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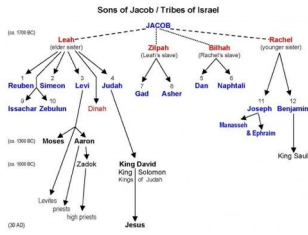
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Lessons from Jacob's Blessing of Dan

By Jerry Collins

"Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a horned snake in the path, that bites the horse's heels, so that his rider falls backward. For Your salvation I wait, O Lord (Genesis 49:16-18).

Verse 16—Dan shall judge his people—Jacob now turns his blessing toward the four sons born to him by the two handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah. His oracle sets high hopes for the tribe of Dan. —*as one of the tribes of Israel*—Jacob wanted to assure Dan, possibly due to his birth by a handmaiden, that he would also be included and blessed as a tribe.



Verse 17—Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a horned snake in the path, that bites the horse's heels, so that his rider falls backward—This explains how Dan's vindication of his people would happen. Dan's conquests would be accomplished by cunning, rather than by military confrontation.

Verse 18—For Your salvation I wait, O Lord—As Jacob sees the conflicts that lie ahead for Dan and Gad (see v. 19), he offers a brief prayer for their security, most likely because Dan would be a minority tribe in Canaan, as they were in Egypt.

PT—Jacob's blessing would guarantee a future for Dan. That future had the potential to place this tribe in a position of strength, provided that Jacob's prayer for God's deliverance to secure that future was answered.

Joshua 19: Dan's Allotment and Unfortunate Move

Dan's territory became a hotbed of struggle due to the Philistines' constant pressure to keep the Danites out of the valley and up into the hills, which finally led to Dan looking for new territory (Judges 18).

Verses 40-46—The seventh lot fell to the tribe of the sons of Dan according to their families... with the territory over against Joppa. Dan received territory primarily in the Shephelah and Coastal Plain west of Benjamin. Its land was extremely fruitful.

Verse 47—The territory of the sons of Dan proceeded beyond them—The point is that Dan failed to conquer their allotted territory. The Amorites, who settled portions of the Philistine plain, drove the Danites out of the plains and into the hills. *Then the Amorites forced the sons of Dan into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the valley* (Judges 1:34).

PT—The International Coastal Highway passed directly through Dan's territory. Any attempt to take control of the region automatically cut the main land link between Africa (Egypt) and Asia (Mesopotamia). Local centers and peoples in the area would be expected to resist any Danite offensive action to control the region. **God knew this and expected Dan to recognize who God was and act accordingly.** That meant advancing against the Canaanites and taking possession of their entire territory.

An Application—We will find ourselves often in difficulty, not because of sin, but because we are attempting to obey the revealed will of God. Doing that can potentially get us in trouble, or be the risky or dangerous direction to take. God did not lead His people to places like Australia, New Zealand, Greenland, or Great Britain, where settlement could have been easier or frequent battles unnecessary. God had allotted them a territory between the great superpowers, and through which traversed the great caravan routes. **It would require faith to possess the territory, secure the land and settle in it safely.** Yet, Dan chose a different path.

- *for the sons of Dan went up and fought with Leshem (Laish) and captured it. Then they struck it with the edge of the sword and possessed it and settled in it; and they called Leshem Dan*—Due to the Danite farms and villages constantly oppressed by Philistines who resented a foreign presence so near to their own centers of life, the Danites sought and settled in a different location furthest north away from possible invaders.

An Application—The Danites' fear of the Philistines is like the generally righteous person's fear of the world. In both cases, that fear often prevents righteousness from being an influence or making a difference. Possibly you know people like the tribe of Dan. Good people generally. Those who hate evil and love good. But they are too afraid to take a stand, if it means trusting God and taking on the world.

CONCLUDING LESSONS FROM THE TRIBE OF DAN

- Be careful and suspicious of a plan or a lifestyle where you only have to take care of yourself and do not have to trust God to take care of you.
- Be wary of fighting easy battles. The battles God has for you will probably be hard ones.
- Do not attempt to situate yourselves far away from the Word of God and the people of God.

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