

"Where is Israel today"?

Who/Where Are The Tribes of Israel Today?
By Rhoda Foust

1/2003

Many studies have been done on the subject of the identity of Israel. Are they just the modern tribe of Judah that is known today as Israel, those Jews who have migrated back onto the land surrounding Jerusalem? We know that there were originally twelve tribes. Have all twelve tribes dissolved into the one tribe, or are we to look for other signs? Rather than take what scholars have offered on this subject, this study will use mostly scripture. Genesis 49: and Deuteronomy 33: allows us to look at the dying Jacob and Moses's prophetic predictions of what these tribes can expect in "the last days".

Gen. 49:1 And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you [that] which shall befall you in the last days.

49:2 Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

These are the twelve tribes of Israel, or the twelve sons who will fulfill the predictions of Jacob (Israel).

Gen.49:3 Reuben, thou [art] my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:

49:4 Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou [it]: he went up to my couch.

We see that Reuben, the first born will not "excel". = Strong's #3498 says the word excel means to "not remain, not be preserved." So we will not look for a large, strong nation from Reuben's tribe. But Jacob prays for his life. Deu.33:6 Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few.

49:5 Simeon and Levi [are] brethren; instruments of cruelty [are in] their habitations.

49:6 O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

49:7 Cursed [be] their anger, for [it was] fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

Jacob prophesies of Levi in Deu.33:8 And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah;

9 Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.

10 They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.

11 Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.

Simeon and Levi, because of their cruelties, will be no nations, rather they will be scattered throughout the other tribes of Israel. However, Levi will be the priests that offer in the Temple. This leaves nine more tribes of Israel.

49:8 Judah, thou [art he] whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand [shall be] in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

Deu.33:7 And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies.

The rest of Israel's descendants will "praise" Judah. Judah will be held in respect and esteem. These are the Jews, from which came our saviour.

Gen.49:9 Judah [is] a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

Judah is not to be taken lightly when it comes to war.

49:10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him [shall] the gathering of the people [be].

49:11 Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes:

49:12 His eyes [shall be] red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

Judah will be the keeper of the law until Jesus, the Messiah, appears.

49:13 Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he [shall be] for an haven of ships; and his border [shall be] unto Zidon.

Deu.33:18 And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents.

We must look for a nation that dwells at "the haven of the sea". One whose border is near Zidon, or Sidon. We can read about Sidon in any bible dictionary. So Zebulun would be found near Lebanon, bordering modern Saida, in the Republic of Lebanon.

Gen.49:14 Issachar [is] a strong ass couching down between two burdens:

49:15 And he saw that rest [was] good, and the land that [it

was] pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.

Deu33:18 And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents.

19 They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.

About Issachar, his nation will be at rest, a pleasant, neutral country. His nation will be paying tribute to one or more protective nations, whether by goods or other means of support.

49:16 Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel.

49:17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.

49:18 I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.

Dan, as one of the tribes of Israel will be judging his people. He will be a danger to those who trample or "step on" him. Some label Dan as being the modern nation of Ireland.

Deu.33: 22 And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan.

Deu.33:20 And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head.

21 And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel.

Gen.49:19 Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.

Gad will be a servant type nation, who has no great strength of it's own, but will "at the last" become its own nation. Whether this nation has reached its last stage can be studied from history.

Asher, while his location is not given, can be safely labeled as a strong country who exports fancy delicacies to other nations.

Deu.33:24 And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.

25 Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.

Gen.49:21 Naphtali [is] a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.

Deu.33:23 And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south.

Naphtali, a nation that gives good instruction or advice, and has attributes of a doe, or female deer.

Some of the attributes can be said to be cautious, not aggressive, keeping to itself, shying away from danger. Their land will be in the southwest.

Gen.49:22 Joseph [is] a fruitful bough, [even] a fruitful bough
by a well; [whose] branches run over the wall:
49:23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot [at him],
and hated him:

Due.33:13 And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the
precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,
14 And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious
things put forth by the moon,
15 And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious
things of the lasting hills,
16 And for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and for the
good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of
Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.
17 His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the
horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the
earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of
Manasseh.

Much is said about Joseph whom the scriptures tell us is actually two
half tribe nations, made up by his two sons, Manasseh and
Ephraim. When this is fulfilled Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) will be very
wealthy "fruitful", who extends or has influence beyond his boundaries, into
other countries. He will be envied and hated by other countries who have
"grieved" him, and declared war against him.
Keep in mind these predictions have spanned over many hundreds of years, and are
still in the process of being fulfilled.

Gen.49:24 But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his
hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty [God] of
Jacob; (from thence [is] the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)
49:25 [Even] by the God of thy father, who shall help thee;
and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of
heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings
of the breasts, and of the womb:

We must look for one (or two ?) nations who is being protected and
helped by the hands of God. A nation that wins in war, and is blessed
above all others with material wealth and strong healthy children.

Gen.49:26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the
blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the
everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on
the crown of the head of him that was separate from his
brethren.

This people will be blessed "above" all the other twelve sons of
Israel, and their progenitors. He will stand out as a leader, separate
from the rest of his brethren.

Gen.49:27 Benjamin shall ravin [as] a wolf: in the morning he

shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

Deu.33:12 And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.

Benjamin is a warmonger who will be successful in war. It is interesting that Benjamin is a part of Judah, known today as Israel. Paul was a Benjamite.

Gen.49:28 All these [are] the twelve tribes of Israel: and this [is it] that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

We know from scriptures in Ezra and Nehemiah, along with history, that three nations, Judah, Benjamin, and Levi made their way back to Jerusalem somewhere near 450 b.c. when they rebuilt the temple. Paul was himself a Benjamite, not of the tribe of Judah, although, he was thought of as a Jew. This leaves (aside from Ruben and Simeon) seven tribes unaccounted for. So we must look for them among the rest of the geographical world of nations. We may ask the question, "was Abraham promised to be the father of a great nation, or MANY great nations"?

Gen. 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I [am] the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

17:2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

17:3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

17:4 As for me, behold, my covenant [is] with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

17:5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

17:6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make NATIONS (plural) of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

The rest of the story is how Isaac was born to Abraham, and Jacob (later named Israel) was born to Isaac from which came the twelve tribes (sons) of Israel. God promised Abraham he would be the father of "many nations". Where are those "many" nations today? Did God actually mean that just one nation, from the tribe of Judah, (modern Israel) would be the total of the "many" nations? Let us see what the word "many" used in the ancient Hebrew meant.

Strong's Conc. #1995 = multiply, abundance, multitude, wealth, riches, tumult, noise. This word "hamown" is only applied twice in the whole bible, both times in reference to this same promise. One might read Gen. 18:18 and think that the one nation of Israel was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. The nation of Israel was at first just one great nation, before the split of the nation following Solomon's reign. Then the greater majority broke away from the other tribes. After having suffered captivity, over many years this larger group gradually migrated into other parts of the world where they lost their true

identity. The fewer tribes, the house of Judah, returned to Jerusalem, and became known as Israel.

What nation (or nations) is fulfilling these promises? Almost everyone agrees that Judah, Levi, and Benjamin made up the Jewish nation during the time of Jesus, and that Jesus was a Jew, born of the tribe of Judah. Later, according to Jewish history, by 70 a.d. the nation of Judah had been defeated and dispersed, no longer a nation. Over a long period of time these people, scattered and persecuted, begin to migrate back to their country. Then in 1948 they took over Jerusalem and established a government, reclaiming it (from the descendants of Ishmael) as their rightful land. But this is the history of the Jews, not the history of the other tribes of Israel. They had long since left, separating from the "house of Judah", and was known as "the house of Israel" during the reign of Jeroboam, around 922 b.c.. Jeroboam was of the tribe of Ephraim, and after this event many scripture passages

refer to these tribes as "Ephraim". Read about the split in 1Kings 11, 12 and 14. Many scholars and historians give accounts of these tribes migrating throughout Europe, settling in various locations, eventually growing into small and larger nations. Most of the location of these evolving nations is speculation. However, some of the prophecies give unique descriptions that only certain nations are presently fulfilling.

Is there a nation that fulfills the prophecy about Joseph?

Gen.22:17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which [is] upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

What other nations beside Great Britain and the U.S.A. have become the greatest, wealthiest, and most powerful nations on the earth? Have other nations "possessed the gates of his enemies"? Read about these two great nations in Gen. 48.

Joseph had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, through which this national blessing would be fulfilled. Both were to be blessed beyond any other nations of the world. Jacob knew that in time one great nation would grow from Manasseh, and would be one of the most powerful nations on earth. He also knew that out of the one great nation another nation would emerge from Ephraim that would be even greater.

Gen. 48:3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,

48:4 And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee [for] an everlasting possession.

48:5 And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, [are] mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be

mine.

Jacob begins the legal process of adopting Joseph's two sons so that they may be in the line of the blessings promised by God.

Gen.48:6 And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, [and] shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.

48:8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who [are] these?

48:9 And Joseph said unto his father, They [are] my sons, whom God hath given me in this [place]. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.

48:12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

48:13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought [them] near unto him.

48:14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid [it] upon Ephraim's head, who [was] the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh [was] the firstborn.

48:15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

48:16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

Notice at the beginning they (the two of them) were to grow into one great multitude just as Great Britian was originally the first to become one great nation.

48:17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

48:18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this [is] the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.

48:19 And his father refused, and said, I know [it], my son, I know [it]: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

Now, we see a separation. From the one great multitude of v.16 where "they" were originally just one great multitude, we have a promise of a greater nation coming out of the first, just as America has become greater than Great Britian from which she came out of. America is a unification of many states (small nations), thus making it "the United States of America".

Gen. 48:20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

Now we will read again the wonderful blessings Jacob pronounced on these two sons of Joseph.

Gen. 49:22 Joseph [is] a fruitful bough, [even] a fruitful bough by a well; [whose] branches run over the wall:

49:23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot [at him], and hated him:

49:24 But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty [God] of Jacob; (from thence [is] the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

49:25 [Even] by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:

49:26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

After having read these scriptures, can we still believe that the descendants of Judah, Levi, and Benjamin make up the whole house of Israel? If we do believe they do, we must also believe they are (in the last days) the greatest, most wealthy and powerful nation on earth. When do you expect Judah (today's Israel) to fulfill this prophecy? Do you believe they are already fulfilling it? If not who do you believe is? If you believe that Great Britain and America is the greatest, wealthiest, most powerful, and influential nations in the world, then you surely will have to admit that they are also Israelites, and that many scriptures refer to them in prophecy as being of the "house of Israel", and as "Ephraim".

On the other side of the coin, throughout their history we also read of many curses that befell both the house of Israel and the house of Judah resulting from their disobedience and idolatry. These blessings were sure, but were not promised to continue throughout the age. How long these blessings last depends on the nations, whether they will listen and follow the instructions of their Creator. The bible indicates that Israel will experience a future great tribulation (time of Jacob's trouble) Mat.24: and Mar. 13. Along with the curses wonderful promises are given to occur during another age, a time when the house of Judah and the house of Israel will become united once again. Ezek. 37:19-22.

Is it not logical to assume these promises and blessing expounded on by Jacob and Moses are not limited to our age, but will reach their climax in a future age? Most prophesies are dual. One event can be fulfilled as a type of a future event. We know there are yet many prophesies yet to be fulfilled after the whole

house of Israel (Eze.37) is resurrected and relocated in their land, which is another study.

Deu.33:27 The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.

28 Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.

29 Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

A wonderful "latter days" age is to come when all of Israel will turn to their Messiah, never to fall away again. Ezek. 37:23-28. And resurrected David will be (our) king again. This will not take place until after the 1,000 year imprisonment of Satan, and the rule of Christ (and his saints) on this earth, and after the resurrection of the whole house of Israel, the release of Satan who leads many Gentile nations (Ezek.38 and Rev.20:7-9) against a wealthy, peaceful but idolatrous Israel, taking them into captivity once again. Then, and only then, will those Israelites who survive turn to God with their whole heart, repent and yield to their Maker.

For the second time, God will lead captive Israel back to their land. Read about this in Ezek. 39:21-29, Isa.12:1-6, Isa.14:1-3, Isa.49:12-26. These are just a few scriptures that allude to this event. God changes Israel's hearts, putting his holy spirit within them (Ezek.36:23-27) and the ancient promises and blessings prophesied throughout the ages will at last be a fulfillment when Israel shall be a righteous and holy example shining upon all nations of the earth.

To read "the rest of the story" continue reading the last chapters of Ezekiel and Rev.21 and 22.
And read the study, "The Rest of the Dead" or "The seven Ages"

Edited 2013