

## The Nation Of Israel—Biblical Israel? (Part Two)

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Who is the Israel of the Bible? As Part One demonstrated, it is not the house of Judah or the modern nation of Israel, as Bible speakers and teachers often claim. Rather, in the Bible, God applies the names "Israel" and the "house of Israel" to what has become known as the "Ten Lost Tribes," and Judah is included only when those names identify *all* the tribes descended from the patriarch Jacob, whom God later renamed Israel.

The previous article also asked, "Are the 'Ten Lost Tribes' actually lost?" Prophecies tell us that these tribes will exist in "the last days" and that God will reunite them with the house of Judah (Jeremiah 30:3; Isaiah 11:12; Ezekiel 37:19; Hosea 1:11). While lost to the world and to themselves, these tribes are not lost to God (Amos 9:9).

### Who and Where

Because God does not lie and His Bible is true, these conclusions raise the question: Who is the Israel of the Bible, and where is it today?

In Genesis 49, God gives a prophecy through Jacob about each of his sons, providing distinct identifying characteristics that would apply to each in the "last days." These prophetic descriptions make sense only if each tribe is an identifiable people, a nation. For those who believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and that we are living in the last days, those prophecies apply to our time today and are therefore to be taken seriously.

Because many biblical prophecies speak about "Israel" and "the house of Israel" in the last days, how can we understand them if we do not know who they are in today's world? God gave those prophecies for a reason. They are not interesting little vignettes of people who lived long ago but are descriptions for our present day. Just as God tells Daniel that the prophecies he received would have their meanings revealed at the time of the end (Daniel 8:26; 12:4, 9), the same principle holds true for other end-time prophecies as well (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17).

Jacob's prophecy begins in Genesis 49:1 by identifying the time this prophecy applies to: "And Jacob called his sons and said, 'Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you *in the last days*'" (emphasis ours throughout).

Do we believe we are living in the last days? If yes, then Jacob's words apply specifically to our time. In this prophecy, God is talking directly to us, looking down through the millennia and preparing a message *especially for us* now. As far back as Genesis 49, He thought it important and necessary. Do we?

Proceeding into the prophecy, the message about Simeon and Levi in verse 7 highlights an important point: "Now I place a curse on you because of your fierce anger. Your descendants will be scattered among the tribes of Israel" (Contemporary English Version [CEV]).

If Simeon and Levi are scattered now, then this suggests that the other tribes are not. Therefore, just as Judah has formed into a nation, we should expect that the other tribes, especially those larger than Judah, have each done the same. We are looking, then, for countries and peoples extant today that fit the profiles given by God to Jacob in Genesis 49.

### **The House of Judah**

Judah is the best place to start to test the validity of this prophecy. Part One explained that, because of their observance of the Sabbath, true to God's promise, the people belonging to the house of Judah have not lost their identity—the whole world knows who they are. This fact makes the link between Judah today and the Judah of the Genesis 49 prophecy easily seen and undeniable.

Notice one tantalizing trait Jacob ascribes to Judah: "Judah, your brothers will praise you. *You will defeat your enemies*" (Genesis 49:8, *Easy-to-Read Version*; emphasis ours).

How have the descendants of Judah, the Jews of the modern State of Israel, fared against their enemies in our time—the last days? They began by defeating those who tried to keep them from being a nation in their war of independence, a victory that led to the founding of the nation of Israel on May 14, 1948. Since then, they have defeated their foes in the wars we know as the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War. In addition, they have fought and survived numerous, lesser known wars since 1948. (For a complete list see the Wikipedia article, "List of wars involving Israel.")

An article on "Top 17 Miraculous Israeli Military Victories" ([israelvideonetwork.com/list/top-17-miraculous-israeli-military-victories](http://israelvideonetwork.com/list/top-17-miraculous-israeli-military-victories)) concludes:

At West Point Military Academy, while wars fought throughout the world are studied to learn military strategy, the Israeli wars are excluded from the curriculum. This is because according to military strategy, Israel should have lost them. Israeli victories defy logic because they are more often than not honest to G-d miracles. At West Point Military Academy, it benefits to teach logic and not the unexplainable miracles that make up Israel.

These frequent miracles should be expected rather than surprising because God is faithful to His promises. He is a miracle-working God: "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure'" (Isaiah 46:10). Though modern Jews have strayed from the faith revealed in God's Word, following their own traditions (Mark 7:6-9), the God of their fathers still watches over them.

Another important, identifying characteristic about Judah appears in the last part of verse 8, "Your brothers will bow down to you," and verse 10 expands on it:

The scepter or leadership shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh [the Messiah, the Peaceful One] comes to Whom it belongs, and to Him shall be the obedience of the people. (*The Amplified Bible*)

Judah's brothers, the other tribes, are to bow down to Judah in the last days. Verse 8 invokes the image of a subject showing deference to his monarch, an image that sharpens in verse 10 with the use of a "scepter," a symbol of a ruler's sovereignty, implying dominion, power, and authority. The symbol reinforces the point that Judah has a responsibility to rule, to lead.

If we are to believe what God predicts here, then we must ask, "Which nations have kings, queens, and leaders who have Judah as an ancestor?" According to God, when we find such a nation, we have a candidate for one of the tribes of the house of Israel.

Some commentators restrict these verses by claiming that the scepter image applies only to David, Solomon, and Jesus Christ. However, as we saw, this prophecy is not just about history or the distant future, but it is specifically about *today*—the last days. In Genesis 49, God describes the identifying traits of each tribe, of each nation they have become, as they exist in our day.

David Guzik writes about Genesis 49:10 in his commentary on the Bible: "Each of these refer to the *ruling* position Judah will have among his brethren. He inherited the leadership aspect of the firstborn's inheritance." This scepter promise was not only about rulership, but more precisely, that God gave Judah the gift of leadership.

It should not be surprising, then, that those who have Judah as an ancestor are often leaders in the fields they choose to enter. For example, in fields as diverse as politics, science, finance, business, entertainment, art, etc., we find descendants of Judah overrepresented as leaders, despite comprising only 2% of the American population. Even in the area of wealth, they represent 20% of the wealthiest 400 Americans. While some cry conspiracy, those who believe God and Genesis 49 instead see a God-ordained gift of leadership and fulfilled Bible prophecy.

In verse 10, Judah receives a special blessing and prominence. To Judah goes the promise of rulership culminating in the greatest and final ruler—Jesus Christ. The day will come when every knee will bow to a Jew—Jesus Christ (Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10). While Judah was not promised physical greatness and prosperity, it received a promise of special prominence by being chosen as the tribe that would produce the Messiah, as well as rule and exercise leadership among the tribes of Israel.

## **Joseph**

Now that we see that the prophecies about Judah are operating in our day just as God said they would, we can be confident that the prophecies about the other brothers are just as accurate. What nations have kings or queens who have Judah as an ancestor? What nations have descendants of Judah as leaders in various fields of endeavor? The answers most frequently point to the Western democracies, some of which are still monarchies, giving us a starting point in our search for Judah's "lost" brothers.

In Genesis 49, besides Judah, one other tribe is given prominence over his brothers—Joseph. Because the prophecies about Judah point to the Western democracies, then the last part of Genesis 49:26 becomes a major clue: "because you are the leader of your brothers" (CEV).

This prophecy is about Joseph, but applies to both his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob says in Genesis 48:5: “And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.”

In his commentary, John Gill comments on this verse:

. . . they shall be mine; that is, by adoption; should be reckoned not as his grandchildren, but as his children, even as his two eldest sons, Reuben and Simeon; and so should be distinct tribes or heads of them, as his sons would be, and have a distinct part and portion in the land of Canaan; and thus the birthright was transferred from Reuben, because of his incest, to Joseph, who in his posterity had a double portion assigned him.

So, if the Western democracies are the fertile ground to search for the tribes of Israel, have there been two brother nations that have consistently led other nations over the last century or so? If such a pair exists, would they lead at the same time or would one follow the other? The Bible has the answer.

In the blessings that Jacob pronounced on Manasseh and Ephraim recorded in Genesis 48, the last part of verse 20 reads, “And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.” Here, God establishes the order, the younger, Ephraim, first and then the elder, Manasseh. In verse 19, Jacob says of Ephraim, “His descendants shall become a multitude of nations.”

Remember, these prophecies are about the last days—*now*. According to God, at this time, descendants of Ephraim should exist who have become a *multitude* of nations. If we see one such nation, and no other, based on the inerrancy of the Bible, we know that we are looking at Ephraim. Of Ephraim’s older brother Manasseh, Jacob says in the same verse, “He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great.”

Therefore, if two brother nations exist today, leading the Western democracies, first one becoming a multitude of nations and later the other brother nation becoming a single great nation, according to God through Jacob, that profile fits Ephraim and Manasseh, respectively.

This article is not meant to answer definitively the question of who and where the “Ten Lost Tribes” are. Rather, it aims to emphasize the fact that Genesis 49 is for today and that many Bible prophecies speak of Israel and its place and condition in our world today. It seeks to inspire the reader to begin a journey of discovery to determine who and where is the Israel that the prophecies foretell will be active in the last days. We have determined that it is not Judah, the modern State of Israel.

### **Why Important?**

Why is it important to know who the Israel of the Bible is? Consider this warning from Jesus Christ:

And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:26-27)

Those in Noah’s day were oblivious to the reality that their world was about to come to an abrupt and devastating end, and so it will be at the end of this age. But it is not just unbelievers who will be caught unaware (Matthew 25:10-13). Prophecies abound in the Old Testament about the last days.

Often they are warnings to Israel and include the consequences to *them* of ignoring those warnings. If those who believe the Bible do not know who God is talking to, they risk being asleep and as unprepared for what is ahead as unbelievers.

So, before we are caught unaware as those in Noah's day, we need to heed the warnings that God in His love gives in the prophecies. But to heed, we must know who He is talking to. We need to know who is the Israel of the Bible.