

# THE TRIBE OF ISSACHAR

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## CULTURAL INSIGHT

The tribe of Issachar is one of the tribes of Israel that traces its descent to Jacob through Leah, Jacob's first wife (Genesis 30:17–18). There are few prominent individuals in the Old Testament who descended from the tribe of Issachar. Tola, one of the judges mentioned in the book of Judges (although not a judge with much narrative), came from the tribe of Issachar (Judges 10:1–2). The third king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Baasha, who overthrew the house of Jeroboam I, was from Issachar (1 Kings 15:24).

The entire tribe of Issachar is included in the list of tribes who supported Barak and Deborah in Judges 5:15. In the relatively late book of Chronicles, the men of the tribe of Issachar are described as containing “men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chronicles 12:32). The blessing Jacob gave to Issachar compares the tribe to a donkey that is crouched down between two burdens (Genesis 49:14–15), which later Jewish writers connected to scriptural knowledge. This may be a reference to the tribe's inheritance. Issachar inherited territory next to the tribe of Zebulun, and it and Zebulun were given a single blessing by Moses in Deuteronomy 33:18–19.

In later Jewish biblical interpretation, each of the tribes was assigned a symbolic image, which was then associated with a flag and a specific stone on the high priest's breastplate. The stone assigned to Issachar was a sapphire, and the tribe's flag was black. The image on the flag was of the sun and the moon in a reference to 1 Chronicles 12:32.

### ***Related verses***

Genesis 30:17–18

Genesis 35:2

Genesis 49:14–15  
Numbers 1:28–29  
Numbers 27:12  
Deuteronomy 33:18–19  
Joshua 19:17–23  
Judges 5:15  
Judges 10:1–2  
1 Kings 15:27–30  
1 Chronicles 12:32  
Ezekiel 48:25–26, 33

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