing. Naphtalies are strong warriors for truth, and for the honor of God. Being people-persons, they have a deep commitment to help protect others from straying from right principles. They are defenders of the cause of God, and feel deeply when wrong is gaining the ascendancy. When champions are few, Naphtalies are bold in standing for their Lord. But Naphtalies are sprinters, not heavy burden-bearers. They accomplish much, but need to pace themselves so that they do not burn out. They need to know their personal limitations, and gauge their productivity accordingly, so that they may continue to use their God-given gifts for God's glory and the blessing of those around them.

Compiled by Carol Zarska, MAR, writer

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