Subject: Banners of the Royal Arch

The Banners of the Royal Arch Chapter.

The Banners used in our Royal Arch Chapters while not completely accurate, according to Biblical History, have special meaning.

The Four Main Banners representing the four divisions of the army of Israel are:-

1. An Eagle on a Blue Banner (USA) GREEN IN CANADA, This represents the Tribe of Dan.
2. A Man on a Purple Banner (USA) RED IN CANADA. This represents the Tribe of Reuben.
3. An Ox on a Scarlet Banner(USA) RED IN CANADA. This represents the Tribe of Ephraim.
4. A Lion on a White Banner (USA) RED IN CANADA. This represents the Tribe of Judah.

The above banners bear a device of angelic nature according to R.A. Masonic tradition representing - integrity and understanding, strength and power, patience and assiduity, promptness and celerity, which roughly correspond to the four Cardinal Virtues of Temperance, fortitude, prudence and mercy.

According to Biblical History the colors of the Banners correspond to the colors of the stones that represent that tribe on the breastplate of the High Priest, this means that the banners above should be colored green, red, red, red. It is no mere accident that in the U.S.A., they now correspond in color in a Royal Arch Chapter to the color of the four Veils, as they are carried by the corresponding Masters of those Veils.

The Twelve Banners of all the tribes of Israel are represented by Characters figurative of the deathbed prophecies of the Patriarch Jacob, and are as follows :-

1. The Banner of Judah was borne by Dashon its Prince. It was designated by a Lion couchant surmounted by a Crown & Scepter. Judah was the Chief Tribe, and was more eminently distinguished, both for prosperity in war and peace and quietness at home. Its dignity was marked by the Divine Favor, in choosing David from this Tribe to be the Instrument of His Blessings to the people of Israel. To the Tribe of Judah was assigned the most honorable station in the camp vis., in the East, before the Tabernacle, and under its standard the Tribes of Issacher and Zebulon pitched their tents. The color of this banner is scarlet or crimson.

2. The Banner of Issacher was borne by the standard bearer of Prince Nethareel. It was Sky Blue and was charged with a strong Ass crouching beneath its burden (some say the burden was the sun and the moon, and Rabbinical studies are inclined to this view.)" The ass is a patient animal and a proper symbol of labour. And accordingly, the prosperity of Issacher sat quietly upon the land allotted to them and cultivated it

with diligence and assiduity. Instead of employing themselves in war or mercantile pursuits, they were lovers of peace and quietness. The act of the ass couching between its burdens was an 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 natural rights on the field of battle. Like the ass, which, though a strong and hardy beast, would rather sink tamely under the heaviest load than shake it off by exertion of its bodily powers.

3. Prince Eliab erected the Banner of Zebulon. It was Purple and bore for its distinguishing characteristics a Ship. This was the prophecy of Jacob " Zebulon shall dwell in the haven of the sea: and he shall be for a haven of ships: and his border shall be unto Zion"

4. The device on the great Banner of Reuben, (Red or Scarlet) which was borne by Elizur, was another of the Cherubic forms vis., a Man, because Reuben was the first born of his Father, the "excellence of dignity and excellence of power." These Epithets may refer in general to the prerogatives of the first born, which Reuben would certainly have enjoyed according to his just claim, if he had not forfeited it by his offense. (He had slept with his Fathers concubine & had also helped sell his brother Joseph into captivity). And therefor his Father predicted of him: "Unstable as water thou shall not excel." And then mentions the reason why, which means that, as water by a natural propensity inherent in its substance, flows from its source in an elevated situation to a place that is lower than itself, so should Reuben fall from his Birthright, and subside into an inferior situation among the Tribes. And that prophecy was remarkably verified, for nothing great or praiseworthy has been recorded respecting the posterity of Reuben. They were inferior in numbers to the other Tribes and the Pre-eminence was given to Judah.

5. Prince Shelumiel, as the leader of the Tribe of Simeon, bore a Yellow Banner emblazoned with a Sword (some say Simeon's Banner was emblazoned with a City or a Tower). Simeon and Levi were represented by instruments of war, the former with a Sword and the latter with a Dagger; in allusion to the abhorrence testified by the dying Patriarch of the city of these two sons, in the barbarous murder of the Schemites, (their ruler's son had slept with their sister) under the assurance of kindness and good faith. Their Father therefore said " Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." Having been associated in wickedness, it was ordained by a superintending Providence that their posterity should be disunited that they not be furnished with an opportunity of working evil upon their brethren, after the example of their progenitors. Hence the Tribe of Simeon had little or no possession 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 among the tribes and devoted exclusively to the service of the Altar.

6. The Banner of the Tribe of Gad was under the charge of Prince

Eliasaph. It was White and was emblazoned with a Troop of Horsemen. (Dr. Loutherbourg has it charged with a Semee of stars, some give it a flag.) " Gad signifies a troop; and was an allusion to the name that Jacob foretold the difficulties that would be opposed to the progress of his posterity by the hostility of their neighbors. But, though they were doomed sometimes to be defeated, yet in the end by divine assistance, they should overcome their difficulties and establish themselves firmly and peaceably in the portion allotted to them. This Prophecy was fulfilled to the letter; for the Tribe occupying a country beyond Jordan, were necessarily exposed to the incursions of the Ammonites, from whom they suffered severely; but at length, through the military talents of Jepthah, theAmmonites were finally subdued and troubled them no more.

7. Ephraim stepped into the inheritance of his Father Jacob and was elevated into one of the leading Tribes of Israel. His Green Banner, borne by Prince Elishama, was consecrated with the figure of a cherubic emblem of the Deity, viz., an Ox that denoted patient industry and strength. Thus Jehovah said, "Ephraim is the strength of mine Head."

8. Prince Gamaliel led the Tribe ofManasseh. Their tents were pitched under a flesh colored Banner, which was charged with a Luxuriant Vine, Planted By The Side Of A Wall which its tendrils overhung. (Some give this Banner a Unicorn and others a Palm Tree). "Joseph is a fruitful bough growing by a well watered soil, and shooting forth two luxurious branches." This referred to the Tribes of Ephraim and Menasseh; and the prediction was fulfilled by their pre-eminence. Of Joseph it was said: "The archers sorely grieved him, and shot at him and hated him:, which referred to the persecutions of his Brethren who sold him into Egypt , to the false accusation by which he was thrown into prison. But "his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hand were made strong by the almighty God of Jacob." As his enemies were termed Archers, so he is here said to be armed with a bow in his own defense, by which he triumphed over his enemies, and rose to the highest state of worldly prosperity

9. Abidan, Prince of the Tribe of Benjamin, was designated by a Green Banner, emblazoned with a Wolf, because it was ever a warlike and cruel Tribe. It was predicted; (Benjamin shall raven like a wolf in the morning he shall divide the spoil". Though Benjamin was a great favorite of Jacob, as being his youngest son, yet he conferred no peculiar blessing on him, but describes him as the father of a fierce and warlike people. This is evident proof that Jacob acted under the influence of Divine inspiration. The Tribe accordingly partook of the character then depicted; they made war single-handedly against all the other Tribes, and overcame them in battle. Saul also, who sprang from this Tribe, possessed great military talents. His whole life was spent in war; and at length he, as well as his sons, was slain in battle.

10.The Tribe of Dan was the largest Tribe next to Judah, and it was for this reason probably that it was placed in the rear. The great Banner was borne by Prince Ahiezer. It was a Bright Green Color and charged

with an Eagle, a component part of the Cherubim, denoting wisdom and sublimity. (Some give Dan a Banner with the device of a Serpent biting the Heels of a Horse, some an Eagle bearing a Serpent in its Talons, others a Serpent only, and one author thinks Dan's standard bore a Lions Whelp). The name of Dan signifies Judging; and therefore Jacob said "Dan shall judge the people". Or in other words, that Tribe should be one head of one of the great divisions . he said further; "Dan shall be a Serpent by the way", and that the Tribe of Dan was remarkable for defeating their enemies rather by policy than by force, of which there are many instances in the Bible. The Tribe of Dan, however, were ringleaders in idolatry and were the first who apostatized (forsakes) from God.

1 1.Prince Pagiel unfurled the Banner of Asher, which bore a flourishing Tree, or a Cup. Its color was Purple. Asher's Tribe is promised a tract in the Holy Land, which should be fruitful and prolific, and accordingly it produced the necessaries of life in abundance and Mount Carmel abounded in the choicest fruits.

12.The Banner of Naphtali was borne by Prince Ahira, and was designated by a Hind. Its color was Blue. "Naphtali is a Hind let loose; he giveth goodly words". This prophecy denotes that the posterity of Naphtali should be a spirited and free people; and that the Tribe should be fruitful and undergo a prodigious increase. And thus, from four sons, whom Naphtali brought with him into Egypt, proceeded upward of 50,000 descendants, when they were emancipated from their captivity. Their portion was in upper Gallilee, a country always noted for the productivity of its soil. This agrees with the blessing which was given to the Tribe by Moses; " O Naphtali, satisfied with favor and full with the blessings of the Lord,"

There has also been suggested that each banner has a philosophical significance and this requires that the banners be arranged in the order that they are placed in a Royal Arch Chapter

6/ Manessah - pink, a vine beside a wall - the wandering of the vine represents uncertainty and denial, and must be coupled with its brother

(12) Ephriam -green - an ox representing fruitfulness and affirmative attitude of mind. When these two faculties are expressed in harmony then Divine Order is established, this indicates that as we must pass through then to approach the V.O.S.L., all must be in harmony if we are to understand His Holy Word.

5/ Benjamin - green - a wolf - translated from the Hebrew as son of the right hand, son of good fortune, productiveness. This represents faith in the consciousness of man, having conquered the negative thoughts he is willing to share as a wolf shares the prey with the pack.

4/ Dan - green - a serpent biting a horses heel, the Hebrew translation is a judge or advocate. This refers to the faculty of judgement before achieving the spiritual plane. This is critical and must be tempered

with love.

3/ Asher - purple - a cup - Hebrew translation - straight, prosperous, happiness, blessedness. Brings to mind that uprightness of Character and bespeaks of ideas - that our faculties should present the spiritual and not the material.

2/ Napthali - blue - a hind, Hebrew translation is wrestling and refers to the casting out by prayer and meditation those material thoughts we accumulate and we must open our minds to light and truth.

1/ Judah - crimson - A Lion with crown and sceptre - Hebrew translation praise Jehovah and celebrate with him. This indicates that praise and joy in the Almighty through prayer and praise can draw from him god like thoughts and accumulate spiritual substance, life and intelligence that lead to jubilant thanksgiving not supplication.

7/ Issachar - sky blue - an ass crouched between two burdens. In Hebrew this means He will bring reward, that there is a reward. This says that active zeal and indicates that this zeal and hard work will bring rewards and compensation not in the material bet in the spiritual sense.

8/ Zebulun - purple - a ship - Hebrew translation Habitation or dwelling. Not a material dwelling but a spiritual one through the orderly progressive abundance of a universal mind represented by the sea and the feeling of security indicated by the ship. The haven of our homes bring us feelings of security.

9/ Reuben - scarlet - wavy lines - Hebrew translation a son seen, vision of the son, this refers to thoughts coming from and belonging to a conscious mind and bespeaks understanding.

10/ Simeon - yellow - a sword and dagger crossed - The Hebrew translation is hearing, obeying, and one who listens and obeys, receptive. This refers to the state of mind in the devout that looks for and listens to spiritual guidance from the Almighty.

11/ Gad - a troop of horsemen - Hebrew translation is fortune, fortunate, or dispenser of fortune. This brings to mind the faculty of power but mostly on a personal plane and not yet lifted to the true spiritual expression.

This leads us to the positive attitude of mind represented by the banner of Ephraim, which has already been presented. It shows that steady progression required in us if we are to follow in the paths leading to a contemplation of the wondrous works and blessings of the One whom is our own Great Leader and Architect from above. When one studies the Great Religions of the world, it is satisfying to find that though the Name Changes, the rules and blessings laid down in each VOSL are nearly identical. Only our view of what is our just reward is tempered by our own social and racial mores.

To properly identify these Tribes and families. All of these Children were fathered by Jacob except Ephraim and Manesseh.

MOTHER
NAME
BANNER
BLESSING OF JACOB
LEAH
REUBEN RED
WAVVY LINES AS
WATER
LEAH SIMEON &
LEVI YELLOW A DAGGER OR SWORD WANDERERS,
FOR THEIR

CRUELTY.LEVI BECAME

ATTENDENTS AT THE TEMPLE
LEAH
JUDAH CRIMSON A
LION TO RULE AS A LION
BILHAH, RACHEL'S MAID
DAN GREEN, A
SERPENT TO BE A JUDGE OF HIS PEOPLE
BILHAH
NAPHTALI BLUE, A
HIND FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY
ZILPAH, LEAH'S MAID
GAD WHITE, A TROOP OF
HORSEMEN TROUBLE, BUT OVERCOME

ALL IN THE END.
ZILPAH
ASHER PURPLE, A
CUP HIS BREAD SHALL BE FAT OR PLENTY

LEAH
ISSACHER SKY BLUE, AN
ASS A STRONG BUT PEACEFUL PEOPLE
LEAH
ZEBULON PURPLE, A
SHIP TO DWELL ON OR BY THE SEA
LEAH DINAH
RACHEL
JOSEPH NO
BANNER THE FRUITFUL BOUGH,
AND A

BOWMAN
JOSEPH'S SON
EPHRAIM GREEN, AN
OX TO BE A FRUITFUL BOUGH
BY A

WELL
JOSEPH'S SON
MANESSEH PINK A VINE OVER A WALL
THE OTHER HALF OF THE FRUITFUL

BOUGH
RACHEL
BENJAMIN GREEN, A
WOLF TO RAVEN AS A WOLF

The original of this was given by Herbert Pickering . I have added to it from other papers, the Volume of the Sacred Law and other researches notably Most Excellent Comp. Len. Pickell.
V. Ex. Comp Mike Raynor November 1998.