

# A remnant of Israel in France

By Valerie Martlew

Most people know enough history to realise that a Celtic people called the Gauls inhabited what is now France, in Roman times. If you have ever read any of the "*Asterix*" books, about a plucky little Gaulish opponent of the Romans, and the "*magic potion*" which made him and his colleagues so strong, you will, at least, be aware of this! Seriously, though, the authors of "*Asterix*" were remarkably clever and they knew a lot about Gaulish and Roman history, so their books should not be dismissed as mere "*comic*" stories. Have you ever wondered where the Gauls came from? They were not the original inhabitants of France, for the cave paintings discovered in the Dordogne at Lascaux were made by the Stone Age inhabitants. The Gauls were of the late Bronze and Iron Ages, and were immigrants.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states that the Gauls came south from the Rhine River valley in the 5th century BC and established themselves as far as the Mediterranean coasts. It does not venture to trace them further back than the Rhine. However, there must be some people (like myself!) who need to know how they reached as far as the Rhine, for they surely did not spontaneously generate there.

The Gauls were a branch of the great Celtic race, which settled all over Europe and the British Isles. Their characteristics were great courage, a fierce love of freedom and individuality, and they produced some magnificent heroes, such as the Gaul, Vercingetorix, and in Britain, Caradoc (Caractacus) and Boudicca (Boadicea). Their individualism was far from an asset sometimes, because their fragmentation into small groups meant that they did not have the central organisation and cohesion to rival that of the centrally disciplined Romans. What they lacked in central organisation, they made up for by their heroism, tenacity, and courage in battle, even when overwhelmingly outnumbered. They were formidable foes for the Romans, and won many a battle. Sadly, eventually they lost the war, and came under Roman domination all over Europe. They began to adopt Roman customs, and to enjoy their luxuries, being gradually displaced by further waves of Germanic tribes, such as the Franks, who settled in modern day France.

The Gauls were among the first people to receive the Gospel after the Ascension of Christ. Very early, from about A.D.35, disciples of "*The Way*" were landing in southern Gaul in Massilia, which is present-day Marseilles. They travelled around Provence, preaching the Word, and then further afield, following the Rhone Valley and thence to Brittany and other parts of Gaul. From Brittany they went into western Britain.

The Gauls established an eastern colony in Asia Minor, in what is now Turkey, which they called Galatia. In Jesus' time, and that of the Apostles, it was a thriving community and Paul addressed one of his epistles to the Galatians. It has been postulated that he visited Gaul briefly, and may also have intended his epistle for the Gauls of Gallia, or modern day France. Certainly, he visited many Celtic lands.

Few historians trace the Celts and Gauls further back than their supposed "*spontaneous generation*" in Europe. It is possible, however to trace them to Asia Minor, via the Danube Valley, the Crimea and the

Caucasus, and other areas around the Black Sea. The link which historians generally seem to be unable to make is that the Celts and their variously named tribes and sub-races, are first found in the very area into which the captive Ten Tribes of the Northern House of Israel disappeared.

Most people believe that they just evaporated, or became absorbed in the surrounding nations, never to reappear as a people. The last mention of them in the Bible is in II Kings 17:6;

*In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.*

We have to turn to secular history to learn of their fate. Tracing their steps is like the solving of a puzzle, and requires careful comparison of different sources. To follow the trail is hard work, but it is well worth the effort because it proves that what God has revealed in the Bible is true. He has not changed His mind, or gone back on His promises, as many a theologian and even well versed Bible students would have us believe. This serves to deepen and reinforce our faith. One of the historic clues in the Apocrypha which we shall consider is the testimony of Esdras (Ezra). This book, although not in our present Canon, is valuable historically and is a continuation of the Book of Ezra, which is in our Bibles. In II Esdras 13, verses 40 to 46, we read:

*Those are the ten tribes, which were carried away prisoners out of their own land in the time of Osea (Hoshea) the king, whom Salmanaser the king of Assyria, led away captive, and he carried them over the waters, and so came they into another land But they took counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt. That they might there keep their statutes, which they never kept in their own land. And they entered into Euphrates by the narrow passages of the river. For the Most High then shewed signs for them, and held still the flood, till they were passed over. 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. Then they dwelt there until the latter time.*

The Apocrypha consists of fourteen books, which were added to the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Jews did not recognise them as part of their Scriptures, considering that they were not inspired as the canonical books are, but this does not detract from their historical importance.

Esdras gives us an insight into the movements of the captive Israelites. Dissatisfied with their lot, they determined to escape from their captivity and they had the opportunity to do so about fifty years after their deportation, for the Assyrian Empire came under attack by the Babylonians, and they obviously needed all their forces to defend themselves against this new threat. The captives would have been the least of their worries!

Esdras tells us that they *"entered into Euphrates by the narrow passages of the river..."* This means the headwaters of the Euphrates. Herodotus, (the Greek historian of c. 484-425 B.C.), then takes up the story and tells us that some members of the Ten Tribes left exile and moved westwards and northwards into what we know as Armenia, then to a place called Ar-Sareth. There is a river called Sareth to the north-west of the Black Sea. They were later said to have overthrown King Midas of Phrygia. They were known by then as Gimira or Cimmerians, called Kimmeroi by the Greeks. This name is cognate with the Assyrian *Khumri*, which is the Assyrian name for the captives, meaning *"people of Omri"*. (Omri was a king of the Northern House).

According to the Behistun Rock, discovered by Sir Henry Rawlinson in 1846, the Gimir were the same people as the Sacae. The inscriptions on the Rock were cut in 516 BC, and it records them in three different languages, Babylonian, Susian and Persian, and thus we get the two different names for the same people. In the Persian and Susian versions the Gimir are called *Sacae*, and amongst the twenty-three provinces listed on the Rock is one called *Sak*. The root *Sak* is the same as the root of the name of the Scythians, leading us to conclude that they are the same people, living in the same area as the Scythians. Herodotus tells us that the Sacae were known as Scythians by the Persians. Now, the root of *Sak* is the same name by which Israel was known in the book of Amos:

*Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord: Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the **house of Isaac**.* (Amos 7:16)

The House of Isaac is *Beth-Saak* in Hebrew. The consonants *SK* are the real root of all the variations, for there were no vowels in ancient written Hebrew.

Herodotus also tells of the Scythians emerging quite suddenly in that same area from which the Ten Tribes had disappeared, only half a century after their deportation.

"*Celts*" seems to have become a generic term covering all these variously named peoples, such as "*Sacae*", "*Scythians*", "*Cimmerians*", and Gauls.

The origin of the word "*Gaul*" is most interesting and informative. The Gallic language was a branch of the Celtic languages, usually classed as Continental Celtic. It was an Indo-European language, as may be inferred from just one example, their word *rix*, meaning "*king*" (cf. Vercingetorix), which may be compared to the Latin *rex* and the Irish *ri* or *righ*. This is traced back to a hypothetical Indo-European word *re* or *rege*, which is also echoed in the Hindu *rajah*.

The syllable *GL* occurs often in Hebrew, with various vowel sounds. As previously mentioned, vowels were not written in ancient Hebrew, therefore words vary a great deal, but the two basic consonants remain the same. We may compare Gilead and Galilee, both of the same origin. The Hebrews who were transported into captivity by the Assyrians and Babylonians referred to themselves as *gola* or *galut*, both meaning exiles. The word *Celt* obviously comes from the same source, for a hard "*g*" easily becomes a "*c*". Consider the other Celts of the British Isles, who speak Gaelic even to this day, and who are known as Gaels. The name "*Portugal*" means Port of the Gaul. Strong's Concordance states that "*captivity*" can be rendered by *gola*, *galah*, and *galuwth*, the latter being close to "*Galatians*".

Justin, the Roman historian of the 3rd century AD, stated that the Gauls claimed an origin from Greece. He said that they took possession of those parts where New Carthage stands (Cartagena, Spain) and passed from thence into Gallaecia (Galicia, NW Spain). It is well known that Celtic peoples inhabited these parts, and before this colonies were established by Phoenician and Hebrew mariners who traded extensively in the Mediterranean. There was a large Israelitish element in the Phoenicians, notably of the tribe of Dan. Deborah the prophetess complained that Dan did not take part in the wars between the tribes in the time of the Judges, because they had taken to their ships and were absent from their Palestinian territory.

*Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships?* (Judges 5:17)

Dan's territory bordered that of the Phoenicians, so it is not inconceivable that they would have joined with them in sea-faring enterprises. The Phoenicians were credited with establishing Massilia (Marseilles) as one of the oldest ports in the south of France, so there is probably an element of Dan in that area.

Several Apostles addressed these scattered people, including James,

*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. (James 1:1)*

and Paul, in Romans 11:1-2, says

*I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.*

The later immigrants, the Franks, from whom France takes its name, were called "*Fraggoi*" by the Greeks. They entered France from the Lower Rhine area, which has preserved the name of Franconia. It has been said that they originated in Phrygia, which was territory near Troy in present day Turkey. They began to settle in France from about the third century A.D. They were a Germanic-speaking people. Although they were probably a mixture of races, it is likely that there was an Israelitish element.

It would also appear that there are descendants of the Trojans in France, for the tribe that founded Paris were the *Parisi* (the Trojan War was caused by the abduction of Helen by Paris). There is also Troyes, which must have been named for the old homeland of the *Parisi*. Trojans came to Britain, and founded London, which they called "*New Troy*", so it is conceivable that others settled in Gaul.

It is well known that the Normans, who settled in northern France, were Vikings from Norway, and they were largely of the tribe of Benjamin, which may be inferred from their heraldry. In Genesis 49:27 we read:

*Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour his prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.*

This must have meant that the people of Benjamin would be courageous and warlike. What is so significant is that the Normans had the wolf as a symbol and were known as sea-wolves.

Many Kingdom Message writers think that there are members of the tribe of Reuben in France. Reuben's territory was in Gilead, east of the Jordan River. Here we find the two consonants *GL* again.

The fourth "*brigade*" leader of the encampment of Israel in the wilderness was Reuben. This tribe of the sons of Jacob-Israel camped on the southern side of the hollow square, and was joined by the tribes of Simeon and Gad, descendants of Reuben's brother and half.brother.

Reuben was the first-born son of Jacob-Israel, and, as such, should have inherited the Birthright. His story is similar to that of Esau, Jacob's brother, who so little cared for his inheritance that he sold it to Jacob for a meal. Reuben did not despise his birthright enough to sell it, but his sin caused him to lose the privilege. Throughout the history of Israel, God has allowed the Birthright to go from the natural heir to the man who would most value it and do His will. Sometimes it is necessary to the fulfilment of God's Plan that a transfer should take place.

Reuben was not completely bad, for he showed concern for his younger brother, Joseph, when the other brothers, jealous that Jacob favoured him, conspired to kill him. He pleaded that the boy should not be killed, but left in a pit in the wilderness, where there was some hope that he might be rescued. (*Genesis 38:12 - 22*).

In spite of his disinheritance, Reuben has played his part in the migrations, and has left his mark on the heraldry of the Israelitish nations, in the same way as those of his brothers' tribes. In Moses' blessing of the tribes (*Deuteronomy 33:6*) he gave an inkling of God's grace towards the sinner when he said "*Let Reuben live and not die*". Reuben is mentioned as being among the Israel of God in Revelation 7:5, and the story of the patriarch gives hope of redemption and salvation to sinners, especially those in the present dispensation who have the blessing of the promises and the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is possible that the name of the city of Rouen in northern France reflects the settlement of some descendants of Reuben.

We should not be surprised to find all these instances if we are aware of the routes taken by the Ten Tribes in their migrations towards the west, to fuse into the Servant Nation.

They became the western fringe nations of Europe and the British Isles.

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