

Did Lehi Organize His Posterity into Seven Tribes?

1. Nephites*

2. Jacobites

3. Josephites

4. Zoramites

5. Lamanites

6. Lemuelites

7. Ishmaelites

*Sam's lineage was numbered by Lehi with Nephi's

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Key Scriptures Jacob 1:13; 4 Nephi 1:36–38; Mormon 1:8; Genesis 49

Explanation Before his death, Lehi gave blessings and counsel to his posterity (see 2 Nephi 4:1–11). At this time, he may have organized them into seven tribes: Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites (see Jacob 1:13; 4 Nephi 1:38; Mormon 1:8). While Nephite and Lamanite governments came and went, the tribal structure of their society endured, suggesting that Lehi’s children considered his organization of tribes binding and constitutional. The patriarch “father Lehi,” as he is called by Enos, Benjamin, Alma, Helaman, Nephi, and Mormon, parallels Jacob/Israel in many respects, for both organized a people of God in a new land of promise by dividing their children into groups.

Sources John L. Sorenson, John A. Tvedtnes, and John W. Welch, “Seven Tribes: An Aspect of Lehi’s Legacy,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 93–95; see John W. Welch, “Lehi’s Last Will and Testament: A Legal Approach,” in *Second Nephi: The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 68–70.