

Myth of the “10 Lost Tribes”

- Joshua entered the Promised Land, and with a 7 year campaign, he finished his job: he dispossessed the land from the usurpers
 - The subsequent generations did a terrible job at follow-up (Judges recounts their dismal failures)
- When Joshua conquered the land, he divided the land by lots as God had ordained
- Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh settle east of the Jordan; their agreement with Joshua was that was OK as long as they go across and fight with the rest of Israel, which they did
- Dan is assigned between Benjamin and the coast; Benjamin is the area of Jerusalem, and Judah and Simeon are south
 - When Samson dies (he didn't accomplish much for the tribe of Dan other than some pranks) - the tribe can't subdue the Philistines
 - So Dan sends a party up north, they subdue a town of Laish, and the rest of the tribe follows; so Dan doesn't stay in their allocated land, but moves north and becomes associated with the northern part of the country
- Levites were assigned to 48 cities (they receive no allocation of land otherwise); 6 cities were “Cities of Refuge”

Division of the Land

The Tribes were allocated their portions by casting lots.

Unable to subdue the Philistines, Dan takes over Laish in the north

Levites were assigned to 48 cities; Six of which were designated "Cities of Refuge."



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 BC), 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 (2 Kings 17:7-23; 2 Chr 6:6-11, etc.).

No "Lost" Tribes Here

- "For Judah...and for all the house of Israel his companions": Judah, Benjamin, Simeon, Levi, et al. (Cf. 2 Chr 11:13-17)
- "Joseph or Ephraim": The northern tribes (remnants of the eight remaining...)

Voting With their Feet

In 930 BC, Jeroboam ruled the Northern Kingdom from his capital in Samaria (1 Kings 11:43 – 12:33). When Jeroboam turned the Northern Kingdom to idolatry, the Levites (and others who desired to remain faithful) migrated south to Rehoboam (2 Chr 11:13-17).

Pursuit of Political Correctness

Horrified that Jeroboam 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 in Jerusalem (Deut 12:5-7; 16:2-6; Is 18:7). Those who favored idolatry, migrated north to Jeroboam. Later, when Asa reigned as king in the south, another great company came from the north (2 Chr 15:9).

Confirmations

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..." (2 Chr 11:3). The "tribe of Judah" is used idiomatically for the Southern Kingdom (Cf. 1 Kings 11:13,32, etc.; 2 Kings 17:18).

Fruchtenbaum:

The concept of the "10 lost tribes" of Israel is actually a myth, and they were never lost. This is quite clear historically. When the northern kingdom went into Assyrian captivity, they were settled in specific cities in Assyria. When Babylon conquered the Assyrian empire, all ten tribes fell under the Babylonian sovereignty. Babylon also conquered Judah, thus subduing the remaining two tribes. So all twelve tribes were under the same sovereign authority of Babylonia.

When the Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylonia, all twelve tribes fell under Medo-Persian authority. The Persians allowed the Jews to return to their home country, and most members of all twelve tribes did indeed return to the Land. However, other members of all twelve tribes stayed where they were.

Luke 2 refers to Anna as being "of the tribe of Asher," one of the so called "10 lost tribes." Quite obviously, Anna was not lost.

In Acts 26:7 Paul references "12 tribes" so Paul didn't believe the northern tribes were lost. James addressed his epistle "to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion." He did not need to look for the "lost tribes" in order to deliver the letter to them.

By NT times, personal identification by once distinguishable tribal names became less prominent. Thus, Paul called himself a Hebrew, and he also called himself an Israelite. In Phil 3:5, he identified himself as a Benjaminite, but he also called himself a Jew, which became a generic term for the members of all the tribes of Israel. So, all those who call themselves Jews today can come from any of the twelve tribes of Israel and not just two.

When encountering the tribal designations, it is important to distinguish between the territories allocated to the tribes and the people themselves. For example, Judah is a reference to both a tribe of people as well as a geographic region. However, once

Jeroboam sets up these idols in the north and there is significant migration from north to south and south to north, there are people that live in the region of Judah that aren't from the tribe of Judah. If I say I'm a Californian, I was born there but I don't live there...I live in Arizona. You must understand the differences in references for geography and ethnicity. Years after the deportation by Assyria, King Hezekiah of Judah issued a call to all Israel to come and worship in Jerusalem and celebrate Passover (2 Chr 30:5-6,10-11,21). Eighty years later, King Josiah of Judah also issued a call and an offering for the temple came back from "Manasseh and Ephraim and all the remnant of Israel..." (2 Chr 34:9).

The Northern Kingdom Falls

In 724 BC, 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 help (2 Kings 18:2). Samaria, Jeroboam's capital, fell in 722 BC; Assyrians pulled down towers, took 27,290 captive; placed an Assyrian ruler over the city, and looted it of 50 royal chariots, and other items, etc.

The Assyrians implemented their infamous policy of intermixing 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 resulted in "Samaritans"; Cf. John 4:20-22.)

The Babylonians Take Over

When the Northern Kingdom went into captivity (722 BC), all 12 tribes were also represented in the south. The northern kingdom had been taken by Assyria as slaves, which were a valuable commodity. (It is difficult to view them as careless enough to let them wander off to Europe.) When the Babylonians took the Southern Kingdom into captivity (586 BC), 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..." (Is 48:1,12-14).

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

Commingled Terminology

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

New Testament Terminology

- Our Lord is said to have offered Himself to the nation, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:5-6; 15:24)
- Other tribes than Judah are mentioned specifically in the NT as being represented in the land (Matt 4:13,15; Luke 2:36; Acts 4:36; Phil 3:5)
- "The Twelve Tribes" (Acts 26:7; James 1:1)
- Anna knew her tribal identity from the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:30)
- Paul knew he was of the tribe of Benjamin—a "Jew" and an "Israelite" (Rom 11:1)
- At 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)
- The NT speaks of Israel 70x in 68 NT verses (in the KJV) and uses the word "Jew" 174x (Acts 21:39; 22:3; Rom 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5, etc.)

Regathered as One

Ezekiel 36-37, the Dry Bones Vision, declares that Judah (Jews) and Israel (10 tribes) shall be joined as one in the regathering (Ezek 37:16-17,21-22). This is true today. [The total physical descendants were not the people to whom the promises were made (Rom 9:4-7).] Israel is being regathered in the land just as God has announced (Ezek 36-37; Is 11:11, et al). 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 (Ezek 38-39). I believe this event could happen at any moment. 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.

Eschatological Implications

- There are 12,000 sealed from each of The 12 Tribes (Rev 7)
- The 12 Apostles are to rule over each of The 12 Tribes (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30)
- The 12 Tribes each have designated divisions of the Land in the Millennium (Ezek 48)