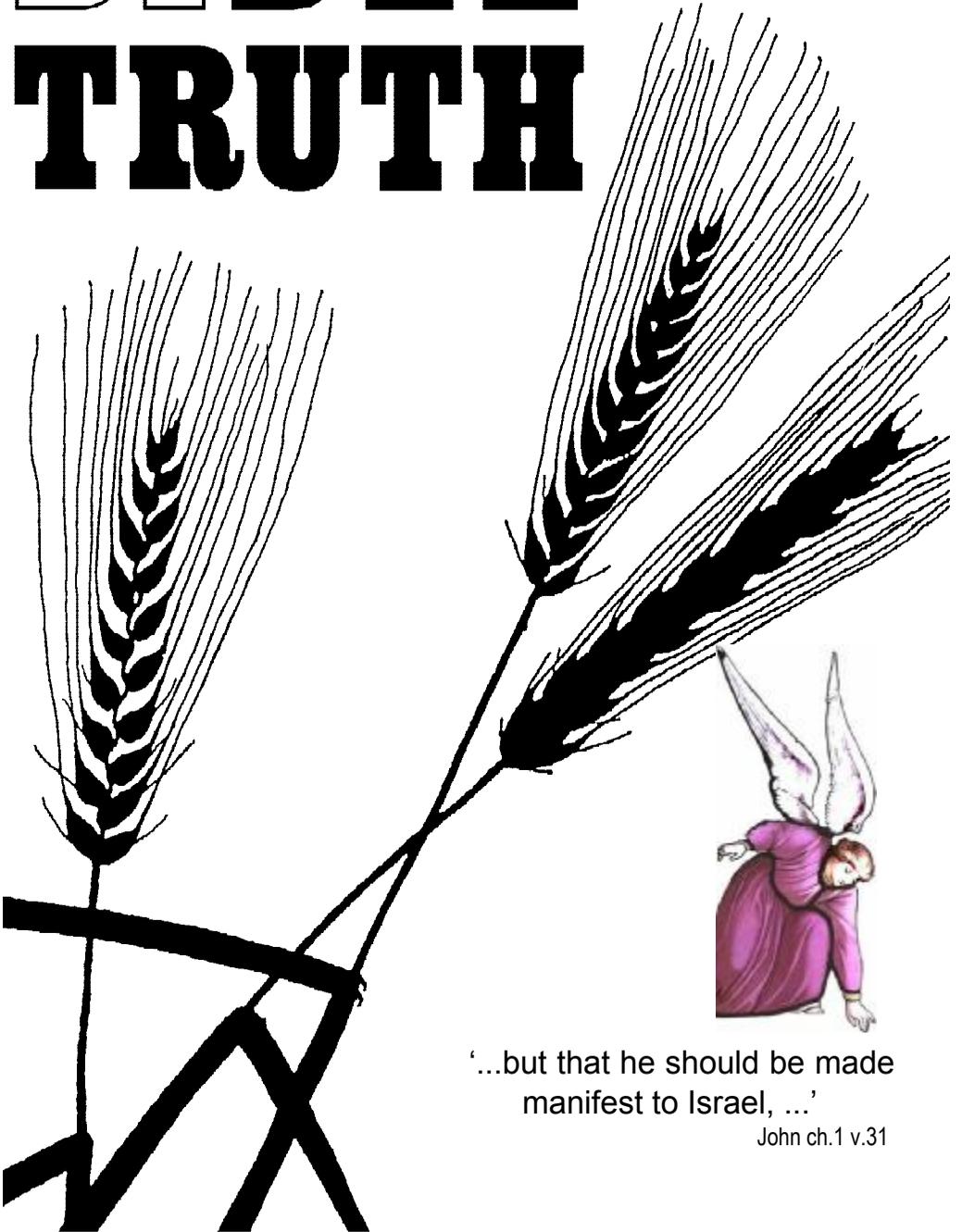


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'...but that he should be made
manifest to Israel, ...'

John ch.1 v.31

EZRA AND THE LOST TRIBES

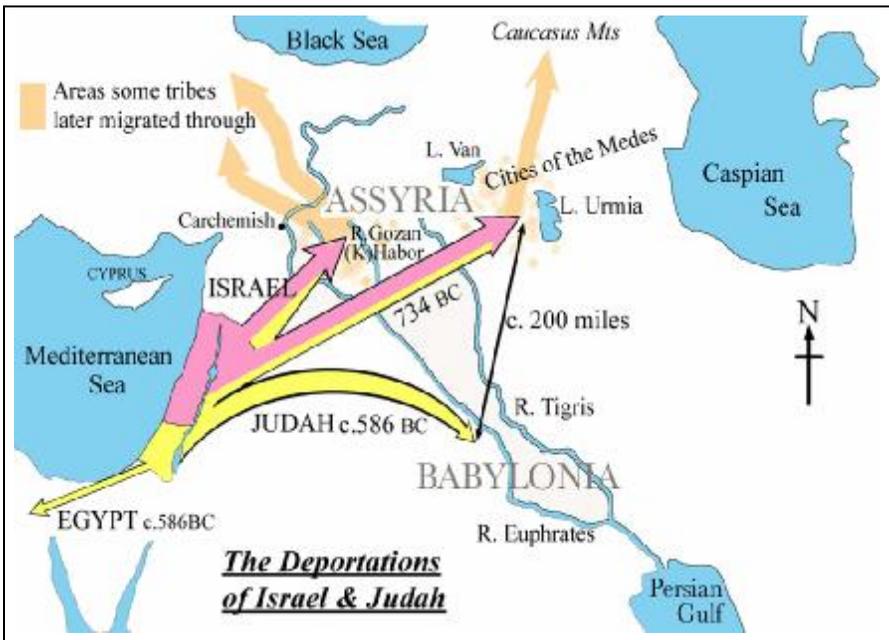
An Eyewitness To History!

by Pastor Dr Jory Steven Brooks, CBIA

In any important public or historic event, reliable eyewitnesses serve as the primary authority concerning what has actually taken place. In Biblical history, we can also call upon dependable and inspired firsthand eyewitness accounts in the writings of the prophets.

When the Babylonian captivity of the House of Judah ended in 538 BC, there was a return of God's people known today as the 'Restoration'. Religious writers looking back upon this event 2,500 years later invariably assume that virtually every one of the Israelites, all twelve tribes, were soon re-established in Canaan. But surprisingly, there are two very creditable and inspired witnesses to the events of that period, Ezra and Nehemiah, who sharply disagree with the ideas of most modern historians.

In fact, these two prophets are the only reliable eyewitnesses available today concerning the Restoration period of Biblical history.



Both agree on an important point, they specifically refer to the returnees as being only of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, corporately known as the House of Judah. There is no mention at all of any of the other missing ten tribes which comprised the kingdom of the House of Israel!

Ezra was looking for colonists to resettle Israel's old homeland, yet not only did he not send an emissary to the missing ten tribes, he strangely did not mention their existence at all. We receive the definite impression that Ezra had no idea where they were himself! In 2 Kings ch.17 v.6, we were told that the House of Israel was exiled by Assyria to '...Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes'. If they were still in the same location in Ezra's day, surely he would have sent emissaries there to encourage them to return to the land of Canaan. Yet Ezra did not send an envoy, nor did he seem to even know where they had gone.

Although only two tribes are ever mentioned throughout the Book of Ezra, the common teaching today is that all twelve tribes of Israel, from both Houses of Israel and Judah, were reunited at the end of the Babylonian captivity. If so, why is there no mention of the rest of these tribes, either in the early portion of the Book of Ezra which relates the following,

'Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem'.

Ezra ch.1 v.5

and in the same way at the beginning of chapter four.

'Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel;'

Ezra ch.4 v.1

or during events years later?

'Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days ...'

Ezra ch.10 v.9

The prophet Ezra knew nothing of any return to old Canaan of the exiled ten tribes of the House of Israel! Neither did his contemporary, the prophet Nehemiah, who spoke only of the existence of the 'House of Judah' and the two tribes it comprised, Judah and Benjamin.

‘And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah.’

Nehemiah ch.4 v.16

(also Nehemiah chs 11 vv 4 & 36 & 12 v.34)

A leading Jewish Israeli scholar, Sara Japhet, agrees and says,

‘... the restoration [i.e. return from exile] and the subsequent renewal of Jewish community life involved only three tribes: the lay tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and the tribe of Levi’.

from *The Rivers Of Babylon*, p.82

Levi was the priestly tribe whose members were divided and spread among all of the other tribes. It therefore did not inherit land itself and the majority of its members would be proportionately found among the missing tribes of the House of Israel.

It is further very significant that out of all of King David's descendants, only one ‘Hattush’ is listed (Ezra ch.8 v.2) among the returning exiles. Since the land of Canaan was virtually emptied of Hebrews during the Babylonian exile, apparently all of David's other descendants remained in the Diaspora in other lands. One of them, King Zedekiah's daughter, accompanied by the prophet Jeremiah, escaped the defeated and plundered land of Judah (Jeremiah ch.43) to go first to Tahpanhes, Egypt, and then (according to legendary history) to the isles of the West. This wonderful story is told in Francis Henking's book, *The Tender Twig*.

Another very possible line of descent from King David provides an interesting link with the Norse-Gothic tribes and their early leader Odin. A reading of 1 Chronicles ch.3 vv 17-18 reveals the Davidic descendant and king of Judah, Jeconiah, had one son, Asir (King James Version - Assir), translated in the Revised Standard Version and New International Version (NIV) as ‘captive’. This Asir was therefore among those exiled from Canaan, and as noted above, neither he nor any of his descendants were included in Ezra's list of those who returned from Babylon. Where did Asir, of the Davidic royal line of kings, and his descendants go? In Norse history, although encased in myth, Asir or Aesir was the name of the chief royal tribe living at Asgard, the early Mideast homeland of the Norse people. *The Columbia Encyclopaedia* under the heading ‘Germanic Religion’ states,

‘In early times there were two groups of gods—the Aesir and the Vanir. However, after a war between the rival pantheons which

perhaps reflects a war between two rival tribes, the defeated Vanir were absorbed into the Aesir, and the gods of both were worshipped in a single pantheon ... of twelve principal deities ... The gods dwelled at Asgard'.

Apparently, exiled Israelites of the twelve tribes gathered around their Davidic leader, Aesir, before leaving the Mideast for Europe. A later leader of these assembled tribes was Odin, whose name is pure Semitic. The name Odin has been shown by scholars to be a royal title meaning 'Lord' (compare the Hebrew 'Adonai' and early Greek hero, 'Adonis').

This should not be surprising, since Ezra informs us that only four courses or divisions of priests returned from Babylon.

'The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.'

Ezra ch.2 vv 36-39

This was out of a total of twenty-four courses (1 Chronicles ch.24 vv 7-18).

These twenty-four courses of priests were a prophetic fore type of the twenty-four elders of the Book of Revelation showing us that they were not eliminated in God's Divine purposes.

'And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.'

Revelation ch.4 v.4

'And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.'

Revelation ch.19 v.4

Simple maths will show that well over 80% of the priesthood of Israel therefore did not return from its exile in foreign lands. This percentage would also be reflected in the very low number of Israelites as a whole who returned to Canaan.

Respected scholar Dr W.F. Lofthouse, in *Israel After The Exile*, Clarendon Bible, Old Testament, Vol. 4, p.24, has this to say,

'[Cyrus' decree] did not mean that any large number of Jews returned from Babylon to Palestine ... it is doubtful if many of the Jews (save the poorer members of the community) would have

been anxious to leave ... Moreover if there had been a considerable company of returning exiles, our sources for subsequent events in Palestine must have referred to its presence there. As a matter of fact, such references do not exist'.

In other words, relatively very few Israelites ever returned to the land of Canaan after being exiled.

The only place that you will read that all of the Israelite tribes reunited in Babylon, and returned together as one body to Canaan, is in the misguided theology of the religious opponents of those believing in the continued existence of the descendants of Israel! Neither the Bible nor history support the idea of a mass return from Babylon of both Houses of Israel. Instead, the prophet Ezra stated,

'... grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, ... '.

Ezra ch.9 v.8

Again he emphasized, '... we are left this day as a remnant' (see Ezra ch.9 v.15 NIV). There is no question that Ezra, an eyewitness, documented that the majority of Israel remained in exile in other lands!

Some of our critics claim that these exiled Israelites all intermarried with the pagan nations of Assyria and Babylon and passed out of existence as a separate people. To this, Dr Lofthouse replies,

'Were they absorbed into the new civilization? If they had been, no one would have been surprised. But they were not'.

(ibid. p.5)

Other critics assert that although few Israelites may have returned immediately, a mass exodus took place sometime later. This too, ignores the facts of history. An interesting statement appears in Ezra's last chapter which bears on this and it reads,

'And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away'.

Ezra ch.10 vv 7-8

Ezra stated that exiles who did not return to Jerusalem at that time 'forfeited' all of their property. The Hebrew word used here, 'yaharam', means confiscated property. Any Israelite who returned

