**Is there archaeological evidence of the sons of Jacob, the tribal leaders of Israel?**

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| http://www.christiananswers.net/0.gif | http://www.christiananswers.net/0.gif | Map copyright 1998, Eden Communications.  Tribes of Israel. (Map supplied by [Eden Communications](http://www.christiananswers.net/eden/home.html).)  Various [archaeological discoveries](http://www.christiananswers.net/archaeology/home.html) support the Biblical record concerning [Jacob](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jacob.html), his 12 sons, and the later [tribes](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/tribe.html) of [Israel](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/israel.html).  Dan - Will Provide Justice for His People ([Genesis 49:16](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen49.html#16))  [Dan](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dan.html) was the fifth son of [Jacob](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jacob.html) and the first son of [Bilhah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bilhah.html), [Rachel's](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/rachel.html) [handmaid](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/handmaid.html) ([Genesis 30:1-6](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen30.html#1)). During the period of [Judges](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judgesbookof.html), the tribe of Dan migrated from their original allotment on the Mediterranean coast to the [city](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/city.html) of [Laish](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/laish.html), renamed [Dan](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dan.html) ([Judges 18](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/judg18.html)).[[1]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a028.html#1) The site of Laish/Dan has been under excavation since 1966, directed by Avraham Biran on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.  The city of Dan is most famous for being the site of one of the [high-places](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/highplace.html) set up by [Jeroboam](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jeroboam.html), first [king](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/king.html) of the breakaway northern kingdom, in order to worship the [golden](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/gold.html) [calf](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/calf.html).  Therefore the king asked advice, made two [calves of gold](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/goldencalf.html), and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to [Jerusalem](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jerusalem.html). Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of [Egypt](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/egypt.html)!" And he set up one in [Bethel](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bethel.html), and the other he put in DAN.       -[1 Kings 12:28-29](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1ki12.html#28)  That [high place](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/highplace.html) has been found and excavated by Biran (Biran 1976). The Dan high place was not only used during Israelite times, but continued as a religious center down to the [Roman](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/rome.html) period.  In 1977, a very important discovery from the [Hellenistic](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/greece.html) period (3rd-2nd centuries BC) was made. A dedicatory inscription mentioning Dan was found some 17 meters south of the high place (Biran 1981). For the first time, the Biblical name of the site was found in an ancient inscription and, by association, the name of one of Jacob's sons.  **Gad - Will be Attacked by a Band of Raiders** [**Genesis 49:19**](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen49.html#19)  [Gad](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/gad.html) was [Jacob's](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jacob.html) seventh son, the first son of [Zilpah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/zilpah.html), [Leah's](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/leah.html) [handmaid](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/handmaid.html). The [tribe](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/tribe.html) of [Gad](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/gad.html) occupied the central area of Transjordan ([Joshua 13:24-28](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh13.html#24)).  In the famous [Mesha](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mesha.html) Inscription found at Dhibon in Jordan, dating from the 9th century BC, the tribe of Gad is mentioned.[[2]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a028.html#2) The [Moabite](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moabite.html) [king](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/king.html) [Mesha](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mesha.html) states, "And the men of GAD had dwelt in the land of [Ataroth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ataroth.html) from of old" (Lemaire 1994: 33, line 10).[[3]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a028.html#3)  [**Asher**](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/asher.html) **- His Food Will be Rich** [**Genesis 49:20**](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen49.html#20)  A number of scholars have maintained that that the name '*Isr* appearing in [Egyptian](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/egypt.html) texts is the Israelite tribal name [Asher](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/asher.html) (e.g., Aharoni 1979: 179, 183; Hadley 1992: 482). That appears not to be the case, however. So we present the following in the way of a correction to information that might appear in other sources.  The earliest mention of the name *'Isr* is in a list of conquered peoples from the time of Seti I, early 13th century BC (Simons 1937:147, List XVII, no. 4).  Photo copyrighted. Courtesy of Eden Communications.  Pharoah Rameses II. (Supplied by [Eden Communications](http://www.christiananswers.net/eden/home.html).)  The name also appears several times in the inscriptions of [Rameses](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/rameses.html) II (1279-1212 BC), again in lists of conquered peoples (Gauthier 1925:105; Kitchen 1993:39-40; Simons 1937: 162, List XXV, no. 8).  Perhaps the most interesting of these references is in [Papyrus](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/paper.html) Anastasi I from the end of the 13th century BC. Here, the wise [scribe](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/scribes.html) Hori chides the novice scribe Amen-em-Opet concerning his knowledge of [Canaan](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/canaan.html). He warned that his reputation could become as low as that of "Qazardi, ruler of *Asru* (*'Isr*), when the hyena caught him up a tree" (Kitchen 1993: 40).  Noted Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen lists four reasons why the Egyptian name "*Isr*" cannot be the Israelite tribe of [Asher](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/asher.html) (1993: 40-41; cf. Kitchen 1966: 70-71):   * The texts indicate that *'Isr* is a territory or place-name, not a tribe. * The final Egyptian r can stand for l as well as r. * It is not known where *'Isr* was located, so it is not possible to make a geographical link between *'Isr* and the tribal area of Asher. * The Egyptian letter s corresponds to *th* not *sh*, as in Asher.   **Judah - Holder of the Royal** [**Scepter**](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/scepter.html) **and Ruler's Staff** [**Genesis 49:10**](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen49.html#10)  [Judah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judah.html) is perhaps the best known of [Jacob's](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jacob.html) sons. He was the fourth son of Jacob and the fourth son born to [Leah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/leah.html) ([Genesis 29:35](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen29.html#35)). It was Judah who talked his brothers out of killing [Joseph](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joseph.html) at [Dothan](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dothan.html) and selling him to the [Ishmaelite](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ishmeelites.html) traders ([Genesis 37:26-27](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen37.html#26)). Judah acted as spokesman for the brothers on their second journey to [Egypt](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/egypt.html) to face Joseph during the famine (Genesis [43:3](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen43.html#3); [44:14-34](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen44.html#14)). Since his three older brothers were passed over,[[4]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a028.html" \l "4) Judah inherited the position of [firstborn](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/first-born.html) of Jacob's sons and received the kingly [blessing](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bless.html) of Jacob ([Genesis 49:8-12](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen49.html#8)).  The [tribe](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judahtribeof.html) established by Judah became the greatest of the [Israelite](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/israel.html) tribes. It received the largest allotment in the promised land ([Joshua 15](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh15.html)), and it was from Judah that the [Messiah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/messiah.html) descended ([Genesis 49:10-12](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen49.html#10); [Matthew 1:1-17](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/mat1.html#1); [Luke 3:23-38](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/luke3.html#23)). When the kingdom divided, the southern kingdom was known simply as [Judah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judahkingdomof.html). After the return of the [exiles](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/exile.html) from [Babylon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/babylon.html), the ancient tribal area continued to be known as *Yehud*/Judah/[Judea](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judea.html) until the suppression of the *Bar Khokba* revolt by Hadrian in AD 135. After that, the name passed out of use.  Because of the political importance of the area of Judah through the centuries, the name has turned up in many ancient inscriptions.  The oldest of these are two references to [Ahaz](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ahaz.html) [King](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/king.html) of [Judah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judahkingdomof.html) from the eighth century BC. One is on a *bulla* ([clay](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/clay.html) [sealing](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/seal.html)) which reads "Ahaz (son of) [Jotham](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jotham.html) King of JUDAH" (Shanks 1997). The other is in a [building](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/building.html) inscription of the [Assyrian](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/assyria.html) king [Tiglath-pileser III](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/tiglath-pileser3.html) from [Calah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/calah.html) (Nimrud), [Iraq](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/iraq.html). It simply states that king "[Jehoahaz](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jehoahaz.html) ([Ahaz](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ahaz.html)) of JUDAH" paid tribute to the Assyrian king (Oppenheim 1969:282).  Additional references to Judah occur throughout the Assyrian period (Oppenheim 1969: 287, 288, 291, 294, 301). The Babylonians recorded the fall of the "city of [JUDAH](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judah.html)" to [Nebuchadnezzar](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/nebuchadnezzar.html) in 597 BC (Oppenheim 1969: 564) and the issuing of rations to Judean captives, including [Jehoiachin](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jehoiachin.html) (Oppenheim 1969: 308). In addition, we have a 407 BC letter from Elephantine to Bagoas, [governor](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/governor.html) of [JUDAH](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judahkingdomof.html) (Ginsburg 1969: 492), Yehud (Judah) [coins](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/coin.html) from the 4th century BC, and Yehud [seals](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/seal.html) from the 4th-2nd centuries BC (Stern 1982: 224-27; 202-13).  **All of these data support the historicity of the Biblical record concerning Jacob, his 12 sons, and the later tribes of Israel.** There is even evidence of their sojourn in Eqypt.  Is there evidence that the Israelites once lived in Egypt as the Bible says? And has Joseph's original tomb been found? [Answer](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a027.html)  **Notes**   1. For archaeological evidence for the migration of the Danites, see Wood 1991:107-109. 2. For more information on the Mesha Inscription, see Wood 1996.  1. [Ataroth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ataroth.html) is thought to be located at Atarus 13 km northwest of Dhiban.  1. [Reuben](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/reuben.html) sleeping with his father's [concubine](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/concubine.html) [Bilhah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bilhah.html) ([Gn 35:22](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen35.html" \l "22)), and [Simeon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/simeon.html) and [Levi](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/levi.html) massacring the men of [Shechem](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/shechem.html) ([Genesis 34](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen34.html)).   **Bibliography**   * Aharoni, Y. 1979 The Land of the Bible, rev. ed., trans. and ed. A.F. Rainey. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press. * Aling, C.F. 1996 The Historicity of the Joseph Story. 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