Ten Lost Tribes

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The phrase Ten Lost Tribes of Israel refers to the ancient Tribes of Israel that disappeared from the Biblical account after the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed, enslaved and exiled by ancient Assyria.[1] Many groups of Jews have doctrines concerning the continued hidden existence or future public return of these tribes. This is a subject that is partially based upon authenticated and documented historical fact, partially upon written religious tradition and partially upon speculation. There is a vast amount of literature on the Lost Tribes and no specific source can be relied upon for a complete answer.

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Twelve Tribes

According to the Hebrew Bible, Jacob (progenitor of Israel) had 12 sons and at least one daughter by two wives and two concubines. The twelve sons fathered the twelve Tribes of Israel.

- When the land of Israel was apportioned among the tribes in the days of Joshua, the Tribe of Levi, being priests, did not receive land (Joshua 13:33, 14:3). However; the tribe of Levi was given cities. Six cities were given to the tribe as refuge cities for all men of Israel and they were to be controlled by the Levites. Three of these cities were located on each opposing side of the Jordan River. In addition, 42 other cities (and their respective open spaces) totaling 48 cities were given to the Tribe of Levi. (Numbers 35)
On the other hand, Jacob elevated the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh (the two sons of Joseph by his Egyptian wife Asenath) (Genesis 41:50) to the status of full tribes in their own right, replacing the Tribe of Joseph (Joshua 14:4). Each received its own land and had its own encampment during the 40 years of wandering in the desert.

Thus, the two divisions of the tribes are:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Traditional division:</th>
<th>Division according to apportionment of land in Israel:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Reuben</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Simeon</td>
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<td>4. Judah</td>
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<td>5. Issachar</td>
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<td>7. Dan</td>
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<td>8. Naphtali</td>
<td>8. Gad</td>
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<td>10. Asher</td>
<td>10. Benjamin</td>
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<td>13. Levi (no territorial allotment, except a number of cities located within the territories of the other tribes)</td>
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### Which tribes were lost

The phrase "Ten Lost Tribes" does not appear in the Bible, leading some to questions the actual number of tribes involved. However, 1 Kings 11:31 (http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=1%20Kings&verse=11:31&src=HE) states that the LORD will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give ten tribes to Jeroboam:

"And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee" (1 Kings 11:31 (http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=1%20Kings&verse=11:31&src=KJV))

"But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes." (1 Kings 11:35 (http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=1%20Kings&verse=11:35&src=KJV))

However, it is not clear which tribes are to be counted as lost. The tribes which have been lost are those which formed the Kingdom of Israel following the dissolution of the united Kingdom of Israel in c. 930 BCE. The tribes of Reuben, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Ephraim and Manasseh were parts of the kingdom, a total of nine.

It has sometimes been said that the Tribe of Simeon was a part of the northern Kingdom of Israel and was therefore part of the "Ten Lost Tribes." However, the Tribe of Simeon was never located in the Northern Kingdom, but was located entirely within the land of Judah. (Joshua 19:1 (http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Joshua&verse=19:1&src=HE)) Apparently, Simeon's tribal distinctions were lost shortly after Canaan was settled by the Israelites when the Simeonites assimilated into the Tribe of Judah.

On the other hand, some count Manasseh as consisting of two half-tribes: East Manasseh and West Manasseh, which are separately counted as lost.

### Religious beliefs

The concept of the "Ten Lost Tribes" originally began in a religious context, based on Biblical sources, not as an ethnological idea. Some scientists have researched the topic, and at various times some have made claims of empirical evidence of the Ten Lost Tribes. However, religious and scriptural sources remain the main sources of the belief that the Ten Lost Tribes have some continuing, though hidden, identity somewhere.

There are numerous references in Biblical writings. In Ezekiel 37:16-17, the prophet is told to write on one staff (quoted here in part) "For Judah..." and on the other (quoted here in part), "For Joseph..." (the main Lost Tribe). The prophet is then told that these two groups shall be someday reunited.

Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. Ezekiel 37:16-17 KJV

There are also discussions in the Talmud as to whether the Ten Lost Tribes will eventually be reunited with the Tribe of Judah, that is, with the Jewish people.

### Historical background

After the civil war in the time of Solomon's son Rehoboam, ten tribes split off from the United Monarchy to create the northern Kingdom of Israel.
These were the nine landed tribes: Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, Dan, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben and Gad, and some members of Levi who had no land allocation. The Bible makes no reference at this point to the Tribe of Simeon, and some believe that the tribe had already disappeared due to the curse of Jacob. (Genesis 49:5-7)

Judah, the southern kingdom, had Jerusalem as its capital and was ruled by King Rehoboam. It was populated by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (and also by some members of Levi and by the remnants of Simeon).

In 722 BCE the Assyrians under Shalmaneser V and then under Sargon II conquered the northern Kingdom of Israel, destroyed its capital Samaria and sent the Israelites into exile and captivity in Khorasan, now part of eastern Iran and western Afghanistan. The Ten Lost Tribes are those Israelites who were deported by the Assyrians. In Jewish popular culture, the ten tribes disappeared from history, leaving only the tribes of Benjamin and Judah to become the ancestors of modern day Jews.

In 607 BCE the nation of Judea was conquered by Babylonia. About 70 years later, in 537 BCE, the Persians (who had conquered Babylon in 539 BCE) allowed Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. It is speculated, however, that by the end of this era, members of the tribes seem to have abandoned their individual identities in favor of a common one.

17th- to mid-20th-century theories

Since at least the 17th century both Jews and Christians have proposed theories concerning the lost tribes, based to varying degrees on Biblical accounts. An Ashkenazi Jewish tradition speaks of the Lost Tribes as Die Roite Yiddelech, "The little red Jews", cut off from the rest of Jewry by the legendary river Sambation "whose foaming waters raise high up into the sky a wall of fire and smoke that is impossible to pass through".[2] On December 23, 1649, after Manasseh ben Israel, a noted rabbi of Amsterdam had been told by Antonio de Montezinos that some of the Lost Tribes were living among the Native Americans of the Andes in South America, he wrote:

"... I think that the Ten Tribes live not only there ... but also in other lands scattered everywhere; these never did come back to the Second Temple and they keep till this day still the Jewish Religion ..."[3]

In 1655, Manasseh ben Israel petitioned Oliver Cromwell to allow the Jews to return to England. Since 1290, Jews had been prohibited by law from living in England. One of the reasons for Cromwell's alleged interest in the return of the Jews to England was the abundance at the time of theories relating to the end of the world. Many of these ideas were fixed upon the year 1666 and the Fifth Monarchy Men who were looking for the return of Jesus as the Messiah who would establish a final kingdom to rule the physical world for a thousand years. They supported Cromwell's Republic in the expectation that it was a preparation for the fifth monarchy - that is, the monarchy which should succeed the Assyrian, the Persian, the Greek, and Roman world empires.

Mixed in with all of this was a background of general belief that the Lost Ten Tribes did not represent ethnic Jews who partially formed the ancient Kingdom of Judah, but tribes who maintained a separate capital at Samaria. Some have attempted to dismiss this complicated saga by stating that it is nothing but Supersessionism. However, the ideas behind these various competing theories are far more complicated, especially when Sabbatai Zevi, the "messiah" claimant and his supporters postulated that he represented groups in addition to those identified as being Jews. However, Zevi lost his credibility to all but the Donmeh when he converted to Islam and became an apostate to Judaism in 1666.

During the latter half of the 18th century, variations on this same theory were advocated by some who believed that the British Empire of nations was a manifestation of ancient prophecies recorded in the Book of Genesis predating both the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah.

Others believe that the 'Lost Tribes' simply merged with the local population. For instance, the New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia states "In historic fact, some members of the Ten Tribes remained in Palestine, where apart from the Samaritans some of their descendants long preserved their identity among the Jewish population, others were assimilated, while others were presumably absorbed by the last Judean exiles who in 597-586 [B.C.E.] were deported to Assyria...Unlike the Judeans of the southern Kingdom, who survived a similar fate 135 years later, they soon assimilated..."[4]. Part of this article and a similar article can be read online at Roads to Dystopia (http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=wvtWqHHFQYoC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=Lyman+%22The+Lost+Tribes+of+Israel+as+a+Problem+in+History+and+Sociology%22&ots=G6Xz9hga8N&sig=X0cFmbFF3D16mB-fzcTSkpdsA8c#PPA168,M1)

Groups claiming descent from specific Lost Tribes

Many groups claim descent from specific Lost Tribes but preliminary scientific evidence such as Y-DNA testing, specifically Haplogroup J would exclude many of them. Some of these groups include:

- Bene Ephraim (from southern India) - claim descent from the Tribe of Ephraim
- Bnei Menashe (from northeast India) - claim descent from the lost Tribe of Manasseh
- Beta Israel, also known as Falashas - Ethiopian Jews some of whom claim descent from the lost Tribe of Dan
- Persian Jews (especially the Bukharan Jews) claim descent from the Tribe of Ephraim
- Igbo Jews of Nigeria claim descent variously from the tribes of Ephraim, Menasseh, Levi, Zebulon and Gad

The Nasranis of Malabar, India are of Hebrew or Israelite heritage but not much is known of their past, making it difficult to be certain that they are also descended from the 'Lost Tribes'. (Ref. Dr. Asahel Grant's 'The Nestorians or the Lost Tribes of Israel' for more about the Nazarenes and Nestorians).
Bene Israel of South Asia

The Bene Israel (Hebrew: "Sons of Israel") are a group of Jews who live in various Indian cities, Mumbai, Pune, Ahmadabad, and in Pakistan such as in Karachi, Peshawer and Multan. Prior to their waves of emigration to Israel and still to this day, the Bene Israel form the largest sector of the subcontinent's Jewish population, and constitute the bulk of those sometimes referred to as Pakistani Jews. The native language of the Bene Israel is Judæo-Marathi, a form of Marathi. Most Bene Israel have now emigrated to Israel. Some researchers believe that the Bene Israel are descended from the Ten Tribes.[5]

Bnei Menashe of India

The Bnei Menashe (from northeast India) claim descent from the lost Tribe of Manasseh. Their oral traditions depict them as originally going from the Persian Empire into Afghanistan. (They may have been in the Persian Empire because it occupied the lands of Assyria when it conquered Babylonia.) According to their traditions, they then went to China, where they encountered persecution, then pressed on to India and Southern Asia.[6]

Beta Israel of Ethiopia

The Beta Israel (also known as Falashas) are Ethiopian Jews. Some members of the Beta Israel as well as several Jewish scholars believe that they are descended from the lost Tribe of Dan, as opposed to the traditional story of their descent from the Queen of Sheba.

Persian Jews

Persian Jews (especially the Bukharan Jews) claim descent from the Tribe of Ephraim. Persian Jews (also called Iranian Jews) are members of Jewish communities living in Iran and throughout the former greatest extents of the Persian Empire.

Igbo Jews of Africa

The Igbo Jews of Nigeria claim descent variously from the tribes of Ephraim, Naphtali, Menasseh, Levi, Zebulun and Gad.

Samaritans

All Samaritans, in one form or another, see themselves as descendants of the original Hebrews. The Samaritan community in Israel and the Palestinian territories numbers about 600. These people, who still struggle to keep their ancient traditions, live in what was the capital of Samaria - Nablus and the town of Holon. They claim to be authentic descendants of the Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh who were not exiled. On Passover the whole community sacrifices on Mount Gerizim.

Groups claiming descent from a non-specific Lost Tribe

Some groups believe that they are descended from one of the Lost Tribes, but don't know which one. These include:

- The Lemba tribe (from Southern Africa) claims to be descended from a lost tribe which fled from modern Yemen and journeyed south.
- The House of Israel in Ghana claims to be one of the Lost Tribes of Israel.
- Pashtun people, ethnic Afghans traditionally claim descent from the Lost Tribes.
- Chiang Min people (from northwestern China) claim to be descendants of Abraham.
- British Israelism (sometimes called Anglo-Israelism) claims that the British are the direct lineal descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel.
- The Makuya sect of Japan believes that parallels between ancient Japanese culture and Biblical practice indicate a Lost Tribes origin for many aspects of Japanese religion and culture.

Lemba people of Africa

The Lemba people (Vhalemba) from Southern Africa claim to be descendants of a lost tribe which fled from what is now Yemen and journeyed south.[7][8][9] DNA testing has genetically linked the Lemba with modern Jews.[10][11] They have specific religious practices similar to those in Judaism and a tradition of being a migrant people with clues pointing to an origin in West Asia or North Africa. According to the oral history of the Lemba, their ancestors were Jews who came from a place called Sena several hundred years ago and settled in East Africa. Some research suggests that "Sena" may refer to Wadi Masilah (near Sayhut) in Yemen, often called Sena, or alternatively to the city of Sanaa, also located in Yemen.[10]

Pashtuns of the Afghan region

The Pashtuns are a predominantly Muslim people, native to Afghanistan and Pakistan, who adhere to their pre-Islamic indigenous religious code of honour and culture Pashtunwali. They traditionally claim descent from the Lost Tribes. The Yousafzai (Yusafzai) are a large group of Pashtun tribes. Their name means "Sons of Joseph".[12] There are also similar names in other areas of the region, such as the disputed land of Kashmir. There are a variety of cultural and ethnic similarities between Jews and Pashtuns.[13][14] A visit by a Western journalist in 2007 revealed that many currently active Pashtun traditions may have parallels with Jewish traditions.[15] The code of Pashtunwali is strikingly similar in content and subject matter to the Mosaic law.
A book which corresponds to Pashtun historical records, *Taaqati-Nasiri*, states that in the 7th century a people called the Bani Israel settled in Ghor, southeast of Herat, Afghanistan, and then migrated south and east. These Bani Israel references are in line with the commonly held view by Pashtuns that when the twelve tribes of Israel were dispersed, the tribe of Joseph, among other Hebrew tribes, settled in the region. [16] Hence the tribal name 'Yusef Zai' in Pashto translates to the 'sons of Joseph'. This is also described extensively in great detail by Makhzan-i-Afghani, a historical work from the 17th Century by Nehamullah, an official in the royal court of Mughal Emperor Jehangir. A similar story is told by Iranian historian Ferishta.[17]

This account is also substantiated by the fact that the Bnei Menashe of India also have traditions which trace their wanderings as going originally from the Persian Empire to Afghanistan. In their case, they then went to China, where they encountered persecution, then pressed on to India and Southern Asia.[6]

Origin theories

The Bani-Israelite theory about the origin of the Pashtun is based on Pashtun traditions; the tradition itself is documented in a source titled *Makhzan-i-Afghani*, the only written source addressing Pashtun origins. It was written in 1612, by Nematullah Harvi, a scribe at the court of Mughal Emperor Jehangir of Hindustan. Nematullah compiled his book on the order of Khan Jehan Lodhi of the Lodhi dynasty, a Pashtun noble and a courtier of the Emperor Jehangir.[18]

Some sources state that the *Makhzan-i-Afghani* has been discredited by historical and linguistic inconsistencies. The oral tradition is believed to be a myth that grew out of a political and cultural struggle between Pashtuns and the Mughals, which explains the historical backdrop for the creation of the myth, the inconsistencies of the mythology, and the linguistic research that refutes any Semitic origins.[18] There are also other sources which disagree strongly with the hypothesis that the Pashtuns have Israelite origins.[19]

**Chiang Min people of China**

The Chiang Min people of northwest China claim to be descendents of Abraham. Tradition holds that their forefather had 12 descendents.

**The Jews of Kaifeng, China**

According to historical records, a Jewish community with a synagogue built in 1163 existed at Kaifeng from at least the Southern Song Dynasty until the late nineteenth century. A stone monument in the city suggests that they were there since at least 231 BC.

**Bedul, Petra**

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Bedouin tribe of “Bedul”, living in the caves of Petra, Jordan, captured the imagination of Zionist pioneers. Among them was the historian, explorer and second president of Israel, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. Ben Zvi discovered traces of ancient Hebrew customs in the lifestyles of some Palestinian villagers and Bedouin tribes. He speculated that the inhabitants on both sides of the Jordan river may be descendants of the original Hebrew population which never left the area, despite the numerous exiles. Although 100 years ago they presented themselves to British historians as the “Sons of Israel”, the Bedul of today deny the legend concerning their Hebrew origin and claim that they are descendants of the Nabateans who built Petra.

**Speculation regarding other ethnic groups**

**Scythian / Cimmerian Theories**

Several theories claim that the Scythians and / or Cimmerians were in whole or in part the Lost Tribes of Israel. The theories are generally based on the belief that the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which had been deported by the Assyrians, became known in history as the Scythians and / or Cimmerians. Various points of view exist as to which modern nations these people became.

The Behistun Inscription is often cited as a link between the deported Israelites, the Cimmerians and the Scythians (Saka).
George Rawlinson wrote:

We have reasonable grounds for regarding the Gimiri, or Cimmerians, who first appeared on the confines of Assyria and Media in the seventh century B.C., and the Sacae of the Behistun Rock, nearly two centuries later, as identical with the Beth-Khumree of Samaria, or the Ten Tribes of the House of Israel.

Adherents often believe that the Behistun Inscription connects the people known in Old Persian and Elamite as Saka, Sacae or Scythian with the people known in Babylonian as Gimiri or Cimmerian.

It should be made clear from the start that the terms 'Cimmerian' and 'Scythian' were interchangeable: in Akkadian the name Iskuzai (Asguzai) occurs only exceptionally. Gimirri (Gimir) was the normal designation for 'Cimmerians' as well as 'Scythians' in Akkadian.

The archeologist and British Israelite, E. Raymond Capt, claimed similarities between King Jehu's pointed headdress and that of the captive Saka king seen to the far right on the Behistun Inscription. He also posited that the Assyrian word for the House of Israel, "Khumri", which was named after Israel's King Omri of the 8th century BCE, is phonetically similar to "Gimirri." (Cimmerian)

Critics of the Israel / Scythian theory argue that the customs of the Scythians and Cimmerians contrast those of the Ancient Israelites and that the similarities and theories proposed by adherents stand in contradiction to the greater body of research on the history of ancient populations, which does not provide support for the purported links between these ancient populations.

British Israelism variant

British Israelism (also known as 'Anglo-Israelism') is the theory that people of Western European descent, especially Britain and the United States, are descended from the 'Lost Tribes' of Israel. Adherents believe that the deported Israelites became Scythians / Cimmerians who are then alleged to have become the Celts / Anglo-Saxons of Western Europe. During the 20th Century, British Israelism was aggressively promoted by Herbert W. Armstrong, founder of the Worldwide Church of God. Armstrong believed that this theory provided a 'key' to understanding biblical prophecy, and that he was specially called by God to proclaim these prophecies to the 'lost tribes' of Israel before the coming of the 'end-times'. The Worldwide Church of God no longer teaches the theory, but some offshoot churches such as the Philadelphia Church of God and the United Church of God continue to teach it even though British Israelism is inconsistent with the findings of modern genetics.

Brit-Am variant

Brit-Am (http://www.britam.org/) , sometimes confused with British Israelism, is an organization centered in Jerusalem, and composed of Jews and non-Jews. Brit-Am, like British Israel, identifies the Lost Ten Tribes with peoples of West European descent, but does so from a Jewish perspective quoting both Biblical and Rabbinical sources. The evidence that Brit-Am relies upon is Biblical in the light of Rabbinical Commentary but is supplemented by secular theories which posit the Lost Tribes / Scythian / Cimmerian connection which they then believe to have become various Western European nations. An example of Brit-Am scholarship may be seen from its treatment of Obadiah 1:20 where the original Hebrew as quoted by both Rabbinical Commentators such as Rashi and Abarbanel is referring to the Lost Ten Tribes in France and England. Brit-Am also believes that "Other Israelite Tribes gave rise to elements within Finland, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Ireland, Wales, France, Holland, and Belgium" and that "The Tribe of Dan is to be found amongst part of the Danish, Irish, and Welsh." Brit-Am also believes that the Khazars were descended from the Ten Tribes and quotes Jewish and non-Jewish sources that were contemporaneous with them.

Other variants

Other organizations teach other variants of the theory, such as that the Scythians / Cimmerians consisted in whole or in part the Lost Ten Tribes. One such theory posits that the lost Israelites can be defined by the Y-DNA haplogroup R, which consists of much of Europe and Russia, which is in contrast to British Israelism and Brit-Am which believe that the Israelites became only Western Europeans. It should be noted that the genetic findings postulated by this and other theories are typically inconsistent with the findings of generally accepted research in archeology, anthropology and population genetics.

The Kurds

Some have promoted the notion that the Kurds represent a Lost Tribe. Some claims have been made regarding a genetic relationship between the Kurds and the Jews on the basis of a similarity between Kurdish Y-DNA and a Y haplotype that is associated with the Jewish priesthood. However, in genetic testing of the Y chromosome of 95 Muslim Kurds, only one sample (1.05% of the Kurds tested) matched the so-called Cohen Modal Haplotype (CMH), consisting of six specific Y-STR values. Various misleading statements have associated typical Kurdish Y-DNA with that of the Jews. However, these attempts are based on several sources of confusion:

(1) The Cohen Modal Haplotype in its original form includes only six Y-STR markers, which with the scientific advances since that time, are now
understood to be far too few to adequately identify a unique, closely related group that shares common descent from one relatively recent paternal ancestor. The same six marker values can be found by random mutations in other populations that are only remotely related. They are thus identical by state, but not identical by descent. The 6-marker CMH cannot be used as a clear indicator of Cohen genetic ancestry, without additional data. Thus its presence should not be used as grounds for probable Jewish ancestry in a population.

(2) It is touted as a fact of great significance that the most common (modal) 6-marker haplotype of the Kurds is only one step from the CMH, but in fact, these same six marker values that were found to be the "Kurdish modal haplotype" can be seen in the data, in numerous sources, to be the most common haplotype amongst a wide variety of J2 Y chromosomes, wherever they may be found, in ethnic groups of the Middle East or in Europe. -- thus, it is hardly an indication of a close relationship with the Cohanim priesthood, or with the Jews.

(3) The fact that the 2001 paper by Nebel found a somewhat greater similarity between the Y-DNA of the Kurds and the Jews than between the Jews and the Palestinians does not point to a uniquely close relationship between the Jews and the Kurds. This study did not compare Jews with other non-Kurdish Iraqis, or with the people of Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, or other nearby lands. The available data indicates that these peoples are all closely related, with the Jews and Kurds making up just two per cent of a diverse family of Middle Eastern peoples in this region.

The Japanese

See also: History of the Jews in Japan

Some writers have speculated that the Japanese people themselves may be direct descendants of part of the Ten Lost Tribes. There are some parallels between Japanese and Israelite rituals, culture, traditions, and language, which provide some evidence for this possibility. An article that has been widely circulated and published, entitled "Mystery of the Ten Lost Tribes: Japan" by Arimasa Kubo (a Japanese writer living in Japan who studied the Hebrew Bible), concludes that many traditional customs and ceremonies in Japan are very similar to the ones of ancient Israel and that perhaps these rituals came from the religion and customs of the Jews and the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel who might have come to ancient Japan.

Joseph Eidelberg's "The Biblical Hebrew Origin of the Japanese People" makes a similar case:

"Late in his life, Joseph Eidelberg began analyzing ancient traditions, religious ceremonies, historical names, haiku poems, Kana writings and Japanese folk songs, discovering thousands of words with similar pronunciations, sounds and translations between Hebrew and Japanese. These discoveries are history in the making, giving credible new information on the meanings of many unknown Japanese words, numbers, songs and cultural traditions – and this book is the first time that these remarkable similarities are combined into a single consistent theory."

The Irish

There is a theory that the Irish, or that Insular Celts as a whole, are descended from the Ten Lost Tribes. Proponents of this theory state that there is evidence that the prophet Jeremiah came to Ireland with Princess Tea Tephi, a member of the Israelite royal family. Proponents of this theory point to various parallels between Irish and ancient Hebrew culture. For example, they note that the harp, the symbol of Ireland, also plays a role in Jewish history, as the musical instrument of King David. Some maintain that the Tribe of Dan conducted sea voyages to Ireland and colonized it as early as the period of the Judges under the name Tuatha Dé Danann.

Aspects of this theory are also sometimes cited by adherents of British Israelism, as one possible explanation of how the Ten Lost Tribes might have reached the British Isles. However, British Israelism takes many forms, and does not always use this hypothesis as its main narrative.

Native Americans

Several explorers, especially during the 17th and 18th centuries, claimed to have collected evidence that some of the Native American tribes might be descended from the Ten Lost Tribes. Several recent books and articles have focused on these theories.

The belief that some Native Americans were a Lost tribe of Israel goes back centuries and includes individuals like the 1782 President of the Continental Congress Elias Boudinot and Mordecai Noah, the most influential Jew in the United States in the early 19th Century. The Book of Mormon, one of the religious texts of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), claims that early residents of the Americas were actually descended from the tribe of Joseph, and particularly through Manasseh.

Some sources such as Howshua Amariel and various researchers assert that there is DNA evidence, linguistic research and other research which indicates links between the Cherokee Nation and the Jewish people.

General dispersions, via Media region

This theory begins with the notion that the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh are the sons of Joseph, who had been in captivity (Genesis 37 through 45) and bore them with the daughter of the Pharaoh's Priest, Asenath (Genesis 41:45-52). The Tribe of Levi was set apart to serve in the Holy Temple (Numbers 1:47-54 2:33 3:6-7). The arrangement of the Tribes was given in Numbers 2.

It is now believed by many that the exiled tribes, who were, according to the Second Book of Kings, transported to the region of Media in what is
now northwestern Iran, most likely assimilated into the population of the area, losing any special sense of Israelite identity. There is also Biblical and Talmudic testimony that much of the population of the "lost" tribes was simply reunited with the rest of the Israelites when they, too, were exiled and, later, returned to the Land of Israel. However, many over the years, in order to hide their Jewish or Israelite identities during tribulations, crusades and continual exiles, have scattered around the whole earth and are believed to have assimilated into the much larger non-Jewish population.

There is now genetic testing being done to representatives of at least two groups - the Lemba in Africa and the Bnei Menashe in India - in attempts to verify claims of descent from the "lost ten tribes". So far, there is nothing conclusive, though in the case of the Lemba, there is a definite link to Levite Hebrew ancestry, specifically Kohanim.

Nathan Ausubel's list

Nathan Ausubel wrote:

"There are quite a number of peoples today who cling to the ancient tradition that they are descended from the Jewish Lost Tribes: the tribesmen of Afghanistan, the Mohammedan Berbers of West Africa, and the six million Christian Igbo people of Nigeria. Unquestionably, they all practice certain ancient Hebraic customs and beliefs, which lends some credibility to their fantastic-sounding claims."

In his 1953 work *Pictorial History of the Jewish People*, Nathan Ausubel compiled the following list of peoples connected in one way or another to this legend:

- Baghdad
- Iran
- Kurdistan
- Yemen
- Georgia
- Bokhara
- Hadramaut
- Mountain Jews
- Afghanistan
- Bene-Israel
- Cochin Jews
- China
- Egypt
- Algeria
- Morocco
- Libya
- Tunisia
- Djerba
- The Sahara
- Cave Dwellers = Atlas Mountains south of Tripolitania and Tunisia. Closely related to the Jews of the Sahara, they believe that their ancestors were brought as captives from Judea by Titus after 70 AD. They cut out tiny paper boats which decorate their synagogues where they pray: *May a boat soon come and carry us to Jerusalem.*
- The Falashas = Lake Tana, Ethiopia. Claim to have come with the Queen of Sheba to visit King Solomon.
- The Samaritans = Nablus (Shechem). Claim to be from the tribes of Ephraim, Menashe, and Levi, and built a rival Temple on Mount Gerizim in the days of Ezra.
- Karaites

In other religions

**Latter-day Saints**

Latter-day Saints believe in the literal gathering of Israel (http://scriptures.lds.org/en/a_of_f/1/10#10), and the LDS Church is actively gathering people from around the world into the Twelve tribes.

See also

- Schisms among the Jews - describes some of the early background to the split between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah
- Shavei Israel - an organization which seeks to find "lost Jews"
- Assyria - destroyed the Kingdom of Israel and caused the Ten Tribes "to become lost"
- Babylon and Assyria - the global powers confronting the Israelites in ancient times
- Babylonian captivity - inflicted by Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon
- Jewish diaspora - spread and growth
- Timeline of Jewish history - covers the flow of history from ancient to modern times
- History of the Jews in China, particularly the Kaifeng Jews
History of the Jews in India
Abrahamic religions - deals with Judaism, Christianity and Islam and a few other faiths
Richard Reader Harris - wrote The Lost Tribes of Israel in 1908 and was a major promoter of British Israelism, the belief that people of Western European descent are also the direct lineal descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes
Joseph Wolff - the eccentric Jewish Christian missionary who in 1828 set off on extensive travels through Asia in search of the Ten Tribes
United States in Prophecy
Assyria and Germany in Anglo-Israelism

References and notes

1. ^ Lost Tribes of Israel (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/listseason/27.html#2706) program on NOVA, Original broadcast date: 02/22/2000
5. ^ The Bene Israel of India (http://www.bh.org.il/Communities/Archive/Communities/BeneIsrael.asp#origin), Dr. Shalva Weil, bh.org.il.
12. ^ Mystery of the Ten Lost Tribes - Afghanistan (http://www.moshiach.com/features/tribes/afghanistan.php), by Rabbi Marvin Tokayer, moshiach.com website
14. ^ Tribes groups (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/israel/losttribes2.html#tribal), NOVA episode, PBS.
19. ^ Afghanistan and Israel (http://www.britain.org/Questions/QuesAfghanistan.html), britain.org
20. ^ George Rawlinson, noted in his translation of History of Herodotus, Book VII, p. 378
42. ^ Israelites Came To Ancient Japan (http://www5.ocn.ne.jp/~magi9/isracame.htm), Arimasa Kubo.
45. ^ Lost Tribes article (http://www.britam.org/Tribesman/GenealogyDavid.html) at BritAm.org45.
47. ^ Nova Episode: The Ten Lost Tribes (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/israel/losttribes2.html), PBS.
48. ^ The Myth of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel (http://www.bh.org.il/Communities/Archive/TenLostTribes.asp#Quest), at bh.org.il
Ten Lost Tribes - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia


51. "Boudinot seems to have felt that the popular identification of the Indians as the lost Israelites would bring with it a widespread realization that the Bible and its prophecies were true"


53. "Mordecai Manuel Noah was the most influential Jew in the United States in the early 19th Century."


External links

- Database of Jewish communities (http://www.bh.org.il/Communities/Archive/TenLostTribes.asp) at Beit Hatefutsot in Tel Aviv. - Overview of many hypotheses about the Ten Lost Tribes.
- Brit Am Israel (http://www.britam.org)
- The Lost Ten Tribes, and 1882 (http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/27177) by Joseph Wild
- Kulanu ("All of us") (http://www.kulanu.org/)
- Bnei Menashe Website (http://www.bneimenashe.com/)
- Brit-Am fallacy exposed (http://www.geocities.com/britam_exposed/)
- Afghanistan: Home to Lost Tribes of Israel? (http://ohr.edu/ask_db/ask_main.php/329/Q1/)
- What happened to the 10 lost tribes? video feature direct from Jerusalem (http://www.aish.com/literacy/jewishhistory/Video_The_10_Lost_Tribes.asp)
- Imperial British-Israelism: Justification for an Empire. (1987) (http://www.revneal.org/Writings/british.htm) by Gregory S. Neal
- British Israelism (http://www.ondoctrine.com/10brtish.htm) by Gary A, Hand
- The Lemba People (http://www.haruth.com/JewsLemba.html) by Haruth.com
- United Israel (http://www.unitedisrael.org/) Lost Tribes Research
- Kol HaTor (http://www.kolhator.org.il/) Promoting Reconciliation between Returning 10 Tribes and Judah
- Bible Revelations (http://www.revelations.org.za/MenuReturn.htm) Library of studies on the Return of the Lost 10 Tribes
- Anglo-Israel The History of the Ten "Lost" Tribes by David Baron, "intended primarily as a thorough examination and debunking of Anglo-Israelism" (http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_History_of_the_Ten_%22Lost%22_Tribes)

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