

Mystery of the Myth: The Ten Lost Tribes

by [Chuck Missler](#)

This month (June 1995) we celebrate the Feast of Shavout, or Pentecost. In Peter's famous speech on this day in Acts Chapter 2, he referred to both "Jews" and "Israel", which brings up an ubiquitous myth concerning the "Ten Lost Tribes" of Israel.

There are many groups that believe the northern tribes, separated during the rift between Rehoboam and Jeroboam after the death of Solomon (and subsequently taken captive by Assyria in 722 b.c.), later migrated to Europe and elsewhere.

The myth of the "Ten Lost Tribes" is the basis for "British- Israelism" and other colorful legends, but these stories have no real Biblical basis. They are based upon misconceptions derived from the misreading of various Bible passages.¹

The Faithful Voted With Their Feet

Before the Assyrian captivity, substantial numbers from the northern tribes had identified themselves with the house of David.² The rebellion of Jeroboam and subsequent crises caused many to repudiate the Northern Kingdom and unite with the Southern Kingdom in a common alliance to the house of David and a desire to worship the Lord in Jerusalem.³

In 930 b.c., Jeroboam ruled the Northern Kingdom from his capital in Samaria.⁴ When Jeroboam turned the Northern Kingdom to idolatry, the Levites (and others who desired to remain faithful) migrated south to Rehoboam.⁵

Horrified that Jeroboam had set up a rival religion with golden calf worship at Bethel and Dan, many Northerners moved south, knowing that the only place acceptable to God was the Temple on Mt. Moriah.⁶ Those who favored idolatry migrated north to Jeroboam.

Later, when Asa reigned as king in the south, another great company came from the north.⁷

Years after the deportation by Assyria, King Hezekiah of Judah issued a call to all Israel to come and worship in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover.⁸ Eighty years later King Josiah of Judah also issued a call, and an offering for the Temple was received from "Manasseh and Ephraim and all the remnant of Israel..."⁹

Eventually, all 12 tribes were represented in the south. God even addresses the 12 tribes in the south: "Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin..."¹⁰ The "tribe of Judah" (2 Kings 17:18, et al.) is used idiomatically for the Southern Kingdom.¹¹ When encountering the tribal designations, it is important to distinguish between the territories allocated to the tribes and the people themselves.

The Northern Kingdom Falls

In 724 b.c. Shalmaneser V besieged Samaria for three years. King Hoshea of Israel attempted to revolt against paying Assyrians annual tribute money--a treaty with Pharaoh of Egypt did not help¹²--and Samaria, Jeroboam's capital, fell in 722 b.c. with Sargon II seizing power in 721 b.c.

The Assyrians implemented their infamous policy of mixing conquered peoples to keep them from organizing a revolt. Israelite captives were mixed with Persians and others, and strangers from far-off lands were resettled in Samaria. The resulting mixed, quasi-Jewish populations became the "Samaritans."¹³ (You can read about this "fall" in 2 Kings 17.)

Not all from the Northern Kingdom were deported. Archaeologists have uncovered annals of the Assyrian Sargon, in which he tells that he carried away only 27,290 people and 50 chariots.¹⁴

Population estimates of the Northern Kingdom at that time range from 400,000 to 500,000; less than 1/20th were deported-- mostly the leadership from the capital, Samaria. The rest of the Northern Kingdom were taken by Assyria as slaves, which were a valuable commodity. (It is difficult to view the Assyrians as careless enough to let their captives wander off to Europe.)

When the Babylonians take over Assyria, the descendants of the "ten tribes" were probably again commingled with the captives of Judah.

The Babylonians Take Over

When the Northern Kingdom went into captivity (722 b.c.), all 12 tribes were also represented in the south. When the Babylonians took the Southern Kingdom into captivity (586 b.c.), members of all 12 tribes of

Israel were involved. Isaiah, prophesying to Judah, refers to them as the "House of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel..." (Isaiah 48:1; cf. vv. 12-14).

Post-Captivity Terminology

After the Babylonian captivity, the terms "Jew" and "Israelite" are used interchangeably. Ezra calls the returning remnant "Jews" 8 times and "Israel" 40 times. (Ezra also speaks of "all Israel": Ezra 2:70; 3:11; 8:35; 10:25, et al.) Nehemiah uses the term "Jew" 11 times and "Israel" 22 times. Nehemiah too speaks of "all Israel" being back in the land (Nehemiah 12:47). The remnant who returned from Babylon is represented as "the nation" (Malachi 1:1, et al.).

The same is true in the New Testament. Our Lord is said to have offered Himself to the nation, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6; 15:24). Tribes other than Judah are mentioned specifically in the New Testament as being represented in the land.¹⁵

Anna knew her tribal identity was of the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36). Paul knew he was of the tribe of Benjamin, a "Jew" and an "Israelite" (Romans 11:1). The New Testament speaks of "Israel" 75 times and uses the word "Jew" 174 times.¹⁶

At the Feast of Pentecost Peter cries, "*Ye men of Judea*" (Acts 2:14), "*ye men of Israel...*" (Acts 2:22), and "*All the house of Israel*" (Acts 2:36).

Regathered as One

Ezekiel 36 and 37, the Dry Bones Vision, declares that Judah (Jews) and Israel (10 tribes) shall be joined as one in the regathering.¹⁷ This is true today. (The total physical descendants were not the people to whom the promises were made [Romans 9:4-7].)

Anti-Semitism

Accompanying some of the legends of the so-called "Ten Lost Tribes" are aspersions on the present State of Israel and the people being regathered in the Land. These various theories such as "British Israelism" are by their nature anti-Semitic because they deny the Jewish people their proper place in the plan of God. Let's remember that Genesis 12:3 has never been repealed!

Israel is being regathered in the land just as God has announced.¹⁸ There is yet to come an event which will awaken them to realize that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob once again has His hand upon them (Ezekiel 38, 39). I believe this event could happen at any moment.¹⁹

The Throne of David was promised to the Son of Mary (Luke 1:32). I believe His taking possession of it is on the near horizon. Maranatha!

Sources:

1. Lewis, David Allen, **Can Israel Survive in a Hostile World?**, New Leaf Press, 1993.
2. Scofield, C.I., **The New Scofield Study Bible**, notes on 2 Kings 17:23.

Notes:

1. 2 Kings 17:7-23; 2 Chronicles 6:6-11, etc.
2. 1 Kings 12:16-20; 2 Chronicles 11:16-17.
3. 2 Chronicles 19:4; 30:1, 10-11, 25-26; 34:5-7, 22; 35:17-18.
4. 1 Kings 11:43-12:33.
5. 2 Chronicles 11:14-17.
6. Deuteronomy 12:5-7; 16:2-6; Isaiah 18:7.
7. 2 Chronicles 15:9.
8. Chronicles 30:5-6, 10-11, 21.
9. 2 Chronicles 34:9.
10. 2 Chronicles 11:3.
11. Cf. 1 Kings 11:13, 32.
12. 2 Kings 18:2.
13. John 4:20-22.
14. Biblical Archaeology, VI, 1943, page 58.
15. Matthew 4:13, 15; Luke 2:36; Acts 4:36; Philipians 3:5; "the twelve tribes," Acts 26:7; James 1:1.

16. Acts 21:39; 22:3; Romans 11:1; 2 Corinthians 4 11:22; Philipians 3:5, etc.
17. Ezekiel 37:16-17, 21-22.
18. Ezekiel 36, 37; Isaiah 11:11, et al.
19. See [The Magog Invasion](#) Audio Book for more information on the predicted invasion of Israel and its role in the end times.



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