



The Ten Lost Tribes: The History and Mystery of the Lost Tribes of Israel

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures

*Includes Biblical passages and Assyrian accounts of the deportation of the Israelites

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"I counted as spoil 27,280 people, together with their chariots, and gods, in whom they trusted. I formed a unit with 200 of [their] chariots for my royal force. I settled the rest of them in the midst of Assyria. I repopulated Samaria more than before. I brought into it people from countries conquered by my hands. I appointed my commissioner as governor over them, and I counted them as Assyrians." - Sargon II, Assyrian king

In the 8th century BCE, one of the most important provinces within the Assyrian Empire was Samaria. Also known as Israel, Samaria repeatedly rebelled against their Assyrian overlords, but in 722, the Assyrians overran Samaria once and for all, killing countless numbers and sending most of the rest of its inhabitants into forced exile. The events of Samaria's fall were chronicled in the Assyrian annals from the reign of Sargon II and the Old Testament, and although the two sources present the event from different perspectives, they corroborate each other for the most part and together present a reliable account of the situation. The end result was that 30,000 Israelites were forcibly deported from the region, a tactic the Assyrians found so effective that they would continue to use it against other conquered enemies until the fall of their own empire.

The Assyrians' forced exile of the Israelites was not the only time such a fate had befallen them, as made clear by Babylonian accounts and the Biblical account of the Exodus out of Egypt, but it was that exile that permanently scattered most of the legendary 12 tribes of Israel, and the fate of the 10 lost tribes has interested people ever since.

The patriarchal stories in Genesis explain the following about the origin of the tribes of Israel. The patriarch Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel (Gen 32:28), was himself the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham. He had 12 sons who are the eponymous ancestors of the 12 tribes of Israel. Genesis lists the 12 sons according to their mothers. Jacob had five sons with his first wife: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, and Issachar. Leah's maid, Zilpah, bore another two sons to Jacob: Gad and Asher. His second wife, Rachel, also bore only two sons: Joseph and Benjamin; as did her maid, Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali.

The simple version of the Ten Lost Tribes is that modern Jewish communities are composed of the descendants of two of these 12 tribes because Cyrus the Great allowed these tribes to return to Judah from their captivity in Babylon. However, the location and fate of the remaining 10 tribes, deported by the Assyrians from the northern kingdom of Israel two centuries earlier, remains a mystery, and it is this mystery that lies at the heart of the search for the Ten Lost Tribes.

The Ten Lost Tribes looks at what is known and unknown about the missing tribes of Israel, and speculation as to their fate. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about the Lost Tribes of Israel like never before, in no time at all.

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