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Where Are the Lost Tribes of Israel?

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Abstract: This article briefly considers the whereabouts of the lost tribes, ultimately concluding that the answer does not matter and it is instead "our concern to help fulfil [sic] the plan of God, by eager daily service."

EVIDENCES AND RECONCILIATIONS

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Where are the Lost Tribes of Israel?

IN THE field of historical speculation, few themes have been more assiduously theorized about than the location of the lost tribes of Israel. The voluminous literature concerning the subject, "proves" that the tribes may be in any land under the sun, according to the theory accepted. In our Church, several books on the subject, presenting differing views, have been written by thoughtful, honest men. Fortunately, so far as human happiness here or hereafter is concerned, it matters not a whit where they are located. Unfortunately, some brethren have entangled the subject with the theology of the Gospel to their own discomfiture.

Throughout its long history as one nation, the Hebrews had been in almost continuous warfare with neighboring people; and indeed the people of the valley of the Euphrates on the east, and of Egypt on the south and west, mighty nations, had paid their warlike respects to the children of Abraham. Wars and warfare form a large part of the history of united Israel. Only under David and Solomon was the kingdom made into an empire strong enough to dictate terms to weaker neighbors and engender wholesome respect among larger powers.

After the death of Solomon, the divided kingdoms, divided also in strength, were subject to similar warfare. Invasion followed invasion; the larger powers to the East, viewing Palestine as a strategically important corridor to Egypt, descended, with powerful armies upon the now petty kingdoms. The southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel became little more than vassals to Babylonian powers.

Following the practice of the times, the victors carried large numbers of the vanquished people into captivity, to serve as slaves, craftsmen, builders, or even statesmen, according to their gifts and talents. There were many such captivities from among the people of Israel.

The captivity connected with the lost tribes is mentioned in 2 Kings 17:6—"In the ninth year of Hoshea the King of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and settled them in Khalah and on the Khabur, a river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." A similar statement is made in 1 Chronicles 5:26. That is all we hear of them. From that time they are literally "lost" to history, except for a passage in the Apocrypha, II Esdras, 13:40-47:

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 came they 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 statutes, which they never kept in their own land. And they entered into Euphrates by the narrow passages of the river. For the Most High then showed signs for them, and held still the flood, till they were passed over. For through that country there was a great way to go, namely of a year and a half; and the same region is called Arsareth. Then they dwelt there until the latter time; and now when they shall begin to come, the Highest shall stay the springs of the stream again, that they may go through.

Many fantastic theories have been set up concerning the location of the lost tribes. One declares, for example, that in the northern countries are vast subterranean caverns in which the lost tribes live and prosper, awaiting the day of their return. Another, by diagram and argument suggests that a secondary small planet is attached at the north pole, to the earth by a narrow neck, and that the lost tribes live there. (See Dalton, *The Key to This Earth*.) Others, even more unacceptable are in circulation.

The view most commonly held by members of the Church is that a body of Israelites are actually living in some unknown place on earth, probably in the north. In support of this opinion are the common knowledge that the earth is not yet fully explored, and numerous scriptural references to a gathering of Israel from the north countries. Jeremiah speaks of the house of Israel coming "out of the north country." (Jeremiah 3:18; 23:8; 31:8-11; Hosea 1:11.) In the Book of Mormon, also, there are references to Israel coming out of the north in the latter days. Ether prophesies of those "who were scattered and gathered in from the four quarters of the earth, and from the north countries." In modern revelation the north countries are mentioned in connection with the restoration of the ten tribes. "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." (Doc. and Cov. 133:26-34.) Moreover, in the Kirtland Temple, Moses appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and "committed unto us the keys of . . . the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north." (Doc. and Cov. 110:11.)

Another view held by many is that the lost tribes are in the northern part of the earth, thus fulfilling that scriptural requirement, but not necessarily in one body. In support are quoted the many references in scripture to the gathering of Israel from the four corners of the earth and the isles of the sea. Further than that, while north countries are mentioned, nowhere is it specifically stated that the lost tribes are in one body apart from other

The EDITOR'S PAGE

Anti-Liquor-Tobacco Campaign

UNDER date of April 26, 1937, the First Presidency wrote to the Council of the Twelve in part as follows:

"You may proceed to organize a campaign throughout the Church against the use of alcoholic beverages. We suggest, however, that you continue to lay special emphasis upon the evils that follow the use of the cigarette and other forms of tobacco.

"We commend your plan to make this campaign a project for all the Priesthood quorums, both Melchizedek and Aaronic, charging the quorums with the responsibility of (a) keeping their own members free from the vice of using alcohol and tobacco, and (b) assisting all others to do likewise. . . .

"Auxiliary organizations should give to the Priesthood quorums such help in the campaign as may be consistently requested of them by Priesthood quorums."

Since this letter was written, an educational campaign throughout all the stakes of the Church for the non-use of alcoholic beverages and tobacco has been inaugurated along the lines indicated in the letter of the First Presidency. I commend this movement to all stake, ward, Priesthood quorum, and auxiliary organization authorities, and urge them to cooperate through committees and special workers to make the campaign thorough and complete.

The youth, as well as all adult members of the Church, should be reached by this movement to the end that they may become free from the use of these things that the Lord has said are not good for man.



peoples. It is contended that the wandering tribes actually settled in northern Europe and Asia, and throughout the centuries mingled with the people there, until the blood of Israel runs strong among the northern peoples. Thus is explained the relatively ready acceptance of the Gospel by the British, Scandinavian, and German peoples. Those who hold this view feel that prophecy has been literally fulfilled by the gathering of Latter-day Saints from Northern Europe to the Church in Western America. The notable British-Israel movement is built upon such a dispersion of the lost tribes. (See Stephen Malan, *The Ten Tribes*).

A third view attempts to reconcile the two preceding ones. We are reminded that historically and prophetically it is well known that Israel has been scattered among the nations. By removal from the Holy Land through successive captivities, and voluntary migrations, often due to persecution, and by intermarriage with other races, the blood of Israel is now found in almost every land and among every people. The ancient writers spoke of "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." It is suggested that on the northward march of the lost tribes, many fell from the company, remained at various points of the journey, there became mixed with the people living there, until today, along the line of the exodus, the blood of Israel may be

found. It is further suggested that a part of the ten tribes may be somewhere in seclusion, but also that their blood may be among the nations through which they passed on their long migration, thousands of miles if they reached the arctic regions. (See George Reynolds, *Are We of Israel?* Also, Allen H. Godbey, *The Lost Tribes, a Myth*.)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believes in the restoration of the ten tribes; and that it is a part of the mission of the Church to gather scattered Israel into the fold of truth. It knows that throughout the ages, under the wise economy of the Lord, the blood of Israel, most susceptible to Gospel truth, has been mingled with all nations. The scattering of Israel is a frequent theme of writers of the Bible. So firm is this belief that the Latter-day Saints, for over a hundred years, at great sacrifices of money, energy, and life itself, have gone out over the earth to preach the restored Gospel, and bring all men into the House of Israel.

The question concerning the location of the lost tribes, of itself unimportant, is interesting in showing how such matters are allowed to occupy men's time and tempers, in a day that calls for helpful action among those who are within our reach. Time will reveal the whereabouts of the lost tribes. It is our concern to help fulfil the plan of God, by eager daily service.—J. A. W.