

Kenite

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[some Ke'nite] קְנִי (Ke'ni), prob. from קָנַ, to work in iron, **Genesis 15:19**; **Numbers 24:21**; **Judges 1:16**; **Judges 4:11**; **Judges 4:17**; **Judges 5:24**; **1 Samuel 15:6**; **1 Samuel 30:29**; written also קְנִי (Keni'), **1 Samuel 27:10**; and plural, קְנִים (Kinim'), **1 Chronicles 2:55**; Sept. Κεναῖοι, **Genesis 15:19**; Κεναῖος, **Numbers 24:21**; **Judges 4:11**; **Judges 4:17**; Κιναῖοι, **1 Chronicles 2:55**; Κιναῖος, **Judges 1:16**; **Judges 5:24**; **1 Samuel 15:6**; Κενί v. r. Κενεζί, **1 Samuel 27:10**; **1 Samuel 30:29**; Vulg. **Cincei**, **Genesis 15:19**; **1 Chronicles 2:55**; **Cinceus**, **Numbers 24:21**; **Judges 1:16**; **Judges 4:11**; **Judges 4:17**; **Judges 5:24**; **1 Samuel 15:6**; **Ceni**, **1 Samuel 27:10**; **1 Samuel 30:29**; Auth. Vers. "Kenites," **Genesis 15:19**; **Numbers 24:21**; **Judges 4:11**; **1 Samuel 15:6**; **1 Samuel 27:10**; **1 Samuel 30:29**; **1 Chronicles 2:55**; "Kenite," **Judges 1:16**; **Judges 4:17**; **Judges 5:24**; sometimes written קְנִין (Ka'yin), **Numbers 24:22**, Septuag. νοσσιὰ πανουργίας, Vulg. Cin, Auth. Vers. "Kenite; **Judges 4:11**, last clause, Sept. Κενᾶ, Vulg. **Cincei**, Auth. Vers. "Kenites"), a collective name for a tribe of people who originally inhabited the rocky and desert region lying between Southern Palestine and the mountains of Sinai adjoining and even partly intermingling with the Amalekites (**Numbers 24:21**; **1 Samuel 15:6**). In the time of Abraham they possessed a part of that country which the Lord promised to him (**Genesis 15:19**), and which extended from Egypt to the Euphrates (**Genesis 15:18**). At the Exodus the Kenites pastured their flocks round Sinai and Horeb. Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, was a Kenite (**Judges 1:16**); and it was when Moses kept his flocks on the heights of Horeb that the Lord appeared to him in the burning bush (**Exodus 3:1-2**). Now Jethro is said to have been "priest of Midian" (**Exodus 3:1**), and a "Midianite" (**Numbers 10:29**); hence we conclude that the Midianites and Kenites were identical. It seems, however, that there were two distinct tribes of Midianites, one

descended from Abraham's son by Keturah (**Genesis 25:2**), and the other an elder Arabian tribe. (See **MIDIANITE**).

If this be so, then the Kenites were the older tribe. They were nomads, and roamed over the country on the northern border of the Sinai peninsula, and along the eastern shores of the Gulf of Akabah. This region agrees well with the prophetic description of Balaam: "And he looked on. the Kenites, and said, Strong is thy dwelling place, and thou puttest thy nest (*ken*, alluding to their name) in a rock" (**Numbers 24:21**). The wild and rocky mountains along the west side of the valley of Arabah, and on both shores of the Gulf of Akabah, were the home of the Kenites. The connection of Moses with the Kenites, and the friendship shown by that tribe to the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness, had an important influence upon their after history. Moses invited Jethro to accompany him to Palestine; he declined (**Numbers 10:29-32**), but a portion of the tribe afterwards joined the Israelites, and had assigned to them a region on the southern border of Judah, such as fitted a nomad people (**Judges 1:16**). There they had the Israelites on the one side, and the Amalekites on the other, occupying a position similar to that of the Tartar tribes in Persia at the present day. One family of them, separating themselves from their brethren in the south, migrated away to Northern Palestine, and pitched their tents beneath the oak-trees on the upland grassy plains of Kedesh-Naphtali (**Judges 4:11**, where we should translate: "And Heber the Kenite had severed himself from Kain of the children of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses, and pitched," etc.). It was here that Jael, the wife of Heber, their chief, slew Sisera, who had sought refuge in her tent (**Judges 4:17-21**). It would appear from the narrative that while the Kenites preserved their old friendly intercourse with the Israelites, they were also at peace with the enemies of Israel -with the Canaanites in the north and the Amalekites in the south. When Saul marched against the Amalekites, he warned the Kenites to separate themselves from them, for, he said, "Ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt" (**1 Samuel 15:6**).

The Kenites still retained their possessions in the south of Judah during the time of David, who made a similar exemption in their case

in his feigned attack (**1 Samuel 27:10**; compare 30:20), but we hear no more of them in Scripture history. If it be necessary to look for a literal "fulfilment" of the sentence of Balaam (**Numbers 24:22**), we shall best find it in the accounts of the latter days of Jerusalem under Jehoiakim, when the Kenite Rechabites were so far "wasted" by the invading army of Assyria as to be driven to take refuge within the walls of the city, a step to which we may be sure nothing short of actual extremity could have forced these Children of the Desert. Whether "Asshur carried them away captive" with the other inhabitants we are not told, but it is at least probable.

Josephus gives the name Κενετίδες (*Ant.* 5:5, 4); but in his notice of Saul's expedition (6, 7, 3) he has τὸ τῶν Σικιμιτῶν ἔθνος -the form in which he elsewhere gives that of the Shechemites. In the Targums, instead of Kenites we find *Shalmai* (שַׁלְמָאי), and the Talmudists generally represent them as an Arabian tribe (Lightfoot, *Opera*, ii, 429; Reland, *Palcest.* p. 140). The same name is introduced in the Samarit. Vers. before "the Kenite" in **Genesis 15:19** only. Procopius describes the Kenites as holding the country about Petra and Cades (Kadesh), and bordering on the Amalekites (ad Genesis 15; see Reland, p. 81). The name has long since disappeared, but probably the old Kenites are represented by some of the nomad tribes that still pasture their flocks on the southern frontier of Palestine. The name of *Ba-Kain* (abbreviated from *Bene el-Kain*) is mentioned by Ewald (*Geschichte*, i, 337, note) as borne in comparatively modern days by one of the tribes of the desert; but little or no inference can be drawn from such similarity in names. The most remarkable development of this people, exemplifying most completely their characteristics-their Bedouin hatred of the restraints of civilization, their fierce determination, their attachment to Israel, together with a peculiar semi-monastic austerity not observable in their earlier proceedings-is to be found in the sect of the Rechabites, instituted by Rechab, or Jonadab his son, who come prominently forward on more than one occasion in the later history. (See RECHABITE).

The founder of this sub-family appears to have been a certain Hammath (Auth. Vers. "Hemath"), and a singular testimony is furnished to the connection which existed between this tribe of Midianitish

wanderers and the nation of Israel, by the fact that their name and descent are actually included in the genealogies of the great house of Judah (**1 Chronicles 2:55**). It appears that, whatever was the general condition of the Midianites, the tribe of the Kenites possessed a knowledge of the true God in the time of Jethro, (See HOBAB); and that those families which Settled in Palestine did not afterwards lose that knowledge, but increased it, is clear from the passages which have been cited. See Hengstenberg, *Bileam*, p. 192 sq.; Schwarz, *Palestine*, p. 218; Ewald, *Gesch. der V. Israel*, i, 337; ii, 31; Ritter, *Erdkunde*, 15:135-138; also the monographs of A. Murray, *Comm. de Kinceis* (Hamb. 1718); A. G. Kerzig, *Bibl. hist. Abhandl. v. d. Kenitern* (Chemnitz, 1798). (See MIDIANITE).