

ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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THE TEN LOST TRIBES Who Are the Jewish People?

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The Ten Lost Tribes

Who Are the Jewish People?



ONE WAY OF ROBBING MODERN DAY ISRAEL is to deny that it is the true Israel of the Bible. Called Replacement Theology, this theory transfers all the promises made to Israel in the *Tanakh* (OT) to the Church, claiming that the Church displaces Israel in the economy of God. How strange that the allegorists (who claim that the Scripture is not literal in reference to Israel) want the Bible to be very literal when it suits their purposes. All the Scripture concerning redemption is to be taken literally, but when it comes to Israel, one must see “Israel” as “the Church.” How strange that some are very happy to transfer to the Church all the blessings of obedience promised to Israel, but are just as willing for the curses pronounced in the *Tanakh* upon the disobedient to be visited upon the heads of the Jewish people today. There is an inconsistency here! The problem with allegorizing the Scripture is that it introduces an anarchy of interpretation. Every man becomes a law unto himself. What is to prevent you from taking any passage and saying, “This is not literal,” and then attaching any prejudiced meaning you wish?

Ten Lost Tribes

Another novel theory is that the Jewish people are not representative of all twelve tribes, but only of Judah and Benjamin. The ten northern tribes wandered off and became the ancestors of Europeans and Americans. This theory, a form of Replacement Theology, is most commonly called British Israelism.

The fact is, there is no basis in history or Scripture for the claims of the British Israel adherents.

Division of Israel

After the reign of King Solomon, the ten northern tribes seceded from the two southern tribes (Judah and Benjamin) around 930 BC. Jeroboam ruled the northern tribes from his capital in Samaria. Rehoboam ruled the southern two-tribe coalition from Jerusalem. For the biblical account, read carefully 1 Kings 11:43–12:33. Note that in the North, Jeroboam set up a rival religion with golden calf worship at Bethel and Dan.

Northerners Move South

Dissatisfied with the apostasy of Jeroboam and the false priests at Bethel and Dan, many true believers in the God of Israel moved south to Jerusalem. They knew that according to the writing of Moses, the only place where the Passover and the sacrifices would be acceptable to God was at the Temple on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem (Deut. 12:5–7; 16:2–6; Isa. 18:7). In the Isaiah reference, Zion refers to Jerusalem.

Shortly, all twelve tribes were represented in the South. Obviously, the number of people who immigrated was significant. God even addresses the twelve tribes in the South: “*Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin...*” (2 Chron. 11:3).

The Levites, whose priesthood had been rejected by Jeroboam, led the way and were followed by the other Godly folk in the North. Of course, some came for political and other reasons, but no matter—that only strengthens the case. The Levites left their suburbs and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem, for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest’s office unto the Lord and ordained priests for the high places, the devils and the calves, which Jeroboam

had made. Out of all the tribes of Israel, those who had set their hearts on seeking the Lord God of Israel followed the Levites to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the God of their fathers.

Another Migration

Much later, as Asa reigned as king in the South, another great company came from the North. This is found in 2 Chronicles 15:9: *“And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon; for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.”* We are left with no doubt that by the time of the captivity of the northern tribes, all the twelve tribes of Israel were well represented in the South. Therefore, when the northern tribes went into the Assyrian captivity in 722 BC, many members of the ten tribes were left in the southern kingdom of Judah. Much later in 586 BC, when the Babylonians took Judah into captivity, members of *all the tribes of Israel* went along because of the earlier migrations from the North to the South.

The Prophet Isaiah

Isaiah lived in Jerusalem and prophesied to Judah, the southern kingdom. Decades after the fall of the North (722 BC), Isaiah writes, *“Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah...”* (Isa. 48:1). This was written about 690 BC. Also note verses 12–14. It is also in this monumental chapter that God promises not to make a full end of Israel. This refutes the British Israel idea that only the North was called Israel after the dividing of the nation following Solomon’s death.

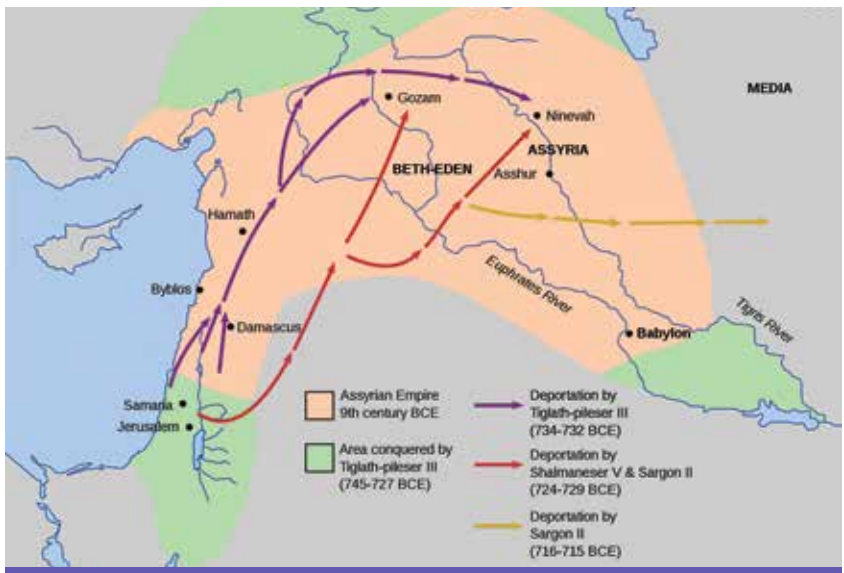
Captivity of Israel (the Northern Tribes)

King Hoshea was the last ruler of the northern (ten tribes) kingdom. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came against him in a war that the Assyrians won. The final fall of Israel took place in 722 BC. Hoshea had reigned from 732 BC until the fall of the northern kingdom.

Many but not all of the citizens of Israel were taken into slavery in Assyria. Later the succeeding Babylonian empire conquered the lands controlled by Assyrians, and they inherited the descendants of the ten (never lost) tribes of northern Israel that had been deported by Shalmaneser.

Not all North Israelites Deported

Indeed some passages such as 2 Kings 17 might, upon superficial examination, indicate that all of Israel (North) went into captivity. This must be understood contextually and by comparison with many other Scriptures that bear upon the subject. Years after the fall of the North to Assyria, King Hezekiah of Judah issued a call to all Israel to come and worship in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover there. *“So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba [extreme southland] even to Dan [the far North], that they should come to keep the Passover unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem...So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah...saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and He will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.”* (2 Chron. 30:5a, 6). We are told that *“the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun...[some men] of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem...a multitude...of Issachar...And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread...”* (2 Chron. 30:10a, 11, 18, 21a). For full context, please read the entire chapter of 2 Chronicles 30.



Over eighty years passed after Hezekiah's revival and reform movement. Then, during the time of King Josiah of Judah, the same condition is described. The call goes out from the king, and the response for a Temple offering comes back from "...*Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin...*" (2 Chron. 34:9). All of this takes place at the time the British Israelite theoreticians would have us believe the ten "lost" tribes were wandering all over Europe.

Jew and Israelite Used Interchangeably

The division of the north and south of Israel ended with the Babylonian captivity. After the return from Babylon, the terms "Jew" and "Israelite" are used interchangeably. Ezra calls the returning remnant "Jews" eight times. He refers to them as "Israel" 40 times. Nehemiah speaks of the "Jews" eleven times. The same people are called "Israel" 22 times in the book of Nehemiah. A bit later we will note the same usage in the Writings of the Apostles (NT) era and supporting documents.

Babylonian Captivity

The Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar conquered the southern kingdom of Judah. The final fall of Judah took place in 586 BC. When the Judeans (and all Israel in their midst) were taken to Babylon, they found descendants of the northern kingdom living in the expanded Babylonian empire, which had conquered Assyria. Not so many generations had gone by that these people had forgotten who they were. Just like you compare genealogical



notes when you meet a relative you had not known before, you can be sure that these genealogy-conscious Israelites recounted many a family tree, and many happy “family” reunions took place.

Return to the Land of Israel

After the seventy years of the desolation of Jerusalem, many captives—freed by Cyrus, the Persian conqueror of Babylon—went back to the Land of Israel to rebuild the Temple and ultimately the city walls of Jerusalem. While many Israelites were assimilated into the heathen cultures of Assyria and Babylon, many retained their identity and returned to the land of their fathers, preserving all twelve tribes of Israel in the Holy Land.

The Witness of Ezra and Nehemiah

Over and over the book of Ezra refers to “*all Israel*” returning to the Land (Ezra 2:70; 3:11; 8:35; 10:25, etc.). Ezra speaks of a “*sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel*” (Ezra 6:17).

The book of Nehemiah bears witness—long after the return—in similar fashion to the presence of all twelve tribes being back in the Land, and not scattered throughout Europe. “*And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah...*” (Neh. 12:47).

How can the adherents of British Israelism or any form of replacement theology make the claim that the ten tribes were “lost”?

Tribal Identity

It may do well to note that there were never twelve races of Israel: there were twelve tribes and only one nation of Israel, up until the reign of Solomon. Tribal identity was based on male descendancy. For example, if a young woman from the tribe of Asher married a young man from the tribe of Judah, she became a member of Judah, and their male children carried on the lineage of Judah. The matter of tribal identity was important for inheritance rights. The tribes were allowed to—and did—freely intermarry.

Promises to Israel

The British Israel theory came to its zenith at a time when the British Empire, “the empire upon which the sun never sets,” held

sway in much of the world. Theologians were puzzled as to what the prophecies of blessing and regathering to Israel in the last days meant. A minority taught that they were literal; that the Jewish people would one day return to the Land and establish a new nation in fulfillment of prophecy. Time has shown these few literalists to be right.

Words, Words, Words

British Israel writers made much of such terms as Anglo Saxons compared to Isaac's Sons. Of course, the actual Hebrew words have no similarity at all. "Isaac" is *Yitzhak*, and "son" is *ben* in Hebrew. One incredible theory claimed that the real Jerusalem was not in the Middle East at any time. It was Edinburgh, Scotland. In the last days, men shall turn aside from truth unto fables.

The trail of the wandering tribe of Dan is supposed to be marked by *Danmark*, the river *Danube*, *DarDanelles*, etc. One might as well try to trace the descendants of Ham, son of Noah, to *Hamburg*, Germany, or *Birmingham*, Alabama. Both are equally ridiculous.

Yes, Jews have been dispersed throughout the world. They have wandered far, but the uniqueness of the Jewish (Israelite) people is that *they never lost their identity*. This is not to say that some did not assimilate and lose their identity, but on the whole, the identity is preserved. This is why the prophecy of the Bible is so marvelous. It has been *absolutely* unerring in its accuracy. The existence of the Jewish people as a unique people is the strongest proof of that. To deny this is to not only rob modern Israel, and thus aid and abet the cause of anti-Semitism, but it is to rob the Church of the strong authority of the infallible Word of Almighty God.

Diaspora

It is true that not all the Israelites returned from captivities. Many were scattered abroad, but not lost. God said that He would "*sift the house of Israel among all nations*" — not just Europe (Amos 9:9). They retained their Jewish/Israelite identity. Thus as Peter preached to the crowd on the day of Pentecost, there were Jews from the dispersion present—visiting from all parts of the known world (Acts 2). Most Jews today do not know their tribal identity, but the identity exists (based on male inheritance rights



and descendance). God knows the genealogy of every human on earth. He knows the tribal identity of every person today who is Jewish. Intermarriage has taken place, but no matter how thin the bloodline, God knows where each descendant of Jacob is.

Writings of the Apostles Witness

Anna, a Godly Israelite in the time of Jesus, knew her tribal identity. She was of the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36).

The apostle Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin. He bears witness to that fact himself. Also Paul says, *“I am...a Jew of Tarsus...”* (Acts 21:39). And, *“I also am an Israelite”* (Rom. 11:1). The terms “Jew” and “Israelite” were used interchangeably after the return from Babylon, and that condition prevailed into the Writings of the Apostles (NT) times. The Writings of the Apostles speak of Israel 75 times and uses the word “Jew” 174 times (Acts 21:39, 22:3, Rom. 11:1, 2 Cor. 11:22, Phil. 3:5, etc.).

The Mission of Jesus

Jesus said, *“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (Matt. 15:24). Since Jesus only ministered in the region of Israel, it would seem that all Israel was present and represented there, notwithstanding the fact that many were dispersed in other nations (with full knowledge that they were Jewish).

Jesus commissioned His followers with these words, *“Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (Matt. 10:6). This was early in His ministry, and the disciples knew nothing at this time of the great world commission which was to come later. For now, they were restricted to Israelites, who were present in the Land at that time.

On the Day of Pentecost

In the great sermon on Pentecost, Peter cries, “*Ye men of Judaea*” (Acts 2:14) and “*Ye men of Israel*” (Acts 2:22). Peter calls his listeners “Jews” and “of the house of Israel.” He says to them, “*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus...both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36, emphasis added).

Fulfilled Prophecy

How can we overlook the fact that through the centuries there have been Godly expositors and Bible teachers who have called for a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, including the scores of passages that speak of a return of the Jewish people to what was previously called Palestine? How can we scorn the simple observation that what these faithful teachers have spoken and written, *based on God’s infallible Word*, has actually come to pass in our times?

“*Therefore say unto the house of Israel...I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land...and ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers...and the desolate land shall be tilled...and ruined cities are...inhabited*” (Ezekiel 36:22, 24, 28, 34, 35). Ezekiel also declares after the “dry bones” vision that Judah (Jews) and Israel (ten tribes) shall be one and will be joined together in the regathering. Read Ezekiel chapter 37, noting verses 16–17. Verse 22 says they will be “*one nation... they shall be no more two nations.*” This is the condition that prevails in Israel today.

Great Future for Israel

Some object that the nation of Israel is a secular society and that most of the Jewish people do not even practice their own religion. Is it some great problem that God is *not a liar*? This is precisely what the Lord said would happen in the last days. First, the Jewish people regather as a secular nation—mostly in unbelief, then there will be a great spiritual awakening in the sovereign timing of God. Do you have the patience to allow God to have His way? It is no problem to me that the prophecy of God is so accurate. It would be disturbing if it were any other way.

Where Do You Stand?

Most of the people who read this already agree with our conclusions. This will supply you with a few answers to the false teachers who deny Israel her rightful place.

But is it enough just to believe correctly? Is it not true, as James writes, that faith without works is dead? He counsels us to be “*doers of the word, and not hearers only*” (James 1:22). When you stand before the Lord one day, you want to hear Him say, “*Well done [not well thought out] thou good and faithful servant...*” (Matt. 25:23). Prophecy is for more than intellectual stimulation. It is a call to action, to implementation of the plan of Almighty God. God wants participants, not mere spectators in the end-time drama of the ages.

It is not enough to just believe that Israel is a fulfillment of prophecy. You are called to do something about it, to be supportive of God’s called and chosen nation—no matter what Israel herself thinks of *His* plan at this time. You are called to cooperate with that plan of God for the present season.

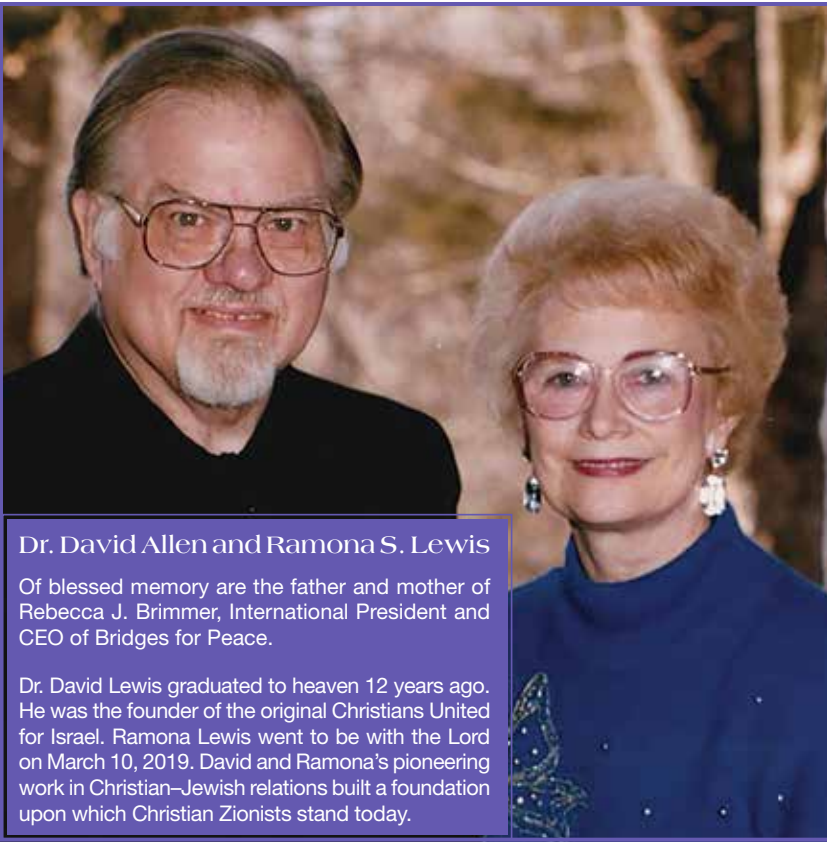


Scripture is taken from the King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

TERMINOLOGY:

Many of our readers are seasoned supporters of Israel while others are just beginning to understand the importance of standing with God’s chosen nation; some prefer the use of Hebrew names and terms, while others are comfortable with more traditional Christian terminology. Because we want to show respect to all of our readers while providing an enjoyable educational experience, we are making every effort to use both terms whenever possible. The following are some of the most common examples:

- Jesus (Yeshua)
- *Tanakh* (Old Testament or OT)—*Tanakh* is an acronym used in Judaism which stands for *Torah*, *Neviim* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- Writings of the Apostles (New Testament or NT)
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)



Dr. David Allen and Ramona S. Lewis

Of blessed memory are the father and mother of Rebecca J. Brimmer, International President and CEO of Bridges for Peace.

Dr. David Lewis graduated to heaven 12 years ago. He was the founder of the original Christians United for Israel. Ramona Lewis went to be with the Lord on March 10, 2019. David and Ramona's pioneering work in Christian-Jewish relations built a foundation upon which Christian Zionists stand today.

Ramona's family set up the Ramona Lewis Israel Memorial Fund in her honor. The fund will be used to bless Israeli widows in need. Visit bridgesforpeace.com to donate.

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