

Who are the Jews?

The Khazar Hypothesis

The Khazar Hypothesis is an anti-Semitic attempt at historical revisionism that proposes a theory about the supposed conversion to Judaism of an ancient nation known as Khazaria in the region of the Caucasus Mountains around the ninth or tenth century AD. With minor variations to the story line, the Khazar Empire is considered to be of Turkic origin. The ruling class apparently converted to Judaism in the eighth century and the majority of the population followed suit. When the Empire later disintegrated, possibly due to invasion by the Mongols, the people fled and dispersed into Europe to eventually become known as the Ashkenazi. Because they are but proselytes to the false religion called Judaism invented by the Rabbis, it is assumed that the vast majority of European Jewry are not descendants of Judah at all.

The proponents of this theory declare that although some Khazars may have intermarried, the vast majority are not actually Jews at all and consequently they have no claim to the Land of Israel whatsoever as they are considered to be nothing but imposters. They may call themselves Jews but they are not Jews.

This theory is oftentimes used as support for a number of Replacement Theologies used to delegitimize any Jewish claim to the land promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Concerning a certain portion of the present population of Israel their assumptions may deserve some consideration.

BUT, even if the above was a correct analysis of the history of the Ashkenazi, it becomes a bit of a moot point when one takes into account the demographics of those who inhabit the Promised Land. Although the Ashkenazi Jews from North Western Europe are the largest ethnic group dwelling in present day Israel, at a bit over 30% they are far from being the majority. Within the population of Jews in Israel are those who have returned from Spain and North Africa, generally known as Sephardim, those of Middle Eastern countries known as Mizrahim, plus smaller Jewish ethnic groups such as the Ethiopian Jews, Yemenite Jews, Russian Jews, Kaifeng Jews, Bene Menashe and others which together make up the overwhelming majority to this day. And with ongoing intermarriage among them all, the percentage of 'pure' Ashkenazi is steadily decreasing.

Having brought our attention to the Khazar Hypothesis, it turns out that there is something about the origin of the Khazars that is worthy of exploration. Secular historians uniformly place the area which was dominated by the Khazars, just north of the Caucasus Mountain range which stretches from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea. This general area was home to a number of empires dating from several centuries before Christ till the time of Genghis Kahn in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century AD. The Cimmerians, the Samartians, the Iberians, the Scythians and the Khazars being of note. Collectively known as Caucasian, they are all generally considered to be of at least some middle-eastern origin: Assyrian, Turkish, Persian, or Syrian are often cited as possible ancestors. So say the secular scholars.

Biblical and Jewish writings, along with the support of some archeological discoveries, tell another story that liberal and secular scholars are unwilling to acknowledge due to their inherent spiritual bias against anything Biblical. In the biblical books of Samuel, Chronicles and Kings, we find the historical record of the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel and both of their exiles. After many wars between them and because of their apostasy, first the Northern Kingdom of Israel was deported from their land by the Assyrians, and approximately 120 years later the Southern Kingdom of Judah was exiled by the Babylonians. The Assyrians relocated the Kingdom of Israel in what we now call Upper Mesopotamia in Northern Turkey and the Jews were taken captive to Babylon in what we now call Southern Iraq.

After the Medes and the Persians conquered the Babylonians, a remnant of the Jews were allowed to return to the Promised Land after seventy years of captivity and eventually they rebuilt the city, its walls and the Temple of God. From a few verses in the Bible we can assume that a representative minority of the Ten Tribes of Israel returned to Samaria and cohabitated with the resident foreigners known as Samaritans and were subsequently considered one and the same. And a verse or two suggest that an even smaller portion may have assimilated with the Jews, but in all truth we have very little evidence to assess the extent of any assimilation. It is a bit of a revelation to realise that from these scant references the vast majority of the Christian Community have assumed that what remained of the Ten Tribes have returned in mass and have been integrated with the Jews since their return from Babylon.

This assumption finds itself at odds with the Biblical prophecies that predict that the Ten Tribes of Israel would never be uprooted again after their return (Amos 9:15; Ezekiel 39:28). From history it is quite clear that the Jews certainly experienced being scattered again (70AD and 135AD) which eliminates the validity of that line of reasoning. Besides all that, there are other prophecies that speak of their destiny while scattered which are being fulfilled to this very day. What follows are some historical documents of Jewish origin which also completely negate the idea.

The Jewish historian Josephus writing in the first century gives us the clearest and most authoritative statements available: “. . . *there are but two tribes under the dominion of the Romans*”, and “. . . *the Ten Tribes are beyond the Euphrates and have become a multitude that none could count*” (*Antiquities of the Jews*: 11.5.2).

It is well documented that the Roman Empire never expanded north of the Caucasus Mountains. Therefore, to be outside the ‘dominion of the Romans’ and ‘beyond the Euphrates’ places them north of this natural barrier.

Another Jewish writing from late in the first century AD says this of the Ten Tribes:

2 Esdras Chapter 13:39-45

And whereas thou sawest that he gathered another peaceable multitude unto him; 40 Those are the ten tribes, which were carried away prisoners out of their own land in the time of Osea the king, whom Salmanasar the king of Assyria led away captive, and he carried them over the waters, and so came they into another land. 41 But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt, 42 That they might there keep their statutes, which they never kept in their own land. 43 And they entered into Euphrates by the narrow places of the river. 44 For the most High then shewed signs for them, and held still the flood, till they were passed over. 45 For through that country there was a great way to go, namely, of a year and a half: and the same region is called Arsareth.

Whilst the accuracy of this particular document is questionable seeing as it is considered to be among the books designated apocrypha, it does indicate some Jewish belief in the knowledge of the whereabouts of the Ten Tribes at the time of writing and also affirms that the Ten Tribes were not joined with the Jews.

Not long after the time of Josephus’ historical recording, a great debate is documented between two famous Rabbis which we find in the Jewish Mishnah: Rabbi Akiva and his opponent, Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. What follows are their core statements:

“The Ten Tribes shall not return again, for it is written (Deuteronomy 29:27) ‘. . . and He cast them into another land like as this day.’ As this day goes and returns not, so do they go and return not.” So says Rabbi Akiva.

But Rabbi Eliezer says, *“Like as this day”*: *‘as the day grows dark and then becomes light, so also with the Ten Tribes; now they are in darkness, but in the future there shall be light for them.’*”

The setting of this debate is around the time of when Bar Kochba was being proclaimed as Messiah among the Jews, around 130-132AD. Rabbi Akiva, who was strongly advocating support for this 'Messiah', argued that the Ten Tribes would not return and he sought to dismiss the revelation of Scripture with his interpretation in order to encourage the Jews in their uprising against Rome with Bar Kochba as their general.

At that time, the Ten Tribes were showing no inclination of returning and because Rabbi Eliezer's understanding was that Messiah had to come upon or immediately before their return, he was therefore not in support of proclaiming Bar Kochba as Messiah. However, it was Rabbi Akiva's opinion that prevailed and the Jews rebelled against the Romans and established their rule in Jerusalem for about three years until being utterly vanquished yet again by the Romans.

For a more complete analysis of the Rabbinical stance on this subject, type *Will the Lost Tribes Return?* By Dennis Jones into your search engine. However, the main point is that the debate was not about the existence of the Ten tribes. That was positively assumed by both sides of the argument. It was about whether or not they would return. All the evidence points to the reality that first century Jews knew where the Ten Tribes were in their time.

All these things fit together: the Biblical account of the deportation of Israel by the Assyrians; the Jewish writings attesting to Israel's existence and their whereabouts; the research of secular scholars. It is far from a leap of logic to acknowledge that these people groups that established these ancient empires immediately to the north of where they had been deported, are in fact the descendants of the Ten Tribes of Israel. They had ample opportunities to establish their prophesied freedom: During the transition of power when their captors were defeated by the Babylonians; again when the Medes and Persians established their dominion; and later with the Greeks and yet again with the Romans.

The secular scholars may not want to acknowledge Biblical truth, but in fact their findings bear witness to both the Jewish writings and Bible history and prophecy. As mentioned above, their research affirms that the Cimmerians, the Samartians, the Iberians, the Scythians and the Kharzars were of at least some middle-eastern origin: Assyrian, Turkish, Persian, or Syrian being cited as possible ancestors.

The scriptures charge the Ten Tribes with mixing themselves with the heathen and of bringing forth pagan children. The prophet Hosea has much to say on this matter and the Assyrians were particularly identified as the people that the Ten Tribes mixed with, who later turned on them (Hosea 12:1; Ezekiel 16:28; 23:5,9,12,23). So it is no surprise to the student of God's Word to see that secular scholars have identified these Caucasians as having some middle-eastern heritage.

This then brings us back to the Khazars. By joining the dots we can propose with confidence that they are in fact descendants of the Ten Tribes of Israel that reconverted back to Judaism. Many later also converted to Christianity and became the founders of what we now call the Russian Orthodox Church. Those that continued in Judaism, whether or not they intermarried with the Jews would still have legitimate claim to be regathered back to the Holy Land by the fact of their actual forgotten heritage as Israelites, even though they identify as Jews.

For the record, the Khazars were the last of the known people groups to migrate from this area into North Western Europe, having been preceded by the Cimmerians, the Samartians, the Iberians and the Scythians. Remnants of these people who remained can be found in present day Georgia which was once known as Iberia. All of these people groups are referred to as Caucasian, all of them with middle-eastern background, all of them mostly descendants of the Ten Tribes of Israel.

Later on in medieval times, Rabbi Rashi (1040-1105AD born in Troyes, France) said that the Lost Ten Tribes were to be found in Tserefat meaning the land called "Francia" i.e. France. Nachmanides a.k.a. Moshe ben Nachman (1194-1270AD born in Girona, Spain) is another Jewish Biblical scholar who wrote that the Ten Tribes were still in Tserefath and are "at the ends of the north", meaning at that time the northern areas of Europe. This whole area of Northern Gaul was once known to the Jews as "Tserefath." Later the term was extended to the whole of France which is its modern usage.

There are numerous Replacement Theologies that would seek to delegitimize the present inhabitants of the Promised Land by declaring them Fake Jews. However, there is another Replacement Theology which has been accepted by most Christians and Jews alike and that is the theory that the present day Jews represent the entire twelve tribes of Israel. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The day will come, it's not here now, when the last shreds of the ancient animosity between Judah and Israel will end and a full reconciliation will take place. This can only happen when both parties have first been fully reconciled to God, which can only happen in Christ and so we look to the promise that all Israel will be saved. It appears from the many scriptures that speak on this subject that it will be a remnant (albeit a multitude nonetheless) that participates in this final restoration spoken of by the prophets and explicitly portrayed by Ezekiel in his vision of the two sticks becoming one in his hand: the Stick of Joseph and the Stick of Judah (Ezekiel 37:15-28). Perhaps the Khazars are an indication that the reunification is on its way. For more on the subject of the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel read: Every Believer's Prophecy Guide by Elihu Ben Ephraim available FREE to read at livingandlovingbyfaith.com