

BENJI: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MAN WHO BROUGHT THE INTELLIGENCE OF SEARCH TO OUR DNA

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Benji is a fictitious entity that journeys into the world of bio-information as commodity and envisions the prospects of genetic discrimination and the increasing personalization of marketing. Named after the child of Sergey Brin (Google.com) and Anne Wojcicki, (23andme.com), Benji represents an ideological and economic union seen in royal political marriages and corporate mergers. Benji's mission is to be the world's leading DNA search engine.

Although Prof. Benji Brin is best known for founding Benji™, the world's leading DNA search engine, he cannot be categorised so simply. If nothing else, his life was too varied, his influence too broad. There are tribesmen in Southern Africa, for example, who know nothing of bioinformatics and Benji™, but know Prof. Benji Brin for his philanthropic efforts. Likewise, there are factory workers in Albania who know him only as a pioneer scientist; children in China who know him as the wise author of their code of destiny; and readers, in dozens of languages, who know him only for his many literary achievements. So Prof. Benji Brin is not an easy man to define, and certainly does not fit popular misconceptions of him as some 'guru scientist,' an aloof and contemplative figure. Yet the more one gets to know this man and his achievements, the more one comes to realise that he was precisely the kind of person who could bring to us the unprecedented DNA search engine, an invention that will continue to shape our world for centuries to come.

Born prematurely on the 25th of December 2008 in Los Altos Hills, California, Benji Michael Brin chose to arrive one week earlier. The auspicious birth of this remarkable child, on this holiest of days, anticipated a lifetime of faithful reverence, fortune and wisdom. Nestled in his mother's bosom, the newborn infant was serenely calm, yet a certain cheekiness – which would always remain part of his personality – unmistakably glimmered in his eyes. Baby Benji couldn't wait to embrace the world that he was destined to change. Naturally, one could say that he was born brazenly defiant of nature's ways, an attitude that brought with it the gift to shape his own fate. And so it seems that from the very beginning, Benji was a self-made person, bound to become the celebrated visionary figure now remembered by billions.

His father, Sergey Brin was the renowned co-founder of the internet giant Google.com, while his biotechnology-savvy mother, Anne Wojcicki, was the co-founder of 23andme.com. In the warm sunshine of their hillside estate grounds, young Benji grew up enchanted by the panoramic view of the valley, as well as the intricate patterns he saw in wondrous life forms no bigger than the tip of his rosy little pinky. At the same time, in the safe confines of his parents' estate, in the comfort of the family library and technology facilities, young Benji already showed a rare talent for computer science. His reading habits were also well beyond his years – philosophy, science and the pillars of Western literature – all part of an effort to satisfy a rare and boundless curiosity. Even before he could fully understand the underlying science, young Benji was keenly aware that his father had inherited from his grandmother a mutation of a gene called LRRK2, which seems to predispose carriers to hereditary Parkinson's disease. As a result, he also spent his formative years pondering the consequences of birth, the fragility of life

and the bitter fatality of disease. Eugenia, his grandmother, a Jewish-Russian immigrant and a former computer engineer at NASA, played an important role in young Benji's life. Grandma Gena, as he called her, lovingly nurtured him while his parents were busy with their work, but she also strictly disciplined him when he stepped out of line. She vested in him all the secret knowledge she had acquired during the course of her illustrious career. Stricken with grief, he couldn't bear to think that one day his father and dear grandma Gena would be robbed of their vitality by the merciless forces of nature. Young Benji vowed to hunt down and fight what his father euphemistically called 'his personal bug', to demystify once and for all the process of biological breakdown known to humankind as mortality.

In high school, young Benji regularly confounded his examiners, having previously discussed philosophy with his private tutors, engaged in spirited scientific debate with his parents, and auto-didactically cultivated the art of meditation. However, there was one specific event, which was to mark the beginning of the first major branch of his career. Obviously, his parents' work brought them into the very nucleus of the American high-tech elite. Their business enterprises attracted the best and brightest businessmen, politicians and research scientists, from local Silicon Valley to the farthest corners of the earth. Celebrities and luminaries such as Natasha Vita-More, Andrew Hessel, Mark Zuckerberg, Eugene Kleiner, and the Rockefeller family regularly dropped by for coffee visits or friendly chats. However, one particular person was to radically transform young Benji's view on the mechanisms of life. When he was introduced to Ray Kurzweil, during a dinner party, which his family hosted annually, Benji was absolutely enthralled by Kurzweil's theories of Singularity and his admirable quest for transcendence. At last, Benji thought, here was a real chance to provide not only future security for his beloved community, but also to possibility overwrite his family's genetic weakness. Although the encounter left him with many unanswered questions, this was the moment when Benji's enduring interest in unravelling the mysteries of the human DNA code was born.

With his parents' blessings, Benji was admitted, at the tender age of fifteen, to the prestigious Singularity University. This in itself was a startling achievement, as he was the youngest applicant ever to join the Exponential Technologies Executive Program, ordinarily reserved for the ranks of venture capitalists, CEOs, strategists, entrepreneurs and government leaders. Already rising above his exceptionally gifted heritage, Benji now showed an extraordinary aptitude for networks and computing systems, biotechnology and bioinformatics. He was a fervent student, excelled in all his classes, and was already close to making his first groundbreaking discovery. As radical as it may have seemed at the time, he had a hunch that the source of all 'original behaviour' takes place at the most fundamental level – the genetic level. He hypothesised that if psychological mood cycles and physical habits could be conquered within the gene, then it should be possible to not only predict and determine, but also to essentially pre-empt, any actual physical manifestations – thus preventing otherwise inevitable diseases, drug addictions and other factors of biological breakdown. It was here that he first began to work out a rudimentary version of his theory of 'DNA Switch Isolation', which he was to further develop in his seminal doctoral thesis. This was the discovery that soon brought Prof. Benji Brin to found Benji™, and ultimately led him to a series of previously unimaginable technological achievements.

Among other landmark events, Prof. Benji Brin became the first to scientifically isolate and draw accurate prognostications from DNA, while objectively demonstrating technological potentials of human transcendence well in advance of contemporary scientific thought. His vision of Benji™ was to create the ultimate service: controlling our destiny through DNA. Its goal was to empower individuals while developing new ways of accelerating scientific research and the market-driven economy. Benji™ combined genetics with the ubiquity of the Internet to produce a significant and positive global impact. Using state-of-the-art technology, Benji™ carefully analyses our personal genetic information and matches our

data to personalised advertisements, which are guaranteed to enhance our day-to-day life, as well as our long-term health and life expectancy. The company proudly claims that its database contains the most complete health and DNA records of the human race. As the value of genetic information increases, Benji's™ mission has broadened to further improve corporate research of the ways in which genetic data predetermines our lives. This way Benji™ can continue to provide an increasingly refined and superior service. To assure that the technology is available to all humankind, Prof. Benji Brin has personally directed the international spread of Benji™, paving the way for the rapidly approaching global enlightenment. Benji™ is a practical service, applicable to every aspect of human existence. It is a service for the here and now. Yet at its core and within each and every Benji™ lies this enduring invitation from its Founder: "We are extending to you the precious gift of freedom and immortality – factually, honestly."