



## Provincial Grand Chapter of Worcestershire

Provincial Office, 94 Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B61 0DF

# The Banners of the Holy Royal Arch Chapters of Jerusalem

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### Companions,

We sit in our chapters of the Holy Royal Arch Chapter of Jerusalem, under the Banners that form part of the essential equipment, but generally we are not familiar with the reason and meaning of their presence, other than they represent the Banners of the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

The Symbolic or Second Lecture of the Holy Royal Arch gives an explanation in brief of the four Principal Banners which are ranged behind the 'three Principals' Chairs. The Book of Lectures of our Order also contains a full description in the form of Questions and Answers.

It is only to be expected that the Volume of the Sacred Law reveals to us the most information.

The Forty-ninth Chapter of Genesis gives us the first list of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, when the Patriarch Jacob called them together and blessed them, just before he died.

There is a list of the tribes given in the Second Chapter of Numbers on the occasion when they travelled prior to their march, and were encamped round about the Tabernacle.

There are also lists in the First Chapter of Exodus, and Joshua, Chapter 15 - 19, and in the Seventh Chapter of Revelation.

In none of these five lists does the order of the placing of the Tribes agree, and this often leads to variation in the arrangement in our Chapters.

The order in placing the Banners with which we are concerned is that in which they were grounded round the Tabernacle.

They were in sets of three, arranged in a circle. Our guidance for this is in the Fourth book of Moses, called Numbers, Second chapter.

*The Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying, "Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard with the Ensign of their Father's house, far off about the Tabernacle shall they pitch". And the final verse reads,*



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*“The children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so they pitched by their Standards, and so they set forward every man according to the house of their fathers. For convenience they are arranged in our Chapters on each side of the altar.*

The order of this arrangement is confirmed as being used in the Royal Arch by Dr. Oliver, an early authority on the subject and by Harris in his design for the Tracing Board of the Order.

These authorities are followed by the Supreme Grand Chapter and all Chapters held at Freemasons’ Hall, London. This therefore, may be taken as the official order in which the banners should be placed in all Chapters working under the Constitution of the Supreme Grand Chapter.

It is worthy of remark that in the first issue of the Laws and Regulations of the Holy Royal Arch, in 1778, it is laid down in Grand Chapter that the Twelve Senior Companions shall hold the Staves with the Proper Ensigns.

This has been discontinued for many years as a matter of convenience.

The Twelve Tribes each has their own Ensign for their families, being subdivided into four divisions, three Tribes under each division.

Each Division had its own Standard or Banner as represented by these placed behind the chairs of the Three Principals, as follows :-

- S:     A MAN - THE BANNER OF REUBEN.  
          “To personify Intelligence and Understanding”.
- W:     THE OX - THE BANNER OF EPHRAIM.  
          “To represent Ministration of Patience & Assiduity”.
- E:     A LION - THE BANNER OF JUDAH.  
          “The strongest Tribe” To represent Strength & Power”.
- N:     AN EAGLE - THE BANNER OF DAN.  
          “To display promptness and celerity with which Will and Pleasure of the  
          “Great I Am” are executed”.

These four Standards were placed round the Tabernacle, E, S, W, and N, and the Twelve Tribes with their Ensigns were ranged each under their own Division.



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Among the Israelites the soldiers were not a separate class, for every male adult was liable to bear arms. They were called out in such proportions as public services required, and the whole body was not expected to take the field except on very extraordinary occasions.

All the adult males above the age of twenty years were enrolled, and from them the necessary levy was drawn for military service; they might, however, claim exemption on any of the following grounds:-

1. That they had built a house and had not occupied it.
2. That they had planted a vineyard or olive grove and had not yet eaten of its products.
3. That they had espoused a wife, and had not taken her home.
4. That they were faint hearted.

### **On the East side of the Tabernacle were the Tribes of:**

JUDAH,  
ISSACHAR,  
ZEBULUN,  
UNDER THE STANDARD OF JUDAH.

### **Judah**

The Banner of Judah was of Crimson or Scarlet and designated by a Lion together with a Sceptre, probably suggested by Genesis 49, verse 10, "The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah" all subsequent history emphasises the kingly power of the Tribe.

To this Tribe belong many of the most noted Prophets, which have exerted its influence in moulding the life of the nation.

The kingly power of the Tribe was not effaced until after the destruction of the City and the Temple by the Romans, under Titus, in the year 70 of the present era. To the Tribe of Judah was assigned the most honourable station in the camp, in the East, before the entrance to the Tabernacle.

### **Issachar**

Its colour was Sky Blue, and had for its device a strong Ass beneath its burden. The Ass is a patient animal and a proper symbol of labour.

Accordingly, the posterity of Issachar sat down quietly upon the land allotted to them and cultivated it with diligence and assiduity, instead of employing themselves in war or in mercantile pursuits. They were lovers of peace and quietness.



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The Ass crouching beneath its burden was the opposite symbol of the indolent character of this Tribe, who would prefer a submission to every species of tyranny and oppression rather than be at the trouble of asserting their material rights in the field of battle, for an Ass, though a strong and hardy animal, would rather sink tamely under a heavy load than shake it off by an exertion of its bodily powers.

### **Zebulun**

This Banner was Purple, and bore the device of a Ship, symbolic of the prophecy - "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon".

### **On the South side of the tabernacle (the next honourable position), were the Tribes of:**

REUBEN,  
SIMEON,  
GAD,  
UNDER THE STANDARD OF REUBEN.

### **Reuben**

This Banner was Red, and had the Device of a Man, because Reuben was the first-born of his father, who predicted that he would be as unstable as water. His father said "Thou shalt not excel", and gave as his reason that, as water by a natural propensity, inherent in its substance, flows from its source in an elevated position to a lower place so should Reuben fall from his birthright and subside into an inferior situation amongst the Tribes.

And the prophecy was remarkably verified, for nothing great or praiseworthy has been recorded respecting the posterity of Reuben; they were inferior in number to the other Tribes; and the prominence was given to Judah.

### **Simeon**

This Banner was yellow, and emblazoned with a Sword and Dagger. Simeon and Levi were represented by instruments of war, the former by a Sword and the latter by a Dagger, Alluding to the abhorrence testified by the dying patriarch to the cruelty of his two sons in the barbarous murder of the Shechemites under the assurance of kindness and good faith, their father said "Cursed be their anger, for it was cruel; I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel".

These sons being associated in wickedness, it was ordained by a superintending Providence that their posterity should be disunited; that they should not be furnished with an opportunity of working evil upon their brethren. Hence the tribe of Simeon and Levi had little



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or no possessions in the Promised Land, but dwelt in the midst of Judah; some of them wandered in search of a dwelling-place as far as Mount Seir and the deserts of Gideon. As for the tribe of Levi, it was entirely dispersed amongst the other tribes and devoted exclusively to the service of the Altar.

### Gad

Had a Banner of white, emblazoned with a Troop of Horsemen.

Jacob foretold the difficulties to the progress of the posterity of Gad due the hostility of their neighbours but though they were doomed to be sometimes defeated, yet in the end, by Divine assistance they would overcome all difficulties and establish themselves firmly and peacefully in the position allotted to them. This prophecy was fulfilled, for the Tribe occupying a country beyond Jordan, was necessarily exposed to the incursions of the Ammonites, from whom it suffered severely, but at length, through the military talents of Jophthah, the Ammonites were finally subdued and gave no more trouble

### On the West side of the Tabernacle were the Tribes of:

EPHRAIM,  
MANASSEH,  
BENJAMIN,  
UNDER THE STANDARD OF EPHRAIM.

### Ephraim

This Banner was Green, and emblazoned with an Ox.

Ephraim stepped into the inheritance of his father Joseph, and his Tribe was elevated to a leading position. The Ox, was emblematic of patience, industry and strength; thus Jehovah said "Ephraim is the strength of mine head".

### Manasseh

This Tribe had a flesh-coloured Banner with a device of Vine, planted by the side of a wall. It was predicted that the Tribe Joseph should be a fruitful vine growing by a well-watered soil and shooting forth two luxurious branches, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

The prediction was fulfilled in the pre-eminence of Joseph. It was said "The archers sorely grieved him and shot at him and hated him", referring to the persecution of his brethren who sold him into Egypt at the false accusation due to which he was thrown into prison.

Nevertheless, his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hand were made strong by the mighty God of Jacob. As his enemies were termed archers, so he is said to be armed with a



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bow in his own defence, by which he triumphed over all his enemies, and rose to the highest state of worldly prosperity.

### **Benjamin**

Had a Green Banner, emblazoned with a Wolf, because it was over a warlike and cruel tribe.

It was predicted “Benjamin shall raven as a wolf; in the morning he shall devour his prey and at night he shall divide the spoil”. Though Benjamin was a great favourite with Jacob, being the youngest son, yet he conferred no peculiar blessing upon him. He is described as the father of a fierce and warlike people. This is evident proof that Jacob acted upon the influence of divine inspiration. The tribe accordingly had a character as predicted and made war single handed against all other Tribes and overcame them in battle. Saul, who sprang from this Tribe, also possessed great military talents. His whole life was spent in war, and at length, he, as well as his sons, was slain in battle. It was one of the smallest Tribes.

### **On the North side of the Tabernacle were the Tribes of:**

DAN,  
ASHER,  
NAPHTALI,  
UNDER THE STANDARD OF DAN.

### **Dan**

Dan was the next largest to Judah and was for this reason that it was placed in the rear.

Their Banner was of bright Green colour and bore an Eagle The name of Dan signifies judging, and, therefore, Jacob said “Dan shall judge the people”; meaning, that Tribe was to be the head of one of the great Divisions in the wilderness. He said further “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, and the Tribe of Dan was remarkable for defeating their enemies rather by policy than by force, in support of which there are many instances in the Bible. The tribe of Dan, was, however, ringleader of idolatry and was the first apostatise from God.

### **Asher**

This Banner was of Purple and bore a flourishing Tree or a Cup. Prince Pagliel unfurled the banner of Asher. Asher’s tribe is promised a tract of the Holy Land which should be fruitful, and accordingly it produced the necessaries of life in abundance. Mount Carmel abounded in the choicest fruits.

### **Naphtali**

Their Banner of was Blue, designated by the Hind. “Naphtali is a hind let loose”; he giveth goodly words”. This prophecy denotes that the posterity of Naphtali should be spirited and



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free people, and the Tribe should be fruitful and multiply. Thus from four sons which Naphtali brought with him into Egypt proceeded upwards of 50,000 descendants when they were emancipated from their captivity. Their portion of the Holy Land was in Upper Galilee, a country always noted for the productiveness of its soil.

Thus, Companions, we review the various Tribes, their positive activities, and usefulness around the Tabernacle and symbolise their Banners in our Chapters as articles of equipment.

The fact that the highest degree, in Freemasonry, adopt these Banners as part of its symbolism, tempts us to extend the speculations as to what may be learned from them.

The Rev, John Lawrence, P.A.G. Chap, of England in his work "The Perfect Ashlar" which is dedicated to the Provincial Grand Master, and Grand Superintendent of East Lancashire (Lord Derby) says :- "very obviously, the first lesson is of organisation.

In the world's great movements there are those who are qualified to go first, others occupy an intermediate position, and then there are those who are left in the rear.

There is a general anxiety amongst men to be in the front, and a greater anxiety to emerge from the rear, but it is not to be supposed that the one is honourable of necessity, or the other dishonourable.

The Three Tribes under Dan had the rear in its special charge. There were to be found the ambulance wagons, the sick and wounded, the camp followers, the women, old men and children. Who shall say that Dan's position in the rear was not an honourable Commission".

Companions, the Banners which direct our thoughts into the consideration of the Great Word are well worthy of study, if only for the special message they bring to us.

The earliest Laws and Regulations of "Grand and Royal Chapter as the Supreme Grand Chapter" was designated in 1767, and it's foundation gives us the thoughts and ideas dominant in the minds of those great craftsmen who brought the organisation of our Order into being.

It says :-

*"It must be observed that when we use that expression and say the Word ..... it is not to be understood as a watchword only, after the manner of those annexed to the several degrees of the Craft, but also Theologically, as a term, thereby to convey to the mind some of the Great Being who is the sole author of existence, and to carry along with it the most Solemn*



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*Veneration for his sacred name and word, and also the most clear and perfect elucidation of His power and attribute that the human mind is capable of receiving”.*

This is the light in which the Name and Word has always been considered from the remote ages.

Freemasonry, then, in its highest degree teaches us a valuable lesson, that, God has appointed each of us his place in the Social system, and that no man is dishonoured in whatever station in life he finds himself.

*Anon.*