



Type: Magazine Article

Something About the "Lost Tribes"

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Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 13, No. 12 (October 1910)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 1084–1090

Abstract: This article gives speculation about the location of the lost tribes.

Something About the “Lost Tribes.”

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The gathering of Israel is part of the work of restoration, or “restitution of all things,” to be accomplished in the greatest of all dispensations—“the dispensation of the fulness of times.” This comprehends not only the return of Judah to Palestine, and the consequent re-establishment of the throne of David, to be occupied by one of his descendants, but the assembling of the “outcasts of Israel,” belonging to the tribes that were separated from Judah and Benjamin, were taken into captivity and were carried away into Assyria, from which country and its bondage they subsequently escaped and traveled northward into regions then generally unknown.

The story of the division of Israel from Judah is told in the Book of Kings, particularly in I Kings. The sins which were committed by the tribes of Israel under Jeroboam and his successors are described in chapters 15 to 22, and the account of their consequent captivity is given in II Kings, 17. The body of Israelites, commonly called the Ten Tribes, were really but portions of nine and a half tribes. Judah and Benjamin, with half of the tribe of Manasseh, united under the kingdom of Judea and were known as Judah, or the Jews. With them were mingled some portions of all the other tribes, but the greater numbers of them were carried away into captivity, and in scripture are mentioned as Israel, in distinction from Judah, who remained under a separate government until they, too, through transgression, were rejected of the Lord, were also taken captive, and subsequently were dispersed among the various nations of the world.

Thus all Israel, that is, the twelve tribes, the offspring of the

twelve sons of Jacob, were scattered abroad in fulfilment of the predictions of their great prophet, Moses, the final blow upon the Jewish people being dealt to them because of their rejection of the Messiah. Judah bears a special mark among all the races with which he has been mixed. The blood of Judah, though mingled with the blood of the Gentiles, carries its own identity with the power of reproduction through all its generations. There are, no doubt, some distinctive marks on the other tribes, but they are not so plainly discernible as those upon Judah. The principle of heredity is abiding and continuous, but it is not the purpose of this brief article to enter into it or explain it. However, Israel is distinct from all other races, and each branch or tribe is entitled to gifts peculiar to itself, which will all be manifested in due time.

The Ten Tribes, so-called, that were taken captive into Assyria, are destined, according to Biblical prophecy, to be gathered in the latter-days and become a great power in the earth. The Hebrew prophets—notably Isaiah, 11th chapter, Jeremiah, chapters 30 and 31, Ezekiel, chapter 37, and Zechariah, chapters 12 and 13—graphically describe the gathering of both Judah and Israel, the former to Jerusalem, the latter to a land chosen for them as specially bestowed upon Joseph, (Gen. 49: 26; Deut. 33: 15-17) who held the birthright in place of Reuben, who forfeited it through transgression. These predictions are to be fulfilled as literally as those concerning the dispersion. The scattering of the tribes of Israel is mentioned in the Old Testament repeatedly, but the course taken by them after their captivity is not definitely given in the books counted as canonical. However, it is clearly stated that they were taken into the "north country," and that in the latter-days they will be brought from the north country, as well as from other places where they were to be scattered. In the Apocrypha will be found an account of the movement of those tribes of Israel after they had been for some time in bondage (see II Esdras, 13: 39-50, as follows):

And whereas thou sawest that he gathered another peaceable multitude unto him; those are the Ten Tribes which were carried away prisoners out of their own land in the time of Osea the king, whom Salmanasar, the King of Assyria, led away captive, and he carried them over the

waters, and so they came into another land. But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt, that they might there keep their statutes, which they never kept in their own land. And they entered Euphrates by the narrow passages of the river, for the Most High then showed signs for them, and held still the floods till they were passed over. For through that country there was a great way to go, *viz.*, of a year and a half; and the same region is called Arsareth. Then dwelt they there until the latter time; and now when they shall begin to come, the Highest shall stay the springs of the streams again, that they may go through; therefore sawest thou the multitude with peace. But those that he left behind of thy people are they that are found within my borders. Now when he destroyeth the multitude of the nations that are gathered together, he shall defend his people that remain. And then shall he show them great wonders.

There have been many speculations concerning the probable whereabouts of these Israelites, whom the Lord is to bring in from their long dispersion, and make of them a great people in the latter-days. Some writers, who have learned of the relics of ancient races on the American continent, and the traces discovered of their evident Hebrew origin, their familiarity also with Egyptian architecture and language, have reached the conclusion that the unknown land to which, according to Esdras, the "lost tribes" were taken, was the American continent, and volumes have been written in support of this theory. The Latter-day Saints know that the notion is incorrect, because of the revelation of the Book of Mormon, which gives the origin of the people who built the cities and monuments and wrote the hieroglyphs referred to, and therefore understand for a certainty that these colonizers of this continent were not the Ten Tribes, but that descendants of Joseph were brought upon this land by Divine direction, and that from them sprang the civilization, the remnants of which have been discovered in latter times, and whose history is given in that most remarkable volume, translated by the gift and power of God.

The question, then, still remains, and is asked by many persons, among them not a few of the Latter-day Saints, where are the "lost tribes" of Israel, and do they exist somewhere as a distinct body, or were they all so scattered among the nations that

their identity has become extinct? In consequence of the numerous references in holy writ to the "north countries" as the destination of the tribes after their escape from Assyria, and to the part of the globe from whence they are to return, some people have imagined they were in the neighborhood of the north pole, and since the alleged "discoveries" of that region by Commander Peary and, perhaps, Dr. Cook, they have felt somewhat disappointed, feeling compelled to abandon the idea. Now, in the first place, there has been no positive revelation or authoritative announcement that the Ten Tribes existed in a separate body at or near the north pole. In the next place, the explorations and developments concerning the polar region have been chiefly conducted from points on the American continent, while the vast regions northward from the eastern hemisphere have been comparatively unexplored. It is quite possible, therefore, that there may be lands and peoples, in the extreme north of the other half of the globe, which are yet undiscovered and unknown. There are traditions among the people of Siberia concerning some fierce and hostile tribes, living in lands far to the north and regarded as dangerous and to be avoided. This is merely mentioned, in passing, to show the possibility that there are habitable lands between modern Russia and the pole.

Recently it has been argued that the prophecies concerning the gathering of Israel in the latter days are being fulfilled by the coming in of descendants of the house of Israel in northern Europe, through the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, as restored by the angel of the Most High. It is evident from the blessings bestowed by the patriarchs of the Church upon the heads of Saints from those lands, that they are of the house of Israel, belonging to different tribes, but particularly of Ephraim. There is no doubt in the minds of those who have investigated this subject, that when traveling northward, as described by Esdras, the tribes of Israel mingled on the way with Gentile nations, and that numbers of their posterity are to be found in the various provinces of Germany, in Switzerland, in Holland, in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Iceland, and the numerous islands in the far north.

Much of the blood of Israel is, doubtless, to be found in the British Isles. It was obtained, in all probability, by the admixture

of Saxon, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish blood with that of the ancient Britons and the Picts and Scots, who inhabited those islands and were subject to the incursions and conquests of the peoples mentioned, among whose ancestors the Israelites mingled in their journey of a year and a half towards the extreme north. Thus the nations here mentioned became impregnated with the seed of Israel, and their descendants who came to this country, bringing the principles of religious freedom and planting the standard of liberty, were also of the lineage to whom great blessings were promised, and from among all these, many who are of Israel embrace the gospel of the latter-day dispensation. The gathering of some of their descendants to Zion is in part fulfilment of the prophecies in regard to the gathering, but there are revelations which cannot be said to be literally fulfilled in this movement. Some of these are here cited:

And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord, and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves, and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them. And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim; and they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows (Doc. and Cov. 133: 26-34).

This indicates the coming of a *body* of these Israelites, with prophets at their head, from regions of ice and rocks, under Divine direction, to receive blessings on this land where are the "everlasting hills," and the gathering place for Israel and the keys of power and authority in the hands of the "children of Ephraim." It is evident, also, that they have important records, containing accounts of the dealings of the Lord with them, and his word concerning them, which they are to bring with them, that they may

be joined with the record of the Jews—the Bible—and the record of the Nephites—the Book of Mormon (see I Nephi 15: 12, 13.)

For, behold, I shall speak unto the Jews, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth, and they shall write it. And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews.

We learn from the Book of Mormon, further, that the Savior, when he appeared to the Nephites, spoke of the "lost tribes" as having been taken away by the Father to a land which he did not reveal to them, and that he was going to visit them and make known to them the same things which he had revealed to his disciples on the eastern hemisphere, and to those on the western continent.

But, verily, I say unto you, that the Father hath commanded me, and I tell it unto you, that ye were separated from among them because of their iniquity, therefore it is because of their iniquity that they know not of you. And verily, I say unto you again, that the other tribes hath the Father separated from them; and it is because of their iniquity, that they know not of them. And verily, I say unto you, that ye are they of whom I said, other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching; and they understood me not that I said they shall hear my voice; and they understood me not that the Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice; that I should not manifest myself unto them, save it were by the Holy Ghost (III Nephi 15: 19-23).

And verily, verily, I say unto you, that I have other sheep, which are not of this land, neither of the land of Jerusalem; neither in any parts of that land round about, whither I have been to minister. For they of whom I speak are they who have not as yet heard my voice; neither have I at any time manifested myself unto them. But I have received a commandment of the Father that I shall go unto them, and that they

shall hear my voice, and shall be numbered among my sheep, that there may be one fold and one shepherd; therefore I go to show myself unto them (III Nephi 16: 1-3).

But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them (III Nephi 17: 4).

These revelations will, doubtless, be among the records which the tribes are to bring forth in the latter-days, and which are to be united with the Bible and the Book of Mormon, showing the dealings of God among these three separate sections of the house of Israel, bringing to pass the sayings of the prophets of old, and aiding in the consummation of the great work of the latter-days. Thus, while the gathering of scattered Israel is being partly fulfilled in the bringing in of people who are of the blood of Israel from the various nations where it was scattered, there is yet to come to pass the word of the Lord a portion of which is here cited, and we may confidently look for its fulfilment as literally as that concerning the house of Joseph and their record, and the house of Judah and their record.

We recommend students on this problem of the probable locality of a body of Israelites, descendants of the tribes that escaped from Assyria, and concerning whom great promises have been made, to look at a globe showing the conformation and countries of the earth, about which something is known, or a plan of the earth's surface, exhibiting both hemispheres, and then, with the understanding that the Ten Tribes, in their journey from Assyria northward, passed through continental Europe away up to the regions of ice on that hemisphere, and they will see the possibility, even the probability, of the existence of a body of people who will yet fulfil to the very letter the predictions of ancient prophets concerning their restoration in the latter-days. This will detract nothing from the views held concerning the great work of gathering of the people who have been mixed among the Gentiles, and whom the Lord is gathering from the east and the west, the north and the south, and giving them an inheritance in Zion.