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The Lost Tribes of Israel: Sources, Motifs, and Discourse in the Development of a Literary Myth

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Abstract of Thesis

For centuries people from different nations have speculated about the ultimate fate and whereabouts of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. As a result it has become a myth with universal appeal that has been recruited for a variety of causes, and even a myth that has the power to persuade people to create a past which has little or no bearing on the objective reality. It has travelled effortlessly through time and transcended national, cultural, and religious boundaries. The myth originated in a terse report of seven repetitive biblical verses and soon grew into a vast literary corpus. Nevertheless, the structure of the myth is such that it can be moulded according to the needs and aspirations of the user.

Through a three-pronged methodology it was established that the myth of the Lost Tribes is an essential feature of Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse from biblical times until the present day. Firstly a number of representative sources and groups ranging from biblical times until today were chosen. Each of these sources enhanced the myth in their own way. A number of them were exclusively Jewish in nature, others were wholly Christian, several were shared between the two, and a few were deemed to be neither Christian nor Jewish. The periodization of these sources has been in centuries rather than in decades. One chapter is devoted to each period and contains a number of sources or groups. Secondly, the development and the use of the motifs that support the discourse were charted to discover whether a change in discourse participants influenced not only the quantity of the motifs but also the motifs themselves. Thirdly, the growth of the myth was tracked and the role of any embellishments discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

We seek him here, we seek him there,
Those Frenchies seek him everywhere.
Is he in heaven?--Is he in hell?
That demmed, elusive Pimpernel.

Sir Percy Blakeney¹

In approximately 722 B.C., when the Northern Kingdom of Israel fell victim to Assyrian expansion policies, ten of the original twelve tribes of Israel were sent into exile. Exiling the inhabitants of conquered nations was a common policy of the time and the exile of Israel was no exception.² Yet, these tribes seem to have walked from conventional history into a world of myth and legend. The main reason for this is that biblical prophecies maintain that, at some point in the future, the Ten Tribes will be reunited with the House of Judah in the Land of their Fathers and that this will be a precursor to the Messianic age. Jews and later others came to believe that, therefore, the tribes had not disappeared and assimilated with their neighbours in exile but that they were merely lost or hidden in some remote part of the world. Just like 'those Frenchies' were seeking the elusive Scarlet Pimpernel 'everywhere' in the time of the French Revolution, so people throughout the ages and until the present day have been looking for the elusive Ten Lost Tribes everywhere. Despite the fact that every aspect of the epistemology of the Ten Lost Tribes resembles a quagmire, the fate and indeed the very existence of the Ten Tribes has been a continuing source of speculation and concern to

¹ Blakeney John, *A Gay Adventurer*, John Long: London, [n.d. but after 1935], pp. 141-199.

² N. Sacher Fox, "Assyrian Exile", in R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, Oxford University Press: New York, 1997, pp. 75-76.

Oded Bustenay, *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, Ludwig Reichert Verlag: Wiesbaden, 1979.

Malamat Abraham, 'Exile, Assyrian' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, editor-in-chief Fred Skolnik, 2nd edn (2007), 22 vols, Thomson Gale in association with Keter Publishing House: Detroit and Jerusalem, 2007, VI, pp. 607-608.

people of different backgrounds. The quest for the Lost Ten Tribes has been as enduring as the search for the Ark of the Covenant, the Man in the Iron Mask or the Holy Grail.

Often the subject is dismissed outright because so many untenable theories about their whereabouts have been proposed. Indeed, there is scarcely a people in the world that has not, at some point in time, been identified with this fabulous ancestry or even identified itself with one or more of the Lost Tribes.³ The various theories have been suggested in part by people who sought to solve a variety of historical problems by such identification, and in part by those motivated either by religious or political zeal. Even though the essential elements of the myth remained the same, one finds that the level of interest in the Lost Tribes fluctuated between periods of great popular excitement and periods where little obvious interest was shown.⁴

Notwithstanding a certain commonality with similar quests, mentioned above, this myth is different inasmuch as the usual national, cultural, religious and temporal borders are all transcended. It is not as structured and culture-specific as one might expect from a myth; it has elements of both a myth and a legend; and its roots are

³ The Indians of North and South America have on numerous occasions been identified as descendants of the Lost Tribes by e.g. Petrus Martyr Anglerius (1457-1526) in his *De Orbe Novo Decades*, Gilbert G nebrard (1535-1597) in his *Chronographiae*, Menasseh ben Israel (1604-1657) in his *Hope of Israel*, Lord Kingsborough (1795-1837) in his *Antiquities of Mexico*, and many more. Ashahel Grant published in 1841 his book *The Nestorians or the Lost Tribes*. The Falashas of Ethiopia were declared to be of the Tribe of Dan by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel (1973 and 1985). Tudor Parfitt, in *Journey to the Vanished City; the Search for a Lost Tribe of Israel*, wrote about the Lemba of Zimbabwe and Vendaland in South Africa who identified themselves with the Lost Tribes. The British Israelites believe that the British people are from the Tribe of Ephraim.

⁴ Some well-documented peaks of interest are the appearance of Eldad ha-Dani in the ninth century, the appearance of David Reuveni in the early sixteenth century, the writing of *The Hope of Israel* by Menasseh ben Israel in the seventeenth century, the Jewish Indian and Anglo-Israelite theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and indeed the present day ingathering of 'lost' Jews into the state of Israel by organisations such as Amishav and Shavei Israel.

historical. In a recent article Stanford M. Lyman recognized all these elements and called it a mytho-historical legend.⁵ It is, perhaps, the very combination of these different genres and their characteristics that give this myth its universal appeal and its power to persuade so many people over so many centuries.⁶

These three genres have been used by people throughout the ages to describe, to elucidate, and generally to teach their descendants what they saw around them before science advanced.⁷ Identification of the various characteristics of these genres may ultimately be the only way to solve some of the epistemological problems one encounters in research about the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. Gerald J. Larson explained that a 'myth articulates the basic self understanding of a people'.⁸ Over the centuries the myth of the Lost Ten Tribes has given people, among many other things, the opportunity, to search for and define their origins; to crystallize their identity; to

⁵ Lyman Stanford M., 'The Lost Tribes of Israel as a Problem in History and Sociology', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 12/1 (1998), 7-42 (p. 7).

⁶ Tudor Parfitt wrote that the myth has 'allowed itself – volunteered itself – to be recruited to all sorts of causes, in every continent and just about every country' in *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth*, Phoenix: London 2003, p. 2.

⁷ Carl G. Jung disagreed that a myth was used this way. He wrote that 'myths never were and never are made consciously, they arise from man's unconscious. This is the reason for the sometimes miraculous similarity or identity of myth-forms among races that have been separated from each other in space ever since time began. [...] It is not possible to suppose that myths were created merely in order to explain meteorological or astronomical processes; they are, in the first instance, manifestations of unconscious impulses, comparable to dreams' (*The Collective Works of C.G Jung*, 20 vols, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1953-1979, IV (1961), Freud and Psychoanalysis, p. 210.). Tieme. van Dijk on the other hand thinks that although myths were used to explain what man saw around them, scientific texts attempt to do the same and the difference between the two genres is not as fundamental as some people think. (Dijk van Tieme, *Blijmoedige Beschouwingen over Taal, Tijd en Mythen*, Nodus Publikationen: Münster, 2001, pp. 163-166.)

⁸ Larson Gerald J., 'Introduction: The Study of Mythology and Comparative Mythology', in *Myth in Indo-European Antiquity*, ed. by Larson Gerald J., University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1974, p. 1.

understand the world around them and it has given hope for a brighter future. In other words the myth has, indeed, been a tool for acquiring a self understanding.

The historical element of this myth is very important because it counter balances, as it were, the mythical side. Although myth and history are closely related, it seems that man is suspicious of myth and reveres history as the truth. History is thought of as eternal whereas a myth can die. In addition to that, calling something a myth immediately attaches a derogatory meaning to it whereas calling something historical adds weight to the statement. Moreover, myth and history are related because there is myth in history and there is history in myth. This is manifested in the myth of the Lost Tribes, too, providing one accepts the Bible or at least parts of it as a historical document.⁹ Aside from the legitimacy, the historical element also provided the myth with its mythic event (the exile), the mythic content (the promise of a future return), the mythic theme (lost-found theme).

The legendary element has defined time in the myth. William Bascom explained that legends are 'set in a period considered less remote, when the world was much as it is today'.¹⁰ He continues by quoting the eminent folklorist Sir James Frazer who proposed to define legends as:

[...] Traditions, whether oral or written, which relate the fortunes of real people in the past, or which describe events, not necessarily human, that are said to have occurred at real places. Such legends contain a mixture of

⁹ Besides the ambiguous promises of the biblical prophecies there is little clear archaeological evidence of the continued existence of the Lost Tribes. Assyriology provides a snippet of evidence inasmuch as individuals with Hebrew names served in the Assyrian army. See Tadmor Haim, 'The Period of the First Temple, the Babylonian Exile and the Restoration', in *A History of the Jewish People*, ed. by Haim H. Ben-Sasson, Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London, 1976, p. 138.

¹⁰ Bascom William, 'The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives', in *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, ed. by Allen Dundes, University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1984, p. 9.

truth and falsehood, for were they wholly true, they would not be legends but histories.¹¹

Aside from the temporal element it has also provided the myth with the means to become multi-religious because legends have peculiarities of their own. If they are transmitted orally, they remain subject to arbitrary changes and additions by each successive narrator. That would allow, for example, a Christian narrator to take a Jewish legend, author it slightly differently, put the emphasis, for example, somewhere else and thus transform it into a Judeo-Christian legend. If the myths/legends are in written form, they are usually the result of a long process of mutation.

The one thing that is difficult, perhaps, to explain is the multi-national or universal appeal of the Lost Tribe myth. A solution perhaps can be found in the field of psychology. Carl G. Jung (1875-1961) wrote:

A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the *personal unconscious*. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the *collective unconscious*. I have chosen the term "collective" because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us. [...] The contents of the personal unconscious are chiefly *feeling-toned complexes*, as they are called; they constitute the personal and private side of psychic life. The contents of the collective unconscious, on the other hand, are known as *archetypes*.¹²

Thus according to Jung, there are certain archetypes or motifs that are a part of our unconscious, which when changed into conscious formulae express themselves in the great universal myths. In addition to many other motifs, two very powerful and

¹¹ Bascom William, 'The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives', p. 26.

¹² *The Collective Works of C.G Jung*, 2nd edn, 20 vols, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1959, IX part 1, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, 3-4. Jung Carl G., *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, recorded and edited by Aniela Jaffé, Fontana Press: London 1995.

universal motifs are intricately woven into the very essence of the myth of the Lost Tribes viz. the lost-found motif (parallel to the dying and rising again motif) and the separation (mainly by water) motif.¹³ These two motifs often find expression through religion and myth. For example Paradise was lost to Adam and Eve because of disobedience but a paradisiacal state can be found again, through righteous, behaviour in the World to Come. Another example is an Islamic legend that Moses lost a fish and found in its stead *Khidr*, the teacher of wisdom.¹⁴ Similarly, the young Jesus was lost to his parents, when they went back to Jerusalem, they found him teaching wisdom in the Temple. Job is a prime example, he lost everything but as a reward for his continuing righteousness, he was compensated with even greater riches. From these examples we can learn that generally speaking, whatever replaces that which was lost is better than what was previously available or known.

The same underlying message can be found in the Lost Tribe lore. The inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel that were led into exile were, according to the Bible, idolatrous and generally sinful. As a result, the power of God had been withdrawn from them which resulted in weakness and ultimately exile. The prophecies that describe the time when they will be found/ return, describe a time when that divine power will once again be with them and make them strong and powerful. However, the message runs deeper and this can be deduced from the number of tribes that comprised the Northern Kingdom and their appellation. The Ten Tribes were often collectively referred to as the Tribe of Ephraim. Ephraim was of course the younger son of Joseph and his non-Jewish Egyptian wife Asenath. Joseph, although favoured by Jacob was but the eleventh son and as such he was not very high up in the family hierarchy. He

¹³ For an extensive discussion of these motifs see *The Collective Works of C.G Jung*, V (1956), Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a case of Schizophrenia, 343-357.

¹⁴ See <http://ccminc.faithweb.com/iqra/articles/921musa.html> (accessed April 2002)

was lost to Jacob when his brothers sold him but when the family was reunited Joseph was, according to Genesis 41:43, 'ruler over all the land of Egypt'. Later we see that Joseph's place in the hierarchy increases in importance when his sons Ephraim and Menasseh are given the birthright because Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob defiled his father's bed.¹⁵ This in turn led to each of them being regarded as a tribe of Israel even though they were born outside the Land of Israel to a foreign mother. If as Jung proposed, these archetypes or motifs are, indeed, part of our collective unconscious, then it should not be surprising that this myth is universal. It would explain why people want to be identified with this ancestry or identify other people as members of that community because it would fulfil many of humanity's basic needs such as identity, security, hope, power, salvation and many more. In a uniquely Jewish context the myth could perhaps be interpreted as a longing to bring back into the fold those who are lost through assimilation, acculturation and (forced) conversion.

As mentioned earlier many untenable theories regarding the whereabouts of the Lost Tribes have been proposed. Nonetheless scholars have also researched the subject and two recent projects are an article that presents a sociological interpretation of the myth of the Lost Tribes¹⁶ and an article and a book that show that the myth is a vital feature of the colonial discourse¹⁷. This dissertation will show that the myth of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel is also an essential feature of Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse from biblical times until the present day. It will be shown that throughout the discourse, the Lost Ten Tribes are either the deliverers – political as well as religious –

¹⁵ I Chronicles 5:1

¹⁶ Lyman Stamford M., 'The Lost Tribes of Israel as a Problem in History and Sociology', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 12/1 (1998), 7-42

¹⁷ Parfitt Tudor, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth*, Phoenix: London, 2003, p. 1.
Parfitt Tudor, 'Hebrew in Colonial Discourse' *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 2/2 (2003), 159-173.

or an inimical force that will fight against deliverance. Their existence and more importantly their return can be part of a religious belief where e.g. it will herald Messianic deliverance or in modern times, where being a member of the Lost Tribes is seen as potentially bringing deliverance from an undesirable socio-economic status. The development and use of the supporting motifs, found in Ten Lost Tribes literature, will also be examined in order to establish whether or not the motifs change when, for example, the discourse participants -the addressees, the producers, or the interpreters -- change. Some attention will also be paid to the development of the myth itself within the discourse, any embellishments will be charted

There are certain necessary restrictions on the scope of this dissertation inasmuch as it is impossible to discuss all the material ever written on the Lost Tribes. A representative selection of sources has been made that have enhanced the myth. A periodization has perforce been in centuries rather than in decades. Research has been limited to Jews and Christians as they were the principal groups interested in the Lost Tribes. The thesis has been divided in:

1. Earliest sources
2. Middle Ages
3. Early modern times
4. Modern times

In each of these periods a number of sources are analysed. These sources were chosen because they aroused the greatest interest or contributed in a major way to the development of the myth and therefore the discourse.

In the chapter on the earliest sources the Bible, the Talmud, the *Midrash*, the Apocrypha and the Pseudoepigrapha, Josephus' writings, and the writings of the Church Fathers are discussed. The Bible, of course, provided the world with the foundation of this myth because of its terseness, ambiguity, and prophecies regarding the gathering of Israel.

In the chapter on the Middle Ages attention is focused on early travel literature in the form of *Sepher Eldad* which is the story of a rather perplexing ninth-century Jew called Eldad ha-Dani and the traveller Benjamin of Tudela and his *Sepher ha-Massaoth*. Two Christian sources, *Mandeville's Travels* and *Prester John* are also discussed.

In the chapter dealing with the sources of the early modern times, two examples of late travel literature are analysed. First *Sippur David Reuveni*, the so-called diary of the adventurer David Reuveni who aroused Messianic hopes in the first half of the sixteenth century. Secondly, *Spes Israelis*, Menasseh ben Israel's book describing the reported discovery of the Lost Tribes in South America.

The chapter on modern times will focus on two contemporary groups that have taken on the identity of Israel viz. The British Israelites and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints also known by their nickname Mormons. In addition to that a brief overview of modern Judaizing groups will be given. Here the Bnei Menashe, a Judaizing group from northeast India will be discussed in some detail because they were recently recognised as descendants from the Tribe of Menasseh.

Notwithstanding the fact that Muslim sources fall outside the scope of this dissertation it should be mentioned that Islam, too, has an interest in the Lost Tribes. Particularly worth mentioning in the context of this thesis is the Ahmadiyyah Muslim Community, for example. With more than ten million members they see themselves as the most dynamic denomination of Islam in modern history. Their beliefs with regard to the Lost Tribes are quite defined if somewhat unorthodox. In common with other Muslims, the Ahmadiyyah Community believes that Jesus, a righteous prophet, did not die on the cross but that He was merely unconscious when taken down. His followers nursed Him back to health and as part of His mission He travelled to the Ten Tribes in

the East. There He lived to a ripe old age, died and was buried in Kashmir.¹⁸ This idea was first voiced in Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's book *Jesus in India* (1899) where he explained in the second chapter that Jesus came to Punjab and met the Ten Tribes, most of whom were Buddhists while some were idolaters. He brought them back on the right path and taught them to believe in a future prophet i.e. Muhammad.¹⁹

¹⁸ See <http://www.alislam.org>

¹⁹ See <http://www.alislam.org/library/books/jesus-in-india/intro.html>.

CHAPTER 1: EARLIEST SOURCES

When tracing the development and use of a myth it is important to scrutinize the original source, if any, and any texts on the topic written around the same time. The sources considered in this chapter originated nearest to the time when the Ten Tribes seemingly walked out of history.

Examination of these sources opens the way to answer a number of vital questions concerning the development and use of the myth. This chapter seeks to investigate whether these sources report the disappearance of the Ten Tribes merely as a fact or whether they are already starting to embroider on the subject or whether they merely encourage embellishments. If there are embellishments, did these contribute to the process whereby the Lost Tribes transformed from a nation-state that was exiled to Assyria, into a group of people perceived as instrumental in either a temporal or a spiritual deliverance by both Christian and Jew? Are there any motifs that support them in this role and if so, do they remain the same or change with time, place and circumstance?

a. The Bible

The Bible forms the foundation of the myth of the Ten Lost Tribes. This is not surprising given that the Old Testament is in part a history of the people of Israel. What is interesting, however, is that the account of the Assyrian exile is quite terse. It may be that the authors of the Bible did not feel that it was necessary to expound at length on this topic or perhaps that there were other texts no longer extant, which dealt exhaustively with this issue. On the other hand, it may very well be that the issue was so commonplace, so banal that it did not need any more explanation. Whatever the case

may be, one needs to examine whether the terseness and resulting vagueness gave an opportunity for a myth to be born. The texts in the Old Testament can more or less be divided into three categories:

1. Prophecies about the exile.²⁰
2. Reports on the actual exile by the Assyrians.
3. Prophecies about the restoration.

As far as the prophecies about the exile are concerned, one finds that the Bible sees exile, whether it be the Assyrian or Babylonian, as a punishment for idolatry and disobedience to the God of Israel.²¹ It takes little notice of imperialism or local politics although occasionally, in other verses, references are made to non-payment of taxes that angered the foreign overlords. Overall the Old Testament sees exile purely and simply as a consequence of disobedience whereby the God of Israel made use of another nation to carry out this punishment.

With regard to the specific reports on the Assyrian exile, it is curious how utterly succinct the Bible is. It devotes merely seven verses to it. In addition to this economy of words, these verses are repetitive and the content reveals little. We read:

II Kings 15:29

In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.

II Kings 17:5-6

Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed

²⁰ In these verses there is not always a distinction between the House of Israel and the House of Judah.

²¹ Some examples applying to the people of Israel in general are Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 8:19-20; Joshua 23:15-16. An example applying to the northern kingdom only is I Kings 14:14-16.

them in Halah and in Habor [by] the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

II Kings 18:9-11

And it came to pass in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which [was] the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, [that] Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it: [even] in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that [is] the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor [by] the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes:

I Chronicles 5:26

And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.

In summary, the only information found in the Bible is that the deportation took place in two stages. First, the Assyrian king besieged Samaria and after three years, it fell and was conquered. Secondly, the Assyrian king deported the population to Halah and Habor by the river of Gozan and in the cities of the Medes.

The Bible does not describe their new habitat, neither do we find any information about how many of the captives survived the trek or indeed how many went.²² It is relatively easy to justify this radical literary economy. If one accepts the Bible and particularly the Old Testament as the history of the victor or the survivor, in this case Judah, it should not be surprising that the Bible pays little attention to the fate of the Ten Tribes after their deportation. The Ten Tribes seceded more than two

²² Sargon's 'Display Inscription' claims that he removed 27290 people, see *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. by James B. Pritchard, 3rd edn, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1969, pp. 284-287. Sargon II claimed the victory but II Kings 18:9-11 which describes the fall and deportation credits it to Sargon's predecessor Shalmaneser V. Material about the various arguments can be found in Gray John, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 2nd fully rev. edn, SCM Press: London, 1970, pp. 60-62.

centuries before the final demise of the Northern Kingdom at the hands of the Assyrians and their deportation transformed this secession into a separation. Another reason might be that the authors of the Bible did not have easy access to information about the exiles. On the other hand one could also argue that the Bible did not have to elaborate. People knew who was taken into exile by the Assyrians and they knew where they went because I Chronicles 5:26, in addition to giving the locations, also notes 'unto this day'. Moreover, the deportation of conquered nations was a well-know feature in the history of the ancient world.²³ No doubt, it caused unrest and fear in neighbouring nations. Some vassal states such as the House of Judah were quickly reminded that it was perhaps better to pay the required taxes but essentially it was a normal result of warfare. The deportees were used for purposes of colonisation of frontier areas or for slave labour. In addition to all this, the demographic movement caused by the deportation of Israel by the Assyrians was not particularly major.

As far as the amount of people deported is concerned, the Bible at first glance gives the impression that every single person in the Northern kingdom, not killed during the siege, was deported by the time Samaria was conquered. Not anywhere in those seven verses does it give an impression that maybe only certain layers of the society were deported. This nonetheless seems to be the more likely thing to have happened and there is a consensus among most modern scholars that this was the case. Furthermore, the Bible itself seems to indicate that it was a partial rather than a

²³ Deportations of conquered nations were a measure to subdue these nations but also a policy of protection for the conquering nation in the longer term. By putting people in an environment they do not know well they are less likely to rebel as they do not have the benefit of topical knowledge which the enemy has not got.

complete deportation. Take, for example, II Chronicles 30:1-6, II Chronicles 34:21 or II Chronicles 35:18. In these verses, members of the Northern Ten Tribes join the House of Judah in their religious ceremonies subsequent to the reported deportation of the northern tribes.²⁴ Whereas the Bible does not further elaborate on who was deported and who stayed, modern scholars have written extensively on the subject. It is possible to divide the scholarly view of the phenomenon of the Lost Tribes of Israel into four categories with some scholars accepting more than one line of thought. The four categories are:

1. The Ten Tribes assimilated into the surrounding populations -either with the Assyrians or with the foreigners placed in Samaria.
2. The Ten Tribes merged with Judah -some of them went over to live with Judah when the kingdom of Israel was destroyed and its people deported in 722 B.C. and some of the descendants of the Ten Tribes joined Judah when it was deported to Babylon in 586 B.C.
3. The Ten Tribes left no trace.
4. The Ten Tribes were never lost.

If one takes a closer look at the first category, we see that many of its supporters think that not the entire population that made up the Ten Tribes or the kingdom of Israel was deported. Some suggest that only those classes of society which were useful to the Assyrians were deported and that the rest stayed in the territory of Israel under Assyrian rule. They all, however, agree that the Israelites did not remain a distinct group of people. They were absorbed either in the populations of the surrounding communities in Mesopotamia or they merged with the foreigners brought into Samaria by the Assyrians.

We read in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*:

²⁴ Another example is I Chronicles 9:1-3.

In 721 B.C. the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom and deported the more prosperous Israelites to Assyria (II Kings 17:6). Most of the population remained in Israel. Those who were removed and those who remained were eventually absorbed by other populations; they were not lost, nor did they survive as a distinct ethnic group.²⁵

Martin Noth in his book *The History of Israel* is of the same opinion, he writes:

The kingdom of Israel thereby ceased to exist, once and for all. Once again the upper class was deported, this time to Mesopotamia and Media, as stated in 2 Kings xvii, 6; and there it no doubt suffered the fate of most of the deported upper classes, of being gradually absorbed into the numerically much greater indigenous population. A foreign upper class was introduced into the new province of Samaria [...]. These foreign elements brought their own way of life and above all their own religions with them (cf. 2 Kings xvii, 29-31), but with the passage of time they too were absorbed in the Israelite population left behind.²⁶

Richard Coggins, a Christian biblical scholar, writes:

Much that has been written about the supposed 'ten lost tribes' can be dismissed to the realm of fantasy, and we may certainly suppose that in both Israel and Judah the majority of the inhabitants continued to lead their lives in their native places; the means for mass deportation which have formed an appalling part of the technical apparatus of twentieth-century dictatorships were not available in the ancient world.²⁷

Whereas the former scholars put their emphasis on the fact that not the entire population was deported, Paul Goodman²⁸ and Henry H. Milman stress the fact that the Israelites were absorbed by their Assyrian captors and the surrounding nations. Milman explains that this was due to the deportation policies of the Assyrians, he writes: 'It was the policy of the Assyrian monarchs to transplant the inhabitants of the conquered

²⁵ Angus J.B. in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Volume 22 p. 429.

²⁶ Noth Martin, *The History of Israel*, 2nd edn, Adam & Charles Black: London, 1960, p. 262.

²⁷ Coggins Richard J., 'The Origins of the Jewish Diaspora', in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives*, ed. by Ronald E. Clements, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1991, pp. 163-181 (p. 164).

²⁸ Goodman Paul, *History of the Jews*, rev. and enlarged edn, J.M. Dent and Sons: London, 1939.

provinces on their borders, to the inland districts of their empire. Thus they occupied their outposts with those on whose fidelity they might rely [...].'²⁹

Other scholars agree to an assimilation process but reject the notion of assimilation into the nations of Mesopotamia. This group is best represented by William Rosenau. In his article, Rosenau puts forwards the idea that the Ten Tribes are to be found absorbed together with the Tribes of Judah and Benjamin in modern Jewry. He says: 'The Ten Tribes were doomed neither to assimilation by the Assyrians nor to unrecognizable dispersion throughout other climes.'³⁰

In contrast to those who assume that there was an assimilation process, there are others who propose that the Ten Tribes left no trace and that therefore all theories about them and their abode are speculation. Foremost in this group is the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*:

The kingdom of Israel [...] fell in 722 B.C.E. and its inhabitants were exiled to "Halah and Habor by the river Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes" (II Kings 17:6 and 18:11 [...]); but in general it can be said that they disappeared from the stage of history. However, the parallel passage in I Chronicles 5:26 to the effect that the ten tribes were there "unto this day" and the prophecies of Isaiah (11:11), Jeremiah (38:8), and above all Ezekiel (37:19-24) kept alive the belief that they had maintained a separate existence and that the time would come when they would be rejoined with their brethren, the descendants of the Exile of Judah to Babylon. Their place in history, however, is substituted by legend, and the legend of the Ten Lost Tribes is one of the most fascinating and persistent in Judaism and beyond it.³¹

²⁹ Milman Henry H., *The History of the Jews*, 2nd edn, 3 vols, John Murray: London 1830, I, p. 306.

³⁰ Rosenau William, 'Ezekiel 37:15-28: What Happened to the Ten Tribes', in *Hebrew Union College Jubilee Volume (1875-1925)*, ed. by David Philipson and Others, Ktav Publishing House: New York, 1968, pp. 79-88 (p. 80).

³¹ Rabinowitz Louis I., 'Ten Lost Tribes', in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* vol.19 pp. 639-640 (p. 639).

With this, A. van Deursen agrees.³² In *Waar Zijn de Verstrooide Stammen Israëls Gebleven?* he presents a range of earlier suggestions and then concludes that historically we have no proof at all of the continual existence of the Ten Tribes. An example of the fourth category is Allen H. Godbey who is intensely opposed to any attempt to locate the Ten Tribes.³³ Although he has ideas in common with the previous authors, he says generally that one does not have to invent theories about the Lost Tribes of Israel because they were never lost. One by one, he tries to invalidate claims by non-scholars who supposedly found the Lost Tribes somewhere. According to him the amount of people deported by Sargon from Samaria was relatively small, and in addition it was not only a deportation of Jews. An ancient custom was that the victor took from vanquished populations, made them slaves and either took these unfortunate souls with them or sold them. Among the wars that Israel lost and where deportation occurred are:

1. Wars with Damascus (II Kings 13:1-8), this led to the dispersion of Israelite captives in the Aramaean lands.
2. Sennacherib's deportation.
3. Nebuchadnezzar's deportation.
4. Psamtik I and II deportations, which placed large bodies of Jews at the Nubian frontier.

Furthermore the fact that for example the Tribes of Naphtali, Dan, Asher and Zebulun are reported to be living in a certain place and that there are people all over the world who have Semitic customs proves nothing about the Ten Tribes. It only proves that there has been a very strong Jewish presence at that particular place and that the

³² Deursen van A., *Waar Zijn de Verstrooide Stammen Israëls Gebleven?*, J.H. Kok: Kampen 1939. (Dutch)

³³ Godbey Allen H., *The Lost Tribes of Israel: Suggestions Towards Rewriting Hebrew History*, Duke University Press, Durham 1930.

people having these customs are possibly descendants of early converts to Judaism who kept these traditions alive, while slowly forgetting their meaning. Godbey concludes by saying that 'the egotism of modern western Gentile ignorance invented the theory of the lost tribes'³⁴, and 'the deportees of the ten tribes are in all fairness to be viewed like deportees of the south, simply Jews of the Dispersion, retaining their faith, active in spreading it, often the nucleus of an early Christian church'.³⁵

Apart from those whose ideas only fit into one category, there are those whose assumptions on the subject may be classified into more than one category. There are those who agree with the idea that not all were deported and that there was an assimilation process; however, they also allow for assimilation with Judah. Among them, the main difference is the time at which they think some of the Israelites joined Judah. Haim H. Ben Sasson writes in his history:

It may be assumed that a part of the exiled tribes that still existed as a separate and conscious group in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel (see Jeremiah 31:8; and Ezekiel 37:19-22) subsequently joined the exiles from Judah upon their return. The majority, however, were assimilated into the surrounding Aramean population, thus sharing the fate of every ethnic community displaced by the Assyrians and subjected to their policy of enforced Assyrianization.³⁶

³⁴ Godbey Allen H., *The Lost Tribes of Israel: Suggestions Towards Rewriting Hebrew History*, p. 684.

³⁵ Godbey Allen H., *The Lost Tribes of Israel: Suggestions Towards Rewriting Hebrew History*, p. 685.

³⁶ *A History of the Jewish People*, ed. by Haim H. Ben-Sasson, Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London 1976, p. 138.

Salo W. Baron³⁷, and the unnamed entries in the *Jüdisches Lexicon*,³⁸ and in *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*³⁹ argue that the Israelites joined Judah upon the latter's arrival in Babylon and that they did not wait until the return to Jerusalem. Semen M. Dubnov⁴⁰, on the other hand, suggests that a large part of the Israelites kept true to their faith and national identity and joined Judah upon the Assyrian conquest but before the kingdom of Judah itself was conquered and its population deported.

Hirsch Graetz would fit into the second and third category, in his history he says the following⁴¹:

The kingdom of the Ten Tribes, or Israel, existed for two centuries and a half, twenty kings ruled over it; but in one day it disappeared, leaving no trace behind. [...] The country cast forth the Ten Tribes, as it had cast forth the Canaanite tribes. Where did they remain? Cheats and dreamers have claimed to be descended from them. A few of them, such as agriculturists, vine-dressers, and shepherds, no doubt remained in the country, and others from noble families, especially those from the borders of Judah, no doubt took refuge in that country.

Some scholars are quite unique or perhaps somewhat unorthodox in their opinion. J.J. Groen is an example of that when he states:

[...] a careful consideration of the facts does not sufficiently justify the common assumption that the ten tribes did not return and were therefore "lost". It seems more probable that they partly remained in Israel, partly

³⁷ Baron Salo W., *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd edn, rev. and enlarged, 18 vols, Columbia University Press: New York 1952, I, 95.

³⁸ *Jüdisches Lexicon*, Founded by G. Herlitz & B. Kirschner, 4 vols, Jüdischer Verlag: Berlin, 1930, vol. IV/2 (S-Z), 625-627.

³⁹ *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed.-in-chief Geoffrey Wigoder, 7th new rev. edn, Facts On File: New York and Oxford 1992, p. 928.

⁴⁰ Dubnov Semen M., *Die Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes in Europa; von den Anfängen der abendländischen Diaspora bis zum Ende der Kreuzzüge*, translated from Russian by A. Steinberg, 10 vols, Jüdischer Verlag: Berlin 1926., I, 202.

⁴¹ Graetz Hirsch, *History of the Jews from Earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. and in part translated by Bella Löwy, rev. edn, 5 Vols, David Nutt: London 1891/2, I, 273-274.

returned from exile and partly stayed in their galuth where some conversion into Jewry and mixture with Islamic groups may have taken place.⁴²

He continues by saying that 'it is our hypothesis that the mass of the Sephardim are genetically still a mixture of the ten tribes'.⁴³

After the terseness of the Bible about the deportation, it is interesting to see how its tone changes when it conveys the message of the restoration prophecies. Upon closer examination of these verses, the restoration of the House of Israel has certain characteristics:

1. The restoration to the land of their fathers will take place either after the house of Israel has repented or simultaneous with it.⁴⁴
2. The restoration is always on a national and not an individual basis.⁴⁵
3. Israel's restoration will have an effect on the heathen.⁴⁶

The most important problem one encounters with the verses about the restoration is the confusion about the subject of these prophecies. At times Judah and Israel are addressed separately whereas in other verses one must conclude that there seems no distinction between the two houses. This nomenclature is further complicated by the fact that Israel is, at times, also referred to as Ephraim. Ephraim was essentially only one of the Ten Tribes albeit the notorious jealous birthright tribe.⁴⁷ This leaves a great opportunity for interpretation and imagination. Thus whereas the Old Testament

⁴² Groen J.J., 'Historical and Genetic Studies on the Twelve Tribes of Israel and their Relation to the Present Ethnic Composition of the Jewish People', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 58/1 (July 1967), 1-13 (p. 3).

⁴³ Groen J.J., 'Historical and Genetic Studies on the Twelve Tribes of Israel and their Relation to the Present Ethnic Composition of the Jewish People', p. 7.

⁴⁴ Examples are found in Deuteronomy 30:1-3; Isaiah 27:11-13; Jeremiah 3:11-14 and 33:7-18; Ezekiel 11:14-20 and 37:11-28.

⁴⁵ See for example Isaiah 11:11-16 and 27:11-13; Jeremiah 3:18 and 23:7-8; Ezekiel 11:14-20 and 37:11-28.

⁴⁶ See for example Isaiah 49:6-12; Ezekiel 20:41-42 and 36:22-24 and 37:28.

⁴⁷ See for example Judges 8:1, Judges 12:1 and II Samuel 19:41-43.

itself does not embroider upon the removal and further life of the Ten Tribes, its conciseness, its choice of words and the relative vagueness of the restoration verses certainly provide fertile ground for the development of a myth. Likewise, the many motifs it employs provide an open invitation to elaborate and fantasize. The Old Testament expends many verses on the prophecies about the exile. The aetiological motif of sin and disobedience leading to exile is very strong. This motif is in a kind of literary opposition to the leading Genesis motif whereby the land of Israel is given to the patriarchs because of obedience. The motif of freedom to bondage can also be found. Unlike the story of the Exodus where the Israelites were freed from Egypt representing the bondage to freedom motif, the Assyrian exile is quite the opposite. As we have seen with regard to the reports on the actual exile, the Old Testament could not be more terse. It almost seems like it considers the actual exile a minor issue. Israel had been warned many times and much was written on the subject and the inevitable consequence of disobedience was not worth expending too many words on. When it comes to the restoration, it launches into vivid descriptions of God's power and might. Prophetic visions and words all describe how one day the Lord will restore the House of Israel to all its might and glory as in the times of kings David and Solomon and what effect this will have on the heathen nations among whom they live. With this renewed proliferation, one finds an abundance of motifs such as the Theodocian motif where God's providence leads to the reversal of the freedom to bondage motif once more. The time frame of this great gathering uses the End of Days motif. Where will they be

gathered? Once again, the Genesis motif of the land given to the patriarchs is used with the addition of the future king motif, where David is restored to his glory.⁴⁸

In summary one can conclude that the idea of deliverance is most certainly present. In most prophecies, the House of Israel, meaning the Southern and Northern Kingdoms, are delivered by the power of God, after they repent and remember the commandments. They themselves do not bring deliverance to others. However, the Old Testament, once again, leaves room for interpretation when, for example, we read in Isaiah 49:6 '[...] I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth'.

In the New Testament, too, there is a very limited interest in the Lost Tribes. Nevertheless, these limited references provided an excellent opportunity for later generations to embellish the original information and to claim that the Ten Tribes became or would become Christians. This tactic was especially used to agitate against the Jews or to discourage them. The apostle Paul seems to indicate to King Agrippa that it was promised that the twelve tribes one day would worship God (Jesus of Nazareth).⁴⁹ Revelations 7 implies the same and James, a leader in the early Christian church, addresses his letter 'to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad'. Some of the motifs found here are again the End of Day motif, the dispersion and suffering motifs with a positive conclusion. On the other hand, one has to wonder whether these verses do not negate the 'lostness' of the Ten Tribes. Would Paul set himself up for Agrippa to

⁴⁸ See for example Ezekiel 39:25

⁴⁹ See Acts 26:6-7

remind him that the Ten Tribes were lost or would James write intentionally to people whose whereabouts were not known to him?

On the whole the Bible does not portray the Lost Tribes directly as a key to either temporal or spiritual redemption of others. Unless one engages in serious biblical exegesis, all references to their role in the redemption at the End of Days are indirect and vague. It describes them as having sinned against the covenant the Lord made with the whole House of Israel and having received their due punishment. However, it is easy to see how the lack of information about their life in exile and vivid descriptions of a future restoration have contributed not only to the birth of a myth but also the casting of the Tribes as deliverers.

b. The Talmud⁵⁰

After the Bible, the Talmud is the most important book for Judaism.⁵¹ Being a repository of thousands of years of Jewish wisdom, it has shaped Jewish life and identity like no other book has. It is considered, even today, as a guide to conduct. Such a reservoir of wisdom it is, that it is also recognised as such by non-Jews. Unfortunately, throughout history, this recognition often led those hostile to Judaism to revile, to

⁵⁰ The Talmudic passages were found with the help of Yacov and Rachel Kozlovsky in Jerusalem and through The Soncino Talmud CD Rom of the Judaic Classics Library.

⁵¹ The Talmud's claim to authority has not gone unchallenged. In the Middle Ages the Karaite movement denied its authority and demanded a return to Scripture alone. The early nineteenth century reformer Abraham Geiger, called the Talmud an 'ungainly colossus' that prevented Jewish progress (Geiger Abraham, letter dated 1831, trans.in Max Wiener, *Abraham Geiger and Liberal Judaism: The Challenge of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. by Ernst J. Schlochauer, Hebrew Union College Press, Cincinnati, 1981, p.100). Reform Judaism accepts the Talmud as a human creation and as such its teachings are not considered binding.

execrate and even consign to flames the books of the Talmud. Repeatedly the study of the Talmud was prohibited in an attempt to crush a Jewish community.

In establishing what influence, if any, the Talmud has had on the development of the Lost Tribe myth one must first and foremost bear in mind that the Mishna and the Gemara are historically approximately five centuries removed from the disappearance of the Ten Tribes. The mere mention of the Ten Tribes would, therefore, at the very least, fuel the continuation of the myth. Whether surrounding circumstances, selective memory, imagination, and perhaps even Messianism play a role remains to be deduced from the text itself. Due to the very nature of the Talmud, it is not surprising to find differences of opinion regarding the subjects discussed in it. The mystery of the Ten Tribes is no exception.

Both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud reflect on the geographical information regarding the location of the original exile in the Bible. There are some minor discrepancies between the two. Nonetheless, the passages in question indicate that perhaps the Bible was right in its assumption that detailed geographical information was superfluous. In these passages, there is no attempt at mythologizing the subject. The identification was necessary in connection to the right procedure regarding betrothal and the question of genealogy. In Yebamot 16b, R. Abba b. Kahana said:

And he put them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and the cities of the Medes; Halah is Halwan, and Habor is Hadyab, the river Gozan is Ginzak and the cities of the Medes are Hamdan and its neighbouring towns. Which are the neighbouring towns? -Samuel replied: Karak, Moshki, Hidki and Dumkia.

In Kiddushin 72a, there is a difference of opinion and we read:

Now, he differs from R. Abba b. Kahana, who said: What is meant by, [and the king of Assyria carried Israel away into Assyria,] and put them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes?

Halah is Hulwan; Habor is Adiabene; the river of Gozan is Ginzak; the cities of the Medes are Hamadan and its environs; others state, Nahawand and its environs. What are its environs? -Said Samuel: Karag, Moschi, Hidki and Rumki.

From the above passages one can conclude that the rabbis knew about the geography of the original exile inasmuch as they were able to clarify where these biblical locations are. It may be deduced that they believed that the Ten Tribes were thriving in the place of exile. These passages do not shed any light on the ultimate fate of the Ten Tribes but further passages indicate that this confounded most of rabbis. Great discussions are found about the reasons for the exile, their eventual return, and the time of the return. The first reference to illustrate this can be found in Sabbath 147b where it says:

R. Helbo said: The wine of Perugitha and the water of Diomsith cut off the Ten Tribes from Israel. R. Eleazar b. 'Arak visited that place. He was attracted to them, and [in consequence] his learning vanished.

The Bible blames mainly idolatry for the exile although immorality and general lewd behaviour are mentioned more than once. It is interesting that R. Helbo completely disregards idolatry and emphasizes one of the secondary sins viz. drinking. According to Helbo, drunkenness clouded their minds and by neglecting study, they lost faith, which ultimately led to exile. This he substantiates by correlating the disappearance of the Lost Tribes with the disappearance of the knowledge of R. 'Arak when the latter apparently took a liking to these pleasures. Whereas the previous quotes merely concerned themselves with geography, thereby perpetuating the belief in the continued existence of the Ten Tribes as a body of people, here we see that the myth starts being used. In this case, to teach a specific moral principle i.e. do not neglect study and faith for the temporal pleasures of lewd behaviour. R. Helbo does not embroider on the

subject but rather draws conclusions from the Bible and the experience of R. Eleazar b.'Arak. As for the knowledge of 'Arak, this was restored after he abstained from further drink and because the Rabbis prayed for him. This may or may not indicate that the Ten Tribes would have a similar chance if they repented but it is not discussed any further.

The next reference is found in Megillah 14b. R. Johanan claims that Jeremiah was not involved in the case of 'Hulda, a close relative of Jeremiah and a woman who prophesied because at the time he was bringing back the Ten Tribes. He said:

Jeremiah was not there, as he had gone to bring back the Ten Tribes. Whence do we know that they returned?- Because it is written, '*For the seller shall not return to that which is sold*'.⁵² Now is it possible that after the Jubilee had ceased the prophet should prophesy that it will cease? The fact is that it teaches that Jeremiah brought them back.

Arakhin 12b brings up the same point but this time with regards to the calculation of the Jubilee year. Rashi elaborates on this by saying that a jubilee year was to be kept only when all Israel was in the land and thus it ceased as soon as the tribes across the Jordan were deported. Jeremiah then brought the tribes back in the eighteenth year of King Josiah and upon their return the counting of the jubilee cycle started again.

These passages strip the mythological side from the Ten Tribes and just use the objective state and fate of the tribes to prove their point. If these passages are to be believed, there are no Lost Tribes and there is no myth.

⁵² Ezekiel 7:13

One finds the complete opposite in Sanhedrin 110b which is a debate between the famous Rabbi Akiva and his opponent Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus.⁵³ Rabbi Akiva is of the opinion that they will never return to Palestine, not even in the days of the Messiah, but that they may return to the future world providing they repent. As seen from the same passage he is alone in this opinion. We read:

MISHNA. The Ten Tribes will not return [to Palestine], for it is said, and cast them into another land, as is this day⁵⁴: just as the day goes and does not return, so they too went and will not return: this is R. Akiba's view. R. Eliezer said: as this day -just as the day darkens and then becomes light again so the Ten Tribes -even as it went dark for them, so will it become light for them. GEMARA. Our Rabbis taught: the ten tribes have no portion in the world to come,⁵⁵ as it says, *And the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation: And the Lord rooted them out of their land*, refers to this world; *and cast them into another land* -to the world to come: this is R. Akiba's view. R. Simeon b. Judah, of the Kefar of Acco, said on R. Simeon's authority: If their deeds are as this day's, they will not return; otherwise they shall. Rabbi said: They will enter the future world, as it is said, *[And it shall come to pass] in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, [and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount of Jerusalem.*⁵⁶

Rabbi Akiva's opinion is interesting because the Bible states that one day, in most cases the Messianic day, the Ten Tribes will be gathered too. He must have been familiar with these verses. Nevertheless, he emphatically states the opposite. The

⁵³ The Halakha remains as Rabbi Eliezer's opinion that the Ten Tribes will ultimately return.

⁵⁴ Taken from Deuteronomy 29:27

⁵⁵ This is to be understood as the Messianic day not the Hereafter.

⁵⁶ Isaiah 27:13 'the holy mount of Jerusalem' is understood here to mean the future world.

question is why? A. Neubauer⁵⁷ and others⁵⁸ after him plausibly propose that this could be due to his belief that Bar-Kokhba was the Messiah. One of the characteristics of the Messianic era is the gathering of all exiles. Bar Kokhba was clearly unable to fulfil this task and Akiva's solution was to eliminate this problem by stating that the Lost Tribes would never return anyway. In this case, R. Akiva does not so much use the myth for his own purposes or embellishes it to prove a point but rather, he denies it for his own purposes.

The above passage does not mean that R. Akiva was not interested in the Lost Tribes. He may have believed that they would not return but his other use of the Lost Tribe enigma is interesting. In Sanhedrin 65b, he uses the legendary river Sambatyon⁵⁹ behind which part of the Lost Tribes are said to be as a proof of the existence of the Sabbath. It reads:

He replied: 'I ask this: Who tells you that *this* day is the Sabbath?' - He (Akiva) answered: 'Let the river Sabbation prove it'; [...]

The Sambatyon is not mentioned anywhere else in the Babylonian Talmud. In fact it is the first time that a written reference to this legendary river has been made in

⁵⁷ Neubauer A, 'Where are the Ten Tribes?' in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 1 (1889), 14-28; 95-114; 185-201; 408-423, (p. 21).

⁵⁸ So for example Klausner Joseph, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, The Macmillan Company: New York, 1975, p. 474 and Weil Shalva., 'Beyond the Sambatyon: The Myth of the Ten Lost Tribes' in *Beyond the Sambatyon: The Myth of the Ten Lost Tribes*, Beth Hatefutsoth, The Museum of the Jewish Diaspora: Tel Aviv, 1991, 94-73 (p. 92).

⁵⁹ Sivan G., 'Sambatyon' in *The Oxford Dictionary of Jewish Religion*, R.J.Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, eds., Oxford University Press: New York, 1997, pp. 604-605.

Rothkoff Aaron, 'Sambatyon' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol 17, pp. 743-744.

Jewish writings. Notwithstanding this, it seems plausible that the people were familiar with it. Why else would Akiva use it in an argument?

In the Jerusalem Talmud, the Sambatyon is mentioned again and in addition to that, there is some more information about the exile. In Sanhedrin 10:5 R. Berechiah and R. Helbo, in the name of R. Samuel bar Nahman say:

The Israelites went into three different lands of exile, one beyond the Sambatyon, one to Daphne at Antioch, and one on which the cloud descended, and which cloud covered them.⁶⁰

This is clearly embroidering upon the subject although there seems no immediate purpose in this statement. Whatever its purpose may have been, this information together with similar midrashim was often used in later stories about the Ten Tribes.

In conclusion, one could say that the Talmud perpetuates the myth if for no other reason than that it utilizes the Ten Tribes for various purposes. In some instances, it employs the existence and location of the Ten Tribes as an aid to establishing correct procedures (for example Yebamot 16b, Kiddushin 72a, and Arakhin 12b) and this it does rather matter-of-factly. Elsewhere, it uses the myth as a teaching tool (for example Sabbath 147b) and in these passages, there is room for imagination and a little embroidery. However, the Talmud stays close to the biblical text and does not embroider greatly on the subject. Biblical motifs are present yet the main use of the enigma of the Lost Tribes is in accordance to the true nature of the Talmud. The fact that it does not seem to have one definite purpose in using the myth may again be due to

⁶⁰ Translation taken from: *The Talmud of the Land of Israel*, trans. by Jacob Neusner, 35 vols, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago 1984.

the nature of the Talmud. Nevertheless, within the body of the Talmud, there are already instances in which individuals use the myth for their own purposes and there is more information about the Ten Tribes than there is in the Bible, notably the existence of the Sambatyon. Another point worth noting is that the continued existence of the Ten Tribes is regarded as an incontrovertible fact. As in the Bible, the consensus seems to be that the Ten Tribes will be delivered after a process of repentance but unlike the Bible, the Talmud does not take up the veiled invitation of the Old Testament to start connecting the Tribes to deliverance. It only implies that if they repent, perhaps they return and as such, they are delivered.

c. Midrash

Despite historical, philosophical, and even theological challenges, the Bible, or *Tanakh*, continues to exert an exceptional authority in Judaism. Nevertheless studying scripture is inseparable from reading its interpretations. The Midrash derived from the root *darash* (to inquire) denotes a literary corpus of rabbinic elaborations and explanations of scripture and as such it is a theological reflection of the Jewish imagination. The Bible often is concise and omits practical details of commandments or rituals. Thus, one finds in the Ten Commandments that no work may be done on the Sabbath but no details as to what constitutes work. In light of the fact that the Law formed the backbone of the Jewish communities it was imperative to know what the commandment really wanted to convey. The oral law of which the Midrash is a branch fulfilled this role. Consequently, the Midrash, like the rest of the Oral Law, has very early origins. There are two types of midrash, the halakhic and the aggadic midrash. The halakhic midrash are the Rabbinic teachings on the Mosaic law. The aggadic

midrash on the other hand is an amplification of the whole of the Old Testament and mainly interprets the non-legal side. As might be expected, it is in the latter that we find the majority of information about the Lost Tribes.

Although there is peripheral material about the Ten Tribes in more than one midrashic text, there are three midrashim that specifically touch on the enigma of the Lost Tribes. These are the *Sifra*, a tannaitic midrash on Leviticus, the *Pesiqta Rabbati*, a Palestinian midrash from the seventh century and the *Midrash Rabbah*, aggadic midrashim to the Pentateuch and the Five Scrolls.

The *Midrash Rabbah* has the most references to the Lost Tribes with the other two only referring to it once.

In the *Sifra* (Behukotai 8) we read:

And ye shall perish among the heathen, R. Akivah says: These are the Ten Tribes which were exiled to Media. Others say: *And ye shall perish among the heathen* is an exile not a annihilation. One could also believe: really perish. It is also stated *and the land of your enemies shall eat you up*, this really means annihilation. What do I think is the meaning of *And ye shall perish among the heathen*? Not perished but rather exiled. *And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity*. This does not mean that they will just pine away but pine away because of their iniquity. And also because of the iniquity of their fathers because of all that they shall pine away.⁶¹

As the *Sifra* is mainly a halakhic Midrash with only a small amount of aggadic material it is perhaps surprising to see that it expands upon so controversial a subject as the Ten Tribes. After all, it could have treated chapter 26 as pertaining to the whole House of Israel. The reason might of course be that this Midrash was produced by the

⁶¹ *Sifra: Halachischer Midrash zu Leviticus*, trans. by Winter Jakob., Schriften der Gesellschaft zur Forderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums, XLII, Stefan Munz Judischer Buchverlag und Buchvertrieb: Breslau 1938.

school of R. Akiva who himself had a rather outspoken opinion on the Ten Tribes. Not betraying its halakhic nature, however, one observes that the discussion limits itself to the meaning of words and that there is no room for fantasy or speculation. The *Sifra* does not seem to have a specific purpose in expanding upon the subject. Nevertheless, between the lines one can possibly detect a desire to assure the reader that this part of Israel is not annihilated but merely exiled and that therefore its return is possible as was prophesied. In that, it stays close to the biblical text and the biblical motif of the punishment for Israel's disobedience is exile not annihilation.

In the *Pesiqta Rabbati*, a midrash of a much later date, it is very different. We read:

Redemption and comfort will come to Israel through the Messiah who suffers in every generation for the sins of the generation. Ultimately he will bring back those of the Ten Tribes who were banished and those who were swallowed in the earth. The latter he will bring by means of underground passageways to a place under the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. God will stand upon the mount, and it will cleave open for the exiles, and they will come up out of it.⁶²

No biblical texts mentions that part of the Ten Tribes were swallowed up in the earth.⁶³ At first sight, it looks like a fanciful embellishment of biblical prophecies, possibly created to cause maximum excitement. This, however, is not entirely the case. For those well versed in scripture, certain elements will look familiar. The prophet Zechariah describing the closing hours of the Battle of Armageddon says that when all

⁶² *Pesikta Rabbati*, trans. by Braude William G., *Yale Judaica Series*, XVIII, 2 vols, Yale University Press: New haven and London 1968, Piska 31 p. 599.
See also *Yalqut Shim'oni* to Isaiah 49.

⁶³ This theory about the Ten Tribes living in the earth is not one that is common among all the theories regarding the Lost Tribes. However, Orson Pratt, an apostle for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints also suggested such a location in 1875. See *Journal of Discourses* Vol 18, (April 11 1875) p. 26.

hope is lost for Israel, the Lord will come, the Mount of Olives will cleave open and provide an escape route for the besieged of Jerusalem.⁶⁴ This event will also be the beginning of the Messianic reign. The question is why did the writer of this Midrash so cunningly twist the meaning of the text? If the Midrash was there to explain the mysteries of scripture, these verses in the context of the whole Book of Zechariah were in little need of explanation. Was it because the return of the Ten Tribes was becoming part and parcel of the Messianic reign and a return such as this solved that problem? Whatever the answer may be, one can but wonder about the similarities between this and two other folk beliefs viz. *ḥibbut ha-kever* and *gilgul*.⁶⁵ Although the *Pesiqta* does not indicate that the Ten Tribes have to suffer, it is through underground passageways they return to the Holy Land with the help of the Messiah. One of the ways to avoid *ḥibbut ha-kever* was piety, which was not one of the strong points of the Ten Tribes when they left the Holy Land. Did the *Pesiqta* want to remind its readers what happens to the wicked or just reassure them that although the Ten Tribes would return, as was prophesied, they would not do so without due punishment. The one sure thing about this section is that by the time the *Pesiqta Rabbati* was compiled, fantasy and speculation about the Lost Tribes were already rife. In addition, if the similarities with *ḥibbut ha-kever* are intentional then again we see that the myth of the Ten Tribes was

⁶⁴ Zechariah 14:3-5.

⁶⁵ See *Babylonian Talmud*, Ketubot 111a
Parfitt Tudor, *The Jews in Palestine 1800-1882*, Royal Historical Society Studies 52, The Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 1987, p. 119.
Wilson John, *The Lands of the Bible: Visited and Described in an Extensive Journey Undertaken with Special Reference to the Promotion of Biblical Research and the Advancement of Philanthropy*, 2 vols, Edinburgh, 1847, II, p. 613.

used for the purposes of teaching certain principles, something that is also inherent in the Talmud.

Teaching a principle using the Lost Tribe myth is recurrent in the *Midrash Rabbah*. By virtue of the many references found in the *Midrash Rabbah* about the Ten Tribes and through descriptions of the sins committed by them, it really impresses upon the reader's mind how evil and apostate these Ten Tribes were, and what the consequence of such behaviour was. Notwithstanding the fact that it mainly concentrates on the reasons for the exile, there is some information about the location of the exile. It records that there were three exiles and that each group shall return as is written in Isaiah 49:9. *Lamentations Rabbah* II, 9 reads:

R. Berekiah reported that R. Helbo said in the name of R. Samuel b. Nahman: Three exiles were experienced by Israel: one to this side of the River Sambatyon, one to Daphne of Antioch, and one when the cloud descended upon them and covered them. When they return, they will return from the three captivities. What is the reason? Saying to the prisoners: Go forth (Isa. XLIX,9), this alludes to those who were exiled to this side of the River Sambatyon; To them that are in darkness: Show yourselves (ib.), this alludes to those upon whom the cloud descended to cover them; They shall feed in the ways, and in all high hills shall be their pasture (ib.), this alludes to those who were exiled to Daphne of Antioch.⁶⁶

It expands only on one of those exiles by giving a description of the Sambatyon as being a river which propels along its course stones throughout the week but allows them to rest on the Sabbath.⁶⁷ Nowhere is there information about the actual habitat, the customs and practices of the Lost Tribes. What it does say, however, is that none

⁶⁶ See also *Numbers Rabbah* XVI, 25 and *Genesis Rabbah* LXXXIII, 6.

⁶⁷ *Genesis Rabbah* XI, 5 and LXXIII, 6 and *Lamentations Rabbah* II, 9.

The Sambatyon is a mysterious river and its location not known. Both Josephus (*Jewish Wars* 7.5.1) and Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 31.11) mention this river albeit that they differ in opinion as to when it flows and when not.

remained in the Land of Israel. In Ecclesiastes Rabbah V, 22 it says that ‘The Ten Tribes were exiled and none of them remained; the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were exiled and some of them remained’. This idea seems to have been accepted by many of the later authors of material on the Lost Tribes although, as seen earlier, modern scholars differ in their opinion. This is not an embellishment as the biblical texts certainly give grounds for interpreting the event as a total exile.

Whereas the Talmud was more concerned about their return and only once referred to a specific sin, the *Midrash Rabbah* catalogues their sins in great detail. In Genesis Rabbah XXVIII, 5 it is written that the Ten Tribes behaved worse than the generation of the flood. It reads:

[...] R. Abba b. Kahana said: The ten tribes did what was not done even by the generation of the Flood. With reference to the generation of the Flood, it is written, *And every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all day* (Gen VI,5), whereas with reference to the ten tribes it is written, *Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds* (Micah II,1), implying, at night. And how do we know that they did so by day too? Because it is stated, *When the morning is light, they execute it* (ib.). [...] ⁶⁸

As in the Talmud, there is much ado about their wine consumption and how it seduced the Ten Tribes from God, eventually leading to exile.⁶⁹ However, wine was not their only sin. At times, the *Midrash Rabbah* is quite explicit about other transgressions. In Numbers Rabbah IX, 7 it enters into great detail about immorality such as ‘debauchery with married women’, ‘adultery’ and a general unwillingness to bear the yoke of God and how all these evils led to exile as predicted in the Scripture.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ See also Leviticus Rabbah V, 3

⁶⁹ See Genesis Rabbah XXXVI, 4; Leviticus Rabbah V, 3; Esther Rabbah V, 1.

⁷⁰ See also Songs of Songs Rabbah I, 5; Exodus Rabbah XXX, 5 and Leviticus Rabbah V, 3.

Another reason for exile was idol worship as found in Lamentations Rabbah Prologue XII. As to the question of whether or not the *Midrash Rabbah* embellishes the biblical text, the answer could be affirmative and negative. Whereas all the sins it catalogues are found in biblical descriptions about the Northern Kingdom, it does take the liberty to mould them into a cause-consequence format. In addition, it adds some new information about e.g. the three exiles and the description of the Sambatyon. This information was perpetuated through the generations. One of the more entertaining things it says about the Ten Tribes, showing its true character in full, is found in Lamentations Rabbah Prologue VI where the Ten Tribes question God about the fairness of their exile. It reads:

R. Abbahu, in the name of R. Jose b. Hanina, opened his discourse with the text, *Ephraim shall be desolate* (Hos.V,9). When? ‘*In the day of rebuke* (tokehah),’ i.e. the day on which the Holy One, blessed be He, will argue (hithwakkah) with them in judgement. You find that when the ten tribes were exiled, Judah and Benjamin were not exiled; and the ten tribes kept asking, ‘Why did He exile us and not them? Is it because they reside in His Palace? Is there perhaps some favouritism here?’ God forbid! There is no favouritism here; but the reason is that they had not yet sinned. When they did sin, He exiled them. Then the tribes exclaimed: ‘O our God, O our God, O mighty One, O mighty One, O truthful One, O truthful One! Even towards the Children of His house He displays no partiality.’ Since they sinned, they were exiled, [...].

This is sheer embellishment and a very liberal explanation of biblical texts.

Summarised, it is clear that the *Midrash Rabbah* offers very little new information above and beyond the biblical text. What it does, however, is to shed a new light on that information. It collects many biblical verses and transforms them into a plausible story assigning blame and consequence as it sees fit in order to get its message across. In some instances, it uses a healthy dose of fantasy but never is there so much exaggeration that it gives the impression of complete fantasy as is seen so often in later

sources. Its message, as in the Talmud, seems to be that it does not pay to transgress the commandments of God and that the consequences are as prophesied in the Bible. At the same time, it reassures the reader that all prophecies are going to be fulfilled including the prophecies of mercy for scattered Israel no matter how awful the punishment that precedes it. The Midrash, like the Bible and the Talmud does not assign the Ten Tribes a specific role in the redemption of mankind but the idea that the Lost Ten Tribes are to be redeemed by the Messiah becomes more pronounced especially in the *Pesiqta Rabbati*. The combination of repentance, mercy, redemption (by the Messiah), and return certainly opened the door to new developments in the use and growth of the Lost Tribe myth. It is easy to see how the idea that there is somewhere a group of people that will reunite with the House of Judah when the Messiah comes gave rise to the idea that the Lost Tribes form a potentially very strong (political) entity. It could also be that these ideas were a reaction to the rise of Christianity, its anti-Semitism, and teachings of supersession. Last but not least it may point to the problems associated with assimilation which, in a Jewish context is very profound. This idea will be explored in more depth later in this thesis.

d. The Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha

The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are two groups of non-canonical Jewish literature dating from about 300 B.C until A.D 120.⁷¹ Some of them are pertinent to this thesis because they, like the Talmud, kept alive the belief in the continued existence of

⁷¹ The Apocrypha are incorporated in the canon of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches.

the Ten Tribes. In some cases, the material and assumptions found in these texts formed the basis of later theories on the Lost Tribes.

The *Book of Tobit*, an apocryphal work originally composed in either Hebrew or Aramaic, centres around the descendants of the Ten Tribes, apparently thriving in Media and surrounding countries. Although the book opens as if it were an autobiography with 'I Tobit', chronological mistakes and other inconsistencies betray that it was not.⁷² In the opening verses of the book one meets Tobit, a descendant of the tribe of Naphtali who has always been righteous. Even though the whole tribe started sacrificing at the golden calf which Jeroboam made in Dan and generally became apostate, Tobit 'walked in the ways of truth' and even continued to journey to Jerusalem at the appointed times. Nevertheless, he was taken captive to Assyria with the rest of the tribe. While in exile, he seems free to go to Nineveh and he finds favour in the eyes of the king and becomes one of his purchasing agents, frequently travelling to Media to buy things for the king. When Sennacherib comes to the throne, travelling to Media becomes impossible and Tobit remains in the neighbourhood of Nineveh. During this time, Tobit continues to do good deeds to his brethren. Particularly noted is his habit of burying any of the children of Israel whom the king slew. This angered Sennacherib and he wanted to execute Tobit. Tobit fled and all his worldly goods except his wife and son are confiscated. After a coup d'état, Esarhaddon ascends the throne and appoints Ahikar, Tobit's nephew, as his treasurer. Ahikar asks for Tobit to be reinstated as the

⁷² For full discussion see *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English with introductions and critical and explanatory notes to the several books*, ed. By Charles R.H., 2 vols, The Clarendon Press: Oxford 1913, I, 183-184.

king's scribe. This is done and Tobit immediately resumes his charitable activities. After returning from burying yet another abandoned corpse, he went to sleep in his courtyard and while asleep bird droppings fell in his eyes and make him blind. In his distress, Tobit begged the Lord to be allowed to die. He acknowledged that he and his people were led captive because of disobedience and sin and asked the Lord to let him die because of his sins and because of the sorrow he feels. At the same time Sarah, daughter of Raguel in Ecbatana also requests from the Lord to be allowed to die because all seven of her husbands died on their weddingnight, killed by a demon and she does not want to be a liability to her father. The Lord hears both prayers and decides to send the angel Raphael to take the blindness away from Tobit and to give Sarah a husband of her own kin who will not succumb to the demon. Tobit suddenly remembers that he left money with Gabael in Rages of Media and sends Tobias, his son, to retrieve it. Tobias does not know the way and his father tells him to hire a guide. Raphael poses as guide and the two set off. As they camp one night at the Tigris Tobias is bitten by a great fish while washing his feet. The guide tells Tobias to catch a fish and preserve its heart, liver and gall for medicament. Tobias ask what these organs are supposed to cure and the guide tells him that the smoke of burning the heart and liver protects a man and wife from an attack of a demon and the gall is a cure for a man with films over his eyes. When they are nearing Media, Raphael suggests that they lodge in the house of Sarah's father, also of the tribe of Naphtali and that Tobias marries her as she is of his kin. Tobias who is familiar with the seven dead grooms hesitates, not least because he is his father's only child. But Raphael reminds him of his father telling him to take a wife of his own kin. He then tells Tobias to burn the heart and liver when they enter the bridal

room and to pray to God for protection. Sarah's father agrees for Tobias to marry Sarah. Tobias does as he was counselled by Raphael and indeed in the morning both are alive and a great wedding feast is spread. While the feast is in full swing, Raphael goes up to Gabael to retrieve the money so as not to prolong their journey too much. Raphael returns with the money and after the fourteen day wedding feast Tobias sets off home with his wife and half of all the possessions of his father-in-law as a wedding gift. When they near Nineveh, Raphael suggests that Tobias and he go ahead and prepare the house for Sarah's arrival. Upon his arrival, Tobias restores his father's sight with the gall of the fish and together with Tobias' mother, they go and meet Sarah. When the time comes to pay the guide, he reveals himself to be none other than Raphael, one of the seven angels who carry up prayers to heaven. Soon after, the aging Tobit is on his deathbed and he counsels Tobias to be righteous, to honour his mother and to leave Nineveh after his parents' death so as not to be destroyed with it. Tobias fulfils all his father commanded him and lived to a ripe old age with his parents-in-law.

The author of the *Book of Tobit* gives a totally different picture of the captivity in comparison to previous sources. First of all, there is more information about the life in captivity. From the wedding gift, which Sarah's father gives to Tobias and Sarah upon their departure (Tobit 10:10) one would almost have to conclude that the captives in Media were thriving. He also gives the impression that there is freedom of movement between Media and other major cities such as Nineveh. One is left to wonder why he did this. It could very well be that he merely wanted to encourage the Jews of the Diaspora with good tidings about their brethren, something that must have been pleasant for them to hear or perhaps he wanted to coax them into a more moral behaviour.

Whatever his aims were, he was a master at combining traditional Jewish values with pagan elements and prophetic elements. By combining all those elements, he created a highly moral yet religious work, which in essence has a very positive message. Although the biblical motif of exile because of disobedience to God is acknowledged in Tobit's prefatory prayer (Tobit 3:1-15) a lot more emphasis is laid on righteous behaviour. A whole new motif is born in connection to the Lost Tribes i.e. that of receiving rewards from God for pious acts, something the Bible does not attribute to them. This text gives the impression that not all inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom had abandoned the faith. This would explain the paradox found in the Bible where it gives the distinct impression that all of Israel apostated and was led captive and yet in other verses some members of the Ten Tribes are found worshipping in Jerusalem after the captivity had taken place. On the other hand the *Book of Tobit* sees these righteous people deported too which then again makes it virtually impossible to worship at Jerusalem. It does therefore not solve that paradox but rather confuses it even more. And what of Tobit's counsel to his son to marry a kinswoman? As seen in the Talmud genealogical purity was very important for the Jews in exile and the author of this book again brings this precept to the foreground by letting a descendant of the Ten Tribes also worry about that same issue. By bringing the people of the Assyrian exile to life and by letting them worry about the same things as the exiles of Babylon he, as it were, unites them, not in body but in spirit. He also put forward the suggestion that they were not lost forever in iniquity and that the biblical prophecies about an eventual restoration after repentance were not impossible.

Similar ideas can be found in *IV Ezra* (or *2 Esdras*). Of particular interest is the sixth vision and its interpretation. In *IV Ezra* 13:39-47 it reads:

And whereas thou didst see that he summoned and gathered unto himself another multitude which was peaceable- These are the ten tribes which were led away captive out of their own land in the days of Josiah the king, which (tribes) Shalmanassar the king of the Assyrians led away captive; he carried them across the River, and (thus) they were transported into another land. But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a land further distant, where the human race had never dwelt, there at least to keep their statutes which they had not kept in their own land. And they entered by the narrow passages of the river Euphrates. For the Most High then wrought wonders for them, and stayed the springs of the River until they were passed over. And through that country there was a great way to go (a journey) of a year and a half; and that region was called Arzareth. There they have dwelt until the last times; and now, when they are about to come again, the Most High will again stay the springs of the River, that they may be able to pass over.”⁷³

Although captivity is mentioned, the biblical motif of exile as the consequence of disobedience has disappeared. Instead of the main biblical motif, several new ones are introduced. Unlike the *Book of Tobit*, the Ten Tribes are described as having repented in captivity and as being desirous to ‘keep their statutes which they had not kept in their own land’. In the biblical prophecies it is frequently found that just prior to the gathering the Tribes will once again turn their hearts to the Lord and as such the repentance (and consequent mercy) motif would have struck a chord with readers. The author then subtly introduces the motif of a vow of obedience by relating that they no longer can stay amidst the heathens who do not adhere to these statutes and that therefore ‘they took counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of

⁷³ *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigraphia of the Old Testament in English with introductions and critical and explanatory notes to the several books*, ed. By Charles R.H., II, 618-619.

the heathen, and go forth into a land further distant'. It is the Most High who stays the springs of the river which otherwise cannot be crossed by mortals. Repentance, vows of obedience, rivers that cannot be crossed by mortals and separation are very powerful motifs, especially in the birthing process of a myth. Whereas the Talmud uses the varying motifs, even that of the river that cannot be crossed by mere mortals in its brief description of the Sambatyon, it does not built on it like *IV Ezra* does. In *IV Ezra* all the motifs for a myth are present and interlinked. It is imprinted upon the reader's mind that after repentance and the vow of obedience on the part of the Tribes, it was God who stayed the springs of the river. It is this divine power that makes it impossible for mortals to cross it. By involving God, the separation motif comes out much better because it attaches divine approval to this separation. Furthermore the words 'there they have dwelt until the last times; and now, when they are about to come again, the Most High will again stay the springs of the River, that they may be able to pass over' re-emphasize that this separation can only be reversed with divine help. The description of a peaceable multitude is probably due to the fact that the vision is set when the Messianic era is about to start and thus this peaceable multitude are the descendants of the Lost Tribes.

The pseudepigrapha are for the most part visionary books, attributed to the ancients to give them credibility. The pseudepigraphists strongly believed in the continuation of prophecy, something that was not accepted in their time. Through the interpretation of prophecy, they believed they could foretell the future, hence the reason that a lot of them deal with the Messianic era. We see this process in *IV Ezra*, where the biblical element of the captivity and the prophecies regarding the gathering of Israel are

moulded into one story that sounds very much like scripture yet in essence is very removed from the original text. Nevertheless, the pseudepigraphist succeeded in his aim to keep alive the belief in the continued existence of the Ten Tribes and his version of events became the basis for many another theory on the Lost Tribes.

The Lost Tribes, again, are not specifically involved in an act of redemption but slowly they are amassing the necessary qualities to take that role upon them. They are thriving (*Book of Tobit*), they do good deeds for others who cannot help themselves (*Book of Tobit*), they are a great multitude (*IV Ezra*), they have repented and are righteous so God can once again be with them (*IV Ezra*). Very interesting is the fact that by keeping the commandments they separated themselves from the rest of the world. This was a deliberate act of separation, something they did themselves and it is not the result of, for example, a divine intervention. This separation ensured their purity, a very important issue for later generations of Jews.

e. Flavius Josephus

Flavius Josephus was born circa A.D. 38 as Yosef ben Mattityahu ha-Kohen. Being of priestly descent, he was well educated and was well respected in the Jewish community. In his youth, he associated briefly with the Essenes, for a time he was a follower of Banus, an ascetic hermit, but finally joined the Pharisees. In A.D. 63, he travelled for the first time to Rome to plead successfully with Nero (B.C. 38- A.D. 9) for the release of some fellow priests. He was profoundly impressed with the Roman Empire and returned to Judea convinced that the Jews stood no chance against the might of Rome in a rebellion. His fellow Jews were not convinced and reluctantly Josephus assumed command over a unit in the Galilee during the Great Revolt. After defeat and

imprisonment, his association with the Roman Empire only became closer when he befriended the future Emperor Vespasian (9-79) and his son Titus (39-81). He returned to Judea with Titus and served as his advisor and interpreter. In this capacity, he tried, in vain, to convince his fellow Jews to surrender Jerusalem and so save the city. When in A.D. 70 Jerusalem was destroyed, Josephus returned to Rome with Titus and, on an imperial pension, started writing. His works, which cannot always be implicitly trusted, give a wealth of extra-biblical knowledge about the end of the Second Temple period. Although he seemingly betrayed his own people by being in league with the Romans, he actually tried to diminish anti-Jewish prejudice by writing *The Antiquities of the Jews*. This book was written to teach non-Jews about the Jewish people, their heritage and beliefs. It is in this book that one finds the Ten Tribes mentioned in various instances. For the most part Josephus offers little new information. He merely collated biblical information and other known historical facts into one readable story.⁷⁴ It is often subjective with an almost obvious pride in the achievements of Israel as a nation. At the same time, one finds a bias against Jeroboam and the Northern Kingdom. So he comments for example that 'the house of Jeroboam suffered the just punishment of his impiety and of his wicked actions'.⁷⁵ He also shows that he does not believe that the Ten Tribes would ever return. By emphasizing that no other people were placed in Judea and Jerusalem whereas the Assyrians resettled the lands of the Ten Tribes with Cutheans he paves the way for a later statement to that effect.⁷⁶ While he describes how

⁷⁴ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 8.7.5-8; 8.10.4; 8.11.4; 8.15.1,3; 9.14.1 in *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. By William Whiston, Hendrickson: Peabody Massachusetts, 1987.

⁷⁵ Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* 8.11.4

⁷⁶ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.9.7

Esdras and the Jews prepare to go back to Jerusalem he gives two interesting pieces of information. He mentions that Esdras reads the epistle of the king to the Jews of Babylon and that he also sends a copy to the Jews in Media, thereby implying that some had left Babylon for Media where the Ten Tribes were supposed to be. Furthermore, he says that the Jews of Media 'were all greatly pleased' and 'many of them took their effects with them, and came to Babylon, as very desirous of going down to Jerusalem'. About the exiles from the Northern Kingdom, he says that 'the entire body of the people of Israel remained in that country'. He then explains that therefore 'there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers'.⁷⁷ These words give the impression that he expects them to stay there for even rebuilding Jerusalem could not convince them to go. The innumerable multitude is of course also mentioned in *IV Ezra* although in the latter the time frame is the Messianic age whereas Josephus claims that in his own time they were already a multitude. The references of Josephus regarding the Ten Tribes are for the most part informative or factual and generally devoid of any of the motifs hitherto seen. This is perhaps not surprising as his intent was to write a history book which generally is full of dates and facts.⁷⁸ His only step into the realm of myth as far as the Ten Tribes are concerned is found in *The Wars of the Jews* where he actually locates and describes the Sambatyon.

⁷⁷ Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* 10.5.2

⁷⁸ Perhaps, one could read between the lines a warning to the Romans that although they destroyed Jerusalem only a fraction of the People of Israel is under their dominion and that the multitudes living beyond the Euphrates should not be disregarded. The question is whether this is intentionally, given his admiration for and adoption of all things Roman.

He describes how Titus Caesar encountered this river:

[...] in the middle between Arcea, belonging to Agrippa's kingdom and Raphanea. It hath somewhat very peculiar in it; for when it runs, its current is strong, and has plenty of water; after which its springs fail for six days together, and leave its channel dry, as any one may see; after which days it runs on the seventh day as it did before, and as though it had undergone no change at all; it hath also been observed this order perpetually and exactly; whence it is that they call it the Sabbatic River, - that name being taken from the sacred seventh day among the Jews.⁷⁹

Aside from locating this mystical river there seems very little purpose in this description. First of all he does not mention that the Ten Tribes or part thereof live beyond this river which would of course clash with previous statement in his *Antiquities of the Jews*. Secondly his description is diametrically opposed to all other descriptions of the mythical river. The Sambatyon is supposed to run six days a week and rest on the Sabbath, this in order to segregate the tribes who could not cross during the week and would not cross on the Sabbath. As one of priestly descent one must wonder why he was not familiar with the Talmudic literature and how he failed to see this contradiction. Again, the lost-found motif usually associated with this river does not appear at all in this book.

Overall, Josephus stands out in that he did not treat the subject of the Ten Tribes as some mysterious subject nor did he attach any particular emotions to the subject. Nevertheless he used the by then obsolete Israelite tribal system as a medium to satisfy his own innate desire to find similarities between two ancient civilizations viz. Rome and Jerusalem. Martin Goodman recently observed that these were only 'surface similarities' and that in the first century A.D. 'the structure of Jewish society was very

⁷⁹ Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews* 7.5.1

different from that of Rome'. Goodman notes that 'the general decline in importance of tribes may well be in part a result of conversions to Judaism over the centuries' so whereas 'new Jews do not seem to have been assigned to any tribe' new Roman citizens were assigned to a Roman *familia*.⁸⁰ In Josephus' writings there is not anything new in connection to redemption other than that the Tribes are without number. His sole aim seems to write about the Jews and Israel and as such, the Ten Tribes are mentioned in due course. Nevertheless, his writings, too, would have contributed to the development and the belief in continued existence of the Lost Tribes and his description that they were an innumerable multitude is a theme that is later firmly attached to the myth.

f. The Church Fathers⁸¹

The Church Fathers were the spiritual and doctrinal proponents of Christianity during its first centuries. Although this title was at first reserved for bishops, in later periods other ecclesiastical authorities were included. In order to be recognised as a Church Father, a person had to fulfil strict criteria. The person had to be orthodox in his attitude towards official Church doctrine, saintly in conduct, and hold a senior, approbatory ecclesiastical position.

In the West, the patristic period ended in 636 with the death of Isidore of Seville while in the Orient it ended in 749 with the death of John of Damascus.

Many of the Church Fathers, at some point in their lives, lived in Israel and studied there under the tutelage of Jews. They knew Hebrew, were familiar with the

⁸⁰ Goodman Martin, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations*, Allen Lane (Penguin Books): London 2007, p. 220.

⁸¹ The writings of the Church Fathers used are found at <http://www.ccel.org> (accessed 2002.)

Aggadah, Halakhah and studied other Jewish sources. This knowledge on the whole was, however, used in anti-Jewish polemics in varying degrees. Some, like Hippolytus of Rome (170?- 235?), were virulent anti-semitic, others, like Clement of Alexandria (150?-215?) and Origen (c. 185-254), used their knowledge of Judaism and Jewish sources to defend Christianity and prove that it was the true religion. Very few, Jerome (347?-419 or 420) is a notable exception, acknowledged their indebtedness to the Jews and Judaism and did not engage in anti-Jewish polemics. As far as the Ten Tribes are concerned one finds little interest in the whereabouts or their fate. Jerome, again, is an exception when, in his commentary, he on Hosea 10:2 claims that the Ten Tribes will never return.

The motifs seen until now are not really present. Occasionally, it is noted that the Ten Tribes were wicked and that God was angry with them but these references are statements rather than a motif.

Considering the quantity of writings by the Church Fathers relatively little was written on the Lost Tribes. They were not ignored however, and several texts offer insight into the opinion of the Church Fathers regarding Lost Israel. There is some indication that some of the Church Fathers contemplated the possibility that the Ten Tribes had converted to Christianity. Later in Christian history this opinion becomes more widely spread and in some cases is even used as an argument against the Jews.

We read:

To mention only a few things in the times of the kings, at the very outset does not the change in the priesthood when Eli was rejected and Samuel chosen, and in the kingdom when Saul was rejected and David chosen, clearly predict the new priesthood and kingdom to come in our Lord Jesus Christ, when the old, which was a shadow of the new, was rejected? Did not David, when he ate the shew-bread, which it was not lawful for any but the priests to eat, prefigure the union of the kingdom and priesthood in

one person, Jesus Christ? In the separation of the Ten Tribes from the temple while two were left, is there not a figure of what the apostle asserts of the whole nation: "A remnant is saved by the election of grace."⁸²

Regarding their whereabouts some thought that the Ten Tribes were not in one body somewhere but rather that they were scattered among the Parthians, Medes, Indians, and Ethiopians and that they never returned to their native land.⁸³ The fact that the exile was not a total removal of the population is also considered with the suggestion that some may still be in Samaria.⁸⁴

Other than that the Ten Tribes were sometimes used to illustrate chronology⁸⁵ or as part of a historical overview⁸⁶. More often than not, however, they were used as teaching examples. It is in these examples that a new motif, unity/disunity, is developed. The Ten Tribes are used as an example in treaties and polemics warning against schisms and divisions and the dire consequences. So in relation to the Schism of Novation the following is said:

In fine, how inseparable is the sacrament of unity, and how hopeless are they, and what excessive ruin they earn for themselves from the indignation of God, who make a schism, and, forsaking their bishop, appoint another false bishop for themselves without, -Holy Scripture declares in the books of Kings; where ten tribes were divided from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, and, forsaking their king, appointed for themselves another one without. It says, "And the Lord was very angry with all the seed of Israel, and removed them away, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until He had cast them out of His sight; for Israel was scattered from the house of David, and they made themselves a king, Jeroboam the son of Nebat." It says that the Lord was very angry, and gave them up to perdition, because they were scattered from unity, and had made another king for themselves. And so great was the indignation of the Lord against those who had made

⁸² Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I, Book XII.33

⁸³ Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, Vol. XI, Book II, Chapter XI.

⁸⁴ Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, Vol. XI, Book I, Chapter I.

⁸⁵ Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I, Vol. II, Book XVIII, chapter 24.

⁸⁶ For example Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, Vol. XI, Book I, Chapter XLII.

the schism, that even when the man of God was sent to Jeroboam, to charge upon him his sins, and predict the future vengeance, he was forbidden to eat bread or to drink water with them. And when he did not observe this, and took meat against the command of God, he was immediately smitten by the majesty of the divine judgment, so that returning thence he was slain on the way by the jaws of a lion which attacked him. And dares any one to say that the saving water of baptism and heavenly grace can be in common with schismatics, with whom neither earthly food nor worldly drink ought to be in common? Moreover, the Lord satisfies us in His Gospel, and shows forth a still greater light of intelligence, that the same persons who had then divided themselves from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, and forsaking Jerusalem had seceded to Samaria, should be reckon among profane persons and Gentiles. For when first He sent His disciples on the ministry of salvation, He bade them, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." Sending first to the Jews, He commands the Gentiles as yet to be passed over; but by adding that even the city of the Samaritans was to be omitted, where there were schismatics, He shows that schismatics were to be put on the same level as Gentiles.⁸⁷

Cyprian in his Treatise on the Unity of the Church in A.D. 251 uses a comparison between the robe of the prophet Abijah and the robe of Jesus to illustrate and condemn schisms. He writes:

This sacrament of unity, this bond of a concord inseparably cohering, is set forth where in the Gospel the coat of the Lord Jesus Christ is not at all divided nor cut, but is received as an entire garment, and is possessed as an uninjured and undivided robe by those who cast lots concerning Christ's garment, who should rather put on Christ. Holy Scripture speaks, saying, "But of the coat, because it was not sewed, but woven from the top throughout, they said one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots whose it shall be." That coat bore with it a unity that came down from the top, that is, that came from heaven and the Father, which was not to be at all rent by the receiver and the possessor, but without separation, we obtain a whole and substantial entireness. He cannot possess the garment of Christ who parts and divides the Church of Christ. On the other hand, again, when at Solomon's death his kingdom and people were divided, Abijah the prophet, meeting Jeroboam the king in the field, divided his garment into twelve sections, saying, "Take thee ten pieces; for thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and I will give ten sceptres unto thee; and two sceptres shall be unto him for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen to place my name there." As the twelve tribes of Israel were divided, the prophet Abijah

⁸⁷ Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, Epistle LXXV.1.6

rent his garment. But because Christ's people cannot be rent, His robe, woven and united throughout, is not divided by those who possess it; undivided, united, connected, it shows the coherent concord of our people who put on Christ. By the sacrament and sign of His garment, He has declared the unity of the Church.⁸⁸

In another text the Ten Tribes are used to illustrate a point of view. An example is found in a discussion about the soul and whether it is called spirit.⁸⁹ In A.D. 426/7 a treatise on Free Will uses the rebellion of the Ten Tribes as an example. It is stated that because Rehoboam used his free will and dealt harshly with the people instead of listening to the senior advisors the Ten Tribes rebelled.⁹⁰ In the same vein the Ten Tribes are used to illustrate what harm bad counsellors can do.⁹¹

In summary, the Church Fathers did not mythologise the Ten Tribes nor did they embellish or acknowledge any fantastic stories they may have come across. As said before, their thoughts on the conversion of the Ten Tribes to Christianity may well have laid the foundations for later statements on this subject but even the possibility of conversion did not seem to overexcite them. As behoves their station in the early Christian Church their first concern was the Church and it seems that the Ten Tribes were merely a tool of the trade. They were not seen as deliverers of any sort.

g. Conclusion

One thing is sure, one cannot, even in the early sources, pinpoint the exact time where reality ended and fantasy began. Even though these early sources, in the main, report historical information, it is obvious that ethical and religious issues are being

⁸⁸ Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, Treatise I On the Unity of the Church, 7.

⁸⁹ Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I, Vol. V, Book IV, Chapter 36.

⁹⁰ Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I, Vol. V, A Treatise on Grace and free Will, Chapter 45.

⁹¹ Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, Vol. X, Book II, Chapter XVIII.

attached to the Assyrian exile. To a certain extent a myth is born and ideas, hopes and warnings are already related to it. Although there is not yet a definite purpose in propagating the myth it is kept alive or highlighted as an illustration to a point of view or as a warning against certain behaviour. The myth does not seem to have a direct influence over the various communities yet. The only influence noteworthy is that for the Jews it kept alive the hope for a future reunion and fulfilment of prophecies. It was understood that the fulfilment of these prophecies could not be forced as at least part of the tribes were in a mysterious, inaccessible place.

Because of the ambiguity of restoration prophecies we see that the earliest sources lay the foundation for the Ten Tribes and their role as deliverers but nothing concrete. In these sources, if there is redemption then the Ten Tribes are the ones that are redeemed, they do not do the redeeming. It is hinted at that they are good people, that they live somewhere in one body, that they are prosperous and that perhaps they have converted to Christianity.

The motifs are fairly constant but some sources expand one motif whereas another source may include a new one.

It is clear that in general people at this time had very little idea about the whereabouts of the Ten Tribes. The things they did write down and the careful embellishments formed a fertile foundation for further mythologizing.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MIDDLE AGES AND THE RENAISSANCE

The period of the Middle Ages has often been employed with great elasticity especially regarding the start of this era. The Middle Ages, as a historical period, are known for their many contrasts. On the one hand one finds an almost barbarian violence, on the other hand one stands amazed at the work and desire for knowledge of, for instance, monks and scholars.

Whereas the Middle Ages were a significant period for Christianity and Islam with regards to their development and growth, one cannot really speak of medievalism in Judaism. Judaism at the dawn of the Middle Ages, whenever that was, had already evolved from the Israelite religion of the ancient days into the post-exilic Judasim that was able to survive in the Diaspora.⁹² On the political front, there were not any dramatic developments either. The position of the Jews in various Gentile communities continued to be volatile because Jews remained without their own homeland, guests of many nations.⁹³

In spite of this absence of medievalism in Judaism itself, the Middle Ages had a lasting effect on Jewish communities. The rapid expansion of Christianity and Islam

⁹² This does not mean that Jewish religious life could not be stormy, one only has to think about the Karaite revolt but the basic Jewish doctrine as practiced in the Diaspora was established.

⁹³ In the seventh to eleventh century the Jewish leadership structure changed to a centralized sort of government which, given the scale of dispersion of the Jewish communities, lasted remarkably long. By the thirteenth century, after a period of decline, this centralized leadership fell victim to individualistic tendencies within the Jewish communities themselves because local leadership could deal more effectively with the ever-changing local conditions.

dramatically changed the position of the Jews. Whereas they had been the torchbearers of ethical monotheism, they soon became the victim of a consistent policy of derogation and humiliation.

With the Muslim conquest of the Persian Empire, the scattered Jewish population was completely under the jurisdiction of other monotheists. This did not improve the situation of the Jews and life under Christian and Muslim jurisdictions was difficult and mercurial. Research about the discriminatory policies and Jewish medieval life in general shows that in spite of great suffering and terrible persecutions, there were also times of prosperity and success. The level of prosperity, success, humiliation, or persecution was dependent on the attitude of their hosts. This difference in attitude caused Jewish-Muslim and Jewish-Christian relations to follow different courses in the Middle Ages. Mark R. Cohen, in one of his recent books, showed just how different these courses were and how this affected the Jewish population. He concluded that 'in the lands of Christendom, relations, favourable in the early Middle Ages, deteriorated beginning with the Crusades and especially in the thirteenth century, until one can speak of a "persecuting society"'.⁹⁴ In countries under Muslim jurisdiction the situation was different and Cohen showed that 'Jews and Christians, though protected as *dhimmis*, were considered infidels and suffered humiliation and contemptuous treatment [...]. Nonetheless, in day-to-day life, the Jews of Islam regularly crossed boundaries in the hierarchy to participate –however temporarily and, at times, tenuously- as virtual equals with Muslims of similar category'.⁹⁵ It would be wrong to conclude that these different

⁹⁴ Cohen Mark R., *Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*, Princeton University Press: Princeton 1994, p. 195.

⁹⁵ Cohen Mark R., *Under Crescent & Cross*, p. 195.

courses meant that life under Muslim jurisdiction was utopian and life under Christian jurisdiction was one of relentless persecution and unmitigated sorrow. Maimonides (1135-1204), for example, had a strong opinion about some of the persecution suffered by the Jews under Islamic jurisdiction. It can be argued that his opinion was based on his own experiences; nonetheless, it negates the idea of a Jewish utopia under Islam.⁹⁶ Bernard Lewis concluded that there were several reasons for the relatively better relationship between the Jews and the Muslims than between Jews and Christians. It was partly due to the fact that 'the Jews recognized Islam as a strict monotheism of the same kind as their own' and that 'they had some doubts, which they shared with the Muslims, about Christianity'. Another reason, according to Lewis, was that 'in Islamic society hostility to the Jew is non-theological'. It is neither related 'to any specific Islamic doctrine' nor 'to any specific circumstance in Islamic sacred history'. For Christians, however the hostility was theological. This added a 'psychological dimension that gives Christian anti-Semitism its unique and special character'.⁹⁷ Christian anti-Semitism was in the first instance rooted in the anger towards the Jews for killing Christ but Christian Replacement Theology which claimed that its believers were now the elect of God and constituted the true Israel also played a major role. In addition to that, persecuting non-conforming religions is, according to Cohen, not something specifically Christian or Islamic. All monotheistic religions in power have felt it proper, if not obligatory to do so. Medieval Islam persecuted non-Muslims,

⁹⁶ See Stillman Norman A. *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*, The Jewish Publication Society of America: Philadelphia 1979, p. 241.

⁹⁷ Lewis Bernard, *The Jews of Islam*, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, Melbourne and Henley, 1984, pp. 84-85.

Christianity persecuted Jews and Muslims and in the second century B.C., even Judaism persecuted the pagan Idumeans.⁹⁸

Nonetheless, these external factors have determined the treatment and the development of the medieval Jewish communities. The early Arab rulers, for example, knew little about agriculture and imposed heavy taxes on infidel farmers. On the other hand, they had a very positive attitude to urban life and trade.⁹⁹ Jews were not restricted in their professions and were, therefore, well integrated in every sector of economic life. Under Christian jurisdiction, the situation was different. The earliest Jewish settlers to come to Christian Europe were merchants following the great East-West trading routes. Early Christianity disapproved of the accumulation of wealth which was considered coterminous with materialism and consequently a lack of spirituality.¹⁰⁰ Trade was considered a profession where one simply bought an item and sold it to a third party for a higher price, thus accumulating wealth without labour. The early Jewish merchants coming to Christian Europe, therefore, encountered, in addition to theological disdain (they were generally seen as the killers of Christ) also an ideological dislike. Nonetheless, these same Jews performed vital commercial services, which nobody else provided, and as a result, most local rulers were relatively tolerant of them. Merchants brought other opportunities and soon Jews began to settle in Christian urban areas

⁹⁸ Cohen Mark R., *Under Crescent & Cross*, p. XIX.

⁹⁹ Unlike in early Christianity, in Islam trade was not a sin. In the Koran there are numerous examples of this attitude, see for example Sura 2:198.

¹⁰⁰ See for example Jesus' answer to the rich young man who asked what he needed to do to follow Jesus. Jesus tells him to give all his goods to the poor and follow him. The young man is not able to do that and Jesus then commented that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 19:16-24).

choosing professions such as blacksmiths, butchers, but also the more intellectual and less physical professions such as medicine, pharmacology, banking, writing and the arts. This was not because the Jews were averse to hard work but because intellectual professions were favoured above raw physical labour. As the Middle Ages progressed however, restrictions on urban professions for Jews increased as did their ability to live where they wanted. Whereas they dominated all trade until about the tenth century, soon city-states such as Venice, grew in importance and a Christian commercial class emerged. This meant that the need for Jewish commerce decreased. Tolerance was replaced by hatred and slowly Jews became increasingly vulnerable to medieval violence culminating in expulsions and confiscations of all their worldly goods. In places where they were (not yet) expelled, a plethora of restrictions soon confined them to the least popular and often despised occupation of banker and moneylender.¹⁰¹

Oppression, hatred, severe persecution, an increasingly decline in standard of living, and even the mass expulsions¹⁰² did not diminish a strong hope for redemption. Throughout these calamitous times, Jews adhered to their religion and customs. They were not deterred from developing an intellectual life and in some cases attained financial success. In fact, when the Renaissance reached its peak the ability of the Jews in turning a hated profession to their advantage often meant that they overcame the perils of persecution. They contributed financially to mercantile fleets and to

¹⁰¹ Initially this was an occupation no Christian could get involved in because usury was seen as evil. This was based on Luke 6:35.

For more detail see also Cohen Mark R., *Under Crescent & Cross*, pp. 82-88

¹⁰² The papal bill of 30th November 1215, based on the fourth Lateran Council was the start of Europe wide mass expulsions of the Jews. Only two countries, Germany and Italy, never engaged in mass expulsions. This was not due to a particular love for the Jews but rather because of their political structure.

expeditions of naval discovery.¹⁰³ They found themselves elevated to treasurers and other political offices¹⁰⁴ and many a Christian ruler became, albeit reluctantly, dependant upon the Jews.¹⁰⁵

Great were the discoveries of these famous fleets but these expeditions were not the sole fountains of all new knowledge. In the early Middle Ages, long before Christopher Columbus (1451-1500) and Vasco da Gama (1469-1524), to name but two, lone merchants risked life and limb to explore early trading routes, others went out to preach Christianity to the heathen, while some searched for Paradise, rumoured to be in the east, and many took to the road as pilgrims.¹⁰⁶ These people inspired others to do better, to search for lands that were more distant and to trade products that were more exotic. Stephen Greenblatt wrote that 'the discourse of travel in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance is rarely if ever interesting at the level of sustained narrative and teleological design, but gripping at the level of anecdote'.¹⁰⁷ In spite of the fact that his book mainly deals with the discovery of the New World and Europe's response to it, the same can be said about the sources discussed in this chapter. Perhaps they could never lay claim to the same fame as the travel reports of Christopher Columbus and others like him but these travel stories, too, had an enduring influence on many aspects of medieval

¹⁰³ Kayserling Meyer, *Christoph Columbus und der Antheil der Juden an den spanischen und portugiesischen Entdeckungen*, Siegfried Cronbach: Berlin 1894.

¹⁰⁴ Yitshaq Abravanel for example was treasurer to King Alfonso V of Portugal and an influential minister at the court of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain until the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.

¹⁰⁵ Florence who had previously expelled the Jews invited the Jews back into the city to set up loan banks.

¹⁰⁶ Rome and Santiago de Compostela in Spain were favourites in the Middle Ages.

¹⁰⁷ Greenblatt Stephen, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*, The Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1991, p. 2.

life and thinking. Their names and journeys, too, were preserved, albeit in the dustier pages of history.

This chapter explores what two early Jewish travel stories and two contemporary Christian sources reveal about the Lost Tribes. In the last chapter it was shown that there was not yet a definite purpose in propagating the myth but that it was kept alive to illustrate, for example, a point of view or to warn against certain behaviour. The myth also did not seem to have a direct influence over the various communities yet, although for the Jews it kept alive the hope for a future reunion and fulfilment of prophecies. It was understood that the fulfilment of these prophecies could not be forced as at least part of the Lost Tribes were in a mysterious, inaccessible place. This chapter discusses what has happened to that budding myth. Did increased travel cause the demise of or enhance the myth and did the general purpose and use change? What impact did these travel stories have on the Jewish and Christian communities? Did the Jews continue to hope for a future reunion and a fulfilment of prophecies and if so, what did Christians think about a unification of the Ancient House of Israel? Did these stories contribute to an increased knowledge about the world and implied in this, did the alleged locating of the Lost Tribes change the attitude towards salvation or were the Ten Tribes perhaps given an active role in the redemption?

The two travel stories discussed in this chapter are *The Story of Eldad the Danite* (9th century) and *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* (12th century). These stories are defined and discussed as early travel literature as opposed to the travel stories discussed in the next chapter, which are classified as late travel literature.

a. The Story of Eldad the Danite¹⁰⁸

Over 1100 years have elapsed since Eldad ha-Dani appeared in Kairouan, in what is now Tunisia.¹⁰⁹ He stirred up the local Jewish community by claiming to be of the Tribe of Dan, one of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. He impressed them with remarkable tales about his travels and adventures prior to his arrival in Kairouan. He continued to astonish them by unfurling before their eyes wondrous tales about the Danites and the Tribes of Gad, Asher and Naphtali who all lived together. He also told them about the Bnei Moshe, Levites, living near to his people but beyond the legendary river Sambatyon.¹¹⁰

His story, as it is presently available, can be divided into two parts. The first part describes the life of these four tribes and their neighbours, the Bnei Moshe. Included in this part is the history of how the four tribes came to Ethiopia and how they came to live together. In the second part, one finds a series of ritual slaughtering laws (*shehitah halakhot*), as allegedly practised by the four tribes. According to Eldad, these

¹⁰⁸ As source material I have used the Hebrew texts as they appear in Epstein Abraham, *Eldad ha-Dani seine Berichte ueber die X Stamme und deren Ritus in verschiedenen Versionen nach Handschriften und alten Drucken mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen nebst einem Excursus ueber die Falasha und deren gebrauche*, Ch. D. Lippe: Pressburg 1891. (Hebrew)

¹⁰⁹ More will be said about the importance of Kairouan later in the chapter.

¹¹⁰ The legendary river which is unnavigable because on weekdays its strong current carries along sand and stones. On the Sabbath it rests, hence its name Sambatyon. Traditionally part of the Ten Lost Tribes were exiled behind it or in case of Eldad, the Bnei Moshe. For more information see: See Rothkoff Aaron, 'Sambatyon' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol 17, pp. 743-744 and Rappaport Samuel, 'Sambatjon' in *Jüdisches Lexicon*, Founded by Georg Herlitz & Bruno Kirschner, 4 vols, Jüdischer Verlag: Berlin, 1930, IV/2, pp. 73-74 and Cowley A., 'Sambation' in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, New edn, 12 vols, Funk and Wagnals: New York and London, 1925, X, pp. 681-683 and 'Sambatyon' in *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed.-in-chief Geoffrey Wigoder, 7th new rev.edn, Facts On File: New York and Oxford 1992, p. 826.

halakhot were, handed down to them by 'Joshua who received them from Moses who received them from God'. According to Eldad, the Tribe of Dan together with the other three tribes formed an independent Jewish kingdom under the rule of King Addiel.¹¹¹ He informed them that the tribes led a nomadic life in the area of Havilah, the Land of Gold, mentioned in Genesis 2:11.

At first glance, the story of Eldad looks like a golden find. This does not only apply to people who desire to prove that the Ten Tribes still exist(ed) but it applies equally to ethnographers, historians and the literary minded, to name but a few. He seems to provide evidence that the Ten Tribes, or at least part of them, still existed as a separate entity in the ninth century A.D. that, after a fashion, they stayed true to the ancient Israelite faith but most importantly that they were independent and well to do. Yet when one takes a closer look, cracks appear rapidly. These are not cracks only brought to light by critical modern scholarship, it is clear that the Jewish population of Kairouan also had concerns.

As far as modern scholarship is concerned, Eldad's story has been the topic of considerable research. A good deal of this research was done in the late nineteenth century. These studies display a diversity in opinions about Eldad. A potential problem with these studies is that often scholars based their opinions on part of the Eldad corpus, be it his Halakhah or his Aggadic material rather than study it in its totality. Abraham Epstein wrote a very detailed work on Eldad's *halakhot* and concluded that it was

¹¹¹ In the different stories there are four different names for this king viz. Adiel, Uziel, Uziel ben Malkiel and Uziel ben Michael.

unlikely that Eldad came from Ethiopia.¹¹² However, by basing his conclusions in the main on the halakhic part of the Eldad corpus, his undoubtedly authoritative research, perhaps, gave Eldad more credence than he deserved. Others saw Eldad in a different light. Adolph Jellinek thought that the Karaites used Eldad's stories against traditional Judaism. He writes: 'Wahrscheinlich wurden die Berichte Eldad's von den Karäern gegen die Tradition benutzt, indem sie geltend machten, dass halachische Differenzen zwischen den 10 Stämmen und den rabbanitischen Juden obwalten; daher R. Zemach in seiner Antwort besonders die Tradition in Schutz nimmt.'¹¹³ Simcha Pinsker thought that Eldad actually was a Karaite himself who was sent to spread Karaite doctrines among the Rabbanite Jews of the Maghreb and that therefore he invented his story in order to hide his true purposes.¹¹⁴ A. Neubauer and Hirsch Graetz shared this opinion, Neubauer called Eldad 'a cunning emissary of the Karaites'.¹¹⁵ Graetz went a bit further and said he was a 'proselytizer, a cunning man [...] who related wonderful adventures, and made a great stir in his day. He belongs to a class of deceivers who have a pious end in view, and who know how to profit by the credulity of the masses [...]'.¹¹⁶ Pinkus F. Frankl called him a 'rogue and a swindler' and 'devoid of any higher purpose' who 'had

¹¹² Epstein Abraham, *Eldad ha-Dani, Seine Berichte über die zehn Stämme und deren Ritus*, Ch.D. Lippe: Pressburg 1891. (Hebrew) His conclusion on the Ethiopian origins of Eldad can be found on pp. 3-12.

¹¹³ Jellinek Adolph, *Bet ha-Midrash*, 6 vols, Friedrich Nies: Leipzig, 1853-1878, II (1853), p. XXIX.

¹¹⁴ Pinsker Simcha., *Lickute Kadmoniot: Zur Geschichte des Karaismus und der karäischen Literatur*, printed by Adalbert della Torre: Vienna 1860, pp. 108-109. (Hebrew)

¹¹⁵ Neubauer A., 'Where are the Ten Tribes?' in *Jewish Quarterly Review* 1 (1889), 14-28; 95-114; 185-201; 408-423, p. 110.

¹¹⁶ Graetz Hirsch, *History of the Jews from earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. and in part translated by Loewy Bella, rev. edn., 5 vols, David Nutt: London 1891-1892, III (1892) p. 186.

no message for Judah and Benjamin, only lies'.¹¹⁷ In recent years, interest in Eldad has surfaced again but this time opinions are more cautious. Some focus on issues such as the integrity of the material and a possible relationship to the material of Prester John.¹¹⁸ Others deal with the more complex question of whether Eldad's narrative contains any authentic information concerning the Jews of Ethiopia. Edward Ullendorff and Charles F. Beckingham do not think there is any authentic material concerning the Jews of Ethiopia and call it 'essentially a fanciful geographical narrative'.¹¹⁹ David Kessler concurs and says that 'there is nothing to show that Eldad had ever visited Ethiopia'.¹²⁰ Aaron Z. Aescholy does not think that there is any authentic material to be found either.¹²¹ Having said that, Eldad's story has a current somewhat unexpected importance. The text contributed to the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Ovadiah Yosef's decision to declare the Beta Israel to be Jews according to *Halakhah* and

¹¹⁷ Frankl Pinkus F., 'Neue Wahrnehmungen an Eldad Haddani, Jehuda ben Koreisch und Saadia', *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 22 (1873), 481-496 (pp. 484-486).

¹¹⁸ See Wasserstein David J., 'Eldad ha-Dani and Prester John' *Prester John, The Mongols and The Ten Lost Tribes*, ed. by Charles F. Beckingham and Bernard Hamilton, Variorum: Aldershot, 1996, pp. 213-236.

¹¹⁹ Ullendorff Edward and Beckingham Charles F., *The Hebrew Letters of Prester John*, Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1982, p. 153. Also in Ullendorff Edward, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, Oxford University Press (published for the British Academy), London 1968, pp. 25-26.

¹²⁰ Kessler David, *The Falashas; The Forgotten Jews of Ethiopia*, George Allen & Unwin: London 1982, p. 75.

¹²¹ Aescholy Aaron Z., *The Book of the Falasha*, Rubin Mass: Jerusalem 1943, p. 164. (Hebrew, quoted in Kaplan, *The Beta Israel* p. 178)

descendants of the Lost Tribe of Dan.¹²² This may or may not be acceptable for religious purposes but for modern scholarship Eldad's story and the other sources that led to this decision appear to be 'seriously deficient as a historical explanation of their origins'.¹²³ In the main, however, with the focus shifted from the contents, one sees that opinions become less emotional. Nevertheless, as David J. Wasserstein writes in the conclusion of one of his recent articles on Eldad there are plenty of reasons 'to warrant a fresh enquiry into the Eldad material'.¹²⁴

As far as his North African audience, they certainly were interested, some were even impressed and some were perhaps carried away in a tide of exuberance at Eldad's appearance and story. Nevertheless, there were concerns about it. Eventually they consulted the head of the rabbinical Academy in Sura, in Babylon. This on its own was not unusual because in the Geonic period and especially after the Muslim conquest it was common practice for communities, distant from Babylon, to contact the *ge'onim* on matters relating to Jewish law and observance. However, the case of Eldad was somewhat different. First of all the questions raised were not so much an opinion on a certain aspect of the Law and the observance thereof but rather a query regarding variances in the Law. They reasoned that if God had inspired the laws of Eldad then

¹²² For the full text of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef First Responsum (3rd February 1973) and Second Responsum (1st Shevat 5745 (1985)) regarding the Jewishness of the Falashas see Corinaldi Michael, *Jewish Identity*, pp. 119-208. Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef heavily relied on a response of the Radbaz who, according to Corinaldi 'implicitly relied upon Eldad's book and the responsum of Zemah Gaon in deciding that "those who have come from the land of Cush are undoubtedly from the tribe of Dan' (*Identity*, Corinaldi Michael, p. 93).

¹²³ Kaplan Steven., *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia; From earliest Times to the Twentieth Century*, New York University Press, New York and London, 1992, pp. 24-26 (p. 26).

¹²⁴ Wasserstein David J., *Eldad ha-Dani and Prester John*, p. 232

surely they must be virtually identical to their own laws, yet they were not. This puzzled them. They informed the *Gaon* that Eldad, from the Tribe of Dan, had appeared; that he brought with him a set of laws, which were similar yet different from the normative *Halakhah*, and asked what they were supposed to do about this situation. The *Gaon* was very diplomatic in his answer pointing out that the possibility of different traditions existed in the Diaspora. Concerns regarding different interpretations of the same things he addressed by saying that also in the Talmud there were examples of sages writing on the same subject yet having different interpretations. In doing so, the *Gaon* covered himself for both eventualities of Eldad being a charlatan or a genuine Danite. This shows that although there were concerns, even the most learned in Judaism were not willing to dismiss Eldad's story off hand.

Why were they not eager to reject Eldad outright? The answer seems twofold. First, there was the nature of the message and what it would mean to the dispersed Jews. Second, it was the place of Eldad's appearance. Had he appeared in some backward, rural village the impact of his coming would not have been so great. He might have rallied the people more easily behind him, locally and might have been declared a Messiah, as many before him and since, but he would not have reached the same fame and aroused the same hopes. One can almost feel the incredulity that Eldad, if he were a charlatan, would dare to enter Kairouan.

Eldad's appearance was actually quite calculated. Kairouan was not some remote backwater. Founded by Uqba ibn Nafi in AD 670, Kairouan, at the time of Eldad's arrival, was a leading economic and cultural centre in North Africa. Moshe Gil wrote the following about it:

This city was the metropolis of Ifriqiya, the main centre of the Fatimids in the first generations of their rule before they transferred their center to Egypt, and the Zirids, the local rulers, leaders of the Sanhajites. It appears that the city became a drawing point for Jewish immigrants from Iraq [...].¹²⁵

The city was made up of a Jewish and Muslim population that lived together in peace for most of the time.¹²⁶ The city thrived because North Africa was at the centre of the North-South and East-West trading routes. It formed a bridge between Babylonia, Palestine, and Egypt on the one hand and Spain, Sicily and Italy on the other hand. The Jewish community in Kairouan was extraordinarily prosperous and although considered *dhimmi*, they were generally well-treated second-class citizens. The Jews played an important role in all parts of the economic life of Kairouan. They engaged in many professions, in all sectors of the economy such as jewellers, inspectors of precious metals, bankers, masons, blacksmiths, and shoemakers and dealt with Jew and Muslim alike. There were also Jewish doctors, pharmacists, poets, and writers. They had adopted Arabic and used it on a daily basis but they were also known to know languages such as Latin, Greek, Persian, Spanish and Slavonic languages, all of which were useful for trade. From Persia, for example, they imported rich coloured clothing and from India, they bought spices. They exported precious metals. The knowledge and use of all these languages did not mean that they neglected Hebrew and Aramaic. Arabic and Judeo-Arabic were used for secular purposes, Hebrew, and Aramaic for prayers, rituals,

¹²⁵ Gil Moshe, *Jews in Islamic Countries in the Middle Ages*, translated from Hebrew by David Strassler, Brill: Leiden and Boston 2004, p. 172 section 118.

¹²⁶ Jews and Muslims lived together in peace in Kairouan until the 11th Century when it was made into a Muslim holy city and consequently forbidden for all non-Muslims.

and religious study. Consequently, the prophecies regarding an end of the exile and a future independent Jewish kingdom were well known and longed for.

North Africa was not only economically central, for the Jews it was also a social, religious, and scientific crossroads between the Land of Israel, the Arab Orient, Spain, and Europe.¹²⁷ In the ninth century, a firm connection was established between the Kairouan community and the *geonim* of Sura and Pumbeditha.¹²⁸ Kairouan was the intermediary between Palestine, Babylon, and Egypt, the centres of Hebrew and Jewish studies, and the Maghrebi countries. It was in this area that the renaissance of the Hebrew language began and that the so-called Golden Age began.

Of course, it would be interesting to discover whether Eldad was a charlatan, an ideologist or whether there even was a historical person going by the name Eldad. Unfortunately for the moment we know very little of Eldad's origins and his motives. At present, the only thing one can do is to establish the places where he did not come from. He did not come from Palestine, Babylonia or Persia nor did he come from north-

¹²⁷ One example is that in the tenth century, the great schools in Baghdad were in need of money and the Jewish communities of Spain, Morocco, France, and Kairouan were asked to contribute. Rather than sending each community's donation individually, Kairouan was appointed as the place to collect all the donations and from there it went to Baghdad. See Goitein Shelomo D., *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 5 vols, University of California Press: Berkeley 1967-1988, II (1971), p.11.

¹²⁸ Most of our knowledge about contacts between Sura, Pumbeditha and the Diaspora communities is derived from the Cairo Geniza. Shelomo D. Goitein says the following about this: 'Moreover, the Geniza material enables to actually follow up such relations between a yeshiva and local leaders during two or more generations not only with regard to larger cities such as Old Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt, Qayrawan in Tunisia, and Fez and Sijilmasa in Morocco, but also to smaller towns, such as Gabes in Tunisia'. Goitein Shelomo D., *A Mediterranean Society*, II (1971), p. 9.

west Africa or Spain. In all these countries, the Jews were familiar with the Talmud, the Aggadah and their language. It is most unlikely that he was a Danite from Kush because there is no historical evidence that the Tribe of Dan ever left Israel pre-exile. Ethiopia, as far as we know, has never harboured Jewish communities with a knowledge of Hebrew or Aramaic with the exception of a small recent Yemenite Jewish community, which established itself in Addis Ababa and other centres. For now all we have is speculation and as Wasserstein writes : 'Speculation placed Eldad's origins in all the usual places, just over the edge of the world which most people knew about, and associated him with all those distant areas in which independent Jewish states with powerful rulers were said to exist.'¹²⁹ The only other straw to clutch on to is research by modern scholars such as Ullendorff, and Beckingham who have suggested that there may be an Arabic substratum in Eldad's language thereby suggesting an indeterminate Arabian origin.¹³⁰ A. Epstein, of course, highlighted the Arabic origin of some of Eldad's vocabulary already in his work.¹³¹ Another possibility is that Eldad never wrote the story but that it was recorded by an Arabic speaking Jew, either a contemporary in

¹²⁹ Wasserstein David J., *Eldad ha-Dani and Prester John*, p. 215

¹³⁰ Ullendorff Edward and Beckingham Charles F., *The Hebrew Letters of Prester John*, p. 154.

Wasserstein David J., *Eldad ha-Dani and Prester John*, p. 225 note 20

¹³¹ Epstein Abraham, in an attempt to identify Eldad's origins, gave a linguistic analysis of Eldad's language (pp. VIII-IXX). Although his study is not recent and major advances have since been made in Hebrew historiography, anybody with a modicum of knowledge of Semitic languages would tend to agree with most of his observations. Of particular interest in Epstein's analysis are the peculiar words which at first seem Hebrew are actually derived of Arabic roots. Epstein concluded that Eldad must, therefore, have known Arabic or even more likely lived among Arabs. This notwithstanding Eldad's insistence to the contrary and the testimony of the people of Kairouan.

Kairouan or someone else later in time.¹³² If this is the case, the Arabic derivations can be ascribed to the recorder, influenced by his mother tongue, rather than to Eldad.

Regardless of whom Eldad was, whether or not he was telling the truth or had ulterior motives, the influence of the stories reverberated well after his time. Jews as well as Christians seemed to have heard about him. Until a definite answer can be given to the question who Eldad really was, one can really only look at the influence his appearance and story had on the development of the myth of the Ten Lost Tribes.

From a literary point of view, it is difficult to fit Eldad into known literary categories because there is something quintessentially metahistorical about him. So, for example, his text is not really a diary, it is not a historical or religious work, it is not all fantasy and the form does not completely comply with a travelogue. In fact, it has something of all of the above. Max Schloessinger, in his work on the *shehitah* rituals of Eldad, points out that one cannot really classify the material because of its 'anomalous character'.¹³³

The Story of Eldad has been preserved in many different versions. In some cases there are only the letters to and from the *Gaon*, whether these are complete is unknown. In other manuscripts, one finds only the slaughtering rituals or only the

¹³² I have not found anyone suggesting this possibility but stand corrected if this has been suggested before.

¹³³ Schloessinger Max, *The Ritual of Eldad Ha-Dani: Reconstructed and edited from Manuscripts and a Genizah Fragment with Notes, an Introduction and an Appendix on the Eldad Legends*, Rudolf Haupt Verlag: Leipzig and New-York 1908, p. 2.

story.¹³⁴ Indeed, it would be fair to say that with regard to the Eldad material much research is needed to establish what, if any, is genuine Eldad. The first printed edition appeared in Mantua in A.D. 1480. Later editions show some differences because they were based on different manuscripts.¹³⁵ Epstein collected six of these manuscripts and published in 1891 his critical edition.¹³⁶

It is my own translation of the text of this edition that will be used in this dissertation.

The information found in the Eldad corpus can be divided into subjects or sections. Although there is no strict chronological sequence, it not being a diary, some events clearly precede others. The first event is Eldad's voyage to Kairouan. Having already noted his wisdom in choosing to appear in Kairouan one cannot help but note that from the start of his story hardly anything seems to be left to chance either. Eldad gets down to the business of striking a chord with his audience at once. It was of course very important to captivate his audience immediately and on a continual basis. The text reads:

'[...] and now we shall tell our brethren, the tribes of Jeshurun, about the affair of Eldad ha-Dani who said all this, how his travels in all the countries were, that he was chosen from the tribe of Dan and that God preformed a great miracle for him and saved him from many places and many difficulties that befell him [...].'¹³⁷

¹³⁴ One of the more recently published materials is a partial manuscript of Eldad was published: Kupfer Franciszek and Strelcyn Stefan, 'Un Nouveau Manuscrit Concernant Eldad Haddani', offprint from *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 29 (1954), pp. 125-141 with appendix (pp. 142-143) by Kazimierz Kwiatkowski.

¹³⁵ Other manuscripts are from Constantinople, Venice, and Prague.

¹³⁶ Epstein Abraham, *Eldad ha-Dani*, Seine Berichte über die zehn Stämme und deren Ritus, Ch.D. Lippe: Pressburg 1891. (Hebrew)

¹³⁷ Epstein Abraham, *Eldad ha-Dani*, pp. 22-23.

Straight away one finds two very powerful motifs viz. an election motif and a protection/divine intervention motif. Eldad's use of these two motifs is neither accidental nor is it a simple narration technique. In scripture, there are numerous references to people chosen by God to do certain things at certain times. Frequently these people were chosen for the salvation of Israel e.g. Moses and Cyrus the Great. The people of Kairouan would have been familiar with this concept. It would also have firmly established in their minds the connection between Eldad and redemption. The same would be true for the protection/divine intervention motif. They would know that God could do mighty miracles if He wanted to protect someone and that miracles were not only for special occasions. Indeed miracles are very much a part of everyday Judaism.¹³⁸ Eldad used these motifs to give himself more credibility and to keep his listeners keen. It is certainly not the last time we see the use of these motifs in the Eldad corpus.

Having caught the attention of his audience he relates how he got to Kairouan. This, as will be shown later, is a very important part of his attempt to persuade the people of Kairouan that he is genuine. He set out from beyond the rivers of Kush together with another Jew from the Tribe of Asher. They boarded a small boat with the purpose of engaging in mercantile activities with the sailors. In the middle of the night, God sent a very strong wind and the ship foundered. However, God did not leave them to drown and Eldad and his companion managed to find and hold onto a plank. They

¹³⁸ Rabbis, over the ages, have emphasised that man is surrounded at all times by miracles. Not all miracles are supernatural events often they denote God's salvation in daily matters as in Eldad's case. The concept is well described in the Amidah prayer where it speaks of 'the miracles that are daily with us- morning, noon, and night'.

drift in the water until the sea brought them to a people called 'Romornos'. Eldad describes them as tall, black, naked Kushites. He also told his audience that they are cannibals and that they took them prisoner as soon as they came to their country. Eldad's companion apparently was healthy, fat, and pampered and they ate him.¹³⁹ Eldad, who had been sick on the ship, was chained up until he, too, would fatten and become healthy. In order to fatten him up they brought him all sorts of good but prohibited foods. Eldad, however, stayed true to his beliefs and did not eat but hid the food. When asked whether he had eaten, he lied and answered in the affirmative. He stayed with them a long time until God performed a miracle for him inasmuch that a great army from another place came upon his captors. They plundered, killed some, and took others prisoner, among the prisoners was Eldad. These barbarians were fire-worshippers and Eldad stayed with them for four years.¹⁴⁰ Then one day they brought him to the city of Azin.¹⁴¹ A merchant Jew from the Tribe of Issachar found him and bought him for thirty-two pieces of gold. Eldad then returned with this man from Issachar to the latter's country.

This part has all the makings of a good story, shipwreck, cannibals, miraculous rescue and above all a happy ending. Once again, the information seems well thought out and aimed at creating credibility before revealing the core of the story. First of all, he claims to come from beyond the rivers of Kush. This would most likely have brought the Queen of Sheba, her wealth, power and relationship with Solomon, one of

¹³⁹ This is based on Genesis 49:20 that reads: 'Out of Asher his bread *shall be* fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.'

¹⁴⁰ In Epstein's fifth manuscript, it is four days.

¹⁴¹ There are variations of the name of this place in the different versions. The city of אלצין was a Khazar city and is also mentioned by Benjamin of Tudela.

the greatest kings in Israelite history, to the mind of his listeners. Not only may this subconsciously have tipped the balance in favour of Eldad, it would probably also have sown some seeds about riches, armies and independence which is a topic that reappears later when he describes the lives of the four tribes in more detail. In doing so Eldad touched a very sensitive subject and more importantly added to the myth. Eldad continues by telling them that he was with a member of another of the Lost Tribes when the ship foundered. Very conveniently, there are no witnesses as to where he came from because only his friend, who later was eaten by cannibals, and Eldad himself survived. The information on his sojourn with the cannibals is again interesting from a literary point of view because in a relatively short piece we find four motifs, some recurring, others new to the story. Earlier he intimated that he was chosen (election motif) to bring good tidings to Judah and he reaffirms this here through a twofold rescue. Both these rescues were through divine intervention (divine intervention/protection motif). Yet, that is not enough, and subtly he adds the obedience-reward motif. At first, he was not eaten because he is too skinny having been ill on the ship but he continues to be too thin because he cannot eat their food. He describes this food as good but forbidden and this obedience and the consequent skinniness result in his rescue before he becomes the main dish. The last motif, the lost-found motif, is also slipped in without any fanfare. The fire-worshippers sell him to a man from the Tribe of Issachar, another of the Lost Tribes. By telling his audience that he was bought by a man from the Tribe of Issachar, Eldad opens an opportunity to elaborate on some of the other Lost Tribes, viz. Issachar, Zebulon, Reuben, Ephraim, half Manasseh and Simeon. The way he imparts this information gives the whole story a degree of verisimilitude. For each of these tribes he

builds up a careful picture, a picture that is beautiful enough to stir the souls of his listeners yet not too incredible.

The Tribe of Issachar, he said, lived in the mountains near the sea and they are south of Media and Persia. Stressing how faithful they are, something they were not before the exile, he tells the people of Kairouan that they fulfilled the verse: 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth'.¹⁴² They did not have the yoke of kingship except the yoke of the Torah. Here we find the same repentance-mercy motif, which can be found in IV Ezra. Somehow, somewhere and at some point in time, these tribes became believers again and as a result they were as Eldad claims secure and calm and neither Satan nor any evil spirit resided among them. Their territory extended ten days' journey on every side. They had a lot of property, camels, donkeys, and servants but they did not breed horses. They did not have any weapons except the ritual slaughter knife. There was no oppression or robbery among them, and even when they found something on the road, they did not take it. They had a judge whose name was Nachshon.¹⁴³ They practised four ways of capital punishment viz. stoning, burning, slaying and strangulation. This of course would strike a chord because these forms of capital punishments are also mentioned in the Talmud. Their languages were Hebrew and Persian.

¹⁴² This verse is Joshua 1:8 and it reads: 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.'

¹⁴³ Tradition has it that Nachshon was the first person to cross the open Reed Sea after Moses divided the waters. It is little details like this that make Eldad's text often seem so believable or treacherous depending on the point of view taken.

Zebulun he placed in the mountains of Paran.¹⁴⁴ They live on their own but had contact with Issachar. They live in tents made of hair skins, which they got from Armenia. They have travelled as far as the Euphrates and are merchants. They, too, practised four ways of capital punishment and keep their own traditions.

The Tribe of Reuben, according to Eldad, lived behind the mountains of Paran. Together these three tribes went to war and commit highway robbery and all their spoil is divided between them. They spoke Hebrew and Persian. In the way of sacred books, they had the Old Testament, the *Mishna*, the Talmud and the *Hagaddah*. This of course is problematic as it suggests that they must have been in contact with Judah and normative Judaism, which developed the Talmud, yet they are supposed to have been lost. The Tribe of Ephraim and half Manasseh, according to Eldad, were located in the mountains across from the city of Mecca. They were fierce and blunt, horse-owners and highway robbers; they did not spare their enemies and had no other means of living but spoil. They were warriors and one of them can be counted for a thousand. The Tribe of Simeon and half the Tribe of Manasseh Eldad located in the land of the Chaldees, six months distant, and they were the most numerous of all and they collected taxes from twenty-five kingdoms.¹⁴⁵

So far, the information Eldad has provided would have sounded plausible to the people of Kairouan. The tone is that of reporting facts and one would not necessarily

¹⁴⁴ In all the manuscripts is written פריאן or פארן. These are probably the mountains, which the Persians called Parouta. Benjamin of Tudela mentions that in those mountains and in the Zagros Mountains Jews were living.

¹⁴⁵ In the text, he indeed reads כשדים but in manuscript five reads הכזריים, in manuscript four כוזרים, in four is also added מירושלים.

become overly suspicious. By clever use of motifs, he veiled some of the more incredible parts.

At this point the audience, perhaps to his own surprise, is not yet running him out of town and he can embark on his real story. This part could be divided into two parts viz. the information he gives about the life and practices of the four tribes and his story about the Benei Moshe. Whereas at first he emphasised how similar the Lost Tribes really are with the House of Judah he now puts the spotlight on another favourite of the Jews -tradition and in particular oral tradition. Eldad relates that it was handed down that in the beginning; the Danites were tent-dwellers in the Land of Israel. In all of Israel, there were no greater warriors and no greater soldiers. When Jeroboam, son of Nebat, was Israel's leader, he caused Israel to sin by worshipping two golden calves. Then the (northern) tribes united and said: 'rise, lets wage war with Rehoboam and Jerusalem'. However, the Danites said to Jeroboam: 'Why should we fight against our brethren and with the sons of our lord David, King of Israel and Judah, Heaven forbid'?

At the same time, the Elders of Israel said: 'In all of Israel there are no warriors like unto the Danites'. Immediately they commanded the Danites: 'rise and fight with Judah'. The Danites, however, said: 'By the head of Dan, our father, we do not wage war with our brethren and we do not shed their blood'. Immediately the Danites threw down their swords, lances and bows. They said to themselves: 'we shall go now and find us a camp and a place because if we wait until the end they will make us go away'. They took courage and decided to go to Egypt and to lay it waste and kill all its

inhabitants.¹⁴⁶ But their leaders said that it is written: 'ye shall see them no more for ever' and they wondered how they would succeed.¹⁴⁷ They said: 'let's go to Amalek, to Edom or to Amon or Moab annihilate them and settle in their place'. Their leaders said: 'it is written in the Torah that God, Blessed be His Name, withheld them from crossing their borders'.¹⁴⁸ In the end, they advised them to go to Egypt but not via the road, which our Fathers took, not in order to lay waste but in order to go to the River Pison, to Kush. And it came to pass that they came close to Egypt and all Egypt trembled and they enquired whether we came in war or in peace? And the Danites said that they came in peace. They told the Egyptians that they would pass through their country, to the river Pison because there would be a place to stay. And it came to pass that they did not believe the Danites and all Egypt stood on their guard-towers until the Danites passed their country. When the Danites came to Kush they found it a good and fruitful land rich in fields, vineyards, gardens and orchards. The locals could not prevent the Danites to live with them because the land was taken by force. After the death of Sennacherib,

¹⁴⁶ It is interesting that Eldad seems to intimate here that military might is a good thing, in a political sphere. That same might, however, is seen as not desirable in a religious sphere especially if it means fighting co-religionists or in this case Judah. Was he trying to temper the longing for military might among his listeners by implying that the rewards of military might and strength are, in the end, worldly rewards?

¹⁴⁷ Exodus 14:13.

¹⁴⁸ This is based on Deuteronomy 2: 4-9.

three other tribes, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher joined them.¹⁴⁹ Every tribe fought the Kushites three months per year and the spoils were for the tribe itself.

In this section of the story, we see that Eldad starts to insert more fantasy but is still careful not to stray too far. He seems to be trying to hook his audience and preparing them for more. It is interesting that he mentions that the whole story about the Tribe of Dan is an oral tradition. Of course, the people of Kairouan were familiar with the concept of oral traditions but this was different. It was not a religious oral tradition but more a historical tradition and it feels as if he is covering his back. If it was found out that his tales were less than accurate, he could always fall back on the concept of tradition. Again, the obedience-reward motif is present when the Danites need to decide where to go and how to get there. They consult and obey passages of scripture and their reward is, like ancient Israel's once was, a rich and fertile land. Through this, he kills two birds with one stone because it shows that the Tribe of Dan adheres to scripture and that, as in days gone by, God remembers and blesses those that obey. With this, he gave hope to his listeners that God, as was prophesied in scripture, would remember those who obey. Seemingly unimportant is his reference to Egypt trembling before the Danites and the Danites crushing the Kushites. Yet it is an important point because unobtrusively he introduces the concept that the tribes are mighty and powerful and that nations tremble before them. What seems out of place in this section is his report as to

¹⁴⁹ The reason as to why at this time the three tribes join the Danites is preserved in another manuscript. Here Eldad related that these three tribes first lived with Issachar in Asia. After a while, the Tribes of Naphtali, Gad and Asher were discriminated against because they were the descendants of Jacob and the handmaids of either Leah or Rachel. In order to avoid war they left and joined Dan.

how the Tribes of Gad, Asher and Naphtali came to live with them after the death of Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.). Sennacherib was the Assyrian king who, through divine intervention failed to capture Jerusalem.¹⁵⁰ If this defeat and his consequent murder had had any impact on the exiles from Israel, one would assume that, given the opportunity, they would have rebelled and returned home, not go off to yet another land.

Having brought together the four tribes, which are central to his story, he needs to create a connection between these tribes and his listeners. Once again, one finds a clever use of plausible information mingled with veiled fantasy and outright error. To begin with, we have the religious practices of the tribes. Eldad relates that the tribes have all of the Old Testament. He then narrows this statement by saying that they read neither the Book of Esther, because they were not there during that miraculous event, nor the Book of Lamentations so as not to become despondent. One might be forgiven for thinking that this statement would immediately raise suspicions because these books are so important in Judaism, as they are specific festival reading. Yet a casual listener might not have noticed the contradiction because the emphasis is on the tribes having the whole of the Old Testament. Furthermore, he gives a plausible reason for not reading either books. In doing so, he deflects, at least in the first instance, any queries as to how the tribes come to have these books, having lived in isolation from normative Judaism. This is a beautiful example of Eldad's mastery in story telling, he mixes half-truths, which are not as damaging and noticeable as outright lies.¹⁵¹ To keep in line with the time line of the tribes he has to say that the Books of Esther and Lamentations

¹⁵⁰ II Kings 19:35, 37

¹⁵¹ This assuming that Eldad is a veritable story. To his listeners and many who came after him it was of course taken as such.

do not form part of the tribes' liturgy since he told his audience that the tribes left the main body of the Israelites before these events. Equally important though is having the Old Testament because that is what set Jews apart from other religions. After all Christians have added a Testament, Muslims have the Koran but Jews are the compilers and protectors of the Old Testament. So by saying they do not read these books he gives the impression to honour the time line and the fundamental principle of the importance of scripture. Alternatively, based on his previous manipulation of scripture there could be another reason for mentioning these books specifically. Both these stories are part of the Hagiographa and in both of them, there is something useful to sustain Eldad's story. In Esther, the Jews take, with great success, matters in their own hands when threatened with death. This is paralleled by the Tribe of Dan and later the other tribes who join the Tribe of Dan. The book of Lamentations describes Jerusalem's loneliness, God's role in her destruction, and the suffering of her inhabitants but all these negatives are negated when the author's despair turns to hope when he realises that repentance can bring deliverance. These books of scripture give, as it were, credence to his story.

Next, he mentions their Talmud, which is written in poetic Hebrew. In it, there are no comments of sages, but only the sayings of 'Joshua who had it from the mouth of Moses who heard it from God'. Again, in order to enhance his reputation as a man of truth and to make a connection with his audience, for whom the Talmud was second only to scripture, the tribes had to have a Talmud too. Questions come to mind immediately concerning the contents and the language of this Talmud. As far as the language is concerned, he is consistent in so far as Eldad claims that the four tribes speak nothing but Hebrew so, consequently, their Talmud is in Hebrew. Concerning the

lack of sayings of the sages, it is slightly more complicated. If he was referring to the sayings of the sages in either the Babylonian Talmud or Jerusalem Talmud then, per definition, they would not appear in his Talmud because there had been no contact according to Eldad. If he was not referring to the known sages, one has to wonder why he would call a book, containing only the sayings of Joshua, a Talmud. Whereas of course the word *talmud* generally is understood as the Babylonian Talmud or the Jerusalem Talmud, he could have taken the literal meaning of the word *talmud* viz. teaching. His audience, familiar with the word, would probably have accepted that the tribes had a book with the sayings of Joshua as their Talmud. Again, one finds a subtle mixing of the credible and the implausible. This is also true of his story about the judicial system of the tribes and in particular about the forms of capital punishment. According to Eldad, the tribes practice four forms of capital punishment: stoning, burning, slaying, and strangulation. In the Old Testament only stoning, burning (pre-Sinaitic), and hanging as a non-Jewish punishment are mentioned. Stoning, burning, slaying and strangulation, however are mentioned in the Talmud of which he claims they have no knowledge.¹⁵² The similarities, however, would have enhanced his credibility and the minor discrepancies would, at least in the first instance, not have been noticed.

With each part of his tale, he becomes more daring and the two most fantastic parts of his story are the war practices of the tribes and his account of the Benei Moshe. His tales about Israelites fighting and defending their territory would have sounded like

¹⁵² Details on how these punishments should be executed and when a person deserves them are found in Sanhedrin 52a-b and 53a.

music to the Jews who were at the mercy of other nations, without a land to call their own. Eldad does not disappoint them. First of all the tribes seem to be continuously at war, each tribe doing a tour of duty lasting three months. At the end of the three months, there is booty to be divided. When battle is imminent the *shofar* is blown and thereupon the general and with him twenty thousand chariots and hundred thousand foot soldiers set out. They carry with them a flag upon which the Shema Israel is written. It seems a simple description but once again, there is more to it. In this description, he effectively tells the people of Kairouan that the tribes are powerful and have a mighty army, something he hinted at when he described Egypt trembling before the Danites. He introduces a flag on which the *Shema Israel* is written, the *Shema Israel*, of course, is a strong identity marker as these are the first and last words spoken by any observant Jew each day. Furthermore, a flag is a very powerful symbol, it not only identifies the combatants but it also facilitates the cohesiveness and pride of a group. Unity and pride make a group strong and he wants to impress upon the people of Kairouan that the tribes are strong. History has shown that the imperial *aquila*, the *signa* and *vexilla* of the Roman legions on their own could make people run away in fear. The people of Kairouan who were known to read Latin might have noticed that, consciously or subconsciously.

The climax of the story must be his description of a group of people he calls the Benei Moshe. It seems Eldad throws all caution in the wind and really goes to town. The tale is fantastic yet the choice of images seems once again chosen carefully. The

Benei Moshe are said to be Levites and they are encircled by the River Sambatyon.¹⁵³ Eldad relates to the people of Kairouan what he heard regarding the Benei Moshe from the rabbis. This is yet another example of keeping his credibility up to par in a veiled and maybe even underhand manner. These rabbis said that when Israel (Southern Kingdom) was exiled to Babylon and they came by the rivers of Babylon the Levites were faced with idolatry.¹⁵⁴ This was because the Babylonians asked them to sing like they used to sing in the temple. The Levites, however, called them fools and lamented that had they sung of every miracle that God did for them, they would not have been exiled from their country but honour-to-honour and greatness to their greatness would have been added. Bearing all this in mind, they had no intention to sing for idolators.¹⁵⁵ The result of this rebellion was that the Babylonians attacked them and killed a great number of them. Although the Babylonians killed many of them, great was their joy that they had not succumbed to idolatry, thereby fulfilling the words 'they required of us mirth'¹⁵⁶. What did the remaining Levites do? They cut off their fingers so they could not play their harps, and when the Babylonians required them to sing they would show their cut off fingers and ask them how they were to sing with cut off fingers?¹⁵⁷ When it became night a cloud came down and covered them, their wives, their daughters, their sons and God, in the appearance of a pillar of fire, carried them, and all night until morning, he guided them and placed them on the coast. When the sun rose, the cloud

¹⁵³ It is interesting to note that Eldad places only these Bnei Moshe beyond the Sambatyon and none of the other tribes.

¹⁵⁴ Psalms 137:1

¹⁵⁵ This is a very broad and cunning interpretation of Psalm 137 on the part of Eldad.

¹⁵⁶ Psalm 137:3.

¹⁵⁷ This is a part of Psalm 137:4 that reads: 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?'

and the pillar of fire disappeared and God extended before them a stream, which is called Sambatyon, and He closed it around them so no man could pass to them. It surrounded them in an area of three months' travel each direction. The range of the same river is two hundred ell and the river was full of sand and stones and the rolling of the sand and the stones create a great noise, which can be heard half a day's distant and the sand and stones roll six days a week and on the Sabbath, it is still. From the beginning of the Sabbath until the end of the Sabbath, a fire rises at the side of the stream and the fire blazes, no man is able to come near the river, and the fire consumes everything that grows around the river until the earth is consumed. The Benei Moshe stay within the bounds of the river and they have not got any unclean cattle, no unclean animals, no creeping things but they have sheep and cows. In their territory there are six springs, each of them comes out in a pond, and with the water thereof, they irrigate their lands. In that same pond, there are all kinds of fishes and near the springs and the pond, all kinds of clean birds nest. In addition, they have all kinds of fruit and they sow and harvest and if they sow one they harvest one hundred. They are believers, obeyers of the Torah, readers of the Mishna and the Hagaddah, and they are wise, pious and holy and they do not take a false oath. They live one hundred twenty years and a son does not die during his father's lifetime, they live to see three or four generations. They do not have slaves and servants but build, plough and sow themselves. They do not lock their houses at night and a little boy goes with the cattle a distance of several days and does not have to fear robbers, wild animals, creeping animals, or villains. They do not have to fear anything bad because they are holy. Because of this, God gave them all that they have and chose them. Except for the four tribes, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher who

live beyond the rivers of Kush, they do not see any other humans nor can any other man see them. The Benei Moshe do not have anything unclean, no unclean birds, animals or cattle and no flies, fleas, or lice, no foxes and no scorpions. Neither are there snakes or dogs because all those were part of the idolatry, which they practised in Israel. They do have sheep, cattle and birds, and their sheep give birth twice a year and their seed yields twice a year. They sow and harvest and they have gardens, orchards, olives, pomegranates, figs, and all kinds of pulses and melons, cucumbers, onions and garlic, barley and wheat. Their Talmud is similar to the Talmud of the tribes. Their only communication with the outside world is with the tribes. They meet with the tribes at a place where they can see each other and they talk by shouting between them across the river Sambatyon. They talk about what happens to us in the war, and they give an account of what has befallen them. If they want to speak or do something important, they send doves that are known among them and they write letters and attach these to the wings or legs of the dove and those go and cross the river Sambatyon. They have many precious stones, silver, and gold. They sow cotton, grow silkworms, and make beautiful clothes without end. They have increased fivefold and are without number.

On the one hand, one finds in this section, as in previous part, literary tools such as recurring motifs. On the other hand, this being the most daring part of his story, he discusses with deliberate hyperbole, issues that are significant for the people of Kairouan and so he firmly connects the Lost Tribes with redemption.

The recurring motifs are the election, repentance-mercy, protection/divine intervention, and the lost-found motifs. Interestingly we also find both the biblical aetiological and theodocian motifs, something that has not occurred before. The first

one is found when he relates that the Levites knew that they were in exile because of disobedience and idolatry. Up until this point, he has avoided apportioning either blame or cause for the exile. He relates that the Danites left before the Assyrian exile in a clear case of right and wrong. This, of course, is an entirely new information. Whereas the Bible also states that the exile took part in stages, nowhere does it mention that the Tribe of Dan left because of internal strife before the Assyrian exile. With regards to the other tribes he also circumvented the blame and cause issue by only stating that they joined the Danites after the death of Sennacherib. In the case of the Levites, however, we get an indirect reference to the cause of the exile by eavesdropping, as it were, in their conversations with the Babylonians. In this conversation, they admit, after a fashion, that it was idolatry, which brought them to Babylon in the first place. The theodocian motif is also found with regard to the Levites who, because of their stance against idolatry, were covered in a cloud and taken to a new land. Again there are no references in earlier sources that all or a part of the Levites were separated from the main body of exiles.

Beyond that, a new element in his presentation tactic unfolds in this part of the corpus. Before, he concentrated on credibility and similarities between his people and normative Judaism. He did this by using familiar and recurring motifs. Now he seems to feel secure enough to concentrate on stirring the hearts and souls of his listeners. Taking a closer look at the subjects one can see that his focus is twofold. On the one hand, he addresses issues specifically facing the Jewish community and on the other hand, he incorporates knowledge that could be of interest to anybody. The exactness with which he pinpoints Jewish issues betrays, yet again, that he was not as uninformed

about the status of the Jews as he would like his audience to believe. The information of general interest is confined to illustrating that the Benei Moshe were advanced for their time. It is maybe this mixture of information that made the story popular well beyond its time and caused it to be cited by Jews and non-Jews alike, each having their own interpretations and reasons for believing in it.

Concerning specific Jewish issues, Eldad employed his usual strategy. He subtly mentioned customs and practices, which highlight the similarities between the Benei Moshe, the tribes and normative Judaism, but weaved 'pleasing conceit' into it. The similarities are there for credibility and the 'pleasing conceit' function is to highlight differences between the status of the Jews in the Diaspora and the independence and wealth of Eldad's people. What attracts immediate attention is his detailed description of the Sambatyon and its function. As discussed in the previous chapter, there is little reference to the Sambatyon in the earliest sources. The Sambatyon is not mentioned in the Bible but references to it can be found in the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (Exodus 34:10), some of the Aggadic Midrashim and in both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud (Sanh. 65b and Sanh. 10:5). The Talmud is the first to ascribe miraculous qualities to this river. Eldad takes all these shreds of information and moulds it into one tale, which he presents as fact. He gives a precise location, contrary to the inferences of known sources, and elaborates, in his usual fashion, on the ascriptions of miraculous qualities, found in the Talmud. For good measure, he implies that the Sambatyon functions as an *eruv*. By referring to these Rabbinic enactments intended to promote the sanctity of the Sabbath in relation to a seemingly Sabbath observing river he strengthens his tale and gives himself room to manoeuvre. Having

established that the Sambatyon surrounds the Benei Moshe, according to his words, for their own protection, he can now introduce several topics in relation to this that will stir the hearts and souls of his audience and add credence to his story.

In a nonchalant way, he describes the size of the territory of the Benei Moshe, three months' travel in each direction, this in addition to a previous description of the territory, the tribes call their own. Being independent, having access to, or owning vast pieces of land was, of course, something only occurring in the dreams of most Jews.

More interesting, however, is his emphasis on the absence of unclean animals, on the one hand and the purity and the holiness of the Benei Moshe on the other hand. This is especially true if one looks at the work done by the distinguished anthropologist Mary Douglas on the subject. When Eldad described the Benei Moshe as holy he used the Hebrew root k-d-sh. Douglas in her book *Purity and Danger* discusses the meaning of this root and concludes that, while 'usually translated as Holy', it 'is based on the idea of separation'.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the people of Israel were separated from the rest of the nations inasmuch as they had a covenant with God through Abraham while others did not. In the preface to the 2002 edition of the book she furthermore confesses to 'a major mistake' with regards to her original interpretation of the Jewish dietary laws, in particular those referring to the question of clean and unclean animals. Instead of seeing the prohibitions on unclean animals as based on abhorrence she now argues that they 'are part of an elaborate intellectual structure of rules that mirror God's covenant with his people'. In other words 'the people's relationship to their flocks and herds is

¹⁵⁸ Douglas Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, 2002 edn, Routledge: London and New York, 2002, p. 10

implicitly parallel to God's covenanted relation to them'.¹⁵⁹ When Douglas' interpretations are applied to Eldad's description of the Benei Moshe, his message reaches new heights with the introduction of the purity motif. The Benei Moshe are k-d-sh, i.e God separated them with the creation of the Sambatyon and within the confines of the Sambatyon there are no (halakhically) unclean animals i.e. no temptations to break the covenant again. Observing the purity laws was of course a daily battle for the Jews, living in Gentile countries but Eldad shows that observing these laws is worthwhile through his descriptions of the wealth and health of the Benei Moshe. Moreover he implies that perhaps the time has come that the House of Israel will be united again. The Lost Tribes were exiled because they were no longer pure, much in the same manner as a woman separates herself from the community, for example, after childbirth. The woman returns when she has purified herself and thus his audience is indirectly led to believe that just as it is written in the prophecies, the Lost Tribes have remembered the Lord their God and are now in a pure state, ready to be reunited.

Other important issues he brings to their attention are political independence and hand in hand with that military superiority and the merits of not wanting to conform to the outside/non-Jewish standards and values and hand in hand with that the existence of miracles. As far as the first one is concerned, it is a known fact that exile and the lack of Jewish government was not an enviable position to be in. In Kairouan, the Jews were generally treated well, they attained good positions, yet they still were under Muslim rule and subject to their every whim. Eldad already told them that not only do the four tribes live in an independent kingdom and that they are not subject to a Gentile nation

¹⁵⁹ Douglas Mary, *Purity and Danger*, pp. xiii-xvi.

and that rather than paying taxes, they collect tribute from subjected peoples. This on its own is wonderful news but then in addition to that he goes one-step further than that with regard to the Benei Moshe. These Levites are independent and self-governing but do not have to fight to maintain this status. They enjoy independence through divine protection behind the Sambatyon. This means the Lord has not completely abandoned His people, an impression some Jews could easily have had when looking at the position Diaspora Jews found themselves in. As far as the second issue is concerned, there was a constant pressure on the Jews to conform to the standards and practices of the nations among whom they lived and to stop being different. Eldad spoke words of encouragement when he relates how Dan left the body of the Israelites when they felt they had to compromise their standards. Their reward was glaringly obvious. The Benei Moshe realised their sins of idolatry and were rather killed and/or mutilated than obey their captors. Their divine reward surpasses imagination. Another subject dear to the heart of the Jews was the gathering of Israel which has to take place before the coming of the Messiah. By virtue of the four tribes living together in close proximity of the Benei Moshe he also suggests a partial gathering of Israel. The Eldad corpus, in general, is not Messianic of a Messianic nature in the classic sense inasmuch as it does not mention the Messiah or the Messianic era. Eldad himself was not declared a Messiah or his forerunner, however, his insinuations that the tribes are more than ready to be reunited with Judah give the story an interesting twist. The last point that would stir the hearts of the Jews is the economic and social status of the Benei Moshe. As mentioned before the Benei Moshe were said to be self-governing and independent. In addition to that, they are wealthy. In Kairouan, the socio-economic status of the Jews

was relatively good. For Eldad's story to have an impact upon the people, the wealth and social status of the Benei Moshe and the tribes had to be beyond imagination yet again not too incredible. So we read that the Benei Moshe harvest twice a year. With careful planning and irrigation, a field in a climate such as Kairouan could yield two harvests too. In the same breath, he tells them that their small cattle have young twice a year. The general impossibility of that will not be noticed immediately as there are many animals that have young more than once a year. He said that the Benei Moshe have no slaves and that all people are equal. He struck a chord, perhaps, by talking about equality for all people because the Jews never were and never would be equal in Kairouan. In the same vein, he mentions that the Benei Moshe have cotton and purple dyed yarn. The Jews in Kairouan were particularly fond of coloured clothing, which they had to import from Persia. The isolated Benei Moshe, blessed as they are have it all.

As far as the items of general interest are concerned, two would arouse interest even today viz. apparent progressive medical knowledge and the use and availability of water in the desert. As far as the first is concerned, Kairouan was home to famous doctors such as Isaac ben Solomon Israeli (c.855-c.955). Eldad says that the Benei Moshe live lives of 100-120 years and that no child dies during his father's life. In those days, physicians were fighting infant mortality and the human lifespan was considerably shorter. Again, Eldad does not claim to have a cure for mysterious illnesses or a lack of physical and mental disabilities, the information is simple but it would have interested educated people and added to Eldad's credibility. As far as the availability of water was concerned, this too must have interested the educated part of

the population. Kairouan, often called The Gate to the Desert, and indeed lying at the edge of the desert must have had its share of water shortages and other water-related problems. Eldad relates that the Benei Moshe have the use of six springs in a relatively small area. Was this proof that there was more water in the desert than the occasional oasis?

The section on the Benei Moshe may well have swayed the richer and more educated part of Kairouan's Jewish community. This in turn could have led to the consultation with the *Gaon* and have prevented Eldad being run out of town. Interest by this layer of the community would also have prevented the poorer and less educated section of the population to declare Eldad a Messiah.

Summarised, it is clear that the Story of Eldad offers a wealth of new information, misinformation or fantasy, as the case may be, above and beyond the earliest sources. With the exception of recurring themes and motifs it has little in common with the earliest sources in general and the terse biblical verses in particular. There is a very strong undercurrent that at least the Lost Tribes are ready for redemption but they are not assigned a specific role by Eldad. Nevertheless judging by the detail of the text one can safely assume that this was not a haphazardly composed work. Did Eldad just have a fertile imagination or were there ulterior motives? Due to the scant information about Eldad as a person, if ever he existed, it is nigh impossible to answer that question and one can only guess. Did he tell the story for monetary gain? That does not seem to be the case, at least there are no reports that he asked for money or was kept in luxury as David ha-Reuveni centuries later did. There is of course no denying that stories like these would do no harm to the interests of a wandering merchant. Similarly

it seems improbable that he sought political power and through it a place in history. If he did, he failed as his ultimate fate is also unknown and he kind of dropped out of history, similarly to the Ten Tribes themselves many centuries before. Since there are no obvious personal reasons for telling the story maybe he had a greater purpose viz. bringing hope to his fellow Jews by bringing them news of a part of Israel living in wealth and freedom. The Christian claim that Jewish independence had ceased with the Roman destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D. would then be null and void. Perhaps he wanted to keep the Muslims on their toes by letting up a balloon that there were still some powerful Jewish polities within the borders of their empire. These could conceivably become a future menace to Muslim hegemony. Lofty aims and personal gain aside the story gives the impression that Eldad or the author of his story was an ideologist, a fantasist, or perhaps even a likable rogue, it does not give the impression, as some scholars have suggested, that he had malicious intend.

b. The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela

A few centuries after Eldad, in 1160, Rabbi Benjamin ben Jonah of Tudela set out on a most remarkable journey lasting thirteen years (1160-c.1173). Benjamin recorded his journey in what became known as *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*. This literary travelogue is a narration of the author's observations of places, people, religious practices, forms of government, and a great many other things. Although his main interest seemed to be the Jewish communities he visited on his way, he also gave a valuable historical perspective on his time in general. A. Asher summarized it as follows:

The whole work abounds in interesting, correct, and authentic information on the state of the three quarters of the globe known at his time and in consideration of these advantages, stands without a rival in the

literary history of the Middle Ages. None of the productions of this period are as free from fables and superstitions as the *Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela*.¹⁶⁰

Looking at the *Itinerary* in more detail it, indeed, becomes clear that he visited the greater part of the then known world. He was not the first person to travel in the area and he probably was not the first person to chronicle his journey but he was unique inasmuch as his diary was preserved. In light of the extent of his travels and the information he provided, one can perhaps call him the greatest of Jewish explorers of his time. In his travels among other things, he allegedly visited or heard about long-lost Jewish communities, including some of the Lost Tribes.

A potential problem with Benjamin ben Jonah of Tudela, as was the case with Eldad, is that we do not really know who he was. There is no real biographical information about Benjamin in either his diary or indeed in any other source. Benjamin lived in the second half of the 12th century in Muslim Spain. His name would indicate that he came from Tudela, a city in the Kingdom of Navarre in northern Spain. Whether he was born there or somewhere else is unknown as is his date of birth. We only know that he died in 1173, the year he returned from his journey. The *Itinerary* is his only extant work. He was a contemporary of the great Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides (1135-1205). Consequently, he, too, would have been exposed to the world of Arabic science and culture, and the traditional Jewish world in which the Bible, the Talmud, and Midrash were studied extensively. This combination would have been advantageous to him inasmuch as it would have enabled him to look beyond

¹⁶⁰ *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages*, Introductions by Michael A. Signer (1983), Marcus N. Adler (1907), and A. Asher (1840), Joseph Simon Publisher: Malibu, 1983, p. 52.

the confines of his religion, and it may even have been the instigation for starting out on his journey. At the same time, it may have hindered him inasmuch as the mid-twelfth century was a period of cultural crisis for the Iberian Jews. The ongoing battle between Cross and the Crescent had so far produced no victor but whatever the outcome, neither party would be particularly well disposed towards the Jews. It is because of this situation that many suggestions can and have been made as to why he set out on his journey. Perhaps he hoped that by bringing proof of power and glory in biblical times, he could make the situation of the Jews better. Perhaps he thought that by showing that there were Jews everywhere and that they were not all subjugated to a foreign power the victor would think twice about persecuting the Jews. Maybe he felt that there was a necessity to make a record of the locations and achievements of the Diaspora to be used when biblical prophecies would be fulfilled and Israel would be restored. Perhaps the opposite is true and Benjamin foresaw great persecution and was as Marcus N. Adler suggests, 'finding out where his expatriated brethren might find an asylum'.¹⁶¹ The truth of the matter is that we will never know for sure because he did not state his aims anywhere and so one suggestion is as good as the next. What we do know is that he was not unique, record numbers of people, those who were simply restless, pilgrims, and merchants alike all flocked to the roads, each with a dream to follow.

The language of the *Itinerary* poses no major problems. It is written in a rather formal yet inelegant medieval Hebrew suffused with Arabic words. Unlike the *Story of Eldad ha-Dani*, the Hebrew is clear and the Arabic words are easily recognised as such because Benjamin had no reason nor did he make an effort to hide their origin. The

¹⁶¹ *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages*, p. 43.

Arabic traces in the language indicate that Benjamin knew Arabic and that it might even have been his mother tongue. The *Itinerary*, like the *Story of Eldad ha-Dani*, was received in many different ways. Some admirers of Benjamin have praised it far beyond its real merit whereas others, sometimes for no apparent reason, have been critical of it. Johann H. Hottinger for example wrote in 1656 that the story 'is puffed up with Jewish pride', that its aim is 'to deceive and mislead the ignorant'.¹⁶² Rev. B. Gerrans regarded some of the information found in Benjamin's diary valuable but was critical of the book in general. He wrote in 1783 that he thoroughly examined the book 'in order to translate it faithfully, and illustrate it accordingly'. It made him 'discover so many gross Errors; so many Fables and ridiculous Absurdities' that he could not 'comprehend why so many respectable Men have paid so much Attention to so contemptible an Author'.¹⁶³ Furthermore he did not believe that Benjamin actually visited these places because he also writes: 'The Public will be greatly surprised, if I attempt to prove, by Arguments drawn from the Book itself, that this is nothing more than a pretended Tour. [...] But I affirm that it will be no unreasonable Conjecture to suppose that he never left his native Tudela, I cannot trust him out of Spain at any rate.'¹⁶⁴ Modern opinions of Benjamin are less harsh and scholars are more likely to consider his merits. Cecil Roth wrote:

There is no general account of the Mediterranean world or of the Middle East in this period which approaches that of Benjamin of Tudela in importance, whether for Jewish or for general history. Most of his record is concise and clear, presumably only a precis of the ampler material he brought back with him. He indicates the distances between the various towns he visited, tells who stood at the head of the Jewish communities, and

¹⁶² Hottinger Johann H., *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Novi Testamenti*, 10 vols, Michaelis Schufelberger: Hannover 1656, III, p. 241.

¹⁶³ Gerrans B. Rev., *Travels of Rabbi Benjamin, Son of Jonah, of Tudela*, The author: London 1783 pp. 7-8.

¹⁶⁴ Gerrans B., *Travels of Rabbi Benjamin, son of Jonah, of Tudela*, pp. 8-9.

who were the most notable scholars. He gives the number of Jews he found in each place, [...]. He notes economic conditions, [...] speaking frequently of the occupations of the Jews [...]. He was deeply interested in Jewish scholarship, and his account of intellectual life in Provence and Baghdad is of singular importance, as is his characterization of the organization of synagogal life in Egypt. Sects, too, engage his attention, not only the Samaritans in Palestine, but also the Karaites in Constantinople and a heretical sect in Cyprus which he relates observed the Sabbath from dawn to dawn. His characterizations of non-Jewish life are vivid, and sometimes very important [...] he is said to be the first European of modern times to mention China by the present name. The importance of the work can be gauged from the fact that it has been translated into almost every language of Europe.¹⁶⁵

Hirsch Graetz called him 'a learned traveler [...] to whom, not alone Jewish history, but also the general history of nations owes thanks for his interesting and authentic information.'¹⁶⁶ Semen Dubnov called him a 'kühne Forscher' and observed that 'gleich allen mittelalterlichen Reisenden vermag auch er Wahrheit und Dichtung nicht immer zu unterscheiden'.¹⁶⁷ Laurie Magnus called Benjamin's record plain.¹⁶⁸ Paul Johnson wrote that Benjamin was 'an exceptionally observant Jewish traveler from Spain – probably a gem-merchant' and called the *Itinerary* 'the most sensible, objective

¹⁶⁵ Roth Cecil, 'Benjamin (Ben Jonah) of Tudela' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol 3, pp. 362-364.

¹⁶⁶ Graetz Hirsch., *History of the Jews; From the Earliest times to the Present Day*, ed. and in part transl. by Bella Löwy, 5 vols, III, David Nutt: London 1892, p. 400.

¹⁶⁷ Dubnov Semen, *Die Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes in Europa; von den Anfängen der abendländischen Diaspora bis zum Ende der Kreuzzüge*, translated from Russian by A. Steinberg, 10 vols, Jüdischer Verlag: Berlin 1926, IV, pp. 383-384.

¹⁶⁸ Magnus Laurie, *The Jews in the Christian Era: From the First to the Eighteenth Century and their Contribution to its Civilization*, Ernest Benn: London 1929, p. 164.

and reliable of all travel books written during the Middle Ages'.¹⁶⁹ W. Bacher wrote that Benjamin 'possessed a clear insight into the conditions and history of the countries he traversed'. He further described him as 'an intelligent Spanish Jew' whose 'account contains numerous valuable details of the political history and internal development of countries and nations; and the history of commerce must always count Benjamin's itinerary as one of its earliest and most valued sources'. He conceded that the *Itinerary* was 'not altogether free from fiction'.¹⁷⁰

Generally speaking, the *Itinerary* was well received by Jews and Christians and this is manifested in the more than fifteen editions that appeared.¹⁷¹ It was first printed in 1543 in Constantinople and after that, it appeared in many languages such as Latin, English, French, German, Dutch, and Spanish.

What makes Benjamin's *Itinerary* so interesting for research into the myth of the Lost Tribes is that Benjamin was, surprisingly perhaps, not interested in the Lost Tribes or the dissemination of the myth. Unlike Eldad's story, which is devoted to the Lost Tribes, Benjamin's *Itinerary* merely contains references to some of the Lost Tribes. These references are part of a wealth of geographical information and they are neither more nor less prominent than any of the information on other Jewish communities. Nevertheless, his work contributed to the continued life of the myth and gave rise to later travellers bringing back tales, which either corroborate or embroider upon

¹⁶⁹ Johnson Paul., *A History of the Jews*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson: London, 1987, p. 169.

¹⁷⁰ Bacher W., 'Benjamin of Tudela' in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol 3, pp. 34-35.

¹⁷¹ For the different editions, see *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. by and trans. By A. Asher, 2 vols, A. Asher: London and Berlin, 1840-1841, I, pp. 1-26.

Benjamin's information.¹⁷² This is not least so because what little he does say about the Lost Tribes keeps alive some of the earlier mentioned motifs and ideas.

In the *Itinerary*, Benjamin takes the reader from city to city and the description of each city can be divided into four parts. First, he describes that he travelled from city X to city Y and he gives the distance between the two cities and the duration of the journey. Secondly, he describes the geographical situation, which often includes neighbouring cities and frequently an identification of the name with the biblical name of that place. In the third part, he proceeds with a general description of the city, the non-Jewish population, its buildings, form of government and any other pertinent information. The fourth and most important part of his description of a place is a report on the presence of a Jewish community in that place. If there is no Jewish community, he just mentions that and moves on without mentioning any reasons. If there is a Jewish community, he describes it in detail. First, he mentions the number of Jews living there. Secondly, he writes about the different professions and the amount of people that practice each profession. Thirdly, he mentions important scholars or other wise men in the community. Fourthly, he describes their economic position and how they are treated

¹⁷² To name but a few these travellers included Abraham ha-Levi who in 1456 found the Lost Tribes in Ethiopia. See Ya'ari Abraham, *Sheluhei Eretz Yisrael: toldot ha-shelihut meha-eretz la-golah me-hurban bayit sheni 'ad ha-me'ah ha-tesha' 'esreh*, Mosad ha-Rav: Jerusalem, 1951, p. 144 and Gross Avraham, 'The Expulsion and the Search for the Ten Tribes', *Judaism*, 41/2 (Spring 1992), 130-147. Another traveller was Obadiah ben Abraham of Bertinoro, see Weil S., *Beyond the Sambatyon: The Myth of the Ten Lost Tribes (exhibition catalogue)*, Beth Hatefutsoth: Tel Aviv, 1991, p. 89. Kabbalist R. Abraham b. Eliezer ha-Levi (1528) who identifies the Jews of Ethiopia with the Tribes of Gad and Dan, see Weil S., *Beyond the Sambatyon*, p. 89. Moses Bassola of Ancona, see *Massot Eretz Yisrael le-rabbi Moshe Bassola*, ed. by Ben Tzvi I., Jerusalem, 1938, pp. 88-90. (Hebrew).

by their Gentile neighbours. Last but not least, he describes their political status. If the Jewish community is independent, he enters into great and enthusiastic detail.

The four relevant cities or areas are Mount Gerizim, Chaibar, 'Amaria, and Nisapur.¹⁷³ Mount Gerizim is the dwelling place of the Samaritans. According to their own tradition, the Samaritans are the descendants of that part of the Israelite population that remained in the territory of what was formally known as the Northern Kingdom after the deportation of the Ten Tribes by the Assyrians. Strictly speaking this would make them part of the Ten Tribes but not part of the Ten Lost Tribes. The Bible, on the other hand describes them as heathens from Mesopotamia, placed there by the Assyrians to repopulate the depopulated Samaria.¹⁷⁴ Benjamin gives his opinion about them unequivocally when he states:

They pretend to be of the tribe of Ephraim and are in possession of the tomb of Joseph the righteous, the son of our father Ja'acob, upon whom be peace, as is proved by the following passage of scripture 'the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up with them from Egypt, they buried in Sh'khem.' The Samaritans do not possess the three letters ה Hé, כ Chet and ם 'Ajin; the Hé of the name of our father Abraham, and they have no glory - the Cheth of the name of our father Jitschak, in consequence of which they are devoid of piety, the 'Ajin of the name of Ja'acob, for they want humility. Instead of these letters, they always put an Aleph, by which

¹⁷³ The excerpts about these four cities are translations from the Hebrew text as found in *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. by and trans. by A. Asher, 2 vols, A. Asher: London and Berlin, 1840-1841.

Mount Gerizim: English pp. 66-68; Hebrew pp. 32-34

Chaibar: English pp. 115-116; Hebrew p. 72

'Amaria: English pp. 121-122; Hebrew pp. 76-77

Nisapur: English pp. 129-130; Hebrew pp. 82-84

¹⁷⁴ II Kings 17:24

you may know that they are not of Jewish (sic.) origin, for they know the law of Moshe, except these three letters.¹⁷⁵

The second area of interest is Chaibar and Benjamin writes:

The distance from Telmas to Chaibar is three days journey. It is reported that these Jews are of the Tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the Tribe of M'nashe, who were led away captives by Shalmanesser king of Ashur and who repaired into these mountainous regions, where they erected the above named large and strong cities. They carry on war with many kingdoms and are not easily to be reached because of their situation, which requires a march of eighteen days through uninhabited deserts and thus renders them difficult of access. Chaibar is also a very large city and contains among its fifty thousand jewish (sic) inhabitants many learned scholars. The people of this city are valiant and engaged in wars with the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, with those of the northern districts and with those of Yemen, who live near them; the latter province borders on India.¹⁷⁶

The third place is 'Amaria and Benjamin gives the following account:

Five days from thence to 'Amaria with five and twenty thousand Jews. This congregation forms part of those, who live in the mountains of Chaphton and which amount to more than one hundred, extending to the frontiers of Media. These Jews are descendants of those, who were originally led into captivity by king Shalmanesser, they speak the syriac (sic.) language and among them are many excellent thalmudic (sic.) scholars; they are neighbours to those of the city of 'Amaria, which is situated within one days journey of the empire of Persia, the king of which they obey and to whom they pay a tribute. This is collected by a deputy and amounts here as well as in all mahomedan countries to one Amiri of gold -

¹⁷⁵ The fact that the Samaritans supposedly have no א, נ, or ו and substitute these letters for an aleph is only due to difference in pronunciation. In Hebrew grammar the consonants א, נ, and ו are a class apart in that they are classified under the heading of gutturals, a name that has been accepted but does not accurately describe them. Benjamin may have noticed something but apparently was not able to explain what he heard grammatically. For a more detailed information see: *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd English Edn., Ed. by A.E. Cowley, Clarendon Press: Oxford 1910, §22-23, pp. 76-82.
The Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, trans. and ed. by A. Asher, 2 vols, Hakesheth: New York and London, [n.d.], I, p. 67 (English) and pp. 33-34 (Hebrew).

¹⁷⁶ *The Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela*, trans. and ed. by A. Asher, 2 vols, Hakesheth: New York and London, [n.d.], I, pp. 115-116 (English) and p. 72 (Hebrew). This appears to be a photographic reproduction of the 1840-41 edition by A. Asher & Co.

equal to one and one third golden Maravedi - for each male inhabitant of the age of fifteen and upwards.¹⁷⁷

The last place of interest is Nisapur. This is not a place Benjamin actually visited but a place about which he heard. This is no cause for alarm as we see that in the *Itinerary*, there are places he actually visited and there are places about which he only heard. He reports the following:

To the mountains of Khazvin on the river Kizil Ozein, a journey of eight and twenty days. Jews of those parts, who live in Persia at the present, report that the cities of Nisapur are inhabited by four tribes of Israel, viz. the tribe of Dan, that of S'bulan and that of Naphtali, being part of the first exiles who were carried into captivity by Shalmanesser king of Ashur as reported in scripture: he banish'd them to Lachlach and Chabor, the mountains of Gozen, the mountains of Media. The extent of their country is twenty days journey and they possess many towns and cities in the mountains, the river Kizil Ozein makes their boundary on one side, and they are subject to no nation, but are govern'd by their own prince, who bears the name of Rabbi Joseph Amarkh'la Halevi. Some of these Jews are excellent scholars, others carry on agriculture and a number of them are engaged in war with the country of Cuth, by way of the desert. They are in alliance with the Caphar Tarac or infidel Turcs (sic.), who adore the wind and live in the desert. This is a nation, who eat no bread and drink no wine, but devour the meat raw and quite unprepared; they have no noses, but draw breath through two small holes and eat all sorts of meat, whether from clean or unclean beasts, and they are on very friendly terms with the Jews.¹⁷⁸

On account of Benjamin's seemingly factual descriptions and because of the paucity of references to the Ten Tribes in the *Itinerary*, these four fragments of Ten Tribe lore may seem incongruous. That is where the problem lies, they seem incongruous and at the same time, in a curious sort of way they seem totally natural. Why these two opposite impressions? Incongruous because Benjamin's *Itinerary* is a

¹⁷⁷ *The Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela*, trans. and ed. by A. Asher, pp. 121-122 (English) and pp. 76-77 (Hebrew).

¹⁷⁸ *The Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela*, trans. and ed. by A. Asher, I, pp. 129-130 (English) and pp. 82-84 (Hebrew). Although Benjamin wrote that there are four tribes living in Nisapur, he only mentions three and mentions nothing about the fourth tribe. The reasons for this omission are not clear.

great geographical work and in science there is no room for lore. They seem natural because Benjamin lived at a difficult time for the Jews and reports about the Lost Tribes and their supposed might and riches were frequently related to the general level of persecution of the Jews. These reports gave hope and not infrequently, they gave rise to Messianic hopes and expectations.

Thus looking at it from both angles it appears that Benjamin was a master manipulator. He appeased the more discerning reader through his choice of words and quasi-scientific explanations yet gave enough insinuations for the less intellectually, more romantically inclined. Let us first consider Benjamin's word choice because looking at the first three passages one after the other one cannot fail but notice an ascending climax. When reporting on the Samaritans he uses the words *hem omrim*. A. Asher chose to translate this as 'they pretend' and while there is nothing wrong as such with this translation, one has to wonder whether he himself was not let by his own preconceived ideas. The root *amar* in the first instance means to say, so by using this verb, Benjamin distanced himself because they, i.e. the Samaritans, say that they are from Ephraim. In the second passage he still makes use of the root *amar* but this time he writes *omrim benei adam* in other words we are not dealing with a self-identification but with others believing these people are of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. The choice of verb, however, still gives Benjamin a measure of distance. When he gets to 'Amaria he obviously feels more comfortable with the facts because he states that there are descendants of those whom Shalmanesser exiled in the first exile. As for Nisapur, because he has not been there, only reports on what he has heard, and therefore

theoretically cannot be held responsible, he throws all caution in the wind and indulges in some myth propagation.

As for the quasi-scientific statements, the reader gets an explanation concerning the enunciation of the Samaritans. When talking about Chaibar, a bit of history is added reminding the reader that the exile took place in stages. When he gets to 'Amaria the reader is confronted with linguistics. Last but not least, in the last reference when he allows himself mythological freedom, the reader is cunningly regaled by a mixture of lore, scripture, geography and anthropology. Even for the reader who might not be jumping for joy at the idea of the Ten Tribes being found he covered himself by implying in the last two references that because these tribes have been there since the Assyrian exile, they are unlikely to move now.

In summary, notwithstanding Benjamin's general disinterest in both the Ten Lost Tribes and the propagation of the myth we see that by neither confirming nor refuting earlier stories he contributed to the continuation of the myth and the excitement surrounding it. One cannot class the *Itinerary* in the same category as *Sepher Eldad* because before us is perhaps one of the greatest geographical travelogues of that time. It is, therefore, perhaps easier to overlook, as it were, some of the more fantastic elements. Not least, because these very elements perfectly perpetuate the already known motifs. Some of the well known but hard to incorporate motifs he incorporated by association. A good example of this is his assertion that the Caphar Tarac —the people with whom the tribes residing in Nisapur are in alliance with— drink no wine. For a person versed in the Talmud this would ring a bell for in Sabbath 147b wine consumption is blamed for the exile. Since the tribes are generally believed to have repented of their wicked

way, it stands to reason that they would seek an alliance with people who would not tempt them back into indulging in the cause of their fall.

The question now is why did he consciously or subconsciously propagate this myth? There simply are no black and white answers to this question. Inasmuch as one can only guess why he made the journey so one can go on speculating ad infinitum as to why he added Ten Lost Tribe lore to the *Itinerary*. Some hypotheses regarding his reasons were raised earlier and looking at these he succeeded. Only by writing his book, he fulfilled the first aim as suggested above. By compiling his list of all the Jewish communities and some of their history, he thus could prove to his contemporaries in Europe —Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike— that the Jewish people still existed in great numbers and that in some cases they were autonomous. The underlying warning being that maybe one should think twice about continuing to persecute the Jews because some of their powerful brethren may want to come and set the record straight. In doing so he kept alive the idea of deliverance but only as an undercurrent. If he was collecting evidence of locations and achievements of the Jewish people as a whole, he succeeded. If this information was to be used when biblical prophecies regarding the gathering were going to be fulfilled, he succeeded too because it is at least a half-decent census of the Jews in the then know world. True, there were undoubtedly imperfections in this list as Rev. B. Gerrans pointed out but one has to admit that the information, however imperfect, is valuable for forming a picture of his time. In addition to that, with all our modern technology, even a modern census of the United Kingdom alone is imperfect and dependent upon the answers given by those being counted. Another possible answer is that deep down Benjamin was a romantic. Add to that, the fact, that he was a

member of a relentlessly persecuted group of people, he did neither more nor less than countless before and even more after him did viz. keeping the myth of the Ten Lost Tribes alive because it brought consolation to a persecuted people. After all this myth purported that the Jews were not always the underdog and that in some countries they lived comfortable and were even part of the governing body. Political power, of course, can ultimately lead to an improvement of conditions. Thus the myth brought a hope of deliverance. Yet another answer is that he may have been looking for potential places for asylum for the Jewish people as Marcus N. Adler suggested. Perhaps he did and used the ever-exciting Ten Tribe lore to attract attention to his *Itinerary*. One can go on speculating ad infinitum.

c. Mandeville's Travels

In *Mandeville's Travels* the Ten Lost Tribes are identified with the inimical forces of Gog and Magog that will fight against the righteous in the final battle for deliverance at the End of Days.¹⁷⁹ This source is significant because the negative image it projects of the Ten Lost Tribes and their role when final deliverance is nigh. Whereas the Lost Tribes are more often than not cast in a positive role in the End of Days, this source paints a picture of conspiracy, betrayal, murder, and destruction. This image that the Lost Tribes are either Gog and Magog or are in the same class as Gog and Magog is largely the product of Christian prejudice. Together with the Prester John materials,

¹⁷⁹ See Ezekiel 38-39 and Revelations 20
For more detailed information about Alexander's Gate and the relationship between Gog and Magog and the Ten Lost Tribes see Anderson Andrew R., *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations*, The Mediaeval Academy of America: Cambridge Massachusetts, 1932. (especially chapter 3)

discussed later in this chapter, *Mandeville's Travels* is a good representation of Christian use of and belief in the myth of the Ten Lost Tribes in the Middle Ages. Although the Prester John material easily outrivaled *Mandeville's Travels* as an example of a common ground between Jewish and Christian myths and legends, the latter was better known and became one of the most beloved tales in the Middle Ages. It was translated into many languages and there are surviving manuscripts in German, Dutch, French, Italian, English, Old Irish, Spanish, Latin, Danish and Czech.

Like a lot of medieval travel literature, the identity of the author is somewhat obfuscated. Moreover, it is difficult to establish whether the author travelled where he claimed to have been or for that matter, whether he travelled at all. Malcolm Letts highlighted these problems when he wrote in *Mandeville's Travels* that 'there are a few facts' and 'the rest is conjecture'.¹⁸⁰ The New Encyclopaedia Britannica takes this one step further and labels the book as plagiarism. It states:

The tales are selections from the narratives of genuine travellers, embellished with Mandeville's additions and described as his own adventures. The actual author of the tales remains as uncertain as the existence of the English knight Sir John Mandeville himself. [...] It is not certain whether the book's true author ever travelled at all, since he selected his materials almost entirely from the encyclopaedias and travel books available to him, including those by William of Boldensele and Friar Odoric of Pordenone.¹⁸¹

This may well be valid but as George Warner wrote there are extenuating circumstances and one should 'remember that in the Middle Ages, when one writer copied another freely and without the least acknowledgement, such wholesale

¹⁸⁰ Letts Malcolm, *Mandeville's Travels: Texts and Translations*, 2 vols, The Hakluyt Society: London, 1953, I, p. xvii.

¹⁸¹ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 7, p. 767.

plagiarism was not regarded in the same light as it would now'.¹⁸² Josephine W. Bennett has an altogether different opinion and presents the work as 'a romance of travel'. She wrote that it 'is a book important in the history of almost every literature of Europe [...] It belongs to the history of imaginary and imaginative travel [...]'. She continues that *Mandeville's Travels* 'is a finished artistic composition, not a mere travel book [...] Mandeville was not an explorer, but a popularizer; not the creator of a dishonest travel-book, but an author of a romance of travel which belongs, primarily, to the history of literature'.¹⁸³ Michael C. Seymour is not flattering. He wrote that 'Mandeville's travels were written in French on the Continent possibly at Liège and probably not by an Englishman, about 1357. Nothing else is known, and little more can be inferred, about the immediate origins of the book' and 'none of the various attempts to pierce the author's anonymity [...] will bear critical examination'.¹⁸⁴ Having said that, he does not find it hard to understand that the book fascinated people because it introduced the new wonders of the world in an 'easily digestible form' and 'plentifully supplied' it 'with fable'. This meant that 'it satisfied without wearying both the seeker of knowledge and the lover of marvels'.¹⁸⁵ In answer to the question whether Mandeville ever travelled, he wrote that it 'is a compilation at second-hand of other

¹⁸² *The Buke of John Maundeull Being the Travels of Sir John Mandeville, Knight (1322-1356)*, ed. by George F. Warner, Roxburghe Club: London 1889, p. xvi.

¹⁸³ Bennett Josephine W., *The Rediscovery of Sir John Mandeville*, The Modern Language Association of America: New York, 1954, pp. 1-19. For a similar opinion see Moseley Charles W.R.D., 'The Metamorphoses of Sir John Mandeville' *Yearbook of English Studies*, 4 (1974), 5-25.

¹⁸⁴ *Mandeville's Travels*, ed. by Michael C. Seymour, The Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1967, p. xiii.

¹⁸⁵ *Mandeville's Travels*, p. xiii

men's travels and contains a sufficient number of inaccuracies and inconsistencies to make it extremely improbable that its author ever left his native Europe'.¹⁸⁶

In the prologue to his work, the author identifies himself as follows:

[...] I John Mandeville, knight, thereof all I be unworthy, that was born in England in the town of St. Albans, and passed the sea the year of our Lord Jesu Christ 1332 on Michaelmas Day, and since hitherward have been long time over the sea, and have seen and gone through many kingdoms, lands and provinces and isles, [...] ¹⁸⁷

From a scholarly point of view this is clearly not reliable information. Stephen Greenblatt in his book *Marvelous Possessions* wrote that 'the actual identity, the training, the motives, even the nationality of the person who wrote Mandeville's Travels have become, under scholarly scrutiny, quite unclear'. He continues 'Mandeville is radically empty; his name is a textual effect, signalling only the absence of an authentic traveller, an absence that now serves to call forth a compensatory faith in an anonymous artist'.¹⁸⁸ Tudor Parfitt called Mandeville's Travels 'some kind of forgery, the reason for which is not clear, written by someone who was not Sir John Mandeville' [...] a figment of some unknown genius' literary imagination'.¹⁸⁹ There is the suggestion that Mandeville really was a nom de plume of a Jean de Bourgogne or Jean à la Barbe and of course, there are suggestions that crime was involved.¹⁹⁰ Greenblatt summarised

¹⁸⁶ *Mandeville's Travels*, p. xiv.

¹⁸⁷ Letts Malcolm, *Mandeville's Travels*, I, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ Greenblatt Stephen, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*, Clarendon Press: Oxford 1991, p. 33-34.

¹⁸⁹ Parfitt Tudor, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson: London 2002, p. 12.

¹⁹⁰ For more information as to the debate about the identity of Mandeville, see: Letts Malcolm, *Sir John Mandeville: The Man and his Book*, The Batchworth Press, London 1949 or Letts Malcolm, *Mandeville's Travels: Text and Translations*, 2 vols, The Hakluyt Society, London 1953.

Mandeville's rise and fall writing that 'as late as the sixteenth century he could be praised [...] as a greater traveller than Marco Polo, Columbus, or Cortéz', by the 'early seventeenth century Samuel Purchas could still write that Mandeville was the greatest Asian traveller than ever the world had', by 'the early nineteenth century most of Mandeville's 'facts' about the world had been disclosed as fantasies, leaving only the author himself as a reality; by the late nineteenth century that author too had been disclosed as a fiction'.¹⁹¹

Mandeville mentions the Ten Lost Tribes when he tells of 'lands and countries and isles that are beyond the land of Cathay'. He writes:

In this same land are the hills of Caspian which men call Uber. And among those hills are the Jews of the ten kindreds enclosed, which men call Gog and Magog; and they may come out at no side. For king Alexander chased them thither, for he wend (sic.) to have enclosed them there through working of man; and, when he saw that he might not, he prayed to God that he would fulfil (sic.) that he had begun. [...] God of his special grace heard his prayer and closed the hills sammen [together], the which are so great and so high that no man may pass them. And on the other side is the sea of Caspian; but on that side may they not win out for this cause, for that sea comes up out of the earth under the foresaid hills and runs on the ta [one] side the country through a great desert and from thence it lasts to the land of Persia. And if all it be called a sea, nevertheless it is none, but it is a lake, the greatest in the world. And if all the folk that are enclosed there might, and they would, pass over that sea by ship, never the latter they wot not where they might arrive, and also they should not understand their language. And ye shall understand that the Jews have now no land of their own to dwell in in all the world, but only among these hills. And yet they pay tribute therefore to the Queen of Amazon, and she gers to foresaid hills wonder well kept, that they pass not out over them to their own country, the which marches upon those hills. [...] And, if it happen that any of them pass out, they can speak no language but Hebrew, ne they not speak with other men when they come among them. And men in the country there near say that in the time of Antichrist these Jews shall come out and do mickle harm to Christian men. And therefore all the Jews that live in divers parts of the world learn for to speak Hebrew, for they trow that these Jews that are enclosed among the hills shall come out and shall know them by their

¹⁹¹ Greenblatt Stephen, *Marvelous Possessions*, p. 30-32.

speech that they are Jews as they are. And then shall they lead them into Christendom for to destroy Christian men. For these Jews say they know by their prophecies that the Jews that are closed among the hills shall come out and Christian men shall be under them, as they have been under Christian men. [...] In the time of the Antichrist a fox shall make his den in the same place where king Alexander gert make the gates of those hills, when he enclosed this foresaid folk. And so long shall this fox work in the earth that at the last he shall come out among this folk; [...] And they [...] shall chase him hither and thither; and [...] at the last they shall drive him to the hole where he came out. And then shall they grave after him so long unto they come to the gates that Alexander gert stop with great stones and cement, and they shall break these gates and so shall they find the passage out.¹⁹²

Notwithstanding the commonalities between Mandeville, Eldad, and Benjamin of Tudela, this text gives a new dimension to the myth with new motifs added to the existing ones.

As discussed in chapter two of this dissertation early Christianity showed little interest in the Ten Lost Tribes. Some Church Fathers toyed with the idea that the Ten Tribes converted to Christianity, but the myth was mostly used for teaching purposes and then in a very limited way. This attitude somewhat changed in the Middle Ages when anti-Semitism was rife and the Ten Lost Tribes were, at it were divorced from their common ancestry with the Jews and transformed into a potentially useful tool in Christianity's quest for dominion.

In his book, Mandeville demonstrates that in fourteenth-century Europe there was a growing tendency towards open-mindedness, this was especially true for the East, often regarded the place where Paradise was to be found. People like the Brahmins of the Indus¹⁹³ and Tibetan cannibals¹⁹⁴, for example, he described in a very tolerant and

¹⁹² Letts Malcolm, *Mandeville's Travels*, vol 1, pp. 184-186.

¹⁹³ Letts Malcolm, *Mandeville's Travels*, vol 1, p 204-206

¹⁹⁴ Letts, Malcolm, *Mandeville's Travels*, vol 1, p 218-219

benevolent way. Striking is that this courtesy was not extended towards the Jews either at home or in these faraway lands.¹⁹⁵ One could argue that he merely reflected the feelings of his time, when Christian anti-Semitism was rife and that his remarks were part of the wider discourse of medieval anti-Semitism. This argument is, perhaps, strengthened by his reiteration of contemporary opinion that the destruction of the Temple and the maltreatment of the Jews by Titus was because the Jews allegedly murdered Christ.¹⁹⁶ Yet this would be too simplistic a picture for he accuses the Jews and the Ten Tribes separately and together of wanting to destroy Christianity. According to him, the Jews failed to poison all Christendom.¹⁹⁷ This accusation was nothing new because in a period where the Black Death, a general lack of medical knowledge, and poor hygiene struck down vast numbers of people, the Jews were often accused of poisoning wells. His assertion, on the other hand, that the Ten Tribes had ill intentions towards Christendom was less common. Unlike the New Testament and the Apocrypha where a conversion to Christianity of the Ten Tribes is alluded to, Mandeville states that at the coming of the Antichrist the Ten Tribes would combine forces with the Diaspora Jews and destroy Christendom. In these relatively few words one now finds an enmity motif, supplemented by a conspiracy motif—they would recognise each other through the medium of the Hebrew language. Enmity and conspiracy are very powerful motifs and would have caught the attention of the already

¹⁹⁵ It is interesting that when he describes Jerusalem and surroundings, Jews do not make an appearance except when he wants to mention some evil deed they allegedly did such as hiding the cross of Jesus under a rock. See Letts Malcolm, *Mandeville's Travels*, vol 1, pp. 52-70.

¹⁹⁶ Letts Malcolm, *Mandeville's Travels*, vol 1, p. 59

¹⁹⁷ Letts Malcolm, *Mandeville's Travels*, vol 1, p. 134

suspicious Christians and their leaders. This in turn would easily instigate yet more anti-Semitism in his and future times, especially considering how many people were familiar with Mandeville's Travels. How ironic then that the alleged future actions of the Lost Tribes of Israel would fuel more anti-Semitism.

This is, however, not where the story ends. The latent anti-Semitism found in Mandeville's Travels became a facilitator for the propagation of yet another motif and more importantly for another usage of the myth of the Lost Tribes, namely Christian Messianism. To understand this, one has to take a closer look at how Mandeville introduced and identified the Ten Tribes. Almost at the beginning, he says that 'among those hills are the Jews of the ten kindreds enclosed, which men call Gog and Magog'. Gog and Magog are the satanic powers mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 who will be defeated through the hand of the Lord at the time of the gathering of Israel. Revelation 20 takes up this Old Testament prophecy and describes how at the End of Days Satan together with Gog and Magog will fight and lose one final battle with the Saints after which the Saints shall live with Christ. In other words the finding of the Lost Tribes suddenly became far more interesting for the Christian world than it had ever been before as it would herald the return of the Messiah. For the Jews, who for the most part also identified the return of the Lost Tribes with the End of Days as prophesied, unfortunately this identification meant more persecution. Common ground was not recognised for who wanted the Jews to form an alliance with Gog and Magog? Also, if there really was a hostile group of Israelites somewhere far away maybe it would be a good idea to reduce the numbers living on one's doorstep.

The motif, Mandeville introduced, is the motif of fear, fear for the Lost Tribes, their power, and potential plans. He minimized this though by stating that 'ye shall understand that the Jews have now no land of their own to dwell in all the world, but only among these hills. And yet they pay tribute therefore to the Queen of Amazon', something that is diametrically opposite to Eldad's statements.

In addition to these new motifs, one finds a subtle reiteration of other known motifs connected to this myth. In this relative short passage one finds for example the bondage to freedom motif, the end of days motif, the separation motif which is supported by the motif already found in the Midrash where the Ten Tribes have to travel under the earth in order to leave their place of bondage which was a place that could not be reached by mere mortals because of hills, water and stones. Conspicuous in its absence are the theodocian and Genesis motifs.

d. Prester John

In 1145, Otto of Freising's chronicle entitled *De Duabus Civitatibus* introduced Prester John and his fabulous Christian Kingdom in the East to Europe. It was based on a report about Prester John by Bishop Hugh of Gebal in Syria (modern Jubayl in Lebanon).

Prester John was a legendary Christian ruler of the East and he became very popular in medieval times when people thought of him as the hoped-for-ally against the Muslims. In spite of years of intensive searching, geographical reassessments, and letters, allegedly from Prester John, to several European rulers including Manuel I Comnenus, Frederick I Barbarossa, the Holy Roman Emperor and the Byzantine

emperor, nobody was ever able to locate Prester John and his fabulous kingdom.¹⁹⁸ This lack of concrete proof of the existence of Prester John and his lands did not diminish the popularity of the legend because it had left too much of an imprint on the European conscious just for the slate to be wiped clean, resulting in the legend having a great influence on European thought and world perception throughout the Middle Ages. The alleged vastness of his kingdom and the sheer riches found therein were enough to stir the minds of even the dullest of people. At times, it was thought Prester John would come to Europe's aid in destroying Islam and at other times Paradise was believed to be in his kingdom. He himself claimed that the Ten Lost Tribes resided in his kingdom.

Inasmuch as Eldad was primarily of Jewish interest, describing a powerful, independent Jewish state, so Prester John's Letter was primarily of interest to Christians, describing a powerful non-European Christian kingdom. It was translated into many languages. However inconceivable this may sound its Christian content did not preclude the Jews from having an interest in the it, leaving posterity with Hebrew versions of the Letter. Perhaps this came about because of information about the Lost Tribes beyond the Sambatyon included in it. On the other hand, perhaps it was, as Ullendorff and Beckingham suggest, an issue of popularity combined with an attempt at damage limitation.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ In 1485, King João II of Portugal, for example, sent João Perez of Covilão, Abraham of Beja and Joseph Capatiero across Africa to investigate the lands of the mythical Prester John.

These searches were not completely in vain because instead of Prester John Western Europe made an acquaintance with a Christian Ethiopian Emperor who, after 700 years of silence, began to communicate with Christian Europe.

¹⁹⁹ Ullendorff Edward and Beckingham Charles F., *The Hebrew Letters of Prester John*, p. 11.

Even today this material keeps scholars occupied, not least because of the similarities between the Prester John material and the Eldad ha-Dani corpus. At first glance, it seems logical to assume that any duplicated material was Prester John copying Eldad ha-Dani since the latter appeared a number of centuries earlier. That is, however, not necessarily the case as is shown by D. J. Wasserstein.²⁰⁰

Taking a closer look at what he Prester John says about the Lost Tribes, we find the following:

Between us and the Jews there runs a river full of precious stones and it descends so quickly that nobody can cross it except on Saturday when it stands still; and whatever it encounters, it carries into the Sandy Sea. We have to protect this crossing, [...], so that if the great King of Israel would come with his men, he could not get across with his Jews, who are twice as numerous as the Christians, but not as the Saracens, for they hold two thirds of the world. Know that the great king of Israel has under him three hundred kings and four thousand princes, dukes, and counts, all of them Jews and obedient to him. And if the Jews could cross this passage, all the Christians and Saracens would be lost. On each Saturday we let some eight hundred or thousand Jews come across for the purpose of trade. They do not, however, enter our strongholds, but exchange the wares outside, because we do not trust them. They buy exclusively with ingots of gold and silver, for they do not have real money. After they have made their purchases, they return home. [...] we have a city called the Great Orionde which is the strongest most beautiful in the world. One of our kings guards it and he collects tribute from the great King of Israel, for he owes us every year two hundred horses loaded with precious stones, gold, and silver, [...] Know that when we make war on them, we kill all those who happen to be in our country and because of this they do not dare to stir, or attack us. Notice that the Jewish women are the most beautiful and passionate in the world.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Wasserstein David J., 'Eldad ha-Dani and Prester John' in *Prester John, The Mongols and The Ten Lost Tribes*, ed. by Charles F. Beckingham and Bernard Hamilton, Variorum: Aldershot, 1996, pp. 213-236.

²⁰¹ Slessarev Vsevolod, *Prester John: The letter and the Legend*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis 1959, pp. 73-74.

The Hebrew Letters of Prester John are not dramatically different but, at times, more favourable to Jews.²⁰² They mention the river between Prester John and the Jews but here the river 'comes from Paradise' and 'when this river is full beyond its banks, it carries very many precious stones'. In the Christian version, the Jews are rich, powerful, and self-governing but are unequivocally subject to the authority of Prester John. The latter is strengthened by the fact that they have to pay tribute. About the riches the Hebrew letters say that 'they have so much gold and precious stone that they adorn their houses with precious stone as we adorn our houses with coloured stone', the wording diminishes the greatness of the people of Prester John and no mention is made of tribute payable to Prester John. The same happens when they talk about power and self-governance, Prester John describes their numbers, kings, princes and dukes but the Hebrew letter take it one-step further. Depreciatingly Prester John says that when he has 'one fortified city, then the great king, king Daniel, possesses ten' and 'he who has not heard of their community has not heard anything in the world'. In the Middle Ages many people searched for Paradise and whereas the Hebrew Letters state that the river which separates Prester John from the Jews has its source in Paradise, this idea of the Lost Tribes being near Paradise is reiterated when the Hebrew Letters state that in King Daniel's country 'there issue two rivers from paradise'.

Both versions of the Letter show the motifs described earlier in this chapter. In both versions, there is a measure of isolation for the Tribes. The isolation motif is stronger in the Hebrew letters where no mention is made of crossing for trade purposes,

²⁰² The information about the Lost Tribes can be found in Ullendorf Edward and Beckingham Charles F., *The Hebrew Letters of Prester John*, pp. 56-60.

which is more in line with Jewish thought regarding the Lost Tribes. In both versions, we find that the Ten Tribes are rich, powerful and self-governing with the difference that in the Christian version they have to pay tribute to Prester John and are again perceived as a danger to Christianity.

Conclusion

The above sample of sources show that in the Middle Ages the budding myth of earlier times started to bloom. This efflorescence manifested itself through new motifs, attempts at locating and/or identifying the Lost Tribes, and last but not least novel ways of using the myth.

Perhaps the greatest change to the myth, from which all other changes flow, were the attempts at identifying a specific place where the Lost Tribes supposedly lived. All sources discussed in this chapter, give a specific albeit different geographical location for the Lost Tribes. These locations are not necessarily found on a modern map but in the Middle Ages, these places were perceived as real and their descriptions as accurate. A good example of this is the sustained search for the lands of Prester John using his Letter as a guide. In earlier times, as seen in the previous chapter, people had very little knowledge as to where the Lost Tribes might be and it seems that they were not particularly interested in locating them either. Why did this all change in the Middle Ages and more importantly why was this disinterest replaced by imagination and fantasy rather than facts?

As far as Europe was concerned, the answer, as so often is the case, can be found by looking to the past. Before the Middle Ages and even in the early Middle Ages people in Europe knew very little about the world beyond their villages or cities.

The basic text of Christian civilization was the Bible and access to it was strictly controlled by the Catholic Church. Using the Bible, a document about life in part of the Middle East, as a foundation for one's world vision would inevitably result in a somewhat skewed and deficient view of the world at large. Yet somehow, Middle Age man had to make some sense of this new world, preferably in a safe environment. The Ten Lost Tribes, mentioned within the safety of the Bible, were the perfect vehicle to help him.

The people of Kairouan and the Jews in other communities had other needs. They too were open to stories about the Lost Tribes, not so much as a medium to understand the world at large but rather a means to counter e.g. Christian assertions that Jewish independence had ceased with destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.

Thus, it becomes obvious that by facilitating multiple applications the simple report of the deportation of a rebellious group of people transformed into a universal myth.

Its transformation into a myth inevitably brought with it more fantasy and motifs. For example whereas the earlier sources give virtually no description of the habitat of the Tribes, the sources discussed in this chapter go into great detail about their habitat. Hand in hand with one's living conditions comes a description of society, government, wealth, and power to name but a few. The emphasis of certain elements of the story depends on its intended use. Thus, we see that the two Jewish works display a certain commonality yet their emphasis is different. Their similarities are multi-layered and the difference in emphasis is achieved through a divergence in the use of motifs. The same can be said of the two Christian sources.

Some of the motifs that have seemingly disappeared since the earlier sources are the sin motif, the Genesis motif, and the future king motif. Some of the motifs that remained are the separation motif, the End of Days motif, and the theodocian motif. Some of the new motifs are an enmity and conspiracy motif where the Lost Tribes form a danger for Christianity, the all important independence motif.

The uses of certain motifs seem to be governed by the intended use of the myth. Therefore, we see that the Jewish sources emphasise e.g. independence, military might and subjugation of other peoples. The Christian sources often do the opposite as is so clearly seen in the Christian sources discussed in this chapter.

What is really interesting is that the myth is not yet used for blatant Messianic purposes, Christian or Jewish. Like the earliest sources, one can make a loose connection with the End of Days and the Lost Tribes but the myth itself is not a tool used to advance the cause of Messianism. It seems that a firm link between the Lost Tribes and Messianism was not yet made, perhaps because the myth needed to grow some more. Looking at this potential connection via the Messianic sources, we can but conclude the same. Take for example the famous *Iggeret Teman*, it is very Messianic in nature yet no mention is made of the Lost Tribes.

CHAPTER THREE: EARLY MODERN TIMES

As was shown in the previous chapter, the Lost Tribe myth was allowed to flourish in the Middle Ages. People attempted to locate and to identify the Ten Tribes, and various travellers regaled their audiences with wonderful tales about the habitat of the some of the Lost Tribes. Overall, however, Jewish interest in the Lost Tribes was greater than Christian interest. The combination of the Christian claim that Jewish independence had ceased in 70 A.D., the mercurial living conditions of the Jews, the steady stream of travellers who “knew” where the Lost Tribes were, and periodic Messianic fervour²⁰³ kept the apocalyptic prophecies of a glorious reunification alive. Reports about powerful, independent Jewish political entities brought hope for a temporal deliverance. Christians, preoccupied by crusades and other skirmishes with Muslim forces were keen to seek an alliance with the forces of Prester John. Even though the latter claimed that the Lost Tribes were living under his jurisdiction, Christian Europe did not yet perceive them as the key to victory. The Lost Tribes remained, however, a part of the general apocalyptic scenario. Mandeville’s assertion that the Lost Tribes would conspire with the Antichrist against Christianity seems to have been part of the general anti-Semitic propaganda of the day.

This all changed in the Renaissance and later the Reformation. The Renaissance was the great revival of art and letters where people studied the great civilizations of Greece and Rome. It began in Italy and eventually expanded into Germany, France, England, and other parts of Europe. The humanistic values of the Renaissance helped create the foundations of the modern world. Although difficult to

²⁰³ Ben-Sasson Haim H., ‘Messianic Movements’ in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol 14, pp. 115-122.

measure, these values greatly contributed to the propagation of science, medicine, navigation and the arts, to name a few.²⁰⁴ However, as David S. Katz and Richard H. Popkin point out, the sheer enormity of inventions, the changes, and the progress of the Renaissance can obfuscate the fact that the great minds of the Renaissance did not think and reason like scholars of today. Their Christian beliefs, especially the expected Second Coming of Christ, played a major role in the way they perceived the world, how they used their knowledge, and how they conducted their research.²⁰⁵ Nonetheless, unlike in the Middle Ages, when the answers to most questions had to be found in the Bible, Renaissance thinking encouraged people to put their beliefs in a wider context. Katz and Popkin write that ‘eclecticism – that is, the idea that no one has a monopoly of truth but that it must be sought among all peoples and cultures’ was ‘the key methodological concept’ that provided that context and that ‘united all [...] Renaissance intellectuals’.²⁰⁶ It facilitated a renewed interest in the hermetic writings. The *Corpus Hermeticum*, brought to Florence in 1453 by a monk employed by the Italian banker Cosimo de’ Medici (1389-1464),²⁰⁷ had a profound influence on

²⁰⁴ There are many examples. The writings of antiquity are known to have influenced 16th-century astronomer Copernicus and possibly other Renaissance scientists. The study of Plato contributed to new conceptions of the universe that relied on mathematical rather than descriptive approaches. The Belgian physician Vesalius dissected human cadavers in order to learn more about human anatomy. Christopher Columbus, Sir Francis Drake, for example used the latest inventions and discoveries in navigation, astronomy, and mathematics. Leonardo da Vinci united art with science

²⁰⁵ Katz David S. and Popkin Richard H., *Messianic Revolution: Radical Religious Politics to the End of the Second Millennium*, Hill and Wang: New York, 1998, p. 3.

²⁰⁶ Katz David S. and Popkin Richard H., *Messianic Revolution*, p. 3-4.

²⁰⁷ *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation, with notes and Introduction*, ed. by Brian P. Copenhaver, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1992 quoted in Katz David S. and Popkin Richard H., *Messianic Revolution*, p. 256.
The New Encyclopædia Britannica vol 7, pp. 1002-1003.

Renaissance Thought and more specifically on the Messianism. This was because 'the chief message of its writings was that humankind not only can understand the world but can actually control it, at the very least, by identifying the path that nature will take'.²⁰⁸ The intellectual fervour of the Renaissance was further enhanced by the Reformation. In 1517, Martin Luther (1483-1546) nailed his ninety-five theses to the church in Wittenberg and effectively set the scene for the Reformation. One of the great achievements of the Reformation was that the Bible was translated into many languages and thus became accessible for everybody who could read. Consequently, interest in biblical exegesis grew which in turn gave rise to a renewed interest in rabbinical studies.²⁰⁹ It is interesting to see that the esoteric and theosophical teachings of the *Kabbalah* became 'the most important bridge between hermeticism' and 'biblical scholarship'.²¹⁰ Thus, we see that even though anti-Semitism was still rife and expulsions of Jews were still a matter of policy in many a country, there was also an insatiable interest in Hebrew and Jewish studies.²¹¹ This interest also extended to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, often seen as the archenemy of the Jews because of its dreaded Inquisition. Indeed, Rabbi Elijah Menachem Halfan describes his exasperation with this situation as follows:

In the last twenty years, knowledge has increased, and people have been seeking everywhere, for instruction in Hebrew. Especially after the rise of the sect of Luther, many of the nobles and the scholars of the land

²⁰⁸ Katz David S. and Popkin Richard H., *Messianic Revolution*, p. 5.

²⁰⁹ Moore George F., 'Christian Writers on Judaism' in *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol 14/3 (July 1921), 197-254, p. 215ff.

²¹⁰ Katz David S. and Popkin Richard H., *Messianic Revolution*, p. 6.

²¹¹ Expulsions occurred all over Europe. England expelled the Jews in 1290, France in 1306 and 1394. In 1348-1350, Black Death swept Europe and the Jews were considered the cause and were expelled for a short while from many places in Europe. Spain and Portugal implemented a policy of forced conversion to Christianity and expulsions in 1492 and 1497, which saw the Iberian Peninsula at least officially free of Jews.

sought to have thorough knowledge of this glorious science [Cabala]. They have exhausted themselves in this search, because among our people there are but a small number of men learned in this wisdom, for after the great number of troubles and expulsions, but a few remain. So seven learned men grasp a Jewish man by the hem of his garment and say: "Be our master in this science!"²¹²

It is in this intellectual, cultural and political climate that David Reubeni appeared in Europe, proclaiming that his brother, the king of the Lost Ten Tribes, has a powerful army and was seeking an alliance with Christian Europe against the Muslims.

a. David Reuveni

In late 1523 or the beginning of 1524, David Reuveni, having travelled disguised as an Arab, disembarked in Venice. Unusually perhaps, he did not go to the Ghetto but went home with the captain of the ship where he commenced a fast lasting six days and nights. Word of his arrival soon spread and while ending his fast with a prayer, a Venetian Jew, called Elchanan, whose father had apparently passed away and whose mother lived in another city came to see him. After a short conversation, the visitor left and later returned with Moses da Castellazzo (1467-1527), a famous Venetian Jewish painter and engraver. Reuveni immediately asked him for seven ducats because he, allegedly, ran out of money after having to spend a considerable amount tending to his sick servant. Moses da Castellazzo took him to the Jewish community in the ghetto where Reuveni met with Meir ben David Hiya. He introduced himself as 'a Jew from the wilderness of Habor, an envoy sent by the seventy Elders'.²¹³ He further told the Jewish community that his mission was to go to Rome to see the

²¹² Katz David S. and Popkin Richard H., *Messianic Revolution: Radical Religious Politics to the End of the Second Millennium*, pp. 8-9.

²¹³ Aescoly Aaron Z., *The Story of David Hareuveni Copied from the Oxford Manuscript*, 2nd enlarged ed., Bialik Institute: Jerusalem 1993, pp. 31-33. (Hebrew)

Pope but did not want to divulge his reasons except that he was going 'for the good of Israel'.²¹⁴

What do we know about David Reuveni, over and above his own words? There is a description of Reuveni by his contemporaries. Daniel da Pisa (d. c. 1532), a banker and leading figure in Italian Jewry and Gedaliah Ibn Yahya (1515-1587) described him as a short and lean man, with a dark complexion like a Kushite who came from afar and who spoke Arabic mixed with a little Hebrew. He was fearless, pious and he fasted regularly. He was about 45 years of age when he appeared in Rome. He managed to speak with the Pope and was regarded with favour.²¹⁵ Modern scholars disagree about his origins. A. Kahane, apparently, thought that it was a 'riddle to which no answer is possible'.²¹⁶ Ervin Birnbaum was 'convinced that Reubeni was a messenger from India, seeking support for the tottering Jewish colony in Cranganore'.²¹⁷ J. Jacobs in the Jewish Encyclopedia states that he was from Khaibar in Central Arabia.²¹⁸ Hirsch Graetz 'asserts with certainty that the Hebrew style of David's "diary" is that of a German Jew and adds that David might have been such, although a native of Egypt who knew Arabic as his mother tongue'.²¹⁹ Sigmat Hillelson accepted a German influence in Reuveni's story but wrote that it was more probable that Reuveni's diary was 'the exact transcript of an oral narrative, perhaps given in

²¹⁴ Aescoly Aaron Z., *The Story of David Hareuveni*, pp. 31-33. (Hebrew)

²¹⁵ For a full description see Aescoly Aaron Z., *The Story of David Hareuveni*, p. 151 and p. 163.

²¹⁶ Kahane A., *Sippur N'siat David Reubeni*, Warsaw 1922 (I have not seen this book) quoted in Birnbaum Ervin, 'David Reubeni's Indian Origin' *Historia Judaica: A Journal of Studies in Jewish History, especially in the Legal and Social History of the Jews*, 20/1 (1958), 3-30, p. 3.

²¹⁷ Birnbaum E., 'David Reubeni's Indian Origin', p. 3.

²¹⁸ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol.10, pp. 388-389.

²¹⁹ Hillelson Sigmat, 'David Reubeni, an Early Visitor to Sennar' in *Sudan Notes & Records*, 16/1 (1933), 55-66, p. 55.

another language and taken down in Hebrew by a German Jew' and he continued that 'the method of writing Arabic names sometimes suggests the phonetic habits of a German Jew rather than of one familiar with Arabic'.²²⁰ Aaron Aescoly gave a comprehensive overview what modern scholars thought about his place of origin and the reasons for their assumptions.²²¹

Unlike modern scholars who seem keen to solve this riddle, if continued interest is anything to go by, those of the Venetian Jewish community who believed him were not too concerned about this lack of information. It did not deter them from generously seeing to his needs and helping him to establish further contacts. They even provided him with an escort to Rome. Reuveni entered Rome on a white horse on 21st February 1524. Like in the Jewish community of Venice, there were prosperous and respected Jews in Rome. Under the influence of the cultured Medici Pope Clement VII (1478-1534)²²², the Jewish community had flourished and there were good contacts between it and the Church. Daniel da Pisa, for example, had free access to the papal

²²⁰ Hillelson S., 'David Reubeni, an Early Visitor to Sennar' in *Sudan Notes & Records*, 16/1 (1933), 55-66, p. 55.

²²¹ Aescoly Aaron Z., 'David Reubeni in the Light of History', *The Jewish Quarterly Review (New Series)*, vol 28 (1937-1938), 1-45, pp. 39-45.

²²² Clement VII was pope from 1523-1534. His pontificate was marked by an unsuccessful attempt to end the Reformation in Germany and by his role in the power struggle between Francis I, king of France, and Charles V, Holy Roman emperor. In 1527 the imperial army sacked Rome, held Clement prisoner for seven months and made the papacy subservient to the Holy Roman Empire. In 1533 the pope alienated King Henry VIII of England by declaring that Henry's previous marriage, to Catherine of Aragón, was still valid. This declaration precipitated a split between the papacy and the king.

court and was an acquaintance of Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo (1465-1532)²²³, a humanist and member of the Augustinian order. Cardinal da Viterbo, who was very interested in Reuveni's story was instrumental in obtaining an audience with the Pope for Reuveni.²²⁴ During this audience Reuveni introduced himself as follows:

I am David, the son of the late King Solomon and my brother King Joseph is older than I, and he sits on his throne in the desert of Habor and rules over three hundred thousand people, over the people of Gad, the people of Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh. I travelled from before the King, my brother, and his counsellors, the seventy Elders and they commanded me to first go to Rome and seek an audience with His Holiness the Pope.²²⁵

This introduction bestowed ambassadorial privileges on him and the Jewish community as well as the Holy See were clambering to make sure that he was adequately housed and entertained. In a nutshell, Reuveni's message to the Pope was that his brother, the king, had a vast army of three hundred thousand soldiers and that he was ready to make an alliance with the Pope to free Jerusalem from the Muslims. His brother's troops were ready to go to Jerusalem and engage in war were it not for the lack of weapons. He asked the Pope to write a letter of introduction for him to the legendary Prester John. Furthermore, he asked the pope to write letters to the King of France, Francis I (1494-1547) and to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500-1558) recommending them to extend him their help, mainly in the form of armaments.

²²³ Egidio da Viterbo entered the Augustinian order in 1488. The papal Curia utilized his diplomatic talents and in 1517 Leo X made him a cardinal. For many years he maintained Elijah Levita in his entourage in Rome, Levita instructing the cardinal in rabbinics and Jewish mysticism. He was also among Reuchlin's correspondents. Egidio's interests in Jewish (particularly Kabbalistic) studies were very considerable. In addition to projecting a plan for translating David Kimni's dictionary he translated (or sponsored translations of) extracts of the Zohar and various esoteric tracts.

²²⁴ There is a report in the Annals of the Vatican that corroborate Reuveni's audience. See Aescholy Aaron Z., *The Story of David Hareuveni*, pp. 171-172.

²²⁵ Aescholy Aaron Z., *The Story of David Hareuveni*, p. 7. (Hebrew)

Reuveni also conveyed the message that his brother, the king, would like the Pope to broker peace between Francis I and Charles V. As far as the last request was concerned, the Pope answered Reuveni that brokering peace between these two monarchs was not in his power. This was not surprising because the power of the Pope at time had weakened considerably by his failure to stop the Reformation in Germany. He would comply, however, with the first request. Unfortunately, the Pope did not keep his word. It took nigh to a year, several requests and a few angry outbursts before any letters were forthcoming. In the end the Pope wrote a letter to King John III of Portugal, a devout Catholic, recommending he help Reuveni acquire the necessary armaments. He also gave him a letter of introduction to the Emperor of Ethiopia.²²⁶

The letter to the Portuguese king ensured that Reuveni was equally well received in Portugal by the King and the nobility with the exception of a few political advisors, this despite the country's horrific track record in its attitude to the Jews. All appeared to go so well that at one point Reuveni said he had secured weapons, munitions and craftsmen from the King of Portugal.²²⁷ Unfortunately, at the last moment, the latter reneged on this deal and did not give him weapons after all.²²⁸ When the Marano, Diego Pires, who served as secretary to the King's Council and recorder at the Court of Appeals, declared himself a Jew, circumcised himself and took the name Solomon Molcho, Reuveni was ordered to leave Portugal. He was arrested off the Spanish coast and imprisoned until, as he says, Emperor Charles V intervened. *The*

²²⁶ A copy of the Pope's letter to King Joao and the King of Ethiopia can be found in Aescholy Aaron Z., *The Story of David Hareuveni*, pp. 172-178. Curiously, the Pope mentions to King Joao that Reuveni promised to be 'devoted and faithful to the Apostolic See' should he succeed in his plans. There is no mention of this when Reuveni speaks to the Jews.

²²⁷ Aescholy Aaron Z., *The Story of David Hareuveni*, II, p. 90

²²⁸ Aescholy Aaron Z., *The Story of David Hareuveni*, II, pp. 94-95

Story of David Reuveni stops here but from other sources the rest of his life can be pieced together. After his release, he was shipwrecked off the coast of the Provence the lord of Claremont imprisoned him for two years. This time Francis I apparently demanded his release and made the Jewish communities of Avignon and Carpentras pay a ransom. In November 1530 he was back in Venice and tried again unsuccessfully to find support for his plans to fight the Muslims. Frederick, the marquis of Mantua invited him to come but while he traveled to that city Frederick was informed by some of Reuveni's enemies among the Jews that he carried forged letters which allegedly replaced the documents which he had lost during his travels. The marquis now warned the Pope and Charles V against Reuveni. When Reuveni and Molcho appeared later that year before the Emperor in the summer of 1532 they were imprisoned. Molcho was burned at the stake while Reuveni was taken to Spain and imprisoned. He died c.1538 in prison, charged with having seduced New Christians to embrace Judaism.

It is evident from the welcome Reuveni received and the ambassadorial privileges, bestowed on him, that initially Jews as well as Christians were interested in his tale. His reception by the Christian leadership in Europe was, to say the least, peculiar. These were people who traditionally either leaned towards anti-Semitism or were outright anti-Semites. One generation had not passed, for example, between the horrific expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal in 1492-1497 and the appearance of Reuveni.²²⁹ The Inquisition, ultimately under the direction of the Pope, was still very active against the Jews and yet the Pope wrote letters to introduce Reuveni and to vouch for his safety to the king of Portugal. This raises the question why he received the reception he did? There were many elements that brought this

²²⁹ Historians have estimated that the number of victims of this expulsion alone ranged between one hundred thousand and several hundred thousand.

about, some through Reuveni's conduct, some because of sheer coincidence of history. Reuveni appeared in a rather momentous time of history. On the one hand, it was a very exciting time culturally and politically. The Renaissance had changed the face of Europe and after the discovery of America by Columbus, Europe got a taste for exploration and exploitation. On the other hand, great problems had started to appear on the not so distant horizon. The Pope had failed to prevent the Reformation and the Catholic Church, as the established Christian church was losing its foothold in many North European countries. This also had an impact on the political front as Protestant countries were starting to revolt against their Catholic masters. The Catholic Church and its political sphere of influence was now besieged from two sides, externally, still, by the advancing Muslims and now internally by Protestant rebels. For the Jews, the situation was somewhat different. Although the Renaissance had brought them some relief from persecution, the bloody exiles were still fresh in their minds, they were still restricted in their daily activities and the Inquisition was still a real danger to their lives. It was, however, also a time when Jews, perhaps especially those living in Palestine, and Christians were engrossed in computing the End of Days. This brought with it a deep interest in the Ten Lost Tribes and other legends such as the river Sambatyon. An alleged messenger from the Lost Tribes who boasted great military might and talked about alliances was bound to rouse interest.

Taking all this into account it becomes obvious that different individuals and groups who were interested in his tale each had their own reasons. Nonetheless, they were united in as far as each one accorded him, or more accurately his brother's Lost Tribes kingdom, the power to deliver them from whatever tricky situation they perceived themselves in. For Christians, it was mainly deliverance from a political threat in the form of the Muslims and for the Marranos of Portugal it was a temporal as

well as a spiritual deliverance. It is also interesting that, as time went on, and doubts regarding his tale started to appear Reuveni rapidly lost support and was looked upon as an impostor or mentally deranged. The consequences were ultimately fatal. The only group that, perhaps, never doubted or deserted him were the Marranos of Portugal whose situation was so difficult that the only bright spark they had was their hope for Israel's redemption.

The popularity of Reuveni's message was largely due to the way he conducted himself and how he very subtly adapted his story to the target audience. His conscious or subconscious use of known and new supporting motifs, play a vital role too. If one analyzes his tale as a discourse of deliverance, the following observations can be made. The orientation of his discourse is a combination of self-preservation, a perception of the world, and the search for a place in the world. It is not affected by ethnicity but is affected by power relationships, ideologies, and attitudes towards territory and time. The discourse participants are, firstly, Reuveni, the producer and secondly, two different groups of interpreters or addressees. The first addressee is the Christian community, represented by the Pope, King John III and to a lesser extent Cardinal da Viterbo and the second addressee is the Jewish community, mainly represented by the Marranos of Portugal.

For both groups of addressees, lineage and/or credentials were very important and we see that like Eldad approximately six centuries before, Reuveni identified himself as a member of the Lost Tribes. Like Eldad, he allegedly came from a powerful kingdom where a number of the Lost Tribes lived together. Unlike Eldad, however, David Reuveni claimed to be the brother of the king and the supreme military commander and not just some representative of this independent Jewish kingdom. In other words the lineage motif which was up until now expressed solely through a person

or a group of people being from one of the Lost Tribes now takes on an additional role viz. designating the hierarchy and therefore power within the Lost Tribes. Christians would have respected his royal birth whereas the Jews would have been more interested in his genealogy.²³⁰ This descent and military power conveyed on him the authority and means and set the stage perfectly for his role as liberator.

Another very interesting part is the travel portion of his story prior to his appearance in Venice. The extent of these travels and sojourns is rather peculiar since his brother, allegedly, charged him to go to Rome first. Was this, like Eldad, an attempt to build up some credibility? Judging by the motifs found in the travel portion, these travels certainly did not harm his cause. If nothing else, they showed he had seen something of the world and had, therefore, a broader insight of issues facing his audience. Perhaps the whole package and the memories his appearance may have invoked functioned as a sort confirmation that somewhere out there, a powerful Jewish kingdom existed because so many people reported on it. Also here one finds supporting motifs. Some of the more obvious motifs are the divine protection motif, not only was he endowed with worldly power but God protected him on his mission of liberation. We also find the suffering and non-conformity motifs. These would have attracted his audience each in their own way. Suffering and deliverance go hand in hand in Christian theology, whereas for the Jews, it was a daily battle not to succumb to assimilation and to keep hoping for a restoration of all things in their pure form.²³¹ The reward motif

²³⁰ This he muddles up as on the one hand he claimed to be the son of a King Solomon and brother of a King Joseph who ruled the Lost Tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh in the desert of Habor and on the other hand he claimed descent Judah offered a pedigree tracing his ancestry back to King David.

²³¹ Scholem Gershom, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, Schocken Books: New York, 1971, pp. 1-36.

where he, for example, received blessings because of his piety, would have attracted both his addressees.

The most important part of the story is the alleged power and army of this independent Jewish kingdom and the things it could potentially achieve. This information affected the two groups of addressees very differently, that is to say, each group chose hear something different. The way it affected them, in turn, influenced their loyalty to him and his cause.

In his message to the Christians, there are several interesting motifs that caused them to believe that Reuveni indeed was about to deliver them and Jerusalem from the Muslims. First, there are the independence and unity motifs, which are augmented by the war motif. Both the independence and unity motifs have already appeared before inasmuch as the idea of an independent Jewish kingdom has been mentioned but Reuveni used it differently. He used it two-fold, it gave him the necessary credentials to introduce himself as the King's supreme military commander and it afforded his army a reputation that it was strong enough to help the Christians defeat the Muslims. As far as the unity motif is concerned, Reuveni called for unity within the Christian world just like the Church Fathers used the idea of the Ten Tribes to warn against disunity. He broadened the use and called for unity between the Christians and the Lost Tribes in the face of a Muslim threat. The unity motif, however, appears tightly bound to the independence and war motifs. In the story, King Joseph and his people were independent and there is no indication that after a successful military campaign with the Christians these people would live in a subordinate unity with the Christians. Christian leaders heard words to the effect of driving the Muslims back and liberate Jerusalem with the direct implication that they would take over dominion, something that had not been the case since Crusader dominion in 12th Century. This was not what Reuveni

said and in fact if one takes his discussion with the Judge of the King of Fez in account, Reuveni wanted to liberate Jerusalem, built an altar and sacrifice as in the days of the Temple and then gather the Jews and presumably establish a Jewish state. It is interesting that the Christians were so self-absorbed that neither of these motifs nor the undercurrent in his message helped the Christian leadership notice Reuveni's real motive for coming to Europe.

For the King of Portugal there was another political incentive. Birnbaum observed that there was a rather puzzling passage in the Reuveni's story, it is the conversation between the king and a ship's captain.²³² It reads:

'I stand before the King and the captain stands before the king. Then the King asked him in my presence whether there are any Jews in the lands of India and Calicut. The captain answered that there were Jews without number in Shingola, ten days walking distance from Calicut. The King continued to ask him whether these Jews have any kings. The captain answered that there are over them many kings of their own'.²³³

Since 1505, the Portuguese ruled over five districts on the Indian continent. Three of the districts were coastal, namely, Goa and adjacent islands off the Malabar Coast; Damān (formerly Damão), near Nasik; and Diu, an island south of the Kāthiāwār Peninsula and adjacent mainland territories. The other Portuguese possessions, Dādra and Nagar Haveli, were inland.²³⁴ They wanted to expand some of these and were thwarted by the Muslims. Again, an alliance with the powerful Ten Tribes could bring relief in this situation.

The Marranos in Portugal interpreted Reuveni's message completely differently. His appearance created a great stir among his co-religionists, yet to a certain extent it also caused bewilderment that a Jew was received as an ambassador,

²³² Birnbaum Ervin, 'David Reubeni's Indian Origin', pp. 18-20.

²³³ Aescoly Aaron Z., *The Story of David Hareuveni*, pp. 81-82

²³⁴ Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2005 under Malabar/ Portuguese India.

not only at the Papal courts in Rome but also at the royal court of Portugal. Over time, while his reputation among the Maranos grew, his reputation among the Christian nobility and rulers declined in equal measure. Ultimately, it was the fear that Reuveni would cause a revolt among the Marranos that persuaded King John to expel Reuveni. This expulsion marked the beginning of the end of Reuveni's mission. Although Reuveni's message to the Marranos was essentially the same, he staged it subtly differently which led to a very emotional response. In spite of the fact that on numerous occasions he reiterated that he was the military commander of his brother's army, a sinner and not a prophet or the Messiah, they saw him at the very least as the harbinger of the Messianic era. They accorded him such great honour, including kissing his hands that the king of Portugal became concerned about the effects Reuveni was having on these crypto-Jews. Under duress, they had ostensibly, converted to Christianity but often they were suspected of being Christians on the outside only. The King was aware that he might not be able to contain a revolt by the Marranos, whipped up by Messianic fervour. What was it he changed and how did they interpret it? He still spoke about an alliance between Christians and his brother's army but added to it was, for example, that nothing would happen to him until he had liberated Jerusalem, built an altar and sacrificed on it. He promised them that when that had happened, his military commanders would gather the Jews from the East and the West.²³⁵ Although he did not declare himself the Messiah, this stirred up Messianic hopes without any difficulty. This is, for example, evident from the almost irrational actions of Diego Pires. Although Pires was a Marrano, he had had a secular upbringing and had a good position at the royal court. Reuveni's message caused such excitement that somehow he felt

²³⁵ Aescholy Aaron Z., *The Story of David Hareuveni*, p. 37 and pp. 74-77

compelled to openly declare himself a Jew which was tantamount to suicide. Reuveni was well aware of the dangers this declaration was for his mission because he distanced himself from Diego Pires, now called Solomon Molcho, declined to circumcise him, and advised him to leave. When the king ordered Reuveni to leave, the Marranos were heartbroken but he encouraged them by changing his message again and telling them that this time he only came to inform them that redemption was near.

What we see, therefore, is that his identification with the Lost Tribes and some very subtle differences in staging awoke in each group a different sentiment. However, they both heard his words as a redemption discourse. What is even more curious is the fact that, perhaps, one has to consider that Reuveni did not intend to engage in a redemption discourse but that this interpretation suited his needs. The fact that political scheming and the Messianic fervour occupied his addressees obfuscated, at least initially, the hiatuses in his story and allowed him to pursue his nationalistic goals that had a lot in common with an early attempt at Zionism.²³⁶ The course of history, in the mean time, has proved that it would take many more centuries for an independent Jewish state to be founded. Yet Reuveni's belief that only an independent state would improve the situation of the Jews was ultimately similar to Theodore Herzl's ideas and that of the Zionist Movement, he founded.

Summarized we see that *The Story of David Reuveni* did not have shockingly new information about the Lost Tribes; it did not provide grand new motifs but it strengthens the place of the Lost Tribes as a vital part of a redemption discourse.

²³⁶ I discussed the Zionist option with a number of people who are not involved in Hebrew and Jewish studies and had never heard of David Reuveni. Curiously, there was a 100% consensus that Reuveni was experimenting with an early form of Zionism. This interpretation, however, is not shared in the scholarly world and I was only able to find one article by Cecil Roth presenting Reuveni's story as 'A Zionist Experiment in the XVIth Century', *Midstream*, 9/3 (1963), 76-81.

b. The Hope of Israel

The success of *The Hope of Israel*, published in Amsterdam in 1650 by Menasseh ben Israel was phenomenal. Mutual distrust, enmity, and Christian persecution of Jews usually marred any relationship between Jews and Christians, yet, this book, somehow, succeeded in bringing together Jewish and Christian thought in the mid-seventeenth century. It is probably correct to assume that the subject matter of the book was to a large extent responsible but one should not underestimate the external factors either. The myth of the Lost Tribes has, over the ages, displayed an enduring power to stir up the hearts and minds of people from all background and varying religious persuasions. Yet in the case of *The Hope of Israel*, it is not only the remarkable power of the myth but a combination of the latter, external events and the genius of Menasseh ben Israel which achieved that, which had not been achieved before. The genius of Menasseh ben Israel is not only displayed in the manner in which he wrote the book but more so in how he recognised what the Montezinos' account could achieve in the political and religious climate of the time. With regards to his style of writing Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon wrote that Menasseh used 'a flood of themes, episodes, and quotations' and put 'together all that was known about the Lost Tribes' thereby 'constructing from it a unity within a Messianic framework'. Bearing in mind Jewish hopes and Christian convictions at the time he added another twist by suffusing 'it with the certainty that the Tribes' reappearance is imminent' and that 'Israel's exile will end'.²³⁷ This meant that there was something in the book for both his target audiences, Christians and Jews. Important to remember is that similar to *The*

²³⁷ *Menasseh ben Israel: The Hope of Israel*, ed. by Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon, Oxford University Press for the Littman Library: Oxford 1987, p. 90.

Story of David Reuveni, Jews and Christians interpreted *The Hope of Israel* differently, yet both saw elements of the book as proof that deliverance was nigh.

In order to fully appreciate the impact *The Hope of Israel* had, it is necessary to discuss in some detail the religious and political climate of the time. The religious turmoil of the sixteenth and seventeenth century changed the face of Christianity forever. The Renaissance and more specifically the Reformation meant an end to the monopoly of the Catholic Church in all matters religious. People's beliefs were no longer buried under religious dogma and institutional interpretation because one of the great achievements of the Reformation was the widespread access to the Bible. In an effort to return to pure doctrine, Protestants considered it not only a privilege but also a religious duty to study the Scriptures, especially the Old Testament prophecies, in great depth. Of particular interest were the prophecies about the End of Days which Christians and to a certain extent Jews thought to be nigh judging by the events they saw happening around them. The apocalyptic prophecies describe a world in turmoil before a new dawn which would be the prelude to the coming of the Messiah. People came to see parallels between these prophecies and the events of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. For years Europe seemed engulfed by bloodshed in the form of the Eighty Years War (1568-1648), the secession war of the of the United Provinces from Spain, the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), which engulfed most of Central Europe, and the English Civil War (1642-1651). In addition to that there were devastating epidemics, Jews were still reeling from one of the most vicious expulsions in living memory (Spain and Portugal 1492-1497) and they were massacred in Ukraine (1648-1649). Furthermore, nature seemed to be shaking its manes in the form of the great comets of 1618, 1648, and 1652.

When in 1648 the Treaty of Westphalia, which encompassed the Treaty of Münster, was signed, Protestants in general but Dutch Protestants in particular saw in these events as a sign and portend that a new age, as prophesied in the Bible, was dawning. The Treaty of Münster brought official recognition of the Republic of the United Provinces and this independence and the religious freedom that came with it allowed this area to develop and flourish. They soon became Europe's leaders in commerce and maritime trade and the resulting wealth transformed the fledgling state in to the artistic and literary capital of Europe.²³⁸ Although internal religious conflicts existed, one can say that on the whole religious and political freedom was established.²³⁹ This reaffirmed the Republic's image as a religious and intellectual haven.

Jews, fleeing the Inquisition had already established a community in Amsterdam and when, in 1615, the States General of the United Provinces officially authorized the Jews to practice their religion publicly, the scene was set for a major centre of Judaism to emerge. Menasseh ben Israel came to live in this centre at a young age with his parents. His father had been a victim of the Inquisition and Menasseh wrote the following about this in his *De Termino Vitae*: 'My father, Joseph ben Israel of pious memory, was stripped of all his goods by the Spanish Inquisition because he was

²³⁸ For more details of this period in the history of the United Provinces see: Geyl Pieter, *History of the Dutch-Speaking Peoples: 1555-1648*, paperback edition, Phoenix Press: London 2001. Geyl Pieter, *Orange & Stuart: 1641-1672*, paperback edition, Phoenix Press: London 2001. Groenveld S. and Leeuwenberg H.L.Ph., *De bruid in de schuit: De consolidatie van de Republiek 1609-1650*, De Walburg Pers: [n.p.] 1985. Wilson Charles H., *The Dutch Republic and the Civilization of the Seventeenth Century*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson: London 1968. Cazaux Yves, *Naissance des Pays-Bas*, Albin Michel: Paris 1983.

²³⁹ The main conflict was the Gomarus versus Arminius conflict. See Groenveld S. and Leeuwenberg H.L.Ph., *De bruid in de schuit*: pp. 12ff.

a Jew. He was previously subjected to torture, which seriously impaired his health [...].²⁴⁰ The experiences of his youth never left him and marked his character and outlook on life.²⁴¹ Menasseh excelled in his studies and at age eighteen, when Rabbi Isaac Uziel died, he became Rabbi. He married Rachel Soeiro, great granddaughter of the famous Don Isaac Abravanel and they had three children. Money was always tight and in addition to his duties as a rabbi, he was a prolific writer, teacher, and bookseller. He also started the first Hebrew printing press in Amsterdam. Menasseh, a child of his time and a product of a community in exile, was strongly orientated towards Messianism, believing like all religious Jews, that the Messiah would come, that he would be their king and that he would restore spiritual and temporal peace.²⁴² For obvious reasons he did not envisage a conversion to Christianity. Soon he became famous inside and outside of Holland, and he especially established good contacts with Protestants who came from everywhere to seek his advice on Jewish matters.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ *Menasseh ben Israel: The Hope of Israel*, p. 23. Also Salomon H.P., 'The Portuguese Background of Menasseh ben Israel's Parents as revealed through the Inquisitorial Archives at Lisbon', *Studia Rosenthaliana*, 17/2 (July 1983), 105-146 (p. 105).

²⁴¹ For information about the life and background of Menasseh ben Israel see: Roth Cecil, *A Life of Menasseh ben Israel, Rabbi, Printer and Diplomat*, Jewish Publication Society of America: Philadelphia, 1934. Mulder S.I., 'Bijdrage tot de levensgeschiedenis van Menasseh ben Israel' in *Nederlands Israëlitisch Jaarboekje*, 1858, pp. 3-17.

²⁴² Messianic expectation is an essential part of Judaism and it permeates virtually every aspect of Jewish religious life. This thesis is not the place to elaborate on Jewish Messianism above and beyond describing the relationship between Lost Tribe lore and Messianism. There is a lot of literature written on the subject of Jewish Messianism. To mention but a few, there are Scholem Gershom, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, Schocken Books: London 1971 and Greenstone Julius H., *The Messiah Idea in Jewish History*, Jewish Publication Society of America: Philadelphia, 1906.

²⁴³ Méchoulán and Nahon take it one step further and regard him as [...] 'one of the spiritual fathers of what we now call 'Judaeo-Christian friendship'[...]' in *Menasseh ben Israel: The Hope of Israel*, p. 25.

The earlier mentioned revived interest in the Bible and its exegesis obviously did not only affect Dutch Protestants. In England, the Puritan movement had been flourishing too and, like their Dutch counterpart, they too studied the apocalyptic prophecies. Unlike Holland with its flourishing Jewish community, Jews had officially no right of abode in England since 1290, when Edward I (1239-1307) had expelled the Jews from England. The apocalyptic prophecies made them think about their attitudes towards the Jews and increasingly calls were made for this royal edict to be repealed and for the Jews to be allowed to settle in England, too. Regina S. Sharif calls this change of heart 'non-Jewish Zionism'.²⁴⁴ Sharif writes that 'what came to constitute the 'Jewish Question' in the 16th Century was not Jewish emancipation —the granting of citizen's rights— but the role assigned to the Jews in such new doctrinal questions as the fulfilment of Biblical prophecies, The Latter Times and the Second Coming of Christ the Messiah'.²⁴⁵ Indeed it can be observed that the Protestant tradition stood in sharp contrast to Catholic tradition. Whereas humanist elements in the Catholic Church had shown an interest in Hebrew and Jewish studies, the interest in the Jewish past, present, and particularly its future reached its climax among the European Protestants in the seventeenth century. Intense biblical exegesis meant that the distinction between the often-idealized Hebrews of the Old Testament and their modern co-religionists disappeared. Protestants, through their literal interpretation of the Apocalyptic writings, came also to believe that universal salvation would come through the Jews and that the Jews would have to be gathered to the Land of their Fathers in preparation for the Second Coming. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), the well-known Dutch Hebraist,

²⁴⁴ Sharif Regina S., *Non-Jewish Zionism: Its Roots in Western History*, Zed Press: London, 1983.

²⁴⁵ Sharif Regina S., *Non-Jewish Zionism*, p. 10.

theologian, philosopher and father of International Law wrote on commonalities between Judaism and Christianity in his *De Veritate Religionis Christianae* (1627). Although, in the main, a work to prove that Christianity was the only true religion, he also sought to make his readers aware that, regardless of the differences between Judaism and Christianity, there were also many similarities and he strongly objected to the degradation of the Judaism as an inferior religion. There was, however, a thorny issue that would not go away, namely, the issue of the conversion of the Jews to Christianity which was also understood as part and parcel of the End of Days. Martin Luther (1483-1516), the Father of the Reformation had already written on this subject and limited success in this area eventually led him to write a polemic against the Jews which forever tainted him as an anti-Semite.²⁴⁶ There was another problem, the Bible appeared to say that the End of Days would be glorious time and that Israel would be restored in all its might and glory. John Archer, an English millenarian described the End of Days as follows, '[...] the cities of the Tribes shall be built againe, and inhabited by naturall Israelites, especially Ierusalem, which shall bee the most eminent city then in the world, or that ever was in the world'.²⁴⁷ European Jewry definitely did not fit this picture of might and glory, if anything, their picture resembled a downtrodden, careworn group of people. This meant that the millenarians started to cast their eye to

²⁴⁶ In 1523 Luther wrote *Daß Jesus Christus ein geborner Jüde sei und wie mit den Jüden sie zu bekehren zu handeln sei* (see *Dr Martin Luther's sämmtliche Werke*, rev. by J.G. Plochman (1-20) and ed. by J.K. Irmischer (21-65), 65 vols., Carl Hender: Erlangen, 1826-1857, XXIX (1841), 45-74). This was actually very pro-Jewish, it was only later that Luther became embittered because the Jews did not convert spontaneously. In 1543 he wrote *Von den Jüden und ihren Lügen* see *Dr Martin Luther's sämmtliche Werke*, XXXII (1842), 99-358.

²⁴⁷ Archer John, *The Personall Reigne of Christ upon the Earth*, London 1642, pp. 25-26. Quoted in David S.Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603-1655*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1982, p. 128

the idea that the Jews did not represent the whole House of Israel and the subject of the Ten Lost Tribes rapidly regained interest.

Ever since the discovery of America questions as to the origins of the inhabitants had been raised. With the notable exceptions such as Isaac La Peyrère, virtually everybody agreed that the Indians, too, had to be descendants of Adam and most likely of Noah too. However, this was very difficult, if not impossible, to explain within the limits of biblical chronology and migration routes. To counter the idea that the Indians were not part of the biblical narrative was impossible because that would make the Bible, the Word of God, incomplete. A popular solution with supporters from all over Europe was to identify the Indians with the Ten Lost Tribes.²⁴⁸

Considering Menasseh's fame and the prevailing thoughts of the time, it is, perhaps, not surprising that Antonio de Montesinos chose to come to Amsterdam to tell his wonderous tale. He arrived in Amsterdam on 19th September 1644 and told Menasseh ben Israel that he had met with members of the Tribe of Reuben in South America. This tale fitted perfectly with existing sentiments.

Montezinos was a Jewish traveller who arrived in Amsterdam on 19th September 1644. He stayed in Amsterdam for only six months and Menasseh interviewed him on several occasions during that time. Montezinos claimed to have found the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes, and swore an affidavit to the truthfulness of his story and never retracted it, not even on his deathbed. Whereas it is true that history has lent an ear to many people with fantastic stories about the Lost Tribes, Montezinos seems different from them. First of all it is striking that he not merely told

²⁴⁸ Katz David S., *Philo-Semitism*, pp. 127-157. Also Katz David S., *The Jews in the History of England*, Clarendon Press: Oxford 1994, pp. 107-144. See also Parfitt Tudor, *The Lost Tribes of Israel*, pp. 28-40
Katz David S., *Philo-Semitism*, 1982.

his story but swore an oath as to its truthfulness.²⁴⁹ Furthermore, unlike Reuveni, for example, he did not derive any profits from it, indeed, he refused all assistance from the Amsterdam Jewish community.²⁵⁰ It could, therefore, very well be that he accurately described his meeting and the information he received but that he simply erred in his identification of these people. By identifying them as members of the Lost Tribes, he, perhaps, simply collated the information he heard with the sentiments prevalent in his time. Or, perhaps it is as Tudor Parfitt proposes that ‘Montezinos came across [...] a group of *conversos* who had settled in a remote a place as possible, intermarried with Indians, and put themselves beyond the reach of the Holy Inquisition’ and that ‘by the time Montezinos came upon them they had only a garbled version of their past [...]’.²⁵¹

On the one hand Montezinos’ account has features in common with other Ten Tribe lore, yet on the other hand, it seems to lack the demagogic qualities we have seen before. Montezinos explained that in the company of a group of Indians, one whose name was Francisco, who was addressed by everyone as *Cazicus* he set out on an arduous journey from the port of Honda to Cartagena.²⁵² As he conducted some heavily laden mules over the Cordillera Mountains, a tempest arose and the mules and the goods were lost. The Indians despaired at the loss of not only their goods but also about the loss of Montezinos’ goods and claimed it was punishment for their sins. Francisco urged them to be patient for shortly they would enjoy rest. The others said that they did not deserve any reprieve because what the Spaniards did to them paled in comparison to

²⁴⁹ In Judaism one does not take an oath lightly. For more information see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, ed. by R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, Oxford University Press: New York & Oxford, 1997, pp. 716-717.

²⁵⁰ *Menasseh ben Israel*, p. 69.

²⁵¹ Parfitt Tudor, *The Lost Tribes of Israel*, p. 90.

²⁵² Later in the story we learn that *Cazicus* is the Indian word for chief.

what they had done to God's holy people who were innocent. Surely this was divine retribution. They decided to stay in the mountains for the duration of the night. Montezinos had some food and shared it with Francisco while at the same time upbraiding him for insulting the Spaniards. Francisco countered that he had not even begun to talk about the unspeakable cruelties of the Spaniards but insisted that, in time, an unknown people would avenge them. Upon arrival in Cartagena, Montezinos was imprisoned by the Inquisition. While praying in prison he has some kind of revelatory experience, which made him wonder if, indeed the Indians are Hebrews. Hoping to find some answers, he greatly desired to find out more about these unknown or hidden people, Francisco had talked about. Upon his release, he set out to find Francisco again and after meeting, they set out on a journey together. Once out of the city Montezinos tells Francisco that, in actual fact, he is a Hebrew of the Tribe of Levi and that there was but one God. Francisco was amazed and asked him the name of his parents. He answered Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Francisco is somewhat surprised and inquired after the name of his biological father which Montezinos gives as Ludovico Montesinos. Only when Francisco is satisfied that Montezinos truly is a Jew did he agree to go deeper into the matter to which he alluded on the mountain. He tells him if Montezinos wants to undertake the journey with him, he has to agree to a number of conditions. Montezinos must accept Francisco as his leader, the journey has to be made on foot, Montezinos cannot eat anything but parched maize, and if reporting afterwards, he must not omit anything of his experience. After more than a week's travel, including a travel free Sabbath, they arrived at the bank of a great river. Here, Francisco announces, Montezinos will meet his brethren. After signalling across the river, a boat with three men and a woman arrived. Only the woman disembarked and, after talking to Francisco in a language Montezinos did not understand, she went back and told the

men what she had learned. Thereupon, they, too, came ashore and embraced Montezinos. Two of the men came on each side of Montezinos and recited Deuteronomy 6:4 which is the *Shema Yisrael*. Over the space of three days Montezinos met with about three hundred of these people. He described them as being somewhat scorched by the sun, comely of body without a special hairdo. They wore ornaments on their ankles and wrists, and they wore a linen headdress. They related a peculiar message, comprising of nine points to Montezinos:

1. Our ancestors were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Reuben.
2. We will bestow several places on them who have in mind living with them.
3. Joseph dwells in the midst of the sea.
4. Shortly some of us go forth to see and to tread under foot.
5. One day we shall all of us talk together, they saying ba, ba, ba. We shall come forth as issuing out of our mother earth.
6. A messenger shall go forth.
7. Francisco will tell you more about these things later.
8. They prayed to God: Do not stay long.
9. They are waiting for twelve bearded men, who are skilful in writing.

Each and every day they told him the same and Montezinos became impatient because they did not answer his questions nor would they suffer him cross the river. When he attempted to board their boat, they threw him out and cautioned him not to try this again. When he prepared to leave they provided him with whatever they thought necessary for the journey. They also told him they had in abundance, all that they themselves needed, meat, garments, flocks, and other things. Later, when they were alone again Montezinos entreated Francisco to tell him more, as he was promised by these people. Francisco then related that the traditions of his forefathers say that these people, Montezinos brethren, were brought here by the providence of God who wrought many miracles for them. The local inhabitants, the Indians, went to war with these impostors and exercised power over them, more severe than the Spaniards do now over the Indians. On instigation of their magicians (they call them *Mohanes*), they went to

the place where Montezinos met his brethren with the intention to destroy them. In total they sent three armies, however very few returned and the country was left with little more than women and old men. The survivors decided to kill the magicians and many perished. Those who survived investigated who these people really were. They concluded that the God of these people, your brethren, is the true God. That all that was engraved upon their stones was true and that at the End of Days they will rule the world as they did in the past. They would bring about much good including freeing the Indians from the Spaniards. The chiefs were only allowed to visit the Reubenites every seventy months except when they had special news.²⁵³ Nobody should be younger than three hundred moons. Anybody else who would approach these Jews would be killed.²⁵⁴

Strangely enough Menasseh ben Israel did nothing with this story for another five years. However, we should not underestimate Menasseh. He was very aware of Christian religious beliefs, politics and other current affairs, something which scholars in the past have overlooked.²⁵⁵ Some suggestions have been put forward as to the reasons for the delay and the subsequent sudden speed with which he wrote *The Hope of Israel*. Tudor Parfitt suggested that as Menasseh 'slowly digested the news, he perceived a way of using the story as part of a wider campaign to get the English government to readmit the Jews'.²⁵⁶ Hirsch Graetz suggested that the death, in 1647, of Dutch Marrano Isaac de Castro-Tartas at the hands of the Inquisition changed his

²⁵³ In the lifetime of Francisco there had only been three special occasions: when the Spaniards came into this land, the sighting of ships in the Southern Sea and the visit of Montezinos.

²⁵⁴ This is a paraphrase of 'The Relation of Antonio Montezinos' in *Menasseh ben Israel: The Hope of Israel*, pp.105-111.

²⁵⁵ *Menasseh ben Israel: The Hope of Israel*, p. 25.

²⁵⁶ Parfitt Tudor., *The Lost Tribes of Israel*, pp. 77-78.

views.²⁵⁷ Méchoulan and Nahon suggest that ‘the first object of *Esperança de Israel* was to challenge the Christian use of the Old Testament’.²⁵⁸ The urgency to write the book probably arose, in part, through the actions of John Dury, a long-time correspondent with Menasseh. John Dury, a Scottish churchman, was, as Richard H. Popkin writes, ‘involved with Peter Serrarius, Samuel Hartlib, Robert Boyle, Jan Comenius and others in trying to establish a new scientific society that would lead to attaining the universal knowledge that would be needed in the Millennium’.²⁵⁹ He was convinced that Lost Tribes were about to return and was interested in any story about them. He believed the millennium would occur in 1655 and that before that the Jews would have to be gathered from the four corners of the earth. He was also greatly interested in the Indian-Israelite theory. His good friend John Thorowgood wrote a book *Jewes in America or Probabilities that the Americans are of that Race* (London 1650) which was delayed in publication because of the execution of Charles I (1649). During the delay Dury asked Menasseh to send him a copy of the story of Montezinos. This, Dury added as an appendix to Thorowgood’s book. Menasseh neither agreed with this theory nor could he accept that the Jews would have to convert to Christianity as part of the Millennial process. Writing *The Hope of Israel* gave him the opportunity to add to the account of Montezinos, a treatise on the whereabouts of the Lost Tribes and Jewish Messianism.²⁶⁰ The Latin edition he dedicated to the English Parliament and

²⁵⁷ Graetz Hirsch., *History of the Jews from Earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. and in part translated by Bella Löwy, rev. edn, 5 Vols, David Nutt: London 1891, V, pp. 34-35, quoted in Parfitt Tudor, *The Lost Tribes of Israel*, p.78.

²⁵⁸ *Menasseh ben Israel: The Hope of Israel*, ed.by H. Méchoulan and G. Nahon, Oxford University Press for the Littman Library: Oxford 1987,p. 93.

²⁵⁹ Popkin Richard H., ‘The Lost Tribes, the Caraites and the English Millenarians’, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 37/2 (Autumn 1986), 213-227, p. 213.

²⁶⁰ Menasseh thought that the Ten Tribes were scattered in Asia and America. See section 37 and 39 of *The Hope of Israel*.

with it he hoped to harness the European millenarian hopes for the good of his co-religionists by pointing out that the Jews could not be gathered from the four corners of the world if there are countries where they do not reside. Menasseh died before the Jews were readmitted to England but his influence reverberates through history.

c. Conclusion

It is clear that in Early Modern times there were a number of crucial changes to the development and use of the myth. The myth is no longer embellished to the same extent as we saw in the Middle Ages. The motifs stay fairly constant but the idea that the exile was a punishment for disobedience completely disappeared. The Ten Tribes became firmly rooted in their role as deliverers or instruments that would bring to pass or even hasten deliverance.

In the main the myth is used for political deliverance. Reuveni used their alleged strength and number to convince the Pope and other Christian leaders that they could defeat the Muslims and deliver Christendom from this ever advancing threat. His ulterior motive, however, was obtaining enough weapons and soldiers from the Christian army to free Jerusalem so he could establish a place for his oppressed co-religionists to live. Ultimately he did not succeed.

In Menasseh ben Israel we found a man who was scarred by life under the Inquisition. While firmly rooted in Jewish Messianism, he is also deeply concerned about his co-religionists. He managed, to a certain extent, to harness the Christian millenarian expectations for the Second Coming for his own purposes. Realizing that the return of the Ten Tribes and the gathering of Israel feature prominently in the final run-up to the Millennium he used the story of Montezinos, to write a treatise about Jewish Messianism. Jewish Messianism encompassed the idea that universal peace would reign when Israel would be gathered in their homeland. Since one can not gather

that which, is not scattered he tried persuade England to readmit the Jews. Although he did not live to see the Jews readmitted, his use of the Lost Tribes and the gathering of the Jews did bring relief to the Jews. For the Millennarians the end result was less fortuitous, they did not manage to gather the Lost Tribes and thereby force the start of the Millenium but the excitement about the Lost Tribes nevertheless inflamed them to look forward to redemption.

CHAPTER 4: MODERN TIMES

The previous chapters have shown that throughout history rumours about the existence and might of the Ten Lost Tribes brought great hope to Jews and Christians alike. Indeed, this dissertation sets out to show that the Lost Tribes became an essential feature of a Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse, temporal as well as spiritual.

What happened to the myth in modern times? The nineteenth century was the start of incredible progress in science²⁶¹, geography, ethnology, and numerous other fields. Did science and ever expanding knowledge replace faith and a hope for miracles? Did the myth of the Ten Lost Tribes become a casualty of the war between religion and science? Indeed, was there any longer a need for a lost people to come to the rescue?

It can be argued that progress certainly changed the extent of belief in the Lost Tribes, however, it will be shown that within the new scope, the myth did not lose any of its popularity. Indeed, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Lost Tribe ideology commanded a considerable allegiance and there is no sign that this is diminishing in the twenty-first century.

The nineteenth century saw a renewed interest into the fate of the Lost Tribes by Jews and many an individual took to the road in search for the Lost Tribes. One of them deserves a special mention inasmuch as he emulated Benjamin of Tudela to such an extent that he even changed his name to Benjamin the Second. He was the Romanian-born Jew, Joseph Israel (1818-1864). He travelled between 1845 and 1859

²⁶¹ There were many new discoveries, a few examples are: English scientist John Dalton developed in 1803 the atomic theory, Dmitry Mendelyev put together the periodic table in 1869, advances were made with research into electricity (Michael Faraday) and magnetism (James Clerk Maxwell). In 1895 Wilhelm Röntgen invented the X-ray, Louis Pasteur found a cure for rabies and Charles Darwin published his book *On the Origin of Species*.

from Istanbul to Egypt, to Syria, to the Land of Israel, to Kurdistan, via Mesopotamia to Persia, Afghanistan, and India in search of the Lost Tribes. After 1859 he apparently also travelled to North America. Like his hero, Benjamin of Tudela, he, too, collected information about the way of life and the traditions of the Jewish communities he met on the way. Other nineteenth century Jewish travellers in search for the Lost Tribes were people like Rabbi Baruch of Pinsk who was murdered in Yemen after he left Safed in 1830, Isaac son of Chaim Baruch Halevi (died in 1886) who went to India hoping to find the Sambatyon, and the German-born Ezekiel Asche who left Jerusalem in 1848 and disappeared in Ethiopia. In the late eighteenth century some Karaites in Crimea tried to prove that they were descendants of the Lost Tribes. They claimed that, unlike the Jews, they were not guilty of the death of Jesus and thus they hoped to obtain tax and military exemptions from the Czarist authorities.

In addition to this renewed interest and the many travellers in search of the Lost Tribes, a remarkable change in the Lost Tribe ideology took place inasmuch that a new facet was added to the myth viz. self-identification with the Lost Ten Tribes.

Previously, alleged representatives identified their people as the Lost Tribes, or merchants and other itinerants identified distant peoples as such. In early modern times many unsuspecting natives of newly discovered nations were eagerly identified with the Lost Tribes, often because they had seemingly Jewish customs. As shown earlier, there was a variety of reasons for this identification, temporal as well as spiritual. There was, however, no attempt by a group of people to identify themselves with the Lost Tribes.

This changed in the middle of the nineteenth century when, rather than solely identifying people in distant lands as the Lost Tribes, some people started identifying

themselves with one or all of the Ten Lost Tribes.²⁶² The reasons for this self-identification process are as extensive as those for identifying others with the Lost Tribes and it will be shown that they, too, are a part of the Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse. Broadly speaking, the reasons are political, religious, economical or a combination thereof. To illustrate this new feature in the use and development of the Lost Tribes myth, three groups of people and/or organisations that identify themselves with the Lost Tribes were chosen:²⁶³

1. The British Israelite World Foundation²⁶⁴
2. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints²⁶⁵
3. Modern Judaizing groups

a. The British Israelite World Foundation

It is nigh impossible to pinpoint either the founder or the precise origins of British-Israelism. The ideology behind the movement —that the Anglo-Saxon peoples are the blood descendants of the ancient Israelites— has been around for hundreds of years and over that period has had millions of proponents on both sides of the Atlantic.

²⁶² This chapter deals mainly with groups that identify themselves with one or more of the Lost Tribes because this represents an important change in the discourse. This should not lead to the conclusion that the search for members of the Lost Tribes by third parties completely ceased. Indeed, this chapter will also acknowledge the role of third parties, notably Amishav (My People Returns) under the direction of Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail, Shavei Israel with its chairman Michael Freund, and the American organisation Kulanu (All of Us) who have been instrumental in substantiating claims of self-identification.

²⁶³ In addition to the people and/or organisations chosen, there are many more groups that lay claim to similar traditions and beliefs. No specific criteria beyond my own interest have led to the choice of groups. It is not meant to exclude other groups that use the myth in this way but rather to limit them within the scope of this dissertation.

²⁶⁴ There are many modern proponents of British-Israelism, such as Herbert W. Armstrong, Bertrand Comparet, and Howard Rand. In this dissertation, The British-Israel World Foundation (hereafter B.I.W.F.) was chosen as the representative of British-Israelism because it best represents the interdenominational character of British-Israelism. Whereas those who follow Armstrong, for example, are members of his Worldwide Church of God where British-Israelism is an important part of his unique brand of religion, most British Israelites remain members of orthodox churches.

²⁶⁵ This church is more commonly known under its nickname Mormons. Hereafter this church will be referred to as LDS Church.

David M. Williams stated that ‘this theory was first put forward around the year 1519’ but does not give sources for this statement.²⁶⁶ John Sadler published *Rights of the Kingdom* in 1649 in ‘which he implied that the English are the descendants of the Israelites’.²⁶⁷ Anton Darms attributes the origins of British-Israelism to Protestant apologist Dr. Abadie of Amsterdam who, in 1723, apparently stated that ‘Unless the ten tribes have flown into the air or have been plunged into the center of the earth, they must be sought for in the south and west, and in the British Isles’.²⁶⁸

Yet, it cannot be denied that the ministry of Richard Brothers (1757-1824) brought the ideology in the public arena as never before and that he should be seen as one of the most important, if not the most important precursor of British-Israelism. Cecil Roth wrote that ‘the candle which Richard Brothers lit in the world, though adequately concealed under a bushel, is not yet extinguished. Even now, a hundred years and more after his death, there are millions of persons on both sides of the Atlantic who implicitly believe in the theory which he first launched, that the Lost tribes are to-day represented by the Anglo-Saxon race’.²⁶⁹ Nevertheless, he is disowned by

²⁶⁶ Williams David M., *British Israelism – an expose*. This article is found <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/5951/BI.html?200515> (accessed 16/06/05)

²⁶⁷ Wilson John, ‘British Israelism: The ideological Restraints on Sect Organisation’ in *Patterns of Sectarianism: Organisation and Ideology in Social and Religious Movements*, ed. by Bryan R. Wilson, Heinemann: London 1967, pp. 345-376, p. 349.

²⁶⁸ Darms A., *The Delusion of British Israelism: A Comprehensive Treatise*, Our Hope: New York, [n.d.] quoted in Friedman O. Michael, *Origins of the British Israelites: The Lost Tribes*, Mellen Research University Press, San Francisco 1993, pp. 14-15. Also in Parfitt Tudor, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth*, Phoenix: London, 2003, p. 53.

²⁶⁹ Roth Cecil, *The Nephew of the Almighty: an Experimental account of the Life and Aftermath of Richard Brothers, R.N.*, Edward Goldston: London 1933, p. 109.

most British Israelites because his behaviour and writings became increasingly peculiar, culminating in him declaring himself the Messiah who would restore Israel.²⁷⁰

The British-Israelites today, hail Ralph Wedgwood a precursor of their official teachings. In 1814 he published his *Book of Remembrance* which, among other related subjects, set out to evince 'that the British Empire is the bow of Ephraim, which has abode in Strength – Messiah's promised Possession and Naval Dominion [...]'.²⁷¹ The book fell on fertile ground because Britain was in a period of religious upheaval. Changes in society, general uncertainty, and the defeat of Napoleon who, on this side of the Channel, was often seen as the anti-Christ himself, gave rise to a renewed interest in biblical exegesis.

Two other men who followed in the footsteps of Wedgwood were John Wilson (d.1871), the acknowledged progenitor of the British-Israel movement and Edward Hine (1825-1891). Wilson, a Christian phrenologist, expanded the theory that England and the other nations of modern northern Europe were the descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. He earned a living giving lectures on this subject and in 1840 published *Lectures on Ancient Israel and the Origin of the Modern Nations of Europe* which four years later had been through three editions. That same year he also published *Our Israelitish Origin* which by 1876 had gone through five editions.²⁷² Wilson also tried to disseminate his message through two, unsuccessful periodicals.²⁷³ Edward Hine was

²⁷⁰ For information about Richard Brothers see Roth Cecil, *The Nephew of the Almighty: an Experimental account of the Life and Aftermath of Richard Brothers*, R.N., Edward Goldston: London 1933. Also Wilson John, 'British Israelism', pp. 345-376, pp. 349-352.

²⁷¹ Wedgwood Ralph, *The Book of Remembrance*, London, 1814, the titlepage and pp. 46-71.

²⁷² This book is now accepted as the first coherent British-Israel book. See Wilson John, 'British Israelism', pp. 345-376, p. 354 and Parfitt Tudor, *The Lost Tribes of Israel*, p. 54.

²⁷³ *The Time of the End and Prophetic Witness* was only published in 1844 and *The Watchman of Ephraim* was published 1866-1868.

largely responsible for an increased exposure of the movement through his writings and lectures not only in England but also in the United States. He subscribed to a large extent to Wilson's theories but did not agree that other European nations were also of Israel. He claimed that the British were the sole heirs to the Abrahamic covenant.²⁷⁴ Hine became especially known for his work on the points of identification between Britain and Israel which he saw as vital if one was to understand Britain's destiny.²⁷⁵ As time went on, Hine lost his prime position. To a certain extent, the reason for this was his continuous opposition to an organised movement but there was also an element of class and education involved. As interest, and inevitably, also opposition to the theory grew so there was more need for 'research' and people with a greater means and

²⁷⁴ Followers of Wilson were also called Teutonists but they gradually had to give ground to Anglo-Israelites like Hine. It is interesting to see that the appeal of the Anglo-Israelites increased at the same time as Britain's power in the world increased. See Wilson John, 'British Israelism', pp. 345-376, p. 357 and p. 357 note 1.

²⁷⁵ See for example Hine Edward, *Forty-Seven Identifications of the British Nation with the Lost Tribes of Israel: Founded upon Five Hundred Scripture Proofs*, Marshall Brothers, London & Edinburgh, [n.d.].

education than Hine were in a better position to do so.²⁷⁶ One of those was Edward Wheler Bird, the son of a respected provincial judge in India. A retired civil servant himself, Bird had the means and the experience to bring his vision of a more orderly and organised movement to pass. In 1878 Bird became the president of the Metropolitan Anglo-Israel Association.²⁷⁷ Despite the name, this was still an organisation of affiliates rather than members. Hine, however, because of his popularity could not be side-lined altogether and as the years went on, differences in opinion and animosity between the two men increased. One well documented difference of opinion related to the necessity of the conversion of the Jews to Christianity.²⁷⁸ Other disputes were about the direction the movement should take. Hine's opinion was that 'British-Israelism was itself a

²⁷⁶ Opposition to Anglo-Israelism was strong and prolific. Rev. Vincent Baker wrote 'If the theory of the British-Israelites is to be taken seriously-and the number of their publications warrants that it should be so taken-it would appear to be included under the heading of the "race heresy", which Pope Pius XI condemned in connection with the Nationalist-Socialist theories of the rulers of Modern Germany'. He continues that the theories 'appear to be based on such wild and unsupported theories, some of them too ludicrous to be considered seriously; to be involved in consequences fatal to the theories themselves; to have been written with amazing carelessness or abysmal ignorance; and to have been completely exploded through the non-fulfilment of the prophecies, which their expounders have so recklessly proclaimed -in fine, to be marvellous nonsense from beginning to end'. See *The Ten Lost Tribes*, Catholic Truth Society: Dublin 1944, pp. 15-16. G. S. Stevenson wrote that it was not 'necessary to expose to the ridicule of the reader all the errors they have made [...], nor to attack their system of interpretation which uses a strange compound of romance, legend, tradition, folklore, pyramidology and imagination [...] 'when it is possible to destroy the whole structure by removing the foundation' which is that 'there never has been a lost Israel' [...] 'the whole conception on which British-Israelism rests is a fallacy'. See *British Israelism Fact or Fallacy*, The Knox Publishing Company, Durban 1944, pp. 83-84. Rev Richard Cornall wrote that after very carefully studying Edward Hine's book *Forty-Seven Identifications of the British Nation with the Lost House of Israel* he has to conclude that 'Mr. Hine's theory is both false and dangerous'. See *The British Nation NOT identical with the Lost Ten Tribes*, 2nd edition, Containing many additional proofs of the Fallacy of the Anglo-Israel Theory, James Nisbet: London 1877, p. 5. John Wilkinson wrote 'It is clear then that Jews are Israelites, and it is equally clear that Englishmen are not'. See *Englishmen not Israelites: an Answer to "Twenty-Seven Identifications" and "Flashes of Light"*, S.W. Partridge: London 1874, p. 50.

²⁷⁷ This incorporated the London Anglo-Israel Associated which Bird had founded in 1874.

²⁷⁸ Wilson John, 'British Israelism', p. 370.

radical and determining ideology, in the light of which not only would religious orientation be restated, but political and economic opinion would be settled'.²⁷⁹ Bird and his associates, on the other hand, were of the opinion that 'British-Israelism should not become entangled with particular political positions, but should wait for the fulfilment of prophecy to bring the final solution to political and international matters'.²⁸⁰ Eventually Bird's ideas prevailed and the movement disassociated itself from Hine. The latter reacted by establishing The British-Israel Identity Corporation which collapsed in 1881 because of external and internal problems. Bird's association, in contrast, flourished and by the mid 1880's established itself as the mouthpiece of British-Israelism, an umbrella organisation for Protestant people of any denomination. Prophetic exegesis finally replaced Hine's brand of prophetic pronouncement. Replacing people like Edward Hine with biblical 'scholarship' may have made British-Israelism more palatable for the middleclass audiences but it did not solve the problems generated by their unique and very literal interpretation of the Bible.

With the passing of time and especially the changes in the political arena, British-Israelism once again aligned itself and today the B.I.W.F. describes the organisation as 'an educational society' which 'sets forth the central theme of the whole Bible'. They are neither a church nor a new sect but 'a teaching to which Christians of all denominations subscribe without prejudicing their Church membership'.²⁸¹ 'They

²⁷⁹ Wilson John, 'British Israelism', p. 371.

²⁸⁰ Wilson John, 'British Israelism', p. 372.

²⁸¹ Because the B.I.W.F. is a worldwide umbrella organisation for Protestant people of any denomination there are no numerical data with regards to membership of the B.I.W.F and/or believers in British-Israelism available in the public domain. An e-mail from B.I.W.F. headquarters in the United Kingdom indicated that the organisation has some idea through figures relating to actual membership, through a mailing list for their magazine, and through the number of hits on their website. Aside from the fact that this is hardly reliable information I have to assume that they were not prepared to share that information as my repeated requests for these figures remained unanswered.

believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, accepting without question the authority of both Old and New Testaments, and recognizing the national message of the Kingdom of God on earth'. The B.I.W.F. 'unifies the teachings of the Scriptures; it enlarges the field of Christian vision; and it reveals God's great plan of salvation, both on the spiritual and also on the material plane'.²⁸² The B.I.W.F. teaches that the Bible is not an old Jewish history book embellished by prophecies and uplifting stories for a generation long gone but that it is timeless and for all people, kindred, and tongues. Furthermore, the Bible is instrumental in bringing people to an understanding of God's great plan –to bring about the fulfilment of the divine promises and covenants with Israel. The British Israelite theory is based on a few core points:

1. A clear distinction is made between the House of Israel —the exiled tribes of the Northern Kingdom— and the House of Judah —the former kingdom of Judah.
2. In order to prove that the Anglo-Saxon nations are the descendants of the tribes of the Northern Kingdom, the path of the Israelite captives after they left Assyria to the British Isles is traced.
3. The assumption that Israel accepted Christianity as a logical and preordained progression from the Old to the New Covenant. The acceptance of the New Covenant is seen as the reason that God still reckons the House of Israel (through descendants of the Northern Kingdom) to be the Chosen People.
4. Linguistic comparisons between English and Hebrew feature high on the list of evidence.

Each of these points needs to be analysed in order to understand how the British-Israelite interpretation of the Ten Lost Tribe myth contributed and added strength to the thesis that the myth formed an essential feature of the Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse.

The first point, perhaps the most important since the whole British-Israel theory is deduced from it, is the supposition of a clear distinction between the House of

²⁸² *British Israel? What's that?* and *The British Israel World Federation: Its Place within the Christian Fellowship*. Both these pamphlets are printed by and available from B.I.W.F. headquarters.

Israel —the exiled tribes of the Northern Kingdom— and the House of Judah —the former Kingdom of Judah before and after the exile. Contrary to modern scholarship and indeed the Bible itself, British-Israelism claims that the removal of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians was a complete removal of the Ten Northern Tribes of Israel.²⁸³ Many British-Israelites, past and present, have written prolifically on the subject of total and continuing separation of the two kingdoms and peoples. Generally they exhaust the reader with often incomplete quotes from the Bible, historical and archeological research, or studies in ethnology and etymology that allegedly supports their theory.²⁸⁴ As recent as 1967 Herbert W. Armstrong wrote ‘we want to impress, here, that Israel and Judah are not two names for the same nation’ and that ‘they were, and still are, and shall be till the second coming of Christ, TWO SEPARATE NATIONS’.²⁸⁵ John H. Allen, before him, used Jeremiah 13:11 to prove that the Chosen People are made up of the whole House of Judah and the whole House of Israel

²⁸³ The improbability of this is discussed at length in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

²⁸⁴ For example Hine Edward, *Forty-Seven Identifications of the British Nation with the Lost Tribes of Israel: Founded upon Five Hundred Scripture Proofs*, Marshall Brothers, London & Edinburgh, [n.d.], p. 1ff. or Wilson John, ed, ‘Mischief Arising from not Recognizing our own Place in Prophecy’ and ‘Our Origin and Birthright’, *The Watchman of Ephraim*, vol 1 (1st January 1866), W. Macintosh: London 1866, pp. 12-16 and pp. 23-32 and ‘Queries Answered’, *The Watchman of Ephraim*, vol 1 (1st October 1866), W. Macintosh: London 1866, pp. 442-448. Today, The B.I.W.F Quarterly often devotes a page to various scriptures and their interpretation (e.g. B.I.W.F. Quarterly, July-September 1995).

²⁸⁵ Armstrong Herbert W., *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, Ambassador College Press: Pasadena, 1967, p. 83. See also Brake E.V., *We Believe in the Faithfulness of God to all His Words*, B.I.W.F.: London [n.d.] and Gawthrop John Rev., *The House of Israel Found in the British Empire and America: The Key-the Covenant Promises Flame with Evidence up-to-date*, Robert Banks: London 1910 and Smith Worth, *The House of Glory; An Interpretation and Elucidation of the Radiant Prophecies, and Allied Messages, of the Holy Bible and the Great Pyramid of Gizeh*, Wise: New York 1943, pp. 59-116. Here, it should be noted that British Israelites have a propensity to use capitals and/or bold print for emphasis.

and that the two cannot be regarded as one.²⁸⁶ David Hilliard wrote in 1995 that ‘on the death of King Salomon we find a revolt in Israel, when ten of the twelve tribes rebelled against Solomon’s son Rehoboam, and set up their own independent kingdom in the north of Palestine’ [...], he continues that ‘from this time onwards in Bible history we have two separate and distinct kingdoms, with two separate dynasties of kings ruling their kingdoms’. He further elaborates on this by stating that ‘this separation into “TWO FAMILIES”, “TWO NATIONS”, “TWO COUNTRIES” and “TWO KINGDOMS” is maintained throughout Bible history and prophecy, Israel of the twelve tribes was no more and has never since been unified as a single STATE’.²⁸⁷

British-Israelism acknowledges that the Assyrian captivity was a result of disobedience, yet there is a general feeling of purpose about it. Curiously, one finds that, rather than lamenting the captivity, the latter is seen as a blessing and fulfilment of divine promises. This cheerful attitude may, in part, be due to the belief that the exile was of relative short duration; that it gave the Lost Tribes time to grow in numbers; and that they waxed strong and independent during this period. Indeed, Worth Smith, a British- Israelite, wrote that ‘the House of Israel was kept captive in Assyria less than one hundred years’ and that ‘during that period they continued to multiply very fast’ and ‘increase in strength and independence as a unit, so much so that they proved themselves a grave liability to their captors rather than an asset’. He continued that ‘the time soon came when the Assyrians could no longer dominate or control Israel; nor were they able to assimilate them into their own people’. Despite the similarities

²⁸⁶ Allen John H., *Judah’s Sceptre and Joseph’s Birthright; an Analysis of the Prophecies of Scripture in regard to the Royal Family of Judah and the many Nations of Israel*, A.A. Beauchamp: Boston 1930, 7th edition originally 1917, p. 65.

²⁸⁷ Hilliard David A., *Britain Awake!; A Challenge and a Warning to the Nation*, Abbey Publishers: Belfast, 1995, p. 45. See also ‘Israel, Judah and the Jews’, *B.I.W.F. Quarterly* (July-September 1995), Covenant Publishing Company, London 1995, p. 20.

between this migration and the Exodus from Egypt, Worth Smith claimed that 'without hindrance or serious attempt at restraint by the Assyrians, the House of Israel folded its tents and migrated in its entirety from the land of its bondage'. This came to pass 'while the House of Judah was still resident in Canaan, before their Babylonian captivity'.²⁸⁸ Where did they go? Worth Smith wrote that they 'did not go 'westward and southwestward to their former homeland in Palestine' but instead 'motivated by some strange and burning urge, headed due northward towards southeastern Europe'.²⁸⁹ This theory is 'substantiated' by a two-pronged approach. The first approach, ostensibly for the more religious and perhaps less scholarly minded, is a steady stream of scriptural references which support their contention that Great Britain is Israel.²⁹⁰ One of the problems, at least for outsiders, is the interpretation of these biblical verses and the random omissions of parts of the same verses that do not fit the interpretation. The second approach, extra-biblical in nature and apparently for the more scholarly minded, is a migration theory constructed through 'historical and archaeological research'. W.E. Filmer in *A Synopsis of the Migrations of Israel* asks whether 'after a lapse of over 2,500 years, it might be thought that all hope of tracing the Israelites has been lost in the mists of antiquity'. The answer is apparently negative because 'archaeologists have, during the last 130 years, unearthed and published the original contemporary records of the Assyrians who took the Israelites captive, and it is from these records that vital clues

²⁸⁸ Smith Worth, *The House of Glory; An Interpretation and Elucidation of the Radiant Prophecies, and allied Messages, of the Holy Bible and the Great Pyramid of Gizeh*, Wise: New York 1943, p. 70. Others such as David Hilliard quote Isaiah 54:7-8; 44:21-22 to prove the same. See Hilliard David A., *Britain Awake!*, p. 59-60.

²⁸⁹ Smith Worth, *The House of Glory; An Interpretation and Elucidation of the Radiant Prophecies, and allied Messages, of the Holy Bible and the Great Pyramid of Gizeh*, Wise: New York 1943, p. 70.

²⁹⁰ Nowadays an abridgment is often published in B.I.W.F pamphlets and other magazines such as *B.I.W.F. Quarterly*, January-March 1996, p. 9. In the past books were written on the subject such as Hine Edward., *Forty-Seven Identifications of the British Nation with the Lost Tribes of Israel: Founded upon Five Hundred Scripture Proofs*, Marshall Brothers, London & Edinburgh, [n.d.].

have come to light'.²⁹¹ In a pseudo-scholarly fashion he used these 'vital clues', to account for the British-Israelite migration theory. Before the exile, Israel was known as Bit Khumri, after king Omri who founded Samaria. Omri in Hebrew starts with the consonant ayin formerly called gayin supposedly pronounced as a guttural -h- (-gh- or -kh-). The Israelites would have called themselves Ghomri, the Assyrians would have written this down as Khumri and the Babylonians as Ghimri. Filmer claims that from the Behistun Rock we know that the Persian equivalent of the Babylonian Ghimri is Sakae or Sakka, probably derived Isaaca, the House of Isaac. From Herodotus, he claims, we know that the Greeks called these Sakae, Scythians. The Romans renamed the Scythians Germans (only the pure Scythians not the Sarmatian tribes who had moved into Scythian territory). Between A.D. 450-1100, some of these came directly to Britain as Anglo-Saxons, others moved through Jutland and became known as Danes and Vikings. Of the latter group, some settled in Britain too, whereas others went to France and became known as the Normans who ultimately subjugated England at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. When all the different groups of Israelites finally arrived in Britain, they fused once more into one nation.

As David M. Williams observed, there are problems with Anglo-Israelism in general and with the migration theory in particular.²⁹² One problem that is particularly pertinent to the migration theory is British Israelism's philology, later revisited in more detail. The British people are said to be descended from Isaac, hence their name Saxons. How does one arrive at that? It is suggested that one removes the -i- from 'Isaac' because vowels are omitted in Hebrew, never mind that following this logic the -a- should also be removed. Furthermore to denote that one belongs to the house of

²⁹¹ Filmer W.F., *A Synopsis of the Migrations of Israel*, Covenant Books: London 1994, p. 5-6.

²⁹² See for example Williams David M., *British Israelism – an expose* found on <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/5951/BI.html?200515>

'saac' one would add something like 'son of' and it is 'not difficult' to see how 'son of Saac' or 'Saac's son' becomes Saxon.²⁹³ Philology based on the similarity of sound has long been discredited and in addition to that Isaac is the Latin form of the Hebrew name Yitzchak and it would be significantly more difficult to derive Saxon from Yitzchak.

British-Israelism assumes that Israel accepted Christianity as a logical and preordained progression from the Old to the New Covenant. Indeed Edward Hine marked the fact that Israel must be a Christian people as the thirty-seventh identification.²⁹⁴ The acceptance of the New Covenant is seen as the reason that God still reckons the House of Israel (through descendants of the Northern Kingdom) to be the Chosen People. For someone sceptical towards the British Israelite theory, this can provide ample ammunition to discredit this very theory. Quite rightly one may ask how and why a people, who received the Mosaic covenant in Sinai, who worshipped at the Temple in Jerusalem, who worshipped two golden calves upon separation from the House of Judah, and who were, because of disobedience, exiled to polytheistic Mesopotamia would not only adopt Christianity but become its special propagators and protectors. Anglo-Israelism has multiple ways of 'proving' this. One way is to claim that Christianity is not a completely new religion and that one should look at Christianity through the eyes of the Old Testament. Edward Hine, for example, wrote that 'the whole routine of the Mosaic law was a training school to bring Israel to Christ' and quotes Galatians 3:24 to support his statement. Furthermore, God promised, for example, in Jeremiah 31:31-37 not to forget His people and that He would make a New

²⁹³ See for example Armstrong Herbert W., *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, Ambassador College Press: Pasadena, 1967, p. 116 and Gawler John C., *Our Scythian Ancestors Identified with Israel*, W.H. Guest: London 1875. The Oxford English Dictionary has of course a different explanation of the words Saxon.

²⁹⁴ Hine Edward, *Forty-Seven Identifications of the British Nation with the Lost Tribes of Israel: Founded upon Five Hundred Scripture Proofs*, Marshall Brothers, London & Edinburgh, [n.d.], pp. 45-47.

Covenant with them. For British-Israelites there is no doubt what that new covenant entails —Christ and Christianity (Hebrews 8:1-13 and Hebrews 9). It is assumed that Israel, practising their religion faithfully, as they would after a punishment as severe as exile, immediately recognised Christianity when they came into contact with it and accepted it as the fulfilment of the Old Covenant. They point out that the time frame also fits because tradition says that Christianity was established in the British Isles by Christ's disciples who came shortly after the crucifixion and not in Roman times.²⁹⁵

Another 'proof' is scriptural interpretation combined with mathematics which shows the movement's propensity for date-setting. The biblical chapter Leviticus 26 is used and of particular interest are verses 18; 24-25; 28; 33; 41-45.²⁹⁶ In these verses one finds three elements. Firstly Israel is to be punished seven times for its iniquities, secondly the punishment is scattering among the heathen and thirdly the Lord will remember them after they have repented and accepted their punishment. David Hilliard, in *Britain Awake!* claims that the seven times, mentioned in these verses, represent 2520

²⁹⁵ See Hansen Vaughn E., *Whence Came They?*, C.F.I.: Springville, 1993, pp. 18-19.

²⁹⁶ **Verse 18:** And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

Verse 24-25: Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

Verse 28: Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.

Verse 33: And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

Verse 41-45: [...] if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember [...]: and they shall accept the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgements, and because their soul abhorred my statutes. And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenants of their ancestors,[...].

years or seven cycles of 360 years.²⁹⁷ These 2550 years started between the years 741 B.C and 721 B.C. when the Israelites were led into exile and ended when General Allenby, fulfilling prophecy, delivered Jerusalem from the Gentiles. How does this tie up with the three elements found in Leviticus? It was in exile that God cut the Israelites off from the covenant as part of their punishment. This punishment had to be borne in full and the prophet Hosea describes the Israelites during this time as *lo-ammi*, not my people anymore (Hosea 1:9 and 2:6). So the Israelites, no longer a covenant people and bereft of divine influence lost their distinct identity and became indistinguishable from the Gentile nations among whom they were now living thereby reaping the full wrath of God. However, God did not forget them entirely because as mentioned above the third element in Leviticus 26 is God's promise to remember the covenant. This act of remembrance is, however, not the return of a number of Jews to Jerusalem because the scattering of the House of Israel has nothing to do with the Babylonian captivity, again here the strict separation of the Houses of Judah and Israel. As it happens, claim the British Israelites, Leviticus was also fulfilled for the House of Judah who returned to Jerusalem. They, too, had a chance to accept Christianity when Christ was living among them. They, however, rejected it thereby fulfilling Jesus' prophecy when He said: '[...] Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled' (Luke 21:24). The time of the Gentiles, they say, can only refer to the seven times mentioned in Leviticus 26. Assuming that being the case one has to look whether there is any evidence of the Lord remembering Judah and Israel after 2520 years and whether that revival can somehow be connected to the Anglo-Saxon people. British Israelites claim that about 2550 years after the deportation Israel begins to revive as prophesied. As shown by the migration theory, the last remaining Israelites had by

²⁹⁷ The mathematical calculations can be found in Hilliard David A., *Britain Awake!*, pp. 41-43.

that time settled in the British Isles where Christianity was being preached and accepted. Britain before this time was poor and rather insignificant but now it started to bloom. The Americas were explored leading eventually to the Pilgrim Fathers leaving Britain and establishing another colony of Israelites. Britain itself slowly grew into the Empire establishing its influence in the sub-continent of India, Australia, New Zealand and many nations in Africa. By the mid-nineteenth century The British Empire counted over 80 million subjects. All these developments were prophesied about in the Old Testament and only Britain fits into all the Old Testament prophecies. The eventual disappearance of the Empire is no problem either as also that was prophesied in Genesis 48:19 where it says: '[...] and his seed shall become a multitude of nations' which the British Israelites interpret as a Commonwealth of nations i.e. the Empire was merely a forerunner. The seven times also apply to other important dates in British history. In 975 B.C. the Ten Tribes rebel against the House of David and establish their own kingdom and worship in Samaria. When one adds 2520 years to that one arrives at 1546, the year that the Reformation took root in England and its inhabitants returned to the pure word of God. In 741 B.C. half the Tribe of Manasseh together with Ruben and Gad were taken into exile. When one adds 2520 years to that one arrives at 1780, a central date in the birth process of the United States.²⁹⁸ This is the fulfilment of the prophecy that Manasseh would become a great nation, separate from Ephraim. In 604 B.C. the first deportation to Babylon took place. When one adds 2520 years to that one arrives at 1917, the year in which Jerusalem was delivered from Gentile dominion by the British General Allenby.

²⁹⁸ The American Colonists declared independence in 1776 but it was not granted until 1783 and therefore 1780, according to the British Israelites can be considered a central date.

All this scriptural and mathematical evidence, according to British -Israelites cannot just be accidental and they accept it as further evidence that indeed the Anglo-Saxon people are the Israelites who accepted Christianity as it was preached to the Gentiles from whom, for a while, they were indistinguishable.

Last but not least, touched upon briefly previously, is a belief that there are in the English language many words that are of Hebrew origin. Not only can the word Saxon be derived from Isaac but also the words British and Britannia are said to be of Hebrew origin. British, a combination of *brith* (covenant) and *ish* (man) means 'man of the covenant' and Britannia is derived from *brith* and *onia* (ship) thus giving 'ship of the covenant'. Other words are kitten from the *katan* (small) scale from *shakal* (to weigh) and sever from *shavar* (to break), lad from *yeled* (boy). On the surface this is very exciting but with a modicum of knowledge of Hebrew one would know that to get 'man of the covenant', for example, one would have to use the Hebrew construct state which would be *ish-ha-brith*. Moreover what would one do with words such as childish and foolish? On the whole, many of the philological claims of the British Israelites seem a classic case of *faux amis*. Although it is quite acceptable to use language to unlock certain ethnological mysteries one certainly cannot use etymology as proof of ethnological origin. Trade and/or immigration, for example, can often be the reason for words to cross national borders and cultures.²⁹⁹

As far as the motifs are concerned, on the whole they are recurring. As is to be expected some are more prominent than others as was seen in previous sources. The

²⁹⁹ In colloquial Dutch there are, for example, many words that have a 'Hebrew' origin. Most people will accept that these words are not proof that the Dutch are of Israelite origin but that they are a result of the interaction between the Dutch and the local Jewish communities. A few examples are *joedje* for Fl 10, *mesjoche* for crazy, *bajes* for jail and *jatten* for hands and/or stealing. An exception to this is Helene W. van Woelderen who claimed in her book, *Strange Parallel* that the Dutch might well be descendants of the Tribe of Zebulon.

aetiological motif, the separation motif, the freedom to bondage and bondage to freedom motifs, the strength and abundance motifs are all present. Notably absent is the Genesis motif. More remarkable, however, is that some recurring motifs, in particular the related lineage, repentance, and election motifs are used differently. As a direct result also the independence, superiority, and non-conformity motifs change. Lineage started to play a vital role as the belief that the Anglo-Saxon peoples are blood descendants of Ancient Israel lies at the foundation of British-Israelism. In previous Lost Tribe literature, lineage was a tool to gain credibility with the audience or readers and no preference was given to a particular tribe. British-Israelism started out in a similar vein, advocating that the British and most northern European nations were descendants of the Ancient Israelites. Slowly, however, a notion gained popularity that the British and only the British were not descendants of just any Lost Tribe but descendants only of the Tribe of Ephraim, the so-called birthright tribe. As such they were heirs to all the rights, privileges and blessings appertaining to the Abrahamic Covenant. They became separate from other nations and like the Benei Moshe in Eldad, this separation, too, brings with it a special, not to be defiled purity. The repentance motif was also used differently. Previously it was used to show that the Lost Tribes repented of their pre-exile wickedness and it was thought that, as a reward, they became rich, strong, successful, and independent. These qualities and commodities were attractive to people in search of either rescuers or allies. Anglo-Israelism, however, used the same motif to create a foundation for the acceptance of Christianity by the Lost Tribes, vital if one casts the Christian British nation as the Ten Lost Tribes. It is thus interesting to see that the Ten Tribes are no longer the enemies of Christianity nor are they useful allies who eventually will have to convert to Christianity. Through the acceptance of Christianity their election as a special people becomes sure and it is

through them and not through the Jews that the Abrahamic Covenant is fulfilled. This completely changes the position of the Lost Tribes as deliverers. Whereas before any member of any of the Lost Tribes could come to the rescue of any third party, now the Tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh are mainly involved in the rescue of their own who are not yet aware of their identity and the ancient blessings connected to this identity. The military role often played by the Lost Tribes in the past is no longer present. Indeed, if there is to be any form of rescue of third parties, it is indirect. David Hilliard explained this as follows:

This calling and election of Israel affords certain privileges and tremendous blessings, but it also places upon Israel the greatest responsibility ever placed upon any people. They were given a World Mission to bless all mankind, and to establish God's righteous domain on the earth.³⁰⁰

Thus, even though the British Israelites are mainly concerned with the physical and spiritual rescue of their own people, the world as a whole will be a better place through Britain's righteousness.

In some instances this has had some far-reaching consequences. It has for example led to isolationism, racial prejudice, and anti-Semitism. From the assumption that the British people are direct descendants of the House of Israel with a special role in modern days rises the question how best to fulfil this divine calling. The British Israelites maintain that throughout history God kept at least a portion of the Ten Tribes separate from other nations although they themselves may not always been aware of that. This separation made it possible for God's plan to fully unfold in modern days. It is in modern, liberal Britain that problems arise. In an attempt to establish a multi-racial society, Israel's Christian values are eroded by non-Israelites who bring their own values, traditions and views on life into Britain. Israel, to a certain extend weak and

³⁰⁰ Hilliard David A., *Britain Awake!*, p. 20

easily influenced as in biblical days, is departing from its unique role as covenant people in God's plan and departing from that very covenant. The British Israelites see only one solution to these problems. Israel has to repent and seek total independence and separate itself within reason from non-Israelite nations and their way of life. It is the non-Israelite ways of life -however well meant- which is luring Israel away from their covenant with God. Thus it is believed that 'the immigrant on entering our land must renounce those practices and cultures that offend our society, and they must be willing to submit themselves to the laws and cultures of our Christian way of life'.³⁰¹ In addition to that membership of international organisations such as the E.C. and the U.N. are not advocated.³⁰² After all membership of these organisations often leads to compromises and via the back door, non-Israelite influences and decisions are forced upon Britain in every aspect of life. An example is the fact that British Common Law has always been based upon Old Testament laws and statutes and remained unaltered until Britain joined the E.C. in 1973.³⁰³ Non-membership of these international organisations is seen as rather harmless. Racial prejudice and the resulting feeling of superiority were particularly rife when the British Empire and all its grandeur and achievements were at their pinnacle. Indeed the biblical interpretations of British-Israelism served as a justification and divine sanctification of the British Empire and its policies. William A. Redding, for example, wrote in 1894:

Go over the earth and collect together all the Anglo-Saxon people and put them in a bunch to themselves; then collect together all the other races of people, such as the Chinese, Japanese, Egyptians, Hindus, Malayas,

³⁰¹ Hilliard David A., *Britain Awake!*, p. 117

³⁰² Stough Harold E., *A Jubilee of Witness*, The Covenant publishing Company: London [n.d.], p. 4b (address given at 50th British Israel World Foundation Congress)
Hilliard David, *Britain Awake*, p. 10.
Browning Matthew J., 'From the President's Desk' in *B.I.W.F. Quarterly*, 9/1 (January-March 1996), p. 16.

³⁰³ Beswick J. Brian, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, Covenant Books: London [n.d.], p. 5.

Negroes, Indians, Arabians and many other kinds of human beings, and put them all together in a bunch to themselves. Then compare the one congregation with the other. In the Anglo-Saxon bunch you will see high foreheads, long, slim intellectual noses, brilliant eyes, fine texture of the skin, well-proportioned physical frames and fine, smooth hair. Turn to the other group of races. There you will see the low, flat foreheads, heavy, short, thick noses, vicious eyes, coarse hair, and uncomely features.³⁰⁴

As far as anti-Semitism is concerned, the British-Israelites do not seem to be able to make up their mind. In earlier days, there was more anti-Semitism and it was often along the lines of the mediaeval theme that the Jews were wicked because they crucified Christ as can be seen in another of William A. Redding rants:

God designated one part as Israel and the other part as Judah, and this part called Judah are the Jews we see on our streets today, and we can pick them out by their looks, as the Bible tells us that God marked their faces so we can tell them anywhere so that they can be persecuted for killing Christ.³⁰⁵

As time went on open calls for persecuting all Jews diminished and only Ashkenazi Jews remained a target.³⁰⁶ However, in comparison to other instances of anti-Semitism in modern days, one has to conclude that the movement is, by and large, not anti-Semitic in nature. It could be argued that on average Jews are not treated worse by the British-Israelites than other 'inferior' races.

b. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

When, on 6th April 1830, Joseph Smith (1805-1844) and five other individuals organised The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the village of Fayette in western New York, there were few signs that this group of six people would grow into

³⁰⁴ Redding William A., *The Millennial Kingdom; A Book of Surprises*, Ernest Loomis: New York, 1894, pp. 45-48, quoted in Friedman O. Michael., *Origins of the British Israelites: The Lost Tribes*, Mellen Research University Press, San Francisco 1993, pp. 103-104.

³⁰⁵ Redding William A., *The Millennial Kingdom; A Book of Surprises*, pp. 45-48.

³⁰⁶ Smith Worth., *The House of Glory; An Interpretation and Elucidation of the Radiant Prophecies, and Allied Messages, of the Holy Bible and the Great Pyramid of Gizeh*, Wise: New York 1943, pp. 113-114.

an international religious movement.³⁰⁷ The movement is better known as Mormonism or the Mormon Church after their sacred book, *The Book of Mormon* and is the fourth largest denomination in the United States.³⁰⁸ The events leading up to the organisation of the LDS Church, however, go back to the spring of 1820.

Joseph Smith was the third of nine children of Joseph Smith, Sr, and Lucy Mack Smith, farmers whose forebears had migrated to New England in the seventeenth century. Widespread crop failures in the summer of 'eighteen hundred-and-froze-to-death' (1816), was the final nail in the coffin of these poor farmers and, like many others, the Smiths were forced to leave New England behind them and migrate to the lands along the Genesee and Mowhawk rivers as well as Ohio country.³⁰⁹ After a number of ill-fated ventures they eventually settled in Palmyra, western New York. Although the family continued to work hard, they remained economically deprived.³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ By the time Joseph Smith was martyred, in 1844, the LDS Church had 26,000 members. In 1963, the total membership stood at two million, in 1979 there were four million and this increased to eight million by 1991. As at December 31st 2006 there are 12,868,606 Latter-Day Saints (figures taken from the Statistical Report 2006 as presented at the 177th Annual General Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah on 31st March 2007).

³⁰⁸ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is often abbreviated to LDS Church. Its members are referred to as Latter-day Saints, LDS, Saints, or Mormons which is somewhat derogatory and will, therefore, be avoided in this dissertation.

³⁰⁹ In 1815 the volcanic eruption of Mount Tambora in the Dutch East Indies created a dust cloud that adversely affected the weather in Western Europe, New England, and Eastern Canada in the summer of 1816. See Henry and Elizabeth Stommel, 'The year without a Summer' in *Scientific American* 240 (June 1979), pp. 176-186 quoted in Hansen Klaus J., *Mormonism and the American Experience*, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1981, p. 2 note 1.

³¹⁰ For more details about the Joseph Smith family see Smith Lucy M., *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and his Progenitors for many Generations*, published for Orson Pratt by S.W. Richards: Liverpool 1853 and Anderson Richard Lloyd, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage: Influences of Grandfathers Solomon Mack and Asael Smith*, 2nd rev. edn, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City; BYU Press: Provo, 2003.

At the same time, the United States were in the grip of religious revivalism also known as the Second Great Awakening.³¹¹ The Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s had engulfed every layer of society with a religious enthusiasm fuelled by itinerant preachers drawing large crowds. As time went on, however, the colonials became occupied with pressing matters of a more temporal nature such as the American Revolution, and religious fervour diminished leaving in its wake a religious and moral void. In the early nineteenth century another national religious upswing took place. Emotional religion became once again part of the landscape and revivalists adapted the itinerant preaching of the Great Awakening into the idea of the camp meetings, large open-air sermons accompanied by prayers and hymn singing. Fiery preachers, imbued by the Holy Ghost, called people to repentance and warned that the day of the Second Coming was nigh. Some of these camp meetings lasted over a week and were attended by 20,000-30,000 people. In some cases people were so 'moved by the spirit' that they imitated animals, had fits, or acted as if they were possessed. Peter E. Prosser wrote that 'Americans in the early nineteenth century were extremely interested in the millennium, the 1,000 years of peace' and that 'whether optimists or pessimists, radical or conservative, Americans used the language of millennialism to support their view'.³¹²

In this environment of economic deprivation, the constant barrage of millennial language, and religious revivalism which facilitated a proliferation of religious options, Joseph Smith grew up. It is therefore, perhaps, not surprising that this young but deeply religious boy, felt confused by the cacophony of voices and the strife between the different religious groups. Later in his life he expressed his confusion as follows:

³¹¹ The Second Great Awakening was a surge of religious spirit in the United States, peaking between 1820 and 1840.

³¹² Prosser Peter E., *Dispensationalist Eschatology and Its Influence on American and British Religious Movements*, Texts and Studies in Religion Vol 82, Edwin Mellen Press: Lewiston, 1999, p. 170.

For, notwithstanding the great love which the converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion, and the great zeal manifested by the respective clergy [...] it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feelings ensued; priest contending against priest, and convert against convert; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.³¹³

Then in the spring of 1820, young Joseph Smith, read in the *Epistle of James* 1:5 (KJV): ‘If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him’. He took this ancient scripture to heart and retired into the woods to pray for religious guidance.³¹⁴ Joseph Smith and his followers maintain that his prayer was answered in a rather unusual way. While praying he was ‘seized upon by some power which entirely overcame’ him ‘and had such an astonishing influence over’ him ‘as to bind’ his ‘tongue so that’ he ‘could not speak’. ‘Thick darkness gathered around’ him and it seemed he was ‘doomed to sudden destruction’. He, however, called with all his might upon God to deliver him. When he ‘was ready to sink into despair and abandon’ himself ‘to destruction – not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such a marvellous power as’ he ‘had never before felt in any being – just at this moment of great alarm’ he ‘saw a pillar of light [...] above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually. Immediately, he was freed from this oppressive darkness and surrounded by a brilliant light. In this light he saw ‘two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description’ standing in the air. In his writings Joseph Smith identifies these two distinct physical beings as God the Father and Jesus Christ. God

³¹³ Smith Joseph Jr, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. by Brigham H. Roberts, 7 vols, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Salt Lake City, 1932-1951, I, p. 3

³¹⁴ In 1838, a number of years after the establishment of the LDS Church a more mature Joseph Smith wrote: ‘in the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions I often said to myself, what is to be done? Who of all these parties is right? Or are they all wrong together.’

the Father, addressing him by name, only spoke to introduce Jesus Christ as his Beloved Son. After recovering, Joseph asked the question that instigated his prayer in the first place viz. ‘which of all the sects is right, that I might know which to join?’ He apparently was counselled to join none of them and to prepare himself for important tasks, the nature of which would be made known to him in the future.³¹⁵ A few days later he told a local minister about the vision, too, and was astonished about the hostile reception.³¹⁶ People ridiculed him immediately, called him a fraud, and some even thought he was dangerous. How could someone so unprepossessing and with so few qualifications claim that God had spoken to him? This initial hostile reception proved to be a foreshadowing of persecution to come which culminated in the martyrdom of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum in 1844.

The persecution, perhaps surprisingly, did not deter him and in the subsequent ten years, Joseph Smith reported other extraordinary religious experiences, among them visitations by John the Baptist, and the New Testament apostles Peter, James and John. They gave Joseph Smith and a few associates the priesthood authority they needed to

³¹⁵ Joseph Smith’s first account of the First Vision can be found on the official website of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: <http://www.lds.org/library/the%5Fpro%5Fjos/the%5Fpro%5Fjos.html>>. Also Backman Milton V., *Joseph Smith’s First Vision: The First Vision in Its Historical Context*, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1971. Since this dissertation deals with the LDS perspective of the Lost Tribe myth and not with the veracity of the LDS Church, the official version is used. It must, however, be noted that this version was written down in 1838 and that up until that time diary entries and oral traditions with all its incumbent issues were in circulation. The order of events which led to the publication of *The Book of Mormon* and the establishment of the LDS Church appear at times problematic and perhaps they cannot be reconstituted precisely. Consequently there is an ongoing discussion about the subject by proponents and opponents of the LDS Church. Some of the more recent information on this discussion can be found on websites such as <http://lds-mormon.com/fv.shtml> or www.irr.org/mit/First-Vision-Accounts.html or www.jefflindsay.com/LDSFAQ/FQ_first_vision.shtml or [www.fairlds.org/Misc/Did_Early_LDS_Leaders_Misunderstand the_First_Vision.html](http://www.fairlds.org/Misc/Did_Early_LDS_Leaders_Misunderstand_the_First_Vision.html) or for a neutral synopsis on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Vision.

³¹⁶ Joseph Smith History 1:21-26

implement the restoration, promised in 1820.³¹⁷ In that same year he published *The Book of Mormon; Another Witness of Christ*. Joseph Smith claimed that he received *The Book of Mormon*, written on golden plates from the angel Moroni. Like the Old Testament, the book is an amalgamation of the history and religious teachings of an extinct Christian people in pre-Columbian America. Consecutive prophets, starting in 600 B.C. with Nephi, chronicled the origins, wanderings, wars and general vicissitudes of their people. Interspersed in this are religious teachings, exhortations, and descriptions of temporary near theocratic societies. During his life as a mortal man, Moroni is said to be the last person to work on the record and he buried it in what is now known as the hill Cumorah near Palmyra, New York around A.D. 400.

The Book of Mormon is a collection of fifteen books. The first two books, I and II Nephi tell how, God commanded Lehi, in a dream, to take his family (later joined by Zoram and Ishmael and his family) from Jerusalem shortly before the Babylonian captivity. After a long journey in the wilderness where more children were born, they arrived at the seashore and Nephi was commanded to build a ship which would take them to the Promised Land i.e. America. Shortly after landing in the Promised Land there was a final break between Nephi and his followers and his rebellious brothers, Laman and Lemuel. Their descendants, the Nephites and the Lamanites are the main people in the Book of Mormon. The next four books, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, and Omni are short books that tell the story of the land of Zarahemla, which had been settled by another group of Hebrews who had left when Zedekiah was carried captive to Babylon (Omni 12-19). These books are followed by The Words of Mormon, apparently the

³¹⁷ The LDS Church is restorationist and millennialist in nature. Joseph Smith, however, went further with these ideas than contemporaries such as William C. Miller and Alexander Campbell. He taught that after the death of the last apostle, a great apostasy had taken place and that now, in preparation of the Second Coming of Christ, the time had come to restore 'all things' as promised in the Bible.

father of Moroni. He compiled *The Book of Mormon* before Moroni put the finishing touches to it. Next are three important books, Mosiah, Alma, and Heleman. In these books the history of the Nephites is further developed. Space is devoted to the reigns of Kings Mosiah and Benjamin, the wars with the Lamanites, the success in converting some of the Lamanites, the coming of the anti-Christ Korihor, and the prophecy of the Samuel the Lamanite. These books also are heavy-weights in the area of religious doctrine. After these books come III Nephi and IV Nephi, which describe the coming of Christ to the American continent after his crucifixion and resurrection in Jerusalem and the establishment of the Church of Christ among the Nephites and Lamanites.³¹⁸ Following this account is *The Book of Mormon* which chronicles the final battle between the Nephites and Lamanites in which the former are wiped out except for Mormon and his son Moroni. At this point the flow of the book is interrupted by the insertion of the Book of Ether, the history of a people called the Jaredites who came to the Americas in windowless and waterproof barges at the time of the Tower of Babel. Finally there is the Book of Moroni, which describes ritual practices and gives doctrinal instruction. It also contains Moroni's challenge to future readers to ask of God if these things are not true (Moroni 4:10).

Latter-day Saints, who have taken on the challenge, often report some kind of religious experience that convinces them that *The Book of Mormon* is true. For

³¹⁸ This account of the risen Christ visiting the pre-Colombian Americas is perhaps the most controversial part in *The Book of Mormon*. For adherents to the faith, however, it is perhaps the most moving part of the book and seen as a fulfilment of John 10:16 'And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd'. They argue if the risen Christ appeared on the road to Emmaus and to the apostles and later to Thomas, why should he not appear in the Americas.

outsiders the authorship of the book is an interesting question.³¹⁹ It has been said that Sidney Rigdon, a Campbellite minister who later became a prominent convert to the LDS Church was the author. Another suggestion was that it was plagiarised from an unpublished novel by Solomon Spaulding. However, once the Spaulding manuscript was found and examined it became quite clear that the two had very little in common. Spaulding's characters travelled through easily recognisable landscape and the places he mentioned could be found on a map of the area. In *The Book of Mormon* the characters come ashore at an unknown location, presumed to be America. The only geographical reference is a 'narrow neck of land' (Ether 10:20) and names of cities, places and people have no connections to modern Indians.³²⁰ Another theory was that Joseph Smith plagiarised *Views of the Hebrews; or, The Ten Tribes of Israel in America* published in 1823 by Ethan Smith, a Congregational minister in Poultney, Vermont. The reason for this is that Oliver Cowdery's family lived in Poultney and Oliver did not leave until after the book's publication. Even though Joseph Smith is not known to have seen the book until later in his life, critics argue that the parallels between it and *The Book of Mormon* are strong enough to assume that Oliver Cowdery told Joseph Smith about the book and so provided the seeds for *The Book of Mormon*. Interestingly enough and

³¹⁹ A number of books and articles have been written on the authorship of the Book of Mormon. Perhaps some of the more interesting ones are Howard A. Davis, Donald R. Scales, Wayne L. Cowdrey, with Gretchen Passantino, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?*, Vision House: Santa Ana, Ca, c. 1977. Bush Lester E., 'The Spaulding Theory Then and Now', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10/4 (1977), 40-69. Plowman Edward E., 'Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?' *Christianity Today* 21/19 (July 1977), 32-34. Cowdrey Wayne L., Davis Howard A. and Arthur Vanick, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon: The Spalding Enigma*, Concordia Publishing House: St Louis, c. 2005.

³²⁰ The Book of Mormon is so lacking in specific orientation points that even Mormon scholars today debate the location of the Nephite nation. See for example Givens Terryl L., *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion*, Oxford University Press: New York 2002, pp. 126-130 or Sorenson John L., *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, 1985.

regardless of what early Latter-day Saints said, the word Indian does not appear once in *The Book of Mormon*. Whereas the numerous books dealing with the question of whether or not the Indians are Jews are based upon parallels with the Old Testament, the prophets of *The Book of Mormon* taught pure Christianity.

Whatever the source of the book is, it clearly emerges that the subject matter is congruent with the beliefs, hopes, and sentiments of America at that time.³²¹ David Chidester called the book a 'distinctively American revelation' because it shows 'the sacred history of ancient Israel [...] to be continuous with the sacred history of America'.³²² This echoes the thoughts of Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), the famous Russian author, statesman, philosopher, and founder of the now defunct religious movement, Tolstoyism, who thought that 'the Mormon people teach the American religion'.³²³

The First Vision, subsequent angelic visitations, and the publication of *The Book of Mormon* serve as the foundational sacred episodes of LDS religious tradition. It is unlikely that there will ever be a consensus as far as these foundational episodes or, indeed, Joseph Smith are concerned. Whether one considers them as true or delusions or psychological experiences will always depend on which side of the fence one stands. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the LDS Church, since its inception, has been very

³²¹ No archaeological evidence that substantiate the Book of Mormon have been found. There has, however been a trickle of research that point to a possible migration from the Ancient near East to the Americas see Gordon Cyrus H., 'The Ten Lost Tribes' in *Hebrew and the Bible in America; The First Two Centuries*, ed. by Shalom Goldman, University Press of New England: Hanover N.H, 1993, pp. 61-69 and Coe Michael D., 'Mormons and Archaeology: An Outside View', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8/2 (1973), 40-48 and Sorenson John L. and Raish Martin H., *Transoceanic Culture Contacts Between the Old and the New Worlds in Pre-Colombian Times: A Comprehensive and Annotated Bibliography*, Foundation for Ancient research and Mormon Studies: Provo, 1988.

³²² Chidester David, *Christianity; A Global History*, Allen Lane: London 2000, pp. 442-443.

³²³ Barlow Philip L., *Mormons and the Bible; The Place of the Latter-Day Saints in American Religion*, Oxford University Press: Oxford 1991, p. viii and for the full text at <http://www.blankslade.net/texts/tolstoy.php>

much in the public domain. Much has been written about the LDS Church, its teachings and place in history. A proportion is polemic, sometimes demagogic but, perhaps surprisingly, since the 1960s a remarkable amount of scholarly research has been conducted too. Moses Rischin wrote:

‘in the course of the past decade, Mormon history has for the first time attracted an array of sophisticated scholars within and without the Mormon fold that has no parallel in the history of any other religious group in America- with the single exception of the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, the grandfathers of us all’ [...] Indeed, despite its vaunted ethnocentricism, Mormon history seems unique in its magnetic fascination and imaginative challenge to Mormon and non-Mormon alike.’³²⁴

The main thrust of this scholarly research is first and foremost the fact that the LDS Church is such a quintessential example of the American religion.³²⁵ However, of no less importance is research into the role the LDS Church has played and still plays in the dissemination of the Lost Tribe myth. A combination of its teachings regarding the Lost Tribes of Israel, on the one hand, and its numerous adherents worldwide, on the other hand, have put this myth in the public domain as never before in history.

In analyzing the beliefs regarding the Lost Tribes of Israel in the LDS Church one finds immediately a dichotomy. On the one hand, there are the theories and stories about the whereabouts and gathering of the Lost Tribes. These theories deal with the temporal and physical side i.e. the present location of the Lost Tribes. On the other hand there is doctrine which deals with the spiritual role of the House of Israel and

³²⁴ Rischin Moses, ‘The New Mormon History’ in *The American West* 6/2 (March 1969), p. 49 (The American West Publishing Company, Palo Alto)

³²⁵ See for example Stark Rodney and Bainbridge William S., *The Future of Religion; Secularization, revival and Cult Formation*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1985, p. 486 or Shipps Jan, *Mormonism; The Story of a New Religious Tradition*, University of Illinois Press: Urbana and Chicago, 1985 or *Differing Visions; Dissenters in Mormon History*, ed. by Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher, University of Illinois Press: Urbana and Chicago, 1994, p. 4 or A. Leyland Jamison who said ‘the historical evolution of the Mormons furnishes the most thrilling chapter in the whole chronicle of American religion’ quoted in Barlow Philip L., *Mormons and the Bible; The Place of the Latter-Day Saints in American Religion*, Oxford University Press: Oxford 1991, p. viii.

which shows very little concern about the location of the Ten Tribes. These two facets of belief seem to lead a separate life next to each other. Consequently, one has to make a clear distinction between tradition and doctrine in order to get a complete picture about the role the Lost Tribes myth plays in the LDS Church. Only after a analysis of the two, can one answer with any degree of certainty the question whether the theories and doctrine complement each other, whether they are mutually opposed, whether they are interdependent, or whether they have an independent life within the LDS community.

In the late 1950s Walt Whipple collected and discussed in great detail the Lost Tribe theories within the LDS Church and some of its off-shoots.³²⁶ For the purpose of this dissertation, less detail suffices and the various theories have been classified into four broad categories.

1. The North Pole Theory
2. The Concave Theory
3. The Unknown Planet Theory
4. The Dispersion Theory

The North Pole Theory is a theory that Whipple classified as supernatural. He concedes that this is, perhaps, 'not the best term' but that it describes the nature of the theory i.e. the theory 'cannot be explained by occurrences or laws known to men'. The first written record of this theory is an 1835 letter from William W. Phelps (1792-1872)

³²⁶ Whipple Walt, *A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes*, an unpublished research paper prepared at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1958-1959.

to Oliver Cowdery (1806-1850) in which the former speculated about the possibility of the Lost Ten Tribes residing in the region of the North Pole.³²⁷ He stated:

The parts of the globe that are known probably contain 700 million inhabitants, and those parts which are unknown may be supposed to contain more than four times as many more, making an estimated total of about three thousand, five hundred and eighty million of souls: Let no man marvel at this statement, because there may be a continent at the north pole, of more than 1300 square miles, containing thousands of millions of Israelites, who, after a high way is cast up in the great deep, may come to Zion, singing songs of everlasting joy. The Lord must bring to pass the words of Isaiah, which say to the North "Give up; and to the South; keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." From the north and south end, I presume, as no one has ever pretended, that there was an end to the globe anywhere else.³²⁸

This theory slowly gained respectability by the second half of the nineteenth century and one finds that other Church leaders started to give their opinions about it, albeit in their usual somewhat cautious and non-committing manner.³²⁹ In the early years of the 20th century the general membership of the LDS Church also added their voice and soon books and articles, one more fanciful than the other started appearing in support of the North Pole Theory.³³⁰ Further speculation was soon to be curtailed when, in April 1909, Robert E. Peary led an expedition to the North Pole and discovered that it

³²⁷ Both these men were in leading positions in the LDS Church. Oliver Cowdery was a primary participant in the formative years of the LDS Church, he was one of the three witness of the Golden Plates, a scribe to Joseph Smith. He was often referred to as the Second Elder of the church. For more information see Gunn Stanley R., *Oliver Cowdery: Second Elder and Scribe*, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1962 or Legg Philip R., *Oliver Cowdery: The Elusive Second Elder of the Restoration*, Herald House: Independence, Missouri, c. 1989. William W. Phelps was also scribe to Joseph Smith. He became an important leader in the early years of the LDS Church. He was assistant president of the church in Missouri, the church printer, an editor of church publications and he wrote a number of hymns.

³²⁸ Phelps William W., 'A Letter to Oliver Cowdery', *Messenger and Advocate*, 3 vols., II (October 1835), p. 194.

³²⁹ Pratt Orson, 'Where Are The Ten Tribes of Israel?', *Millennial Star*, 29 (March 30th 1867), pp. 200-201 and again *Journal of Discourses*, 18 (1875), pp. 23, 26, 68 and Reynolds George, 'The Assyrian Captivity', in *Juvenile Instructor*, 64 vols., XVIII (January 15th 1883), p. 28.

³³⁰ For example Lindelof O.J.S., *A Trip to the North Pole, or, the Discovery of the Ten Tribes, as Found in the Arctic Ocean*, Tribune Printing Company: Salt Lake City, Utah, 1903.

was uninhabited. A few months after that Charles W. Penrose, an Apostle, cautioned the members that, although vast areas of the Arctic had not yet been explored, it was not established Church doctrine to consider the north, mentioned in scriptures, as the North Pole.³³¹ By the 1940's the theory had very few supporters.

The Concave Theory, sometimes called the hollow-earth theory, proposes that the Lost Tribes live in a hollow area or a concave area, like a dormant volcano in or in the region of the North Pole. An early reference to the belief in this theory is found in the diary of Benjamin F. Johnson who writes that on one occasion he asked Joseph Smith the favourite question of the time. The diary reads:

I asked where the nine and a half tribes of Israel were. "Well," said he, "you remember the old caldron or potash kettle you used to boil maple sap in for sugar, don't you?" I said yes. "Well," said he, "they are in the north pole in a concave just the shape of that kettle. And John the Revelator is with them, preparing them for their return."³³²

Various other articles and books on the same subject appeared. Orson Pratt, in an 1875 sermon in Salt Lake City opined that this theory could very well be the answer. He said:

[...] one thing I do know, from that which is reported by those who have tried to find a passage to the pole, that there is a warmer country off there, and that birds of passage go north to find a warmer climate. That I know from the writings of intelligent men who have been on voyages of discovery. And I know, furthermore, that they have crossed by means of dogs and sledges a certain portion of this great band of ice and have come to an open band of sea, which proves that there is a warmer country further north. There is a tract of country around the pole, some seven or eight hundred miles in diameter, that no man among the nations that we are acquainted with, has ever explored. But how much of that land may be fit for habitation I am not prepared to say, for I do not know. I know it would be a very easy matter for the Lord God, by the aid of great mountain ranges

³³¹ Penrose Charles W., *Millennial Star*, 71 (4 November 1909), p. 699 and again in *Improvement Era*, 13 (October 1910), p. 1087 quoted in W. Whipple, A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes, pp. 14-15.

³³² Johnson Benjamin F., *My Life's Review*, Zion's Printing and Publishing: Independence, MO, 1947, p. 93 quoted in Whipple W., *A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes*, p. 9.

encircling them around about, to produce a band of ice which would prevent other nations and people very easily reaching them. [...] ³³³

That there was a lively discussion within the LDS community about the subject also becomes apparent when a person, known only by his or her initials, published an article in a local weekly in which (s)he states that (s)he ‘cannot believe that they are in any such a locality’. ³³⁴ This theory is by no means unique to the LDS Church as it was first proposed by the British astronomer Edmund Halley in the 17th century when scientific knowledge about the earth was still in its infancy. Although scientific discoveries soon consigned the theory to the bin, writers of imaginative fiction such as Jules Verne used it in their novels. In America, an enthusiastic proponent of the theory was John C. Symmes (1779-1829), a contemporary of Joseph Smith and other early LDS leaders. ³³⁵ As with other such theories, scientific explorations of the North Pole region did not find any concave communities or civilizations. ³³⁶

The Unknown Planet Theory is a uniquely LDS theory that purports that the Ten Lost Tribes, similar to the City of Enoch, were taken away from the earth by God and placed somewhere else in the universe. They will be brought back again at some

³³³ Pratt Orson, *Journal of Discourses*, 18 (11th April 1875), p. 26.

³³⁴ W.J.R, ‘The North Pole Theory’, *The Deseret Weekly*, 53 (20th June 1896), pp. 20-21.

³³⁵ <http://sht.stanford.edu:3455/SouthPole/676> or <http://www.gi.alaska.edu/ScienceForum/ASF7/718.html> or <http://www.t0.or.at/subrise/hollow.html> or <http://ku-prism.org/polarscientist/hollowworld/mar11896mjhw.html>.

³³⁶ Science seldom stops the determined and even today there are proponents of the theory. In 1979, for example the Bell Publishing Company published a book by Bernard Raymond W., *The Hollow Earth: The Greatest Geographical Discovery in History made by Admiral Richard E. Byrd in the Mysterious Land Beyond the Poles – The True Origin of the Flying Saucers*, quoted on <http://www.gi.alaska.edu/ScienceForum/ASF7/718.html>.

point in time.³³⁷ This theory apparently has its roots in the first decades of the LDS Church and is attributed to Joseph Smith. There is, however, no evidence that he ever proposed this theory or held these views in any of his recorded sermons or discourses. The source for this theory can probably be traced back to a hymn written by Eliza Snow, a wife of Joseph Smith that reads in part:

1. Thou, Earth, wast once a glorious sphere
Of noble magnitude,
And didst with majesty appear
Among the worlds of God
2. But thy dimensions have been torn
Asunder , piece by piece,
And each dismember'd fragment borne
Abroad to distant space.
3. When Enoch could no longer stay
Amid corruption here,
Part of thyself was borne away
To form another sphere.
4. That portion where his city stood
He gain'd by right approv'd;
And nearer to the throne of God
His planet upward mov'd
5. And when the Lord saw fit to hide
The "ten lost tribes" away,
Thou, Earth, wast sever'd to provide
The orb on which they stay.
6. And thus, from time to time, thy size,
Has been diminish'd, till
Thou seemst the law of sacrifice
Created to fulfil.³³⁸

According to a statement by Homer M. Brown in 1924, the composer, Eliza Snow, told the former's grandfather that she had received the information about the whereabouts of the Lost Tribes as mentioned in the hymn from her husband, Joseph

³³⁷ For a description of the City of Enoch see Moses 7: 14-69 in *The Pearl of Great Price: A Selection from the Revelations, Translations, and Narrations of Joseph Smith*, 1981 rev.edn., The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: Salt Lake City, UT, 1981. Orson Pratt discussed the case of the City of Enoch in *Journal of Discourses*, 17 (19th July 1874), p. 147.

³³⁸ Richards Franklin D., *L.D.S. Hymns: Sacred Hymns and Spiritual Songs for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, n.pub.: Liverpool, 1856.

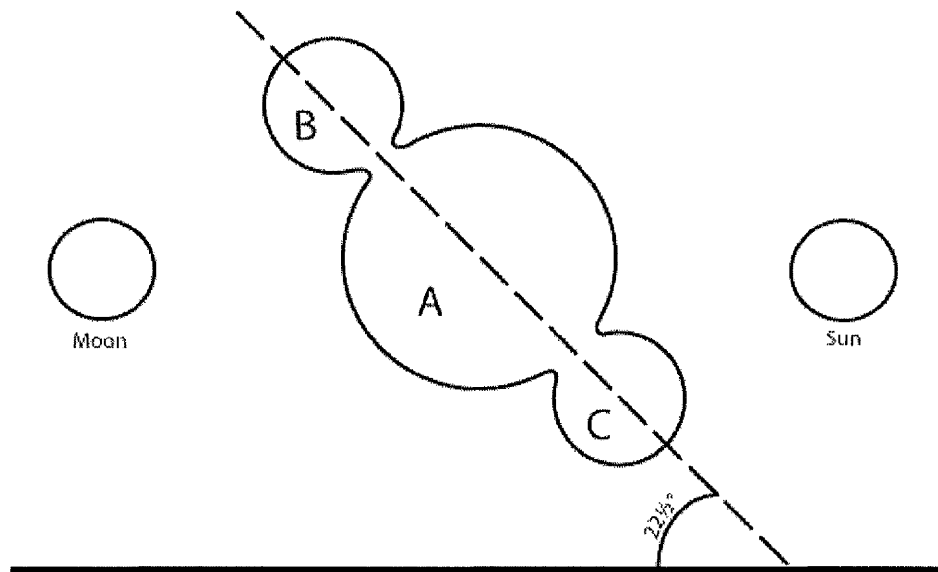
Smith.³³⁹ Even though the information in the statement is third or fourth hand, many members reasoned that this must be safe as it was so-called insider information. Another possible source for this theory is a statement by Brigham Young, the second president of the LDS Church, as recorded by Wilford Woodruff. Young is quoted as saying that the Ten Tribes are on a portion of the earth that is separated from the mainland.³⁴⁰ Parley P. Pratt, an apostle and editor of the *Millennial Star*, floated a similar theory when he answered a question regarding falling stars in one of the editorials. He wrote that stars which fall to earth are fragments that at one time or another have been broken off the earth and that the Ten Tribes are on one such fragment. All these fragments will some day be restored to the earth.³⁴¹ Brigham H. Roberts, also an apostle, publicly stated that he had 'no opinion to express' regarding the Lost Tribes being 'located upon some detached portion of the earth'.³⁴² The Unknown Planet Theory has a sub-theory of its own called the Narrow Neck Theory. Relatively little has been written about it and it appears not to have many believers. It is based on a supposed drawing by Joseph Smith which was preserved by Philo Dibble. According to Dibble, Joseph Smith drew, around 1842, the earth (A) with a sphere on the north (B) and a sphere on the south (C). Although he said nothing about sphere C he, apparently, stated that the Ten Tribes were on sphere B. These spheres are connected to the earth by a narrow neck of land.

³³⁹ Brown Homer M., Account of the Reminiscences of His Grandfather Benjamin Brown, dealing with Joseph Smith's statements about the Ten Tribes and the City of Enoch, unsigned typescript of a narration to Theodore Tobiason in October 1924, Church Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Ms 3892).

³⁴⁰ Cowley Matthias F., *Wilford Woodruff*, Deseret News: Salt Lake City, UT, 1909. p. 448 quoted in Whipple W., *A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes*, footnote 22.

³⁴¹ Pratt Parley P., *Millennial Star*, 1 (February 1841), p. 258.

³⁴² Roberts Brigham H., *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 2 vols, Deseret News: Salt Lake City, UT, 1912, II, 447-480.



In 1906, Philo Dibble's son, Sydney Dibble swore an affidavit as to the correctness of a copy of this drawing which a Matthew W. Dalton had in his possession.³⁴³ Again, no evidence of this belief is found in any of the recorded sermons or discourses of Joseph Smith nor is there any scriptural backing for it.

The Dispersion theory is the last major theory. It proposes, as its name suggests, that the Lost Tribes have been scattered among all the nations of the earth. Even though, at the time of its emergence, it was somewhat contrary to the general teachings of the LDS Church of that time, it attracted a lot of interest.³⁴⁴ The theory differs from the other major theories for a number of different reasons. Firstly it has withstood the ravages of time and enjoyed a remarkable longevity. The exact reasons

³⁴³ Whipple W., *A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes*, pp. 8-9.

³⁴⁴ Many LDS General Authorities who spoke about the subject said that although they were diffused among the nations, a sufficient number or a large proportion of the Ten Tribes were together in one group. See Talmage James E., *A Study of the Articles of Faith: Being a Consideration of the Principal Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 12th edn., The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Salt Lake City, UT, 1968, pp. 340-341 or Richards LeGrand., *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, UT, 1977, pp. 201-235 or Whitney Orson F., *Saturday Night Thoughts: A Series of Dissertations on Spiritual, Historical and Philosophic Themes*, Deseret News: Salt Lake City, 1921, p. 174.

for this are difficult to determine and it is probably a concurrence of circumstances. It could, for example, be that the subject of the Lost Tribes does not attract the same interest as it once used to and this theory happened to be the last in a row of different theories. It could be that, because the LDS Church has grown exponentially in the last few decades, it has, perforce, become institutionalised. Institutions, regardless of their many benefits have a tendency to yoke people together and thereby discourage speculations which have always been an inherent part of Lost Tribe mythology. Secondly, previous theories were based on presumed statements of Joseph Smith or personal views and opinions of a few early LDS leaders. As such they were broadly in line with the sentiments of the time and equally the victim of scientific progress. Thirdly, for a broad section of LDS members it is perhaps easier to identify with a theory such as the Dispersion Theory because it does not necessarily contradict science, yet it ostensibly provides the scriptural safety net some desire.

The Dispersion Theory is based on writings and scriptural interpretations of a few ordinary LDS members and it is interesting to note that many elements and to a certain extent the methodology, found in the literature of the British Israelite movement, are also present here. As mentioned earlier, the theory proposes that the Lost Tribes have been scattered among all the nations of the earth. The main difference with the other theories is that they are considered lost as to their name and identity but not as to their location.³⁴⁵ The Tribes are being gathered into the LDS Church through missionary labour. With regards to the origin of this theory, W. Whipple's suggestion that Brigham H. Roberts, an LDS general authority, was the first to express this opinion

³⁴⁵ Anderson James H., *God's Covenant Race*, Deseret News Press: Salt Lake City, UT, 1938, p. 128.

has not been rendered out of date by more modern research.³⁴⁶ In 1912, Roberts wrote an answer to criticisms in local newspapers in relation to LDS views about the Lost Tribes and their location in the Polar region. He stated:

I do not know how many Latter-day Saints may have entertained the view that about the polar regions were located the lost tribes of Israel. I do not know how many even of our students – the students of the gospel of this dispensation of the fullness of times – may have entertained the same view. There is the statement of Esdras that there was a year and a half’s journey northward from Assyria, by the ten tribes; and there is the promise repeated frequently in Jewish Scriptures, that the Lord would lead back from the north the tribes of Israel. From these statements, some of our people may have concluded that necessarily these lost tribes must be established in the extreme northern portions of the earth, hence the region of the north pole. [...] But of this I am positive; that in none of the revelations of God is there any expression that would lead one to believe that God had located the ten tribes about the north pole. [...] It would have been quite possible for God to scatter, or to use the language of the prophet Amos - “Sift the house of Israel among the nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve,” and “yet not the least grain fall upon the earth” - i.e. not be lost to the knowledge of God, though now lost to men. And as it was possible to lose these tribes of Israel among the nations of the earth, so it is possible for God to recover them from their scattered condition from among these nations, with a display of divine power.³⁴⁷

A number of months later, Stephen Malan published his book entitled *The Ten Tribes, Discovered and Identified*. Whether or not he was influenced or indeed knew about Roberts’ comments is impossible to determine, interesting, however, is that it was the first time that the Dispersion Theory was discussed in published form by an ordinary LDS member. The obvious weakness of Malan’s book was the methodology. Not unlike the publications of the British Israelite movement, it is very dependent on personal interpretation of scripture. Malan, like his British Israelite counterparts, often saw a fulfilment of prophecies in current affairs or scientific discoveries of his time. So

³⁴⁶ Whipple W., *A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes*, p. 20.

³⁴⁷ Roberts Brigham H., *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 2 vols, Deseret News: Salt Lake City, UT, 1912, II, 447-480.

for example Malan's interpretation of a LDS scripture found in Doctrine and Covenants

133:26-27. The text reads:

And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And a highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep.

Malan's interpretation of the above scripture is as follows:

The presiding authorities of our modern church in their succession are the only prophets the ten tribes have [...] But shall the rocks be smitten and the ice flow down at their coming? Leaving out all consideration of the supernatural, we may say that the most reasonable explanation of this phenomenon lies in the skilful engineering, the explosives, the machinery, the manual labor expended in the construction of our railroads over the plains, mountain defiles, across rivers and through mountains. And no doubt, too, this work in the rocks would affect the ice-bound regions of the north.³⁴⁸

His book contains numerous similar examples and the work exudes Malan's confidence of having solved, at least for himself, the Lost Tribe problem. One cannot but agree with Whipple's assessment when he described Malan's book as 'shallow research'. He rightly observed that Malan 'attempted to prove a topic not on the basis of positive evidence against previous theories, but on the basis of a lack of evidence to disprove the theory which he was then advancing'.³⁴⁹ Unfortunately for Stephen Malan, it is James H. Anderson, an LDS author and prominent historian, who is generally considered the father of the Dispersion Theory.³⁵⁰ To a large extent this was because Anderson was more prolific and his writings displayed a combination of logic and

³⁴⁸ Malan Stephen, *The Ten Tribes Discovered & Identified*, E.A.L. Scoville Press: Salt Lake City, UT, 1912, p. 144 and p. 162 quoted in Whipple W., *A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes*, p. 22.

³⁴⁹ Whipple W., *A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes*, p. 21.

³⁵⁰ Whipple W., *A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes*, p. 23.

scriptural knowledge that completely overshadowed Malan's earlier work.³⁵¹ The coup de grâce, however, was probably a set of forty-three questions. They first appeared in a letter, dated 29th January 1929, but were later incorporated in one of his books.³⁵² These questions were so well written that as well as putting the debate about the Lost Tribes, once again, into the limelight, they put opponents of the Dispersion Theory and believers of the other theories on the defensive.

In 1947 Earnest L. Whitehead published an enormous book that was in methodology as well as premise—that the Lost Tribes were scattered among the present nations of the earth—similar to Anderson's. He, however, used the allegory of the olive tree, written by Zenos and quoted by Jacob to his people in Jacob 5:1-77 in the *Book of Mormon*. His interpretation of this allegory was that there were four branches of Israel and the main trunk. This then gave a total of five locations on the earth for Israel i.e. Jerusalem, America (the peoples of the *Book of Mormon*), Britain, Scandinavia, and Tahiti.³⁵³ In addition to advocating the Dispersion Theory, he used Jeremiah 3:18 as evidence against the North Pole Theory. He wrote:

It will be of considerable surprise to some to know that the Lord did not intend to isolate His chosen vine in a part of the world where they would grow up completely isolated from other nations, or the rest of the House of

³⁵¹ Anderson James H., *The Present Time & Prophecy*, Deseret News Press: Salt Lake City, UT, 1933 and Anderson J.H., *God's Covenant Race*, Deseret News Press: Salt Lake City, UT, 1938.

³⁵² Anderson James H., *The Present Time & Prophecy*, Deseret News Press: Salt Lake City, UT, 1933, pp. 145-149 quoted in Whipple W., *A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes*, pp. 23-24.

³⁵³ Whitehead Earnest L., *The House of Israel: A Treatise on the Destiny, History, and Identification of Israel in all the Five Branches*, Zion's Printing and Publishing Company: Independence, MO, 1947, pp. 88-94 quoted in Whipple W., *A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes*, pp. 24-25.

Israel. This is the fallacy of belief behind the “north-pole theory” which has existed for a century within the Church.³⁵⁴

It seems that following the publications of Anderson’s books and Whitehead’s tome the Dispersion Theory steadily grew in popularity in the LDS community.³⁵⁵ Without a new in-depth and multi-national survey among LDS members it is difficult to determine how popular the Dispersion Theory still is. That the theory is not universally accepted and that, perhaps, a shift to a belief in the miraculous is reoccurring might be deduced from the publication of some interesting books and articles from the 1960s onwards. This material disputes or at least cast doubt on the Dispersion Theory and suggest that the return of the Lost Tribes requires divine intervention or some miraculous event. One of those is *Prophecy, Key to the Future* by Duane S. Crowther, a well known LDS author and publisher.³⁵⁶ Notwithstanding the fact that he did not endorse or cast aspersions on any of the major theories, he alluded that the location of the Lost Tribes should be considered a mystery to be solved in due time. On the other hand, Gerald N. Lund, a prolific LDS author, downright attacked all the theories in circulation. In his book *The Coming of the Lord*, he makes it quite clear that all the theories are pure speculation. He stated:

Down through the centuries there have been innumerable speculations as to where the lost ten tribes are. These speculations have ranged all the way from a planet somewhere in outer space to exotic hidden places under the ice cap of the Arctic regions. Some have speculated that they went into present-day Europe, and became the various present nations of that continent. [...] All such speculation as to the whereabouts of this group of

³⁵⁴ Whitehead Earnest L., *The House of Israel*, p. 85 quoted in Whipple W., *A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes*, p. 24.

³⁵⁵ A part of W. Whipple’s research paper was a limited survey of students in religion classes at the Brigham Young University. It indicated that the Dispersion Theory was by far the most popular but no detailed indication of the reasons for this were incorporated in the survey. See Whipple W., *A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes*, pp. 26-28.

³⁵⁶ Crowther Duane S., *Prophecy, Key to the Future*, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, UT, 1962.

Israelites is strictly that – only speculation. As yet, their specific location has not been revealed to the Church. But the idea that the gathering has already been fulfilled in the great missionary efforts of the Church is in error, for the prophets have definitely stated that they shall come as a body; there coming shall be so miraculous that it could not be mistaken for a gradual response to missionary work.³⁵⁷

More recently John P. Pratt wrote in his monthly column for Meridian Magazine that the return of the Lost Tribes from the north countries, as described in the LDS scripture Doctrine and Covenants 133, would be a miraculous event. Whereas he made it quite clear that the article does not speculate about the location of the Lost Tribes, he wrote that it is certain that some of the Tribes were scattered but equally that some will return from the north at some point in time. In the conclusion of his article he wrote:

The scriptures clearly teach that Israelites will someday return from the north countries. The Lord has revealed that they will do so on a highway that is cast up in the great deep. If that is interpreted literally, science has no explanation of where they might be located, much less of the sudden appearance of a land bridge across a deep ocean. Therefore, if the prophecy in D&C 133 of their return as a group along a highway is fulfilled literally, it would be a miracle.³⁵⁸

The material discussed above, shows that the LDS Church, as a community of people, is as susceptible to traditions as any other group. These traditions which for the most part relate to the temporal and physical location and gathering of the Lost Tribes are imbued with time related opinions and assorted popular fantasies in many variations. The majority of these theories originated and proliferated in the early days of the Church as a result of personal opinions of General Authorities and members alike. By and large it is not unexpected that, aside from a few, perhaps uniquely LDS nuances, these theories are broadly in line with the sentiments of the time in which they appear.

³⁵⁷ Lund Gerald N., *The Coming of the Lord*, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, UT, 1971, pp. 160-161.

³⁵⁸ Pratt John P., 'A Volcanic Highway for the Lost Tribes?', *Meridian Magazine*, 15th May 2005.

Nevertheless, judging by the amount of recent publications these theories still attract attention in the LDS community today.³⁵⁹ Scientific advances in areas such as ethnography, ethnology, and geography preclude a perpetuation of the more fantastic theories of the past and inexplicable future miraculous events now, in part, supersede the former. What is remarkable, however, is the general lack of embellishments of the myth and the paucity of motifs in these theories. Aside from the Dispersion Theory which, in comparison to the other theories, has the two additional motifs i.e. the identity motif and the obedience leads to return motif, the others are mainly concerned with location. No particular attention is paid either to the circumstances they lived in, to how or why they went into exile or were able to escape from that same exile. As a result both the aetiological and the theodocian motifs are strikingly absent. The three motifs appearing in all of the theories are the separation, divine intervention and lost/found motifs without which there would be no Lost Tribe theories. In none of the theories is any particular attention paid as to why the Ten Tribes are lost. The aetiological, punishment, and mercy motifs are thus completely absent as is any mention of a future role. Location has always played an important role in the Lost Tribe mythology but it has virtually always gone hand in hand with at least a partial description of their imagined habitat and standard of living. Sources have varied in emphasis but aside from the Bible which displays a radical literary economy, few sources have been as sparing with additional information about the Tribes as the LDS theories. By and large, one is left with a feeling that something is missing, especially if one accepts that the

³⁵⁹ For example Nelson Dale W., *The Migrations, Alliances, and Power of Israel in Western Europe and Central Asia: A Latter-day Saint Perspective on the Lost Tribes*, Sharpshooter Press: Orem, UT, 2001 or Hansen Vaughn E., *Whence Came They?: Israel, Britain and the Restoration*, Cedar Fort: Springville, UT, 1993 or McConkie Clay, *In Ephraim's Footsteps: The Story of the Three Houses of Israel*, Bonneville Books: Springville, UT, 2004.

LDS Church 'has contributed greatly to keeping Lost Tribes ideology alive and well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries'.³⁶⁰

There is a strong indication that LDS doctrine is the cause for these, in some ways underdeveloped, theories. The role and the gathering of the House of Israel, which includes the Ten Tribes, is a principal and integral part of LDS doctrine. The importance is evidenced by it being mentioned in The Articles of Faith, the tenth of which states a belief 'in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes'.³⁶¹ At first sight this statement is nothing new as throughout the ages countless non-Latter-day Saints have believed the same. Nevertheless, when one analyses LDS doctrine, it differs on a number of points with other groups who were given or who have taken upon themselves the mantle of Israel.

The most notable of these differences is the continuance of the House of Israel. Whereas it is commonly accepted that the House of Israel consists of the lineal descendants of Abraham who got their collective name, Israel, when Jacob's name was changed at Penuel (Genesis 32:28) and again at Bethel (Genesis 35:10), LDS theology maintains that the House of Israel is a term that designates not only a group of related people but also a structural organisation that existed before the foundation of the world and that will continue throughout eternity. It is this interpretation that forms the

³⁶⁰ Parfitt Tudor, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth*, Phoenix: London, 2003, p. 111.

³⁶¹ The LDS Church has no formulated creed because Latter-day Saints believe that no creed transcends the creed of continuing revelation. The Articles of Faith, written by Joseph Smith and originally part of the Wentworth Letter (March 1842), are a guide in faith and conduct and present some of the fundamental doctrines of the Church in a systematic order. For a more detailed description see Talmage James E., *A Study of the Articles of Faith*, 12th edn, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Salt Lake City, UT, 1968, pp. 6-7 and McConkie Bruce R., *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, UT, 1985, pp. 14-17.

foundation of the LDS doctrinal belief that only through the House of Israel can mankind be saved.

In comparison to mainstream Christianity, Joseph Smith's theology, as a whole, was idiosyncratic and independent. Presenting a coherent picture of his teachings with regards to the House of Israel is hampered by the fact that the LDS prophet never presented any of his ideas systematically in a clear, logical order. His teachings were mostly presented to his followers as divine revelations received at irregular intervals. It is, therefore, difficult to encapsulate or analyse them and more often than not, one has to rely on secondary sources.

One of Joseph Smith's unconventional principles was that the human soul, like God, is eternal without beginning or end. In the beginning God created a mortal body and put Adam's eternal spirit in it and these two elements together formed the living man.³⁶² Inferred in these teachings is that the spirits of men and women lived, as individuals before they were born into this life.³⁶³ The LDS apostle, Bruce R. McConkie (1915-1985), explained this as follows:

God lives in the family unit. He is our Father in heaven — the literal and personal Father of the spirits of all men. He begat us; we are the offspring of Heavenly Parents; we have an Eternal Father and an Eternal Mother. We were born as spirits, and we dwelt in the presence of our Eternal Parents; we lived before our mortal birth. As spirits we were in all respects as we are now save only that we were not housed in mortal bodies

³⁶² Smith Joseph, *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, UT, 1976, pp. 352-354. Also Abraham 5:7 (the *Book of Abraham* is part of the *Pearl of Great Price* which is a volume of LDS scripture. For more information about this book see Bushman Richard L., *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, Alfred A. Knopf: New York 2005, pp. 285-293 and pp. 452-458.

³⁶³ The belief in a pre-mortal life is a fundamental principle of LDS doctrine. The same belief is held to a varying degree in Abrahamic and other religions (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-existence>). Among Christians there is an ongoing debate and references used for and against are e.g. Job 38:7, John 1:15,30; 6:62; 9:1-2 and 17:5.

as is the present circumstance. [...] Each of us came into being as conscious identities in our appointed order [...].³⁶⁴

In addition to describing a pre-mortal existence, Joseph Smith also taught that there was an organisation of spirits in the pre-existence and that nothing was left to mere chance.³⁶⁵ An often quoted verse is Jeremiah 1:5 where God said that before Jeremiah was conceived God 'knew' him and before he was born God 'sanctified' and 'ordained' him to be 'a prophet unto the nations'.³⁶⁶ In LDS scripture there is an indication that this organisation was based on the faithfulness of the individual spirit. The prophet Alma, in *The Book of Mormon* taught:

And this is the manner after which they were ordained –being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on the account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with the holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.³⁶⁷

Also in *The Book of Abraham* which, as part of *The Pearl of Great Price*, is a volume of LDS scripture, we read:

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and the great ones. And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.³⁶⁸

The tenth LDS president, Joseph Fielding Smith (1876-1972), esteemed as the chief doctrinal authority of the LDS Church, taught that those who were to be born into

³⁶⁴ McConkie Bruce R., *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, UT, 1979-1981, I (1979), p. 21.

³⁶⁵ Smith Joseph, *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, UT, 1976, p. 158 and p. 181.

³⁶⁶ Jeremiah 1:4-5.

³⁶⁷ Alma 13:3

³⁶⁸ Abraham 3:22-23

the House of Israel were known and separated in the pre-existence.³⁶⁹ Bruce R. McConkie combined the previous ideas and wrote that ‘the whole house of Israel, known and segregated out from their fellows, was inclined toward spiritual things’.³⁷⁰

To summarize, LDS doctrine puts forward the idea that, based on pre-mortal faithfulness, a defined number of God’s spirit children, were born into a lineage and family, later to be known as Israel, through whom ‘all the nations of the earth’ would ‘be blessed’.³⁷¹

Historically, the LDS Church has been looked upon as a marginal group of peculiar people and as a result much of its doctrine, including the unconventional doctrine regarding the House of Israel, received, at best, a generous measure of ridicule. As discussed earlier, this changed in the late 1950s when the LDS Church started to attract a growing interest from the scholarly world that started to see it as a quintessential example of an American religion. Over the next few decades the LDS Church itself started to make moves to come out of obscurity. As a result some doctrine was outright changed and opinions on other issues were brought into line with modern attitudes.³⁷² Not only was the doctrine regarding the House of Israel being a chosen nation not among the changed and/or adapted doctrine but a distinct lack of discomfort with the idea that there is a chosen nation has become apparent, this in spite of historically disastrous consequences and moral objections often associated with the idea

³⁶⁹ Smith Joseph Fielding, *Doctrines of Salvation*, compiled by Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, UT, 1954, I, 59.

³⁷⁰ McConkie Bruce R., *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, UT, 1979-1981, I (1979), 23.

³⁷¹ Genesis 22:18 but also Genesis 12:2-3, 26:4, 28:10-14, and Acts 3:25.

³⁷² The most important doctrinal change was the announcement on 30th September 1978 that the priesthood and temple blessings were to be extended to all worthy male members of the Church. Opinions regarding e.g. divorce, contraceptive use, among others, were modified to reflect the time.

of a chosen people.³⁷³ Judaism, the religion where the idea of a chosen people has been central throughout its history has struggled for centuries to place chosenness in a proper context. Oft-times this struggle was instigated by external vilification yet internal struggles and discomfort with the idea cannot be ignored completely. In our modern and egalitarian age the distaste for the idea of a chosen people has changed into outright abhorrence and the notion of Jewish uniqueness has been challenged by Jews and non-Jews alike.³⁷⁴ Nevertheless, chosenness as understood in Judaism should never be confused with supremacy as conceived in the Nazi concept of a supreme Aryan nation or the chosenness as advocated, for example, by the white Afrikaners in the Apartheid era. Arnold Eisen wrote that chosenness in Judaism is signified by the Hebrew root *bhr* which 'is used as set apart for service'.³⁷⁵ The general lack of discomfort with the idea of chosenness in LDS circles stems from the fact that they interpret chosenness much the same way as Judaism. Chosenness, as delineated by LDS doctrine, does not relate to honour, status, wealth, or other material benefits, but it corresponds to having a special, mostly spiritual, responsibility to facilitate the salvation of the human family.

³⁷³ Although the LDS seem very comfortable with the idea that the House of Israel is the chosen nation, Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie remark on p.3 of their book, *Our Destiny: The Call and Election of the House of Israel*, that Latter-day Saints suffer from 'spiritual schizophrenia' where, while accepting the doctrine, they feel at the at same time anxious to be perceived as different from non-Latter-day Saints.

³⁷⁴ So for example Mordechai Kaplan (1881-1983), who proposed to substitute vocation for election because 'we cannot afford to harbour any doctrine which is in conflict with the ethical basis of democracy' see Kaplan Mordechai., 'The Chosen People', in *Contemporary Jewish Thought: A reader*, ed. with Introductory Notes by Simon Noveck, B'nai B'rith Great Books Series, IV, B'nai B'rith Department of Adult Jewish Education: Washington, 1963, p. 344 and Arnold Toynbee who wrote that the Jews after having 'been gifted with an unparalleled spiritual insight' made 'the fatal error of looking upon a momentary spiritual eminence [...] as a privilege conferred upon them by God in a covenant which is everlasting' see Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12 vols, Oxford University Press: Oxford 1934-1961, IV (1939), p.262.

³⁷⁵ Eisen Arnold M, *The Chosen People in America: A Study in Jewish Religious Ideology*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1983, p.13.

Membership of the House of Israel is neither exclusive nor does birth into this lineage guarantee salvation. Membership of the House of Israel wholly depends on an individual's willingness to continually adhere to certain principles; it is, therefore, first spiritual and then temporal.³⁷⁶ Thus chosenness and inclusiveness are seen as compatible.

Attendant to the doctrine of a chosen people is the concept of a covenant which circumscribes the responsibilities of the chosen nation. In the Bible, whenever God chose a person or a nation and acknowledged it as his own he did so by making a covenant with them.³⁷⁷ Such a divinely authored covenant was a bi-lateral agreement between God and the individual or the group it appertained to. The terms of a biblical covenant were set by God and blessings as well as curses or punishments were included for respectively obeying or disobeying the terms of the covenant. A biblical covenant had, in principle, a lasting validity. It could only be broken if one of the parties reneged on the terms. The covenant that appertains to the House of Israel is the Abrahamic covenant made between God and Abraham and reaffirmed with his descendants.³⁷⁸

In Abrahamic religions there is a widespread agreement about the importance of the Abrahamic Covenant, the same unanimity as to the meaning or interpretation does not prevail. LDS doctrine, having ascribed a redeeming role to the House of Israel, has its own interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant. This interpretation is based on

³⁷⁶ Matthew 8:5-12, Luke 13:28-30, Alma 13:4-5

³⁷⁷ In the Old Testament there are many examples of covenants such as the Noahic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant which undergirds both the Old and New Testaments, the Mosaic covenant, the Palestinian covenant and the Davidic covenant.

³⁷⁸ Psalms 105 and 106 are among the many biblical references that indicate that the Abrahamic Covenant lies behind everything God did for and through Israel.

traditional scripture, LDS specific scripture, notably *The Book of Abraham*, and revelation.³⁷⁹

The covenant between Abraham and God, as preserved in the Bible, contained three major kind of promises; individual promises, national promises, and finally universal promises.³⁸⁰ These promises were conditional upon Abraham and his descendants accepting Yahweh as their God, walking before him i.e. keep his commandments, and being perfect.³⁸¹ The sign of the covenant was the circumcision of each male when eight days old or upon their joining the household. The biblical narrative gives no further explanation either about Abraham's obligations or about the promises made to him. The reason for the scantiness of information, according to Joseph Smith, is that over time and before its compilation parts of the Bible were lost or removed.³⁸² *The Book of Mormon*, too, warns its readers that 'many plain and precious things' shall be 'taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God' while in Moses 1:39-42 one can read that this apparently shall happen in a time 'when the children of men shall esteem' God's 'words as naught'.³⁸³ Although Latter-day Saints believe in the essential truthfulness of the Old Testament, they feel that crucial

³⁷⁹ There is an ongoing controversy about the source and authenticity of the Book of Abraham especially since a lot of LDS specific doctrine is found in it. The LDS Church, considers it scripture and thus this dissertation views the book as it would any book of faith. It will be used at face value. For more information on the controversy see e.g.: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Abraham (neutral) or http://www.jefflindsay.com/LDSFAQ/FQ_Abraham.shtml (apologetic) or Larson Charles M., ...*By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*, Institute for Religious Research, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992. (polemic)

³⁸⁰ Individual promises: Abraham is promised that he would be the father of a great nation including kings and that he would be given land (Genesis 12:2; 13:14-17; 15:4-5, 7; 17:4-6, 8). National promises: The nation itself should be great and innumerable (Genesis 12:2; 13:16; 15:5). The nation is promised everlasting possession of the land (Genesis 13:14-15; 17:7-8). The universal blessings is that all families of the earth are blessed through his seed (Genesis 12:3, 22:18).

³⁸¹ Genesis 17:1; 17:7-8

³⁸² Smith Joseph Jr, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, I, 245.

³⁸³ 1 Nephi 13 (quote from verse 28). The Book of Moses is part of *The Pearl of Great Price*, an LDS volume of scripture.

information missing. The degree to which the gospel of Jesus Christ was known from Adam to Malachi, for example, is shrouded in mystery while at the same time messianic prophecies by great prophets remain. Likewise the Abrahamic covenant, as recorded in the Bible, is also said to have fallen victim to the scriptural cull. Curiously and arguably conveniently the hiatus is filled by LDS specific sources viz. *The Book of Abraham* and *The Doctrine and Covenants*, a collection of canonized revelations. These sources combined with the biblical narrative are said to give a better understanding, not only of the reasons as to why Abraham became known as the father of the faithful but also of the scope of the Abrahamic covenant and the role that Abraham's descendants, the House of Israel, play in the eternal scheme of things.

One of the pivotal things that are said to have been lost in the biblical narrative is Abraham's desire to receive the priesthood.³⁸⁴ *The Book of Abraham* describes how Abraham, who possessed 'the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of the Priesthood' sought to receive this priesthood. Anciently this priesthood had passed from father to son but Abraham's immediate ancestors had 'turned from their righteousness [...] unto the worshipping of the gods of the heathen'.³⁸⁵ Abraham presumably called them to return to the religion of their fathers but they 'utterly refused to hearken' and 'endeavored to take away' his 'life by the hand of the priest of Elkenah'. When he was about to be sacrificed he called upon God and 'the Lord hearkened and heard and he filled' Abraham 'with the vision of the Almighty' while an

³⁸⁴ The priesthood which all worthy males in the LDS Church receive is defined as 'the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things for the salvation of men. It is the power by which the gospel is preached; by which the ordinances of salvation are performed so that they will be binding on earth and in heaven; by which men are sealed up unto eternal life, being assured of the fullness of the Father's kingdom hereafter; and by which in due course the Lord will govern the nations of the earth and all that pertains to them' see McConkie Bruce R., *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd edn, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1979, pp. 594-595.

³⁸⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 107:40-56.

angel freed him. In this vision God identified himself as Jehovah and told Abraham that he has come to rescue him. He also directed him to leave Ur for a new land of promise. God further promised Abraham that he would receive the priesthood which he had desired. Later Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the most high God conferred the priesthood upon Abraham.³⁸⁶

The Book of Abraham also explains that the priesthood was important because through it all the blessings of the Gospel were administered.³⁸⁷ The word Gospel seems incongruous as it is generally taken to mean the teachings of Christ. As such it is generally accepted that it and its ordinances such e.g. faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, and baptism were not known until the days of John the Baptist. Joseph Smith, however, taught his followers, somewhere between 1834 and 1837, that the Gospel and all its ordinances are eternal.³⁸⁸ He pointed out that Paul tells the Galatians that Abraham was taught the Gospel.³⁸⁹ The Gospel is said to embrace 'all of the laws, principles, doctrines, rites, ordinances, acts, powers, authorities, and keys necessary to save and exalt men in the highest heaven hereafter'.³⁹⁰ Astonishingly, Joseph Smith, thus, Christianized the Old Testament with the stroke of a pen.

From an LDS point of view the combination of the biblical narrative, *The Book of Abraham* and modern revelation not only shows that Abraham existed but also sheds light on the importance of the Abrahamic covenant as a means to gain salvation. It also confirms the central role Abraham and his descendants are to play with regards to the salvation of mankind as a party in the Abrahamic covenant. These three sources

³⁸⁶ Abraham 1:1-19, 1:31, 2:1-6; D&C 84:14-17; Genesis 11:31, 14:18-20.

³⁸⁷ Abraham 2:8-11.

³⁸⁸ Smith Joseph, *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, UT, 1976, pp. 59-61.

³⁸⁹ Galatians 3:6-9.

³⁹⁰ McConkie Bruce R., *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd edn, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1979, p. 331. Also *Doctrine and Covenants* 131:1-4 and 132:19, 29.

together are also said to clarify that the blessings promised to Abraham and his descendants are, although in part temporal, on the whole spiritual in nature.³⁹¹

For the purposes of this dissertation, the LDS interpretation of the promise that through Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed is of special interest. While Abraham's seed also includes his descendants through Ishmael and those through his marriage with Keturah, the Bible clearly notes that the Abrahamic covenant as a whole was renewed with Abraham's birthright son, Isaac, and after Isaac with Jacob.³⁹² Joseph, Abraham's great-grandson, also obtained the birthright because Reuben, the oldest of Jacob's twelve sons, lost his birthright.³⁹³ Joseph's second son, Ephraim, received the birthright in Israel and it remains with that tribe until the final gathering of Israel.³⁹⁴ Under the patriarchal order having the birthright did not only include a land inheritance but also the right to preside over the family and to hold the keys of the priesthood.

³⁹¹ Bruce R. McConkie summarized the LDS interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant as follows:

What, then, is the Abrahamic covenant? It is that Abraham and his seed (including those adopted into his family) shall have all of the blessings of the gospel, of the priesthood, and of eternal life. The gate to eternal life is celestial marriage, which holy order of matrimony enables the family unit to continue in eternity, so that the participating parties may have posterity as numerous as the sands upon the seashore or the stars in heaven. The Abrahamic covenant enables men to create for themselves eternal family units that are patterned after the family of God our Heavenly Father. A lesser part of the covenant is that the seed of Abraham have the Millennial destiny of inheriting as an everlasting possession the very land of Canaan whereon the feet of the righteous have trod in the days gone by. See McConkie Bruce R., *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, UT, 1985, p. 505.

³⁹² Genesis 17:21, 25:5-6, 26:2-5. This does not mean that his other descendants were excluded from the covenant. Parts of the covenant would have applied to them by virtue of being Abraham's descendants. Indeed, Ishmael, too, became great nation in his own right (Genesis 17:20). All individual promises would have applied to all Abraham's descendants as long as they obeyed the terms. The Bible tells for example about Jethro who became not only Moses' father-in-law but also gave the priesthood to Moses (Doctrine and Covenants 84:6-13). Jethro was a Midianite.

³⁹³ Genesis 35:22 and I Chronicles 5:1-2.

³⁹⁴ I Chronicles 5:1-2 and Jeremiah 31:6-9.

It is, according to LDS theology, the everlasting covenant and the attendant priesthood blessings that have enabled the House of Israel to play a central role in blessing the nations with whom they come into contact. It is the same covenant and priesthood that will enable the House of Israel to continue to play the same role and bless all the nations of the earth. Latter-day Saints believe that the breaking up of the House of Israel through various dispersions and over many centuries was not only an incident of history but also part of a divine plan. In light of the promise that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed through Abraham's seed, the House of Israel was to be dispersed throughout the nations. The dispersion of Israel occurred in many stages, and extended through millenniums. It was not limited to the deportations such as the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles and the secondary movements arising from them or the scattering following the destruction of the Second Temple.³⁹⁵ The House of Israel was also dispersed on a smaller scale through divinely or otherwise instigated relocations of individuals and their families.³⁹⁶ This has meant that throughout history there have been groups of Israelites in various places in the world. While some groups of Israelites were led away because their surroundings were no longer conducive to their obeying the terms of the covenant, the great majority was scattered because of unbelief and disobedience. If, therefore, Israel was scattered because of spiritual poor behaviour then the corollary of this must logically follow that a change in their spiritual behaviour will be a precursor to restitution and gathering. If Israel was scattered all over the earth and

³⁹⁵ Although Cyrus allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem to build the temple, many chose to stay. If the Book of Esther is anything to go by Jews were living in all the provinces of the Persian empire (Esther 3:8-13).

³⁹⁶ *The Book of Mormon* chronicles three such, divinely instigated, migrations. First, the Jaredites whose quest is described in Ether, one of the last books of the *Book of Mormon*. Second, Lehi and his group, who are the main characters in the *Book of Mormon*. Third and last the group of Mulek, one of the sons of Zedekiah who left at the time of the Babylonian Exile (Mosiah 25:2, Heleman 6:10, 8:21).

among all nations, then its gathering must be from among all nations of the earth.³⁹⁷ Since the Abrahamic Covenant is interpreted as mainly spiritual in nature, Israel, according to LDS theology, will first be gathered spiritually and only after that will a temporal gathering take place. A complete temporal gathering will only be accomplished after the Second Coming. Localized temporal gatherings of Israelites have taken place throughout history, but more often than not the root cause of these gatherings was religion.

Spiritual gatherings throughout history have often been rooted in individual awakenings, when, like Abraham, individual Israelites, once again started searching for the blessings promised to their fathers. In addition to these pockets of righteousness there have been larger restorations of the ancient keys. The most important of these episodes was the restoration at the meridian of time when Jesus was born. Like other Christians, Latter-day Saints consider him to be the redeemer who came to save mankind from sin and death. He was born into the House of Israel through the Tribe of Judah and as such he fulfils one of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant that through the House of Israel, in this case more specifically Judah, all the nations shall be blessed. No less important, Latter-day Saints also view Jesus as the restorer of the priesthood keys and authorities which had been lost during the preceding centuries. They further believe that Jesus, after his resurrection visited many groups of scattered Israelites to bring the same message he had taught in Jerusalem. They find reference to Christ's visit to the people of *The Book of Mormon* in John 10:16 where Jesus said in Jerusalem that he had 'other sheep' which were 'not of this fold' which he would also have to bring into the fold because 'there shall be one fold, and one shepherd'. To the people of *The Book of Mormon* he said that he had yet 'other sheep which are not of this land,

³⁹⁷ Jeremiah 23:3.

neither of the land of Jerusalem, neither in any part of that land round about whither' he had been to minister. They had not heard his voice, neither had he manifested himself to them but God had commanded him that he should 'go unto them' and they would 'hear his voice' and they shall 'be numbered among' his 'sheep, that there may be one fold and one shepherd'.³⁹⁸ He commanded each of these peoples to write down His teachings and as the gathering progresses all different groups shall all have each others words and so form one fold with one shepherd.³⁹⁹

In light of their restorative and millennial character and their idiosyncratic interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant, it is, perhaps, a given that Latter-day Saints are convinced that, after centuries of religious change and discord, there was, once again, a need for a restoration to overcome the insurmountable departure from the faith Jesus established. They point out that Paul wrote that a period of falling away would take place before the Second Coming.⁴⁰⁰ Many times God appointed a prophet to restore to a branch of scattered Israel to the knowledge of the covenant. Some people accepted the teachings, others did not and often discord and disobedience eventually resulted in apostasy and thus each dispensation was limited in time and location.⁴⁰¹ Over time Israel was scattered further, intermarried and thus Israelite blood and the blessings attached to that bloodline were spread throughout the globe. The implication of this, according to Latter-day Saints, is that localized gatherings and restorations were no longer sufficient and a complete restoration and gathering was going to be required. Scriptures such as Jeremiah 16:14-16 are quoted to substantiate the claim that this,

³⁹⁸ 3 Nephi 16:1-3.

³⁹⁹ 2 Nephi 29:10-14.

⁴⁰⁰ 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

⁴⁰¹ LDS believe that there were any restorations and dispensations but that each of them was relatively localized. Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Lehi and others each headed a dispensation that covered a small segment of the earth.

indeed, is going to happen. The final dispensation is said to be limited neither in time nor location and rather than ending in apostasy, it would fill the earth.⁴⁰²

The LDS Church sees itself as the vanguard of this final gathering and restoration under the leadership of Joseph Smith and his successors. In a classic case of what Harold Bloom calls 'transumption', when people of one age think they are continuing the history of another, Latter-day Saints believe themselves to be part of modern Israel.⁴⁰³ They receive a patriarchal blessing at the hands of a specially ordained patriarch in which their lineage is declared.⁴⁰⁴ Moreover they believe that Joseph Smith was able to restore all things because he was a descendant of Joseph of Egypt, the birthright son, and was thus entitled to the priesthood and the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant.⁴⁰⁵ Through the ages various prophets have presided over and administered to groups of Israelites. To that end they held the keys of the kingdom. The keys of the kingdom are defined as 'the power, right, and authority to preside over the kingdom of God on the earth (which is the Church) and to direct all of its affairs'.⁴⁰⁶ These powers were either handed over from one prophet to another prophet or, when no

⁴⁰² Isaiah 27:6, Doctrine and Covenants 128:18, 132:45.

⁴⁰³ *Doctrine and Covenants* 103:15-17.

⁴⁰⁴ The First Presidency defined a patriarchal blessing in a letter dated 28th June 1957 as: Patriarchal blessings contemplate an inspired declaration of the lineage of the recipient, and also where so moved upon by the Spirit, an inspired and prophetic statement of the life mission of the recipient, together with such blessings, cautions, and admonitions as the patriarch may be prompted to give for the accomplishment of such life's mission, it being always made clear that the realization of all promised blessings is conditioned upon faithfulness to the gospel of our Lord whose servant the patriarch is. All such blessings are recorded and generally only one such blessing should be adequate for each person's life.

⁴⁰⁵ In addition to scriptural references to that fact (2 Nephi 3:5-16, *Doctrine and Covenants* 86:6-11, 132:30-32) Joseph Smith's patriarchal blessing, stated that he was of the House of Joseph, see Millet Robert L. and McConkie Joseph F., *Our Destiny: The Call and Election of the House of Israel*, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1993, pp. 61-63 and Shute R. Wayne, Nyman Monte S. and Bott Randy L., *Ephraim: Chosen of the Lord*, Millennial Press: Salt Lake City, 1999, p. 65.

⁴⁰⁶ For a detailed explanation as to the meaning of the keys of the kingdom see McConkie Bruce R., *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd edn, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1979, pp. 411-413. Quote from p. 411.

successor was available, they were temporarily taken away upon the death of the prophet. In the New Testament one can, for example, read that Jesus, in his role as restorer, gave these keys to Peter, his chief Apostle.⁴⁰⁷ Latter-day Saints believe that in the period immediately following the crucifixion, apostles were called when a vacancy arose. Matthias, for example, replaced Judas, but that eventually the keys of the kingdom were no longer exercised when the last apostle ceased to minister towards the end of the first century.⁴⁰⁸

Even though they believe that all things were restored through Joseph Smith, they nevertheless point out that the Restoration could not have happened without a preparation spanning many centuries and many nations. Brigham H. Roberts, described this process as follows:

While the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is established for the instruction of men; and is one of God's instrumentalities for making known the truth yet he is not limited to that institution for such purposes, in time nor place, God raises up wise men and prophets here and there among all the children of men, of their own tongue and nationality, speaking to them through means that they can comprehend; not always giving a fullness of truth such as may be found in the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ; but always giving that measure of truth that the people are prepared to receive. "Mormonism holds, then, that all the great teachers are servants of God; among all nations and in all ages. They are inspired men, appointed to instruct God's children according to the conditions in the midst of which he finds them."⁴⁰⁹

Thus Zoroaster (?c. 628-651 B.C.), Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) Confucius (551-479), Muhammad (c.570-632), the Magna Carta, the Renaissance, the work of people such as Martin Luther (1483-1546), John Calvin (1509-1564) and John Knox (c.1505-1572) and many other people and events were all part of the preparation for and the prelude to the Restoration. No less important was the discovery and

⁴⁰⁷ Matthew 16:13-19.

⁴⁰⁸ Acts 1:23-26

⁴⁰⁹ Roberts Brigham H., *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 2 vols, Deseret News: Salt Lake City, UT, 1907-1912, I, 512.

colonization of a new continent. It is here that the distinctly American character of the LDS Church comes to the forefront through a clear belief in American exceptionalism. Joseph F. Smith (1838-1918), the sixth LDS prophet, for example, wrote:

This great American nation the Almighty raised up by the power of his omnipotent hand, that it might be possible in the latter days for the kingdom of God to be established in the earth. If the Lord had not prepared the way by laying the foundations of this glorious nation, it would have been impossible (under the stringent laws and bigotry of the monarchical governments of the world) to have laid the foundations for the coming of his great kingdom. The Lord has done this.⁴¹⁰

Latter-day Saints describe the coming forth of *The Book of Mormon* as the beginning of the spiritual gathering and deliverance of Israel in the last days.⁴¹¹ The Apostle Russell M. Nelson said on the October 2006 semiannual General Conference:

The Book of Mormon is central to this work. It declares the doctrine of the gathering. It causes people to learn about Jesus Christ, to believe His gospel, and to join His Church. In fact, if there were no Book of Mormon, the promised gathering of Israel would not occur.⁴¹²

The Book of Mormon is thus seen as the main aid in bringing Israel to remembrance of the covenant. Nevertheless, it is the keys of the kingdom, discussed above, that empower members of the House of Israel to be a blessing not only to their brethren but to all nations. Latter-day Saints believe that their prophet has all the keys as do all the apostles albeit that these are considered to be dormant in the latter group until the prophet comes to die.

Linking the Latter-day church to biblical history became a pattern in Joseph Smith's prophesying and in *The Doctrine and Covenants* one finds revelations where figures from the Bible bestow their keys on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Section 13 reports that on 15th May 1829, John the Baptist conferred the Aaronic Priesthood

⁴¹⁰ Smith Joseph F., *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th edn, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, 1939, p. 409.

⁴¹¹ 3 Nephi 29:1 and Ether 4:17.

⁴¹² Nelson Russell M., 'The Gathering of Scattered Israel', *Ensign*, November 2006, pp. 79-82, p.80

upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.⁴¹³ In section 27:12-13 it is reported that in June of the same year they received the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood as well as the keys of the kingdom at the hands of Peter, James and John. Section 110 describes, how one week after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple on 3rd April 1836 a further theophany took place after which additional keys were restored. According to *The Doctrine and Covenants*, Jesus, during his appearance, accepted the Kirtland temple as His house and said that ‘the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house’.⁴¹⁴ There is a clear parallel, in line with the restorative character of the LDS Church, with the Old Testament when, during Israel’s wanderings, Yahweh frequently made his presence known through a cloud that rested on the Tabernacle. Later it will be shown that this acceptance of the Kirtland Temple and the other keys restored that day are crucial in LDS theology and their belief that the House of Israel is instrumental in bringing deliverance to the nations. After the theophany, a second vision took place and Moses who anciently had gathered Israel from the Egyptian bondage appeared and committed ‘the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north’.⁴¹⁵ With the restoration of these keys, the Saints could now engage in obeying a previous instruction received in September 1830 when they were called upon to ‘bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts’.⁴¹⁶ After the visit of Moses, ‘Elias appeared, and committed

⁴¹³ A more detailed report of this event can be found in ‘Joseph Smith History’ in *The Pearl of Great Price: A Selection from the Revelations, Translations, and Narrations of Joseph Smith*, 1981 rev.edn, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, UT, 1981, 1:68-73.

⁴¹⁴ *Doctrine and Covenants* 110:9

⁴¹⁵ *Doctrine and Covenants* 110:11.

⁴¹⁶ *Doctrine and Covenants* 29:7.

the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed'.⁴¹⁷ These keys were necessary to re-establish the ancient patriarchal order enabling the faithful who receive a celestial marriage to become with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob heirs of the Abrahamic covenant which, among its many blessings includes eternal posterity as numerous as the stars in the heaven. After that the final visitor of the day arrived who identified himself as Elijah, the prophet 'who was taken to heaven without tasting death'. He said that 'the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi –testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord'. The task of Elijah would be 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse'.⁴¹⁸ Elijah accordingly restored the keys of sealing powers which enables families, organised in the patriarchal order, to be sealed for eternity. The events of 3rd April 1836 concluded the restoration of the keys of the kingdom which, according to LDS theology, provide purpose and perspective to everything Latter-day Saints do and believe in.

To summarize, throughout history there have been countless religious reformers who agitated against what they considered corrupt religious practices or misleading beliefs. They attempted with varying success to reform from within. Others felt that the time for reform from within had passed and that only a restoration could right the wrongs. Joseph Smith belonged to the last group but was unique in that he staked his claim to authority by virtue of lineage. A major function of religion has been the validation of an identity, in this case, however, it is the identity of Joseph Smith and

⁴¹⁷ *Doctrine and Covenants* 110:12. In LDS theology Elias is not considered synonymous with Elijah but seen as a forerunner such as e.g. John the Baptist. See McConkie Bruce R., *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd edn, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1979, pp. 219-222.

⁴¹⁸ *Doctrine and Covenants* 110:14-15 and Malachi 3:4-6.

his followers that validate the religion. Claiming to be a descendant of Abraham through the loins of Joseph of Egypt, Joseph Smith taught his followers that they as members of the House of Israel and under the presiding authority of the Tribe of Ephraim would be instrumental in delivering mankind. This deliverance would be achieved through administering the Abrahamic covenant to all who are willing to abide by its terms. The concept of both the House of Israel and the Abrahamic covenant were redefined. The House of Israel became, in addition to a lineage, also an eternal structural organisation whereas the Abrahamic covenant became synonymous with the Gospel of Jesus Christ who is seen as identical to Yahweh of the Old Testament. Although early Latter-day Saints believed that they were merely resuming the biblical narrative in their own time, it would, perhaps, be more correct to say that Joseph Smith took both Jewish and Christian sacred histories as his foundation and fashioned a new sacred history.

In comparison to other groups that have played a role in developing and dissemination of the Lost Tribe myth, the persistent dichotomy between traditions and doctrine in the LDS Church is unusual. It is a given that in most religions there is an official doctrine complemented by popular traditions but usually the two tend to share more than just subject matter. On the whole LDS doctrine with regards to the House of Israel is idiosyncratic, quite comprehensive, and it leaves little room for the speculation so inherent to the Lost Tribe myth. It is, perhaps, for this very reason that the LDS theories about the Lost Tribes found fertile ground. The theories are, as opposed to the doctrine, congruent with the sentiments of the time, exciting, and less convoluted. Perhaps the theories and traditions were and are popular because the LDS church was and, to a certain extent, still is a church of converts from all walks of life and from many different cultural backgrounds. Although the members are aware of, have accepted but

perhaps not always understood the scriptural information and doctrine regarding the Lost Tribes, previously held beliefs continue to play a role, and, especially in times of popular excitement, speculation is rife. In addition, the proliferation of these traditions is exacerbated by people attributing statements to Joseph Smith or various other church leaders when in fact they are secondary in nature.⁴¹⁹ A direct result is that these traditions first start to supplant doctrine and some time later they are generally embraced as doctrine. When the process has completed its full circle people wonder why this apparent doctrine often evinces internal illogic or conflicts with prior or subsequent statements of the same individual, this, in turn, leads to more discussion and speculation.

The theories and the doctrine neither complement each other nor are they mutually opposed. On one level they are independent from each other and yet on another level they are interdependent inasmuch as each fulfils a need for the same community.

If one analyses LDS doctrine in the light of the discourse of deliverance, a number of observations can be made. In LDS theology no divisions are made between the House of Judah and the House of Israel. All tribes and those individuals adopted into Israel are involved in the salvation of mankind by administering the ordinances of the Abrahamic covenant. In addition to that the Tribes of Judah and Ephraim have special roles. Through Judah came the prophets, the priesthood and the Redeemer

⁴¹⁹ See for example Brown Homer M., Account of the Reminiscences of His Grandfather Benjamin Brown, dealing with Joseph Smith's statements about the Ten Tribes and the City of Enoch. The typescript of this narration to Theodore Tobiason in October 1924 can be found in the Church Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Ms 3892). It was brought to my attention that it is also quoted in Smith Robert W., *Scriptural and Secular Prophecies Pertaining to the 'Last Days' Compiled from Prophectic Utterances and Writings of Noted Church Leaders, Statesmen, Scientists, World Famous Writers, Philosophers, Commentators etc.*, 10th edn, Pyramid Press: Salt Lake City, 1948, pp. 211-216 but I have not been able to check this reference.

himself while under the leadership of Ephraim all those who desire are brought to the knowledge of the Gospel in the final gathering of Israel. The aetiological motif is present inasmuch as it is acknowledged that a large proportion of the House of Israel was exiled and scattered because of disobedience and sin. As with the British Israelites there is a general feeling of purpose and divine planning with regards to those exiles. This becomes particularly apparent in the belief that over time small groups of Israelites were led away, not because of disobedience and sin but as a reward for righteous living in an unrighteous community. The use of the separation motif, a recurring motif in the Lost Tribe myth which often goes hand in hand with a purity motif is underutilised in LDS theology. The majority of the House of Israel was separated from each other rather than from the outside world to facilitate intermarriage and a thorough dispersion among all nations. The combination of the separation and purity motifs can only be applied to the groups who were led away because they were righteous in an unrighteous environment and even then unlike, for example, the Benei Moshe the state of purity was temporal. Unlike previous sources the deliverance does not involve political power, mighty armies, or riches and so the related motifs of dominion, wealth, superiority, and abundance which so often are part of the Lost Tribe lore are absent. The deliverance process is initiated by a spiritual awakening and a resulting recognition of identity, first by the Tribe of Ephraim and later, through their administrations, by the rest of the House of Israel. As such Ephraim's actions sets into motion a process of awakening and deliverance, first among the Ephraimites, after that among the descendants of the other tribes, and lastly among such of the non-Israelites as are willing to join Israel. The lineage and identity motifs are very strong but are used differently than in previous sources. In modern times, as was shown earlier, the use of the lineage motif and the closely related identity motif were changed from a simple tool to gain credibility to

motifs that underpinned a religious ideology. Anglo-Israelism used the repentance motif to explain how Britain which, at its roots is a Christian nation could be descended from and identified with the Tribe of Ephraim. LDS theology approaches the lineage and identity problems in a rather exceptional manner and uses an apostasy motif to effectively Christianize Ancient Israel and the attendant Abrahamic covenant. This in turn creates a continuity motif whereby Israel goes through recurring cycles of apostasy from the Abrahamic covenant to repentance and renewed adherence to the same covenant (repentance motif). Renewed adherence to the covenant facilitates a restoration (restoration motif) of which the restoration by Joseph Smith is understood to be the last and most comprehensive one before the Second Coming (Messianic and End of Day motif). Each restoration had its own prophet who held the keys of the kingdom but some held special keys necessary to fulfil his prophetic calling. Moses, for example, needed to gather the Israelites and lead them out of bondage in Egypt. Therefore, in addition to the normal prophetic keys, he was given the specific key of the gathering of Israel. The last restoration before the Second Coming is said to need all the keys of all the different dispensations as lineal and adopted Israel must be gathered and delivered through the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant from all the nations it was dispersed to (dispersion and gathering motifs). This explains why Moses' appearance in the Kirtland Temple in 1836 is seen as a vitally important event. While a complete gathering and related deliverance apparently will not be accomplished before the millennium, it is said to gather pace and starting to spread to the nations.⁴²⁰ A central

⁴²⁰ In my research I inquired with the LDS First Presidency whether they kept a computerized statistical database of patriarchal blessings and lineage pronouncements. I received a letter stating that a copy of all patriarchal blessings was kept but that to date no specific lineage statistics were kept. They granted me, however, access to the CR Patriarchal Blessing Index 1830-1971 in the LDS Church Archives in Salt Lake City. This file contains cards with the name of the recipient, date and place of birth, date and place of patriarchal blessing and the

motif is the election motif, which in itself is not surprising as it is a recurring motif with many faces in Lost Tribe lore. In LDS theology the election motif is used on several levels. On one level it provides support for the idea of continuity between pre-existence, earthly life, and life after death. God does not specifically elect a nation or a people to the exclusion of others, he provides an eternal structural organisation, called the House of Israel and individuals elect, as it were, to be part thereof through their actions. If they had an affinity for spiritual matters in the pre-existence then they were born through the lineage of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. To be born through the lineage of the House of Israel is in itself no guarantee for salvation, only obedience to the terms of the Abrahamic covenant is. Conversely, a person who, for unknown reasons, was not born through the lineage of the House of Israel can elect to adhere to the terms of the covenant and in doing so (s)he is adopted into the House of Israel and is heir to the same blessings as lineal Israelites (inclusiveness motif). Lineal pronouncements in patriarchal blessings then use terms like 'Abraham-by-adoption' or 'Ephraim-by-adoption'.⁴²¹ The definition of a Gentile becomes thus very black and white because it simply means someone who is not willing to enter into the Abrahamic covenant or someone who chooses not to partake of the salvation offered through the House of Israel. The election motif is also used to provide support to the idea that in the final gathering the covenant is, at first, administered by the tribe who historically became known as the birthright tribe i.e. Ephraim. Later the other tribes and the adopted members will assist Ephraim in bringing the blessings of the covenant and its deliverance to all who desire it. As a result of a belief that LDS members are of Israel;

lineage. With a random search of 4000 cards (8 boxes of 500 names each), I found a number of the 12 Tribes of Israel represented although the majority were of the lineage of Ephraim or Manasseh. From secondary sources I have heard that all the tribes are amply represented among the LDS Church membership.

⁴²¹ Examples of the use of these terms can be found in the CR Patriarchal Blessing Index 1830-1971, box 95 (ASR) Oda Aileen Misako to Olson Ezra.

that Israel administers the covenant that leads to salvation; that all people need to get a chance to hear the message; and that all need an invitation to freely enter into the Abrahamic covenant in order to gain salvation, the LDS Church can be classified as a proselytising religion. Unlike any other source discussed in this dissertation but nevertheless logical within LDS theology, Israel's calling to bring deliverance to mankind apparently also extends beyond death. For this reason the 1836 visit of Elijah is considered vitally important because he restored the keys of bringing the fathers unto the children and the children unto the fathers. Joseph Smith taught that the power of Elijah seals 'those who dwell on earth to those who dwell in heaven' and thus he introduced a redeeming role for Israel that extended beyond death through vicarious work.⁴²² Latter-day Saints go to their temples to vicariously perform the ordinances appertaining to the Abrahamic covenant and so bring deliverance to their ancestors in the full knowledge that these people might not accept their offer of salvation. These ordinances are of a sacred and holy nature and are only performed in temples. This explains why the theophany of April 1836 where Jesus is said to have authorized and accepted the Kirtland Temple as His house was so important, for it was the first temple in this dispensation.

Neutral opinions on the LDS Church and its theology are on the increase. Nevertheless, virtually any library with a section on the LDS Church and any group of people interested in the LDS theology still reveal a polarization between those who believe in it and those who ridicule it. Perhaps, K.N. Ross was right when he wrote that 'the Mormon faith is a tissue of absurdities' but equally what religion does not have its idiosyncrasies that are perfectly acceptable to believers and absurd to outsiders?⁴²³ LDS

⁴²² Smith Joseph, *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, UT, 1976, pp. 337-338.

⁴²³ Ross K.N., *Mormons Are Wrong*, A.R. Mowbray: London, 1962, p. 14.

theology, especially their teachings on the House of Israel and its apparent vocation to deliver mankind, is essentially consistent with the concept of America's destiny that began influencing American theology as early as the eighteenth century.

c. Modern Judaizing groups

In addition to the two groups, discussed above, recent years have seen some interesting developments in the way some people view the Lost Tribe myth. In the past Christian missionaries and explorers designated people they encountered as the Lost Tribes and it became 'a catch-all device for understanding unknown peoples and races'.⁴²⁴ In modern times people in far flung countries such as Afghanistan, Japan, and South Africa have themselves claimed to be descendants of the Lost Tribes. Often these claims are based on oral traditions and on customs that have a lot in common with normative Judaism. Some of these groups have a desire to emigrate to Israel whereas others have no intention to leave their present countries.

The State of Israel has, since its inception in 1948, been exceptional in that the majority of its citizens were immigrants or children of immigrants from all around the globe with often the only commonality the fact that they are of Jewish descent. Over the years religious authorities fiercely guarded the Jewishness of Israel's citizenry by, sometimes ruthlessly, applying the rules and regulations of The Law of Return (1950). This policy continues to spark the debate about who is a Jew and who is not and whether this law is legal in a democracy or whether it constitutes a form of Apartheid. The fact that one's status as a Jew has been in the hands of the mainly Orthodox religious establishment not only left its mark on individuals who, for example, converted to Judaism in non-orthodox ceremonies but also on groups claiming to be the

⁴²⁴ Parfitt Tudor, *The Lost Tribes of Israel*, p. 247.

descendants of the Lost Tribes.⁴²⁵ Both the religious establishment and the academic world often viewed them with suspicion, the former by applying the austere criteria of orthodox Judaism and the latter by calling for evidence. Against this background it is perhaps surprising that in the last twenty to thirty years organisations such as Amishav and Shavei Israel, that seek out and assist lost Jews, were founded in religious circles. These organisations have been active in checking the claims of Judaizing groups who maintain descent from one or more of the Lost Tribes of Israel. When the claims are considered genuine, they have organised emigration to Israel for those who desired to make *Aliyah* after a (symbolic) conversion ceremony.

Judaizing groups and people who claim to be descendants of the Tribes of Israel can be found in many corners of the world.⁴²⁶ An Afghan tribe known as the Pathans, who inhabit eastern Afghanistan, claim to be descended from the Tribe of Benjamin. The Bene Ephraim, is a judaizing movement of Indians from Andhra Pradesh. They have taken the Jewish identity as their main identity and would like to be recognised as such. They feel ethnically as well as religiously Jewish but their claim has not yet found fertile soil. Some Japanese, in particular the Makuya, believe that the Hada tribe is traceable to the Tribe of Zebulun. The Black Hebrews, Afro-Americans from Detroit and Chicago, made Dimona in the Negev their home believing they are descendants of the Tribe of Judah. In Ethiopia there were the Falashas, now Israeli

⁴²⁵ In May 2008 a conflict about the validity of conversions sparked outrage in Israel when the High Rabbinical Court called into question all conversions performed by Rabbi Chaim Avior and Rabbi Chaim Drukman, who heads the Israeli Conversion Court see <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/Articles/0,7340,L-3538630,00.html> (accessed 09/12/2008) and <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/Articles/0,7340,L-3601478,00.html> (accessed 09/12/2008) and <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/Articles/0,7340,L-3546498,00.html> (accessed 09/12/2008)

⁴²⁶ Parfitt Tudor and Trevisan Semi Emanuela, *Judaizing Movements: Studies in the Margins of Judaism*, RoutledgeCurzon: London, 2002 and Parfitt Tudor, *The Thirteenth Gate: Travels Among the Lost Tribes of Israel*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London, 1987.

citizens and declared descendants from the Tribe of Dan. In a region known as the Venda in South Africa and the Mberengwe-Mposi area of Zimbabwe live the Lemba tribe.⁴²⁷

The beliefs and hopes of each of these groups fit well within the Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse. Some, like the Christian-Jewish Makuya, see the national nature of Judaism as a paradigm for the redemption of Japan against the forces of increasing individualism and egotism. They are also active in providing practical help and political support for Israel thereby hoping to prevent the demise of the Jewish state. Other groups may have realized, at some point in time, that their Lost Tribe descent could mean a deliverance from adverse economic situations and a key to a better life in Israel. For the outsider this may tint their claim opportunistic but the issue of identity and belief are complex and one cannot simply dismiss what a group thinks about themselves, no matter how improbable the claim seems. The process of awakening often involves many years whereby hopes, beliefs, and reality fuse in such a manner that the people are genuinely convinced of their descent. For the outsider, whether scholar or religious authority, it becomes often difficult to pinpoint the trigger of their conviction.

At present, the most intriguing of these groups are, perhaps, the Bnei Menashe a Judaizing group from northeast India, mainly the Indian states of Mizoram and Manipur.⁴²⁸ They claim descent from the Tribe of Manasseh. Their claim was and in Israel often still is met with a degree of scepticism, not least because there are no apparent connections to Judaism or Israel. Their forefathers encountered Christianity,

⁴²⁷ Parfitt Tudor, *Journey to the Vanished City: The Search for a Lost Tribe of Israel*, Hodder & Stoughton: London 1992.

⁴²⁸ Samra Myer, 'Buallawn Israel: The Emergence of a Judaizing Movement in Mizoram, Northeast India', in *Religious Change, Conversion and Culture*, ed. by Lynette Olson, Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture: Sydney 1996, pp. 105-131.

when Protestant missionaries arrived in 1894, a few years after the Anglo-Manipur War. These missionaries had a reasonable success. Shalva Weil has suggested that 'the reasons for the ease with which the tribal populations embraced Christianity' can 'be found in the nature of the indigenous religion'. Before their encounter with Christianity, they practiced an animistic religion. While the missionaries encouraged the natives to adopt Western standards, 'the local population discovered that it was possible to embrace Western religion without necessarily abandoning indigenous belief'.⁴²⁹ When they became dissatisfied with Christianity they started observing Jewish customs with which they were probably acquainted through the Old Testament and which were more compatible with their indigenous religion than Christianity ever was. Myer Samra concluded that the concept was probably introduced by the missionaries within the framework of millenarianism.⁴³⁰ The Bnei Menashe maintain that the identification with the Lost Tribes was a part of their pre-Christian indigenous religious traditions and that they thus 'desire to 'return' to the people of Israel by adopting Judaism in the Jewish State'.⁴³¹ Weil calls this process 'the phenomenon of "double" conversion to a second world religion'.⁴³² Although known in popular parlance as the Bnei Menashe, their self-identification with the biblical Tribe of Menasseh was not straightforward. By

⁴²⁹ Weil Shalva, 'Double Conversion Among the "Children of Menasseh"', in *Contemporary Society: Tribal Studies (Professor Satya Narayana Ratha Felicitation Volumes)*, ed. by Georg Pfeffer and Deepak K. Behara, 2 vols, Concept Publishing Company: New Dehli, 1997, I, Structure and Process, pp. 84-102, (p. 89).

⁴³⁰ Samra Myer, 'Judaism in Manipur and Mizoram: By-Product of Christian Mission', *The Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, 6/1 (1992), pp. 7-22.

⁴³¹ Weil Shalva, 'Lost Israelites from the Indo-Burmese Borderlands: Re-Traditionalisation and Conversion Among the Shinlung or Bene Menasseh', *Anthropologist*, 6/3 (2004), pp. 219-233, p. 220 and p. 226.

⁴³² Weil Shalva, 'Double Conversion Among the "Children of Menasseh"', in *Contemporary Society: Tribal Studies (Professor Satya Narayana Ratha Felicitation Volumes)*, ed. by Georg Pfeffer and Deepak K. Behara, 2 vols, Concept Publishing Company: New Dehli, 1997, I, Structure and Process, pp. 34-102, pp. 84-85

1990, however, they were convinced of their tribal affiliation.⁴³³ This idea was strengthened by the attention of Rabbi Eliyahu Avihail, founder of the Amishav organisation. He duly investigated their claims, customs, and laws and became convinced of the authenticity of their traditions. On the 31st March 2005 the Bnei Menashe were recognised as descendants from the Tribe of Menasseh by the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Shlomo Amar. The Efrat Chief Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, one of an Israeli team who went to the Bnei Menashe to investigate their claim said that before he went to the Bnei Menashe he 'was very sceptical about the Lost Ten Tribes' and that 'the notion of the Lost Tribes and bringing the Lost Tribes back to Israel always had' [...] 'an almost fairy-tale kind of aspect'. During the visit he changed his mind and admitted that it was 'very difficult not to accept their traditions that they come from the tribe of Menashe'.⁴³⁴ In November 2006 the first of the Bnei Menashe emigrated to Israel and the most recent group made Aliyah in August 2007.⁴³⁵

Both the acceptance of the Bnei Menashe as descendants of the Tribe of Menasseh by the Chief Rabbi, something called into serious question by academics, as well as Bnei Menashe's own unshakable beliefs can be viewed within the Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse. Perhaps cynically, one can view their emigration as a political, social, and economic rescue since Manipur is not one of the most stable regions. In 1986, a 20-year guerrilla insurgency against New Delhi ended but underground groups still clash frequently with government forces. Circumstances like that are perfect breeding ground for ideas that include salvation, identity, and a prospect

⁴³³ Weil Shalva, 'Lost Israelites from the Indo-Burmese Borderlands', p. 228.

⁴³⁴ Freund Michael, 'Long-Lost Jews', *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, 27th March 2002.

⁴³⁵ 'Voorhoede Joden uit India naar Israel', *Haarlems Dagblad*, 21 November 2006 and Ronen Gil, 'More Than 200 Bnei Menashe Arriving in Israel' on: <http://www.Israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/123481> (last retrieved 1st September 2007).

of emigration and economic success abroad.⁴³⁶ In addition to that most Bnei Menashe originally settled in Gaza and the West Bank and the Shalom Achshav (Peace Now) movement suggested that their conversion and immigration was encouraged to safeguard political ideas that Israel must protect itself from a potential Arab majority. As such the Bnei Menashe are considered the rescuers of a political ideology that is slowly falling from grace. The suspicions of Shalom Achshav are strengthened when one hears Michael Freund, the chairman of Shavei Israel, express the opinion that the Bnei Menashe could help with Israel's demographic problem because 'groups like the Bnei Menashe constitute a large, untapped demographic and spiritual reservoir for Israel and the Jewish people'.⁴³⁷ In a less cynical way one can accept that the Bnei Menashe truly believe that they are descendant from the Tribe of Menasseh. These claims may not be able to withstand academic scrutiny but from an anthropological point of view one has to equate what a group thinks about itself with what the outsider thinks about them. If one thus accepts their traditions and their identity one could see their rescue as part of the deliverance that was promised by the biblical prophets.

In spite of political, religious or scholarly debates about the validity of the traditions of Judaizing groups, some of the typical Lost Tribe motifs are present in these traditions. As is to be expected the lineage, identity and lost/found motifs play a central role. In some groups the End of Day motif plays an indirect role inasmuch as the return of these groups to the Jewish State is seen as the fulfilment of biblical prophecies. It is interesting that the idea of the exile plays a minor role and that the reasons for the exile

⁴³⁶ Fathers Michael, 'Lost Tribe of Israel?', Time Magazine, 15th September 1999 on <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,30965-1,00.html>.

⁴³⁷ Steinberg Jessica, "'Lost Tribe' émigrés from India Making a Dramatic Aliyah' Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 3rd January 2003 on: http://www.Jewishsf.com/content/2-0/module/displaystory/story_id/19498/edition_id/396/format/html/displaystory.html

do not seem to be relevant only the fact that they are the descendants of the Israelite exiles. Consequently one does not find motifs such as the aetiological or punishment motifs. The contrast between the relative paucity of the motifs and the strength of their conviction that they are, indeed, descendants of the Lost Tribes is fascinating.

d. Conclusion

It is clear that also in modern times the Lost Tribe myth continues to fascinate scholar and layman alike. People starting to identify themselves with one or more of the Lost Tribes rather than associating groups in distant lands with this illustrious ancestry caused some remarkable changes within the development of the myth. Each self-identifying group provides plenty of evidence of different sorts to support their claim. None of it, however, can withstand the rigors of academic scrutiny successfully and the standard view in the academic world thus remains that the Lost Tribes are nothing but a myth. The question then remains, why do people, regardless of scholarly opinions, scrutiny, and evidence to the contrary continue to identify themselves as descendant from the Lost Tribes? Why would anyone want to connect themselves to historical or modern Israel when, over the centuries, anti-Semitism has cost many a life, caused unimaginable misery and pain, and shows no sign of diminishing.

The answer is, perhaps, that academism cannot hope to compete with people's beliefs or the perception of who or what they are. It is a little bit like convincing anorexia patients that they are too thin or people with phobia's that there is nothing to be afraid of. As far as most stories discussed in this dissertation are concerned, one has the benefit of hindsight. Eldad disappeared and one can only try and piece together his motives for coming to Kairouan. Greater geographic knowledge has outdated the information found in the *Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, nevertheless, one can admire him as, perhaps, the greatest Jewish explorer of his time. David Reuveni lived well

because of his story, after a while he lost favour with the governments of Europe and ultimately he lost his life. For each source one can find good reasons while at the same time discrediting the information found therein by applying rigorous academic scrutiny. When dealing with people's (perceived) identities it is not so straightforward and it is easy to get lost in the quagmire which the Lost Tribe myth sometimes resembles.

The material discussed in this chapter shows a continued use of the myth in the Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse. The Lost Tribes are still perceived as having the power to bring about a process of deliverance. For some lineage is used to deliver them from various undesirable situations, some find that their descent has afforded them a special status and so delivered them from the ignorance and relative stagnation of the masses whereas yet others believe that their descent is a privilege with a responsibility. These different interpretations with regards to the deliverance process and the reasons for self-identification have also influenced the development and use of the myth. British Israelism is religiously and politically motivated. This has meant that they have had to adapt quite a number of times in line with the changing political scene. At the apogee of the British Empire it was relatively easy to foster the idea that there was a master race, descended from biblical Israel who, having recognised their true identity and destiny would deliver the world from spiritual and political darkness. As such it became a sanctification and validation of the British Empire. Later with the decline of the British Empire, the redemptive powers were more directed inwards and saving the world became a secondary aim.

Latter-day Saints also claim to be of the House of Israel but they approach their redeeming role totally from a religious point of view. Their stated aim is to administer the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant to as many as will hear. They believe that Israelite descent offers them spiritual authority to gather not only the whole House of

Israel but also to gather into the House of Israel all who are willing to obey the terms of the Abrahamic covenant. In addition to that they, perhaps bizzarely, accorded themselves also redemptive powers beyond death inasmuch as they also administer the ordinances of the Abrahamic covenant vicariously for their dead ancestors.

For the modern Judaizing groups, especially the Bnei Menashe, their descent has set into motion a deliverance process that will touch virtually all areas of their lives.

The varied use of the myth by the self-identifying groups has had certain consequences for its development. It is very difficult to quantify the embellishments except to conclude that they are of a very different nature than the embellishments of the Middle Ages. Both British Israelism and the LDS Church changed the very foundation of the myth. It is a fact that the myth has been used by Jews, Christians and even Muslims but in most cases it remained essentially a Jewish myth. In the case of British Israelism and LDS theology, the myth became Christianized. The former did so by supplanting Judah as the covenant race and the latter by giving a Christian dimension to the Old Testament as a whole and the Abrahamic covenant in particular. The Judaizing groups contributed to the embellishment of the myth by their very claim thereby making the myth multi-cultural. In the political arena their interpretation of the myth and the resulting consequences such as for example the *Aliyah* of a large number of Bnei Menashe could have changed the myth into a ticking bomb. It is worthwhile to note that in spite of these changes the motifs remained fairly constant.

CONCLUSION

For centuries people from different nations have, for various reasons, speculated where the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel went when they walked out of conventional history into a world of myth and legend. As a result it has become a myth with universal appeal, a myth that has been recruited for a variety of causes, and even a myth that has the power to persuade people to create a past which has little or no bearing on the objective reality. It has travelled effortlessly through time and transcended national, cultural, and religious boundaries. In its travels the myth, which originated in a terse report of seven repetitive biblical verses, soon grew into a vast literary corpus. This was possible in part because its structure is such that individuals and groups alike have been able to mould it according to their needs and aspirations and in part because of the lack of details, past and present, and more importantly the scantiness of tangible archaeological sources. These two important characteristics allowed the myth to fuel the imagination of many across conventional boundaries such as religion and ethnicity. When examining the different uses of the myth it becomes obvious that the essential elements and the basic motifs of the myth hardly change, whereas the peripheries are in constant flux depending on who is using the myth.

This thesis set out from the premise that the myth of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel is an essential feature of Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse from biblical times until the present day. In order to establish whether this indeed was the case, the methodology was three-pronged. Firstly a number of representative sources and groups ranging from biblical times until today were chosen. These sources were not chosen randomly as each of them enhanced the myth in some way. A number were exclusively Jewish in nature, others were wholly Christian, several were shared between the two and a few were deemed to be neither Christian nor Jewish. The periodization of these

sources has been in centuries rather than in decades. Secondly, the development and the use of the motifs that, perforce, support the discourse were charted to discover whether a change in discourse participants influenced not only the quantity of the motifs but also the motifs themselves. Thirdly, the growth of the myth was tracked and the role of any embellishments discussed.

In applying this methodology a number of things became apparent. The Bible as the foundation of the myth of the Ten Lost Tribes has been responsible for its initial dissemination. This is not surprising given that the Old Testament is in part a history of the people of Israel. It presented an ambiguous tale of disobedience, punishment, loss, and future redemption. Although the Bible did not embroider upon the removal and life of the Lost Tribes, its conciseness on the one hand and its ambiguity on the other hand provided fertile ground for the development of a myth.

The initial development was slow but even in the earliest sources it is impossible to pinpoint the exact time where reality ended and fantasy began. Most of the earliest sources reported historical information but at the same time they often attached ethical and religious issues to the Assyrian exile. So the Talmud reminded its readers that the consumption of large quantities of wine or other lewd behaviour were the causes for the exile of the Ten Tribes. The Midrash employed the Ten Tribes to show that it does not pay to transgress the commandments of God and the Church Fathers used the Ten Tribes in their treatises and polemics to warn against schisms and divisions. Because of the ambiguous restoration prophecies the earliest sources, as a whole, laid the foundation for the enduring connection between the Ten Lost Tribes and the idea of redemption. They did not assign a specific redemptive role to the Lost Tribes but hinted that one day both Israel and Judah would be reunited in a final redemption of the people of Israel.

The sources discussed in the second chapter showed a phenomenal increase in the appeal and the recruitment of the Lost Tribes myth in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The sources discussed in this chapter, two early Jewish travel stories and two contemporary Christian sources, offered a wealth of new information, misinformation or fantasy, as the case may be, above and beyond the earliest sources. Whereas the Middle Ages were a significant period for Christianity and Islam with regards to their development and growth, this was not the case for Judaism. Judaism had already evolved from the Israelite religion of the ancient days into the post-exilic Judaism that was able to survive in the Diaspora. In spite of this the Middle Ages had a lasting effect on Jewish communities as the relations between Christians and Jews deteriorated beginning with the Crusades and culminating in the expulsions of the thirteenth century. These external factors greatly influenced the growth and the use of the Lost Tribes myth.

One of the most famous and influential Jewish contributors to the Lost Tribe myth in this period was Eldad ha-Dani. With the exception of recurring themes and motifs Eldad's story had little in common with the earliest sources in general and the terse biblical verses in particular. He came to Kairouan and recounted a beautiful tale about his shipwreck, cannibals, and a miraculous rescue. He regaled the Jews of Kairouan with tales about his people, the four Lost Tribes of Dan, Gad, Naphtali, and Asher who lived in their own territory, who were independent, rich and righteous. The climax of his story was his description of a group of people he called the Benei Moshe. The Benei Moshe were Levites who repented from their idolatry while in exile in Babylon. As a reward God rescued them from Babylon, placed them relatively near Eldad's people, and encircled them by the Sambatyon. Eldad's description gives the distinct impression that, rather than being incarcerated by the Sambatyon, the Benei

Moshe are protected by it. The guaranteed protection from impure customs and practices as well as the absence of anything unclean within the confines of the Sambatyon were a reward for their repentance in Babylon.

Eldad's story is rich in new and recurring motifs, and his contributions have had an enduring influence on the growth of the Lost Tribe myth. He did not assign the Lost Tribes a specific redemptive role but there is a strong undercurrent that the Lost Tribes are ready for the final reunion with the House of Judah and for the redemption of Israel that was promised by the Old Testament prophets. Less obvious, but present nevertheless, is a feeling that he also wanted to warn those who might underestimate the strength of the Jews, especially if they were to be joined by the Tribes of Dan, Gad, Naphtali, and Asher.

The second Jewish source discussed in this chapter was the *Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*. This literary travelogue is interesting for research into the myth of the Lost Tribes because Benjamin was, surprisingly perhaps, not interested in the Lost Tribes or the dissemination of the myth. Nevertheless, his work contributed to the continued life of the myth and gave rise to later travellers bringing back tales, which either corroborate or embroider upon Benjamin's information. The few references to the Ten Tribes that he did make were such that they gave hope to European Jewry whose situation was very difficult. He further contributed not only to the continuation of the myth but also to the excitement surrounding it and by neither confirming nor refuting earlier stories. There is an undercurrent in his writings in relation to the redemption of the Jews. His list of the habitats, strength, and achievements of non-European Jews and the Lost Tribes were, perhaps again, meant as a warning to Christians and Muslims alike to not underestimate the Jews.

The first Christian source discussed in this chapter was *Mandeville's Travels* in which the Ten Lost Tribes are identified with the inimical forces of Gog and Magog that will fight against the righteous in the final battle for deliverance at the End of Days. This source was significant because of the negative image it projected of the Ten Tribes and their role when final deliverance is nigh. This latent anti-Semitism became a facilitator for a new usage of the myth of the Lost Tribes namely Christian Messianism. Finding the Lost Tribes became a lot more interesting for Christians because it would herald the return of the Messiah.

The last source discussed in this chapter is the legendary Christian ruler Prester John. Together with *Mandeville's Travels* it is a good representation of Christian use of and belief in the Ten Lost Tribes in the Middle Ages. The alleged vastness of Prester John's kingdom and the sheer riches found therein contributed to the idea that he would come to Europe's aid in destroying Islam. Prester John claimed that the Lost Tribes lived in his kingdom but that they were enemies of Christianity.

The Middle Ages were thus very important to the development of the Lost Tribe myth. The myth started to bloom and this is manifested through new motifs, attempts at locating and/or identifying specific places where the Lost Tribes lived, descriptions of riches and power beyond one's imagination, and new usage of the myth. While the myth was not yet used for blatant Messianic purposes, Christian or Jewish, the connection between the Lost Tribes and redemption became a lot stronger.

It became clear that, in Early Modern times, there were a number of crucial changes to the development and use of the myth. First, the sources of the Early Modern times did not continue the mediaeval trend of adding embellishments to the myth and the motifs stayed fairly constant. The most important change was that the Ten Tribes became firmly rooted in their role as deliverers or instruments that would bring to pass or

even hasten deliverance. In both sources the myth is used in the main for political deliverance. Reuveni used the alleged strength and number of his people to convince the Pope and other Christian leaders that together they could defeat the Muslims and deliver Christendom from this ever advancing threat. His ulterior motive, however, was obtaining enough weapons and soldiers from the Christian army to free Jerusalem so he could establish a place for his oppressed co-religionists to live. Menasseh ben Israel, a man who was scarred by life under the Inquisition was firmly rooted in Jewish Messianism, but he was also deeply concerned about his co-religionists. He managed, to a certain extent, to harness the Christian millenarian expectations for the Second Coming for his own purposes. Realizing that the return of the Ten Tribes and the gathering of Israel feature prominently in the final run-up to the Millennium, he used the story of Montesinos to write a treatise about Jewish Messianism. Jewish Messianism encompassed the idea that universal peace would reign when Israel would be gathered in their homeland. Since one can not gather that which, is not scattered he tried persuade England to readmit the Jews. Although he did not live to see the Jews readmitted, his use of the Lost Tribes and the gathering of the Jews did bring relief to the Jews. For the Millenarians the end result was less fortuitous, they did not manage to gather the Lost Tribes and thereby force the start of the Millenium but the excitement about the Lost Tribes nevertheless inflamed them to look forward to redemption.

Most surprising, perhaps, was the development and use of the myth in Modern Times. One might have expected that with the progress in science, geography, ethnology, and other fields the need for a myth such as the Lost Tribe myth would diminish. Indeed, would there still be a need for a lost people to come to the rescue of others? It was demonstrated that progress certainly changed the extent of belief in the Lost Tribes, however, within that new scope the myth did not loose any of its popularity

and there was a continued use of the myth in the Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse. It was shown that during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Lost Tribe ideology commanded a considerable allegiance and there was no sign that this is diminishing in the twenty-first century. A remarkable change in the Lost Tribe ideology was noted inasmuch that a new facet was added to the myth viz. self-identification with the Lost Ten Tribes. Previously, alleged representatives such as Eldad and Reuveni identified their people as the Lost Tribes, or merchants and other itinerants such as Benjamin of Tudela and Montesinos identified distant peoples as such. In early modern times many unsuspecting natives of newly discovered nations were eagerly identified with the Lost Tribes, often because they had seemingly Jewish customs. There was, however, no attempt by a group of people to identify themselves with the Lost Tribes. This changed in the middle of the nineteenth century when, rather than solely identifying people in distant lands as the Lost Tribes, some people started identifying themselves with one or all of the Ten Lost Tribes. In addition to a brief overview of self-identifying groups, three groups were discussed in detail. The first group were the British Israelites, a Protestant interdenominational movement which believes that the Anglo-Saxons are the blood descendants of the Ten Tribes which comprised the Northern Kingdom of ancient Israel. Their beliefs were shown to be based on a strict separation of the House of Judah and the House of Israel, a migration theory, questionable philology, and the premise that the Ten Tribes converted to Christianity. It was shown that the motifs were for the most part recurring with some more prominent than others. As with other sources, where only a number of the Lost Tribes played a role, in British-Israelism, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh are the tribes of interest. Their role is redemptive but the redemption is an internal affair inasmuch as it is an awakening of the British and American people to their true identity. These tribes are

not involved in the redemption of others but the world, as a whole, will be a better place through Britain and America's righteous leadership. These beliefs were shown to have led to isolationism, racial prejudice, and anti-Semitism.

The second group discussed was The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, an American religious movement founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith. Latter-day Saints also claim to be of the House of Israel but their interpretation of what the House of Israel constitutes was shown to be very different from any of the sources discussed in this dissertation. According to LDS theology, the House of Israel is both a designation of lineage and an eternal structural organisation. Membership of the House of Israel is thus, until the Final Judgement, in constant flux and wholly dependent on an individual's willingness to obey the terms of the Abrahamic covenant which is believed to be synonymous with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, one can be born into the House of Israel by virtue of lineage but one can also adopt this lineage by entering into the Abrahamic covenant. Lineal Israelites and adopted Israelites are subject to the same conditions if they want to remain in the House of Israel. They believe that Israelite descent offers them spiritual authority and responsibility to gather not only the whole House of Israel but also to gather into the House of Israel all who are willing to obey the terms of the Abrahamic covenant. Unlike the British Israelites the redemptive role of the House of Israel is universal. It involves an initial awakening of the tribe of Ephraim, the birthright tribe and after that any lineal or adopted Israelite participates in the redemption by administering the Abrahamic covenant. So strong is this belief that one has to belong to this structural organisation that is the House of Israel that they, even participate in administering the ordinances of the Abrahamic covenant vicariously for their dead ancestors.

This chapter also contained an overview of modern Judaizing groups. It was noted that people from far flung countries such as Afghanistan, Japan, and South Africa have claimed to be descendants of the Lost Tribes. Some of these people have a desire to emigrate to Israel whereas others have no intention to leave their present countries. Often their claims are based on oral traditions and on customs that have a lot in common with normative Judaism. It was shown that the beliefs of each of these groups fit well within the Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse. One group, the Bnei Menashe were discussed in more detail because their status as Jews from the Lost Tribe of Manasseh was confirmed by Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar on 31st March 2005. It was demonstrated that the deliverance of the Bnei Menashe can be viewed on different levels.

On the whole this thesis has shown that the myth of the Ten Lost Tribes is an essential feature of Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse from biblical times until the present day. Throughout the discourse, the Lost Ten Tribes are either the deliverers – political as well as religious- or an inimical force who will fight against deliverance. Their existence and more importantly their return can be part of a religious belief where e.g. it will herald Messianic deliverance or in modern times, where being a member of the Lost Tribes is seen as potentially bringing deliverance from an undesirable socio-economic status. A very recent development is that the Lost Tribes are seen as new participants in the rescue of the political entity viz. the State of Israel, a land that they themselves see as the place of their own redemption.

When dealing with the myth of the Lost Tribes, however, conclusions are rarely final and answers are seldom crystal-clear. Consequently, the conclusions of this research, too, give rise to a number of specifically related questions. Firstly, did the myth as part of the Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse prosper in one geographical

location more than in another? Secondly, why do people in the face of all scientific advances still look for salvation through the Lost Tribe myth? Last but not least, what are the reasons behind the myth's enduring power of attraction? The latter is important because in spite of the fact that Jews and Christians share a common religious ground, they have a very different attitude to and understanding of the concept of deliverance.

The question whether the myth prospered in one geographical location more than in another is pertinent because in the introduction it was mentioned that the Lost Tribe myth differed from other universal myths inasmuch as it transcended the usual national, cultural, religious and temporal borders. It became apparent in this thesis that within the Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse geography has not restricted the myth in any way. Within the relative limited scope of this thesis people and/or groups from India to the Americas and from Africa to Europe have used the Lost Tribe myth in their individual and collective searches for actual deliverance or for an understanding of the concept. There are of course cases or other discourses where geography has influenced or restricted the use of the Lost Tribe myth. So, for example, the Spanish bishop Bartolomeo de Las Casas (1484-1566) who in his bid to defend the rights of the native Americans forwarded a theory according to which the American Indians were descendants from the Lost Tribes. Later this theory became widely accepted by groups of Christians and also Jews of European origin. Academic research into the use of the Lost Tribe myth has shown, for example, that the myth was often used by Westerners. The Catholic Church, for example, with its seat of government in Europe used the myth in support of Christian anti-Semitism, thereby reflecting the mediaeval European Christian view of the Jew as the killer of Christ. Tudor Parfitt showed that the Lost

Tribe myth offered Westerners a mechanism for understanding the other in colonial times.⁴³⁸

The second question as to why people in the face of all scientific advances still look for salvation through the Lost Tribe myth probably has many answers. Perhaps in some cases it is 'the yearning of uneducated people for the trappings and vocabulary of scholarship', an escape mechanism as it were from one's place in society.⁴³⁹ Others might be looking for more exciting or heroic ancestors, and some might feel justified in their political opinions, however offensive these are to others. I, however, would like to suggest that, in modern times, the Ten Lost Tribes represent, more than anything else, transcendence. Much in the same way as the Ten Tribes were a romantic fantasy in times of persecution, they represent transcendence in a time where scientific advances put within mankind's grasp that which surpasses our stoutest dreams. Science, however, can be a harsh taskmaster; it demands exactness, detachment, and proof whereas it is within human nature to dream the impossible, to hope for the improbable, and to search for that which cannot be found.

The last and perhaps the most difficult question that needs addressing appertains to the reasons behind the myth's enduring power of attraction. In the introduction of this thesis it was suggested that Jungian psychology might provide an explanation for the multi-national or universal appeal of the Lost Tribe myth. Jung showed that there are certain archetypes or motifs that are part of our collective unconscious and that these influence our attitudes and behaviour. The same ideas can be used to explain the myth's enduring power of attraction, as a feature of Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse. As this thesis progressed it became apparent that out of the many recurring motifs found in Lost Tribe literature, some were more prominent than others.

⁴³⁸ Parfitt Tudor, *The Lost Tribes of Israel*, p. 248.

⁴³⁹ Parfitt Tudor, *The Lost Tribes of Israel*, p. 62.

I would like to suggest that the more prominent motifs reflect the different needs for and the understanding of the concept of deliverance by the Jewish and Christian communities respectively. For Jews deliverance often comes after a period of separation (often in the wake of hostilities) and purification (separation, war, and purity motifs) whereas Christians for the most part believe that deliverance comes through taking upon themselves the name of Christ and spreading the Gospel, by force if necessary (purification, identity, and war motifs). The very powerful and universal lost-found motif that is intricately woven into the myth of the Lost Tribes has, throughout history provided an environment, in which these four motifs that in part carry the Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse, could thrive. This allowed all participants of the discourse, from biblical times until today, to mould the myth according to their needs.

Jewish history is marked by material as well as spiritual loss and thus the lost-found motif, is very profound, indeed. The power of the myth is so enduring because on the one hand it mirrors Jewish history while on the other hand it provides the hope that eventually, after a period of separation, reflection, and purification all things will be restored. The Bible laid the foundation of this idea by indicating through the restoration prophecies that the House of Israel, meaning the Southern and Northern Kingdoms, will be delivered by God after they repent and remember the commandments. The Talmud and the Midrash toy with the idea that the Ten Tribes need to purify themselves before they will be reunited with Judah. In some cases this purification process has already taken place and the Lost Tribes are separated from the impure influences of the world behind the Sambatyon. The Sambatyon is thus a protection from impurity rather than a means of incarceration. IV Ezra tells its readers that the Ten Tribes realised they had sinned and that they separated themselves to a place where they could 'keep their

statutes which they had not kept in their own land'.⁴⁴⁰ Eldad emphasizes that true purity through separation brings great blessings and thus encouraged Jews to continue to observe the purity laws even if it meant that they were separated or different from their neighbours because of it. Reuveni certainly gives the impression that the Lost Tribes thrived as an independent Jewish kingdom, presumably having repented from their sins, because they were separated from the House of Judah. Those of the modern Judaizing groups that do return to Israel are put through some degree of conversion/purification process by religious authorities as a closure to their separation from the fold. Aside from the (alleged) descendants of the Lost Tribes that have returned after a period of separation and a process of purification there is another group that is mirrored by the Lost Tribe myth. They are those that are separated from the fold through assimilation, acculturation, and even conversion. Judaism longs to bring these lost sheep back into the fold but here too, a process of purification has to precede this.

For Christians the power of the Lost Tribe myth is enduring because all the elements that change a person into a Christian are present. By leaving their old life behind, through baptism and by taking on a new identity viz. the name of Christ they start on the road that ultimately leads back to God. Separation and purification in this case are for the most part momentary acts rather than a period of reflection and repentance. This interpretation allows for the assumption that the Lost Tribes, in leaving their old lives behind, converted to Christianity. Thus their return and gathering can be easily accommodated in any time frame, including an End of Days scenario. More importantly, however, it allowed Christians throughout history to harness the now often Christian Lost Tribes in their quest to spread the message of salvation, which is an integral part of Christianity. So, for example, Pope Clement VII could assume, at least

⁴⁴⁰ IV Ezra 13:49-47

for a short period, that Reuveni's army would help him fight Islam and bring Jerusalem once more under Christian authority. In modern times, it allows Christians to see themselves as Israel, through Lost Tribe descent, and so be instrumental in the salvation of mankind.

As said before when dealing with the myth of the Lost Tribes conclusions are rarely final and answers are seldom crystal-clear. However, we can conclude with certainty that the lack of tangible information about the Lost Tribes throughout the centuries has on the one hand embellished the myth and on the other hand allowed the myth to be used by numerous groups and individuals for various purposes and discourses one of which is the Jewish-Christian deliverance discourse.

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