

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Fürst, *Bibl. Jud.* i. 103-104 (see also vol. iii., Preface, p. vii.); Brüll's *Jahrbücher*, v. 217; *Monatsschrift*, xxx. 375-384, 570-572; *Keren Hemel*, v. 8; Fueno, *Keneset Yisrael*, pp. 597-599; *Ha-Maggid*, vii. 234; *Ha-Karnel*, iii. 365, 366.

G.

P. Wt.

BENJAMIN.—**Biblical Data:** Youngest son of Jacob by Rachel, who died on the road between Beth-el and Ephrath, while giving him birth. She named him "Ben-oni" (son of my sorrow); but Jacob, to avert the evil omen, called him "Ben Yamin," son of the right hand; that is, of good luck (Gen. xxxv. 17, 18).

Benjamin stayed with his father when his brothers went down to Egypt to buy corn during the famine, but Joseph insisted that he should come down with them on their second visit. Jacob being afraid to let him go from his side, as he was the only remaining son of Rachel, Judah vouched for his safety, and finally obtained his father's permission to take him along (Gen. xlii., xliii. 8-10). Joseph received his younger brother with marks of special attention; but as the time came for the brothers to return to their father with the newly bought corn, he put them severely to test by laying a trap and bringing the charge against Benjamin of having stolen his silver cup, in punishment for which he wanted to keep him as a slave. Judah, faithful to his pledge, stepped before Joseph, begging to be taken as a slave instead of Benjamin, whose failure to return would cause his father to go down in sorrow to Sheol; whereupon Joseph, seeing that the brothers were not so cruel toward one of Rachel's sons as they had been to him, made himself known to them (Gen. xliii., xlv.). Benjamin, until that time spoken of as "a child" (Gen. xlii. 13, xlv. 20), moved to Egypt with his father, Jacob, himself being the father of ten sons (Gen. xlv. 21).

The tribe of Benjamin is described in Jacob's blessing (Gen. xlix. 27) as warlike: "Benjamin is a wolf that raveneth; in the morning he shall devour the prey, at evening he shall divide the spoil." In the desert, where Benjamin formed part of the camp of the sons of Joseph, the tribe counted 35,400 warriors, and later on 45,600 men (Num.

The Tribe i. 36; ii. 22, 23; x. 22-24; xxvi. 41).

of In I Chron. vii. 6-11, 59,434 men are given.

Benjamin. The astute and pugnacious nature of the Benjamites is evidenced by the fact that they were drilled as left-handed warriors to attack the enemy unawares (Judges iii. 15-21, xx. 16; I Chron. xii. 2). They were known as brave and skilled archers (I Chron. viii. 40, xii. 2; II Chron. xiv. 7). A cruel act of inhospitality by the men of Gibeah, reminding one of the Sodomites, brought the whole tribe under a ban ("herem"); and a war followed in which all the other tribes very nearly exterminated the little tribe; moreover, they took an oath not to give to the Benjamites any of their daughters in marriage. Only at the last moment, when all but 600 men had been slain, a way was found to provide the survivors with wives in order to prevent the tribe from dying out (Judges xix.-xxi.). Still the little tribe of Benjamin was destined to a prominent place in the history of Israel. It gave the nation its first king, in the person of Saul, son of Kish (I Sam. ix. 1); and when Saul died,

his son, Ish-bosheth, reigned for two years over Benjamin and the other tribes, except Judah (II Sam. ii. 8, 9). In fact, Benjamin considered himself the younger brother of Joseph long after David had united all other tribes with his own of Judah (II Sam. xix. 21 [20]).

But the territory of Benjamin was so favorably situated as to give it prominence beyond its numerical proportions. Bordering on Joseph's to the north and on Judah's to the south, it touched on the Jordan; and, lying on the line leading from Jericho to the northern hills of Jerusalem, it included such cities as Gibeah, Gibeon, Beth-el, and,

The according to rabbinical tradition, a
Territory. part of the Temple district (Josh. xviii. 11-21; Josephus, "Ant." v. 1, § 22; Sifre, Wezot ha-Berakah, 352). Reference is made to this excellent locality in the blessing of Moses: "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; he covereth him all the day long, and he dwelleth between his shoulders" (Deut. xxxiii. 12). At the secession of the northern tribes, Benjamin remained loyal to the house of David (I Kings xii. 21), and therefore shared the destinies of Judah at the time of the restoration (Ezra iv. 1, x. 9). Mordecai, the loyal Jew, was a descendant of Saul of the tribe of Benjamin (Esth. ii. 5); and Paul, whose Hebrew name was Saul, also claimed to be a Benjamite (Rom. xi. 1; Phil. iii. 5). On the other hand, it is hardly admissible that Menelaus and Lysimachus should have been allowed to officiate as high priests if they were descendants of the tribe of Benjamin, as II Macc. iii. 4 (compare iv. 23, 29) seems to indicate; it is much more probable that the name "Benjamin" in this place is due to a copyist's error, and the passage should read: "Simon was of the [priestly] tribe of Miniamin," if "Bilgah" is not the proper reading. Compare Suk. 56a and art. **BILGAH**; also Herzfeld, "Gesch. des Volkes Israel," 1863, i. 218.

G.

K.

—**In Rabbinical Literature:** The name "Benjamin" is given various meanings by the Rabbis. According to some, בְּנֵי יָמִים is equivalent to יָמִים ("son of days"), because Benjamin was born to his father in his old age (Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Benjamin i. *νῆς ἡμερῶν*; Midrash Lekah-Tob; and Rashi, ed. Berliner, on Gen. xxxv. 18). Other rabbis interpret the name Benjamin as "son of the South," since he was the only son born to Jacob in Palestine, the others having been born in Mesopotamia, north of Palestine (Rashi *ad loc.*: "Sefer ha-Yashar," Wayishlah, ed. Leghorn, p. 56b). Benjamin was not granted to his parents until after Rachel had prayed and fasted for a second son a long time (Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, i. c.; Num. R. xiv. 8), and not until Jacob was one hundred years old (Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, *ib.*; "Sefer ha-Yashar," Wayishlah, *ib.*; compare Heilprin, "Seder ha-Dorot," i. 52, ed. Warsaw).

Benjamin, Joseph's brother, took no part in the selling of Joseph (Sifre, Deut. 352); and in order to comfort Benjamin concerning his brother's fate, God showed him, while awake, Joseph's form and countenance (Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Benjamin x.; compare Tan., ed. Buber, Wayesheb. 8).

When Benjamin was detained as the alleged thief of the cup, Joseph pretended that Benjamin had been instigated by his brothers. But Benjamin swore: "As truly as my brother Joseph is separated from me, as truly as he has been made a slave, I have not touched the cup, and my brothers did not want to make me steal." When asked for a proof that his brother's memory was so sacred that Joseph must believe this oath, Benjamin told Joseph how he had given his ten sons (Gen. xlv. 21) names which referred to the loss of his brother. The first was called Belah (בלע), because Joseph had disappeared (בלע, "swallow"); the second, Becher (בכר), because Joseph was his mother's first-born (בכור); the third, Ashbel (אשבל), because Joseph was made a captive (שבה, "capture"); the fourth, Gera (גרא), because he lived in a foreign (גר) land; the fifth, Naaman (נעמן), on account of Joseph's graceful speech (נעים, "grace"); the sixth, Ehi (אחי, "my only full brother"); the seventh, Rosh (ראש, "the older"); the eighth, Muppim (מפים), because Joseph taught Benjamin the things he himself had learned from his father (מפנים, "double mouth"); the ninth, Huppim, "whose wedding (חופה) I have not seen"; and the tenth, Ard, because Joseph was like a rose (ורד).

Benjamin's oath touched Joseph so deeply that he could no longer pretend to be a stranger, and so revealed himself to his brother (Tan., ed. Buber, Wayiggash, 7; the meanings of the names are also given in Sotah 36b; Gen. R. xciv. 8). According to another Haggadah (known to so early a work as the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Benjamin ii.), Joseph makes himself known to Benjamin before his reconciliation with the other brothers. The "Sefer ha-Yashar" (Mikkez 89) narrates that Joseph caused a kind of astrolabe to be brought, and asked Benjamin whether he could not discover by means of the instrument the whereabouts of his lost brother. To Joseph's astonishment Benjamin declared that the man on the throne was his brother, and Joseph revealed himself to Benjamin, telling him what he meant to do with the brothers. His intention was to try them and thus to learn whether they would act in a brotherly manner toward Benjamin if he were in danger of losing his liberty.

The Rabbis lay stress on the name, "beloved of the Lord," by which Benjamin is distinguished (Deut. xxxiii. 12; Sifre, *l.c.*). He is counted among the four men who died by the poison of the serpent in Paradise; *z.e.*, without sin of his own, the other three being Amram, the father of Moses; Jesse, the father of David; and Kileab, the son of David (Shab. 55b). His comparison to the ravaging wolf (Cant. R. to viii. 1), "who devours his enemy" (Gen. xlix. 27) is referred to the men of Shiloh who stole their wives (Judges xxi.) or to Ehud or to Saul. By others it is referred to Mordecai and Esther (Gen. R. xcix. and Tan., Waychi, 14; so also in the original text of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs [Benjamin ii]; whereas a Christian interpolation refers it to Paul).

One interpretation refers the blessing to the early ripening of the fruits in the territory of Benjamin, and the great fertility of the region of Jericho and Beth-el, and another refers the expression "wolf" to the altar of the Temple, which devoured the sac-

rifices in the morning and in the evening (Gen. R. *l.c.*; Targ. O. and Yer.).

G.

The erection of the Temple on Benjamitic ground is explained in several ways. It is related that Benjamin (Sifre, Deut. 352, ed. Friedmann, 146a) was privileged to have the SIREKINAN dwell in his territory because Benjamin. all the other tribes (that is, fathers of the tribes) had taken part in the selling of Joseph. For God said: "If they—the Israelites—build me a Temple in some other place and seek my mercy, I can show them as little mercy as they showed their brother Joseph." Origen ("In Genesis," xlii. 6), gives another reason, probably based on Jewish tradition (compare Esther R. on iii. 4), viz.: Because Benjamin did not bow down before Esau as did his brothers and his father (Gen. xxxiii. 3-7), nor before Joseph (*ib.* xlii. 6), his territory was reserved for the worship of God.

The descendants of Benjamin, it is true, did not always show themselves worthy of their ancestor, especially in connection with the incident at Gibeah (Judges xix.). In spite of their wrong-doing the Benjamites were at first victorious (Judges xx. 21-25); but this was due to God's anger against all Israel because they had attacked all Benjamin on account of the crime of an individual, and at the same time quietly tolerated the idolatry which Micah (Judges xvii.) was spreading among them (Pirke R. El. xxxviii.). At first the intention of the other tribes was to efface Benjamin completely, since the number of twelve tribes could be preserved through Ephraim and Manasseh; but they remembered God's promise to Jacob shortly before Benjamin's birth (Gen. xxxv. 11), that "a nation and a company of nations shall be of him"; and they decided that the existence of the tribe of Benjamin was necessary (Yer. Ta'anit iv. 69c; Lam. R., Introduction, 33). The day on which the reconciliation took place between the tribes is said to have been the fifteenth of Ab, and for this reason it was made a festive day (*ib.*; compare AB, FIFTEENTH DAY OF). On another occasion, however, the Benjamites showed themselves worthy of their pious ancestor. When, at the Red Sea, all the other tribes stood in desperation only the tribe of Benjamin trusted in God and leaped into the sea (Mekilta, Beshallah, Wayikra 5; Sotah 36b).

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L. G.—K.

—In Mohammedan Literature: In the Koran, Benjamin is not mentioned by name. The story of Joseph is told in sura xii., and reference is made repeatedly to a particular brother of Joseph. Thus, *e.g.*, in v. 8, the other brothers say, "Verily, Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than we." Baidawi explains that Benjamin is so specified because he was brother to Joseph on both sides. Again, in v. 69, "And when they entered to Joseph, he took his brother to him." Baidawi explains this that he made him sit at meat with him or live with him in his dwelling. He adds, as a tradition, that Joseph made his brothers sit two by two; so Benjamin remained alone and wept and said, "If my brother Joseph had been alive he would have sat with me." Then Joseph made him sit at his table.

Thereafter he assigned houses to his brothers, two by two, but took Benjamin to his own house. And he said to Benjamin, "Would you like if I were your brother in the stead of the brother who is lost?" And Benjamin replied, "Who can find a brother like to you? but Jacob did not beget you, nor Rachel bear you."

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Critical View: The story of Benjamin in Genesis is drawn from three different sources: The Elohist, who wrote the story of Benjamin's birth (Gen. xxxv. 16-22), makes Reuben vouch for Benjamin (Gen. xlii. 37); whereas the Jahvist assigns this act to Judah (xliii.-xliv.). The latter makes Joseph give vent to his brotherly feeling at the first sight of his younger brother Benjamin, and give him five times as many presents, without, however, betraying himself (xliii. 30-34), and afterward, at the recognition scene, show his affection for him without reserve (xlv. 14); while the Elohist merely relates at the end that Benjamin was distinguished by receiving five times as many presents as the others (xlv. 22). The genealogical chapter which represents Benjamin as the father of a large family (xvi. 21) is of a far later date than the rest. (In the older sources he appears to be a young child [xlii. 4, 15; xlv. 20].) The blessing of Jacob, in which Benjamin—who, after Joseph, was the last of the sons—is described as being warlike, as was the tribe in the time of Deborah (Judges v. 14), yet without any allusion to Saul's kingdom, is best ascribed to the time of the Judges (Dillman, *Commentary*). The story of the war at Gibeah (Judges xix.-xxi.), which bears evidences of very late composition and has many legendary features, such as exaggeration of numbers and modes of warfare, has been rather too rashly declared to be a late invention inserted with the intention of covering up atrocities perpetrated by the tribe of Judah under King David against the kinsmen of Saul (Güdemann, "Monatschrift," 1869, p. 357; Geiger, "Jüd. Zeit." 1869, p. 284; Grätz, "Gesch. der Juden," i. 351 *et seq.*; Wellhausen, "Komposition des Hexateuchs," p. 237; Kuenen, "Historisch-Kritische Untersuchung über die Entstehung und Sammlung der Bücher des Alten Testaments," ii. 163). Recent critics think it far more probable that it rests on a historical fact (Moore, *Commentary on Judges*, pp. 406-408; Hogg, in Cheyne and Black, "Encyc. Bibl."; Nöldeke, quoted by the latter on p. 536, note 3). This indeed seems to account for the sudden change in the character of the tribe (see GIBBEAN).

In the time of David the tribe of Benjamin followed the leadership of Joseph or Ephraim, considering itself closely related to the latter, and therefore jealous of Judah's rising power (II Sam. xix. 21 [20]). The blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 12),

which represents Benjamin as perfectly identified with Judah's interests, **Moses' Blessing.** is probably the product of the time of Jeroboam II. (Driver, *Commentary*,

pp. 387 *et seq.*). Stade ("Gesch. des Volkes Israel," i. 161; *idem*, "Zeitschrift," i. 114) and Hogg ("Encyc. Bibl." s.v. "Benjamin") explain the name "Benjamin" as a derivative of "Yemini" (compare I Sam. ix. 1, "Ish Yemini," and I Sam. ix. 4, "Erez

Yemini"), denoting the people living to the south or right of the Ephraimite highland; the story of Benjamin's birth in Canaan being taken as reflecting in mythical form the fact of its having branched off from the tribe of Joseph after the other tribes had settled in their various territories (Judges i. 22, 23, 35). The house of Joseph, according to Moore, includes Benjamin. Stade ("Gesch. des Volkes Israel," i. 138) thinks that the account of Benjamin was lost. The report that the large number of 280,000 archers, said to be the tribe of Benjamin, belonged to King Asa (II Chron. xiv. 7; compare xvii. 17) is regarded as unhistorical. Regarding the list of Benjamite towns in Josh. xviii. 21-28, belonging to the late priestly writer (P) and the one in Neh. xi. 31-35, which belongs to the late chronicler, see PALESTINE.

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G. K.

BENJAMIN II., J. J. (real name, **Joseph Israel**): Rumanian traveler; born at Folticheni, Moldavia, in 1818; died at London May 3, 1864. Married young, he engaged in the lumber business, but losing his modest fortune, he gave up commerce. Being of an adventurous disposition, he adopted the name of Benjamin of Tudela, the famous Jewish traveler of the twelfth century, and toward the end of 1844 set out to search for the Lost Ten Tribes. He first went to Vienna, and in January, 1845, started for Constantinople, visiting several cities on the Mediterranean. He landed at Alexandria June, 1847, and proceeded via Cairo to Palestine. He then traveled through Syria, Babylonia, Kurdistan, Persia, the Indies, Kabul, and Afghanistan, returning June, 1851, to Constantinople, and thence to Vienna.



Benjamin II.

After a short stay in the last-named city, he went to Italy, embarking there for Algeria and Morocco. On arriving in France, after having traveled for eight years, he prepared in Hebrew his impressions of travel, and had the book translated into French. After suffering many tribulations in obtaining subscriptions for his book, he issued it in 1856, under the title "Cinq Années en Orient" (1846-51). The same work, revised and enlarged, was subsequently published in German under the title "Acht Jahre in Asien und Afrika" (Hanover, 1858), with a preface by Kayserling. An English version has also been published. As the veracity of his accounts and the genuineness of his travels were attacked by some critics, he amply defended himself by producing letters and other tokens proving his journey to the various Oriental countries named. Benjamin relates only what he has seen; and, although some of his remarks show insufficient scholarship and lack of scientific method,