

# BANNERS OF THE ROYAL ARCH

By Randy Crouch  
Grand Captain of the Guard  
of the Grand Council of Iowa

The banners in the Royal Arch represent the tribes of Israel. The tribes that are indicated on the banners are Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan. In the second chapter of Numbers, God commanded Moses to set out a camp and directed the placement of each of the tribes. There are four principal tribes, which are to be camped at the four cardinal points of the compass. Each principal tribe had two other tribes associated with them. The tribe of Judah is set to the east, with Issachar and Zebulun; Reuben to the south, with Simeon and Gad; Ephraim to the west, with Manasseh and Benjamin (Ephraim and Manasseh were the sons of Joseph); and Dan to the north, with Asher and Naphtali. In the 10th chapter of Numbers, the marching order is set out. The tribe of Judah and its associated tribes lead the procession followed by Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan in the rear.

Each of these tribes were designated by a standard. The principal tribes had a banner; however, the color of the banner differed from what we use in the Royal Arch. In our ritual, the banner of Judah is white, Reuben is purple, Ephraim is red, and Dan is blue. The Jewish tradition indicates that Judah's banner was scarlet, Reuben's banner was gold, Ephraim's banner was gold, and Dan's banner was blue. On each of the banners is found, an ensign or emblem. The emblem for Judah is a crouching lion. The emblem for Reuben is a man. The emblem for Ephraim is an ox. The emblem for Dan is an Eagle. The emblems on these banners are the same as the four faces of the cherubim.

The tribe of Judah was the chief tribe and the rulers or kings of Israel were from this tribe. We have all heard of the lion of the house of Judah, which alludes to the emblem on its banner and to the warrior like nature of the tribe. This status was indicated in the blessing given by Jacob in Genesis 49:8-11. The tribe of Reuben was a smaller tribe and was less warlike. This tribe preferred peace and, would also live under the rule of others. Again, this is according to the blessing given in Genesis 49:3-4. The tribe of Ephraim was strong and industrious geared to manual labor and production. The blessing given by Israel, in Genesis 48:15-20, to Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh puts them in place of Simeon and Levi, who were taken out of his blessing, but the tribe of Levi later became the priests and caretakers of the Ark of the Covenant. This is given in the 33rd chapter of Deuteronomy along with a blessing from Moses for the tribes of Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh. The tribe of Dan is the tribe from which the judges came. The tribe Dan was the largest tribe, and therefore protected the rear. As judges they preferred to defeat their enemies by policy, rather than by force. The blessing given to Dan is also given in Genesis 49:16-17, and that blessing gives the possibility that the Emblem on the banner could have also been a serpent. Sampson was from the tribe of Dan.