

THINGS AS  
THEY ARE,  
WERE  
AND  
ARE TO COME



The Lost Tribes

ANTHONY E. LARSON

THINGS AS THEY ARE,  
WERE <sup>AND</sup> ARE TO COME

## The Lost Tribes

Copyright © 2002 Anthony E. Larson

Research into the place names of Russia and Europe together with linguistic research into the Germanic languages reveal a strong connection to the ancient Hebrews. Could it be that millions of descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes are spread across Russia and Europe today?

Jesus was often called a “Galilean” in his day, according to the gospels. That is likely so because he was raised in Nazareth, a city proximate to the Sea of Galilee in an area in Northern Palestine that was known as Galilee or Samaria. Anyone from that area could rightly be referred to as a Galilean.

The practice of calling people from that area “Galileans” was widespread, apparently — certainly more common than calling them Israelites. The name seems to have followed groups of people who migrated from Northern Palestine sometime before the time of Christ to an area south of the Black Sea in what is presently modern Turkey. Evidence of this is found in Paul’s letter to the Galatians, which he addressed to “the churches of Galatia.” (Galatians 1:2.)

Clearly, the Galatians were Galileans who had brought the place-name of their homeland with them, subsequently lending it to their new locality.

Therefore, it should be no surprise to learn that, much earlier, these people were an identifiable group known to both the Romans and the Greeks before them. The Romans called the people from the Galatia region “Galatae,” a Latin pronunciation.

Since Galatia was also proximate to the ancient Greek city-states, the Greeks also recognized them, calling them “Keltoi,” a Greek derivation of the same word.

It is in these two variations that we find a whole new slant on history and the destiny of the biblical Israelites.

What is not generally recognized is that derivations of this same place name can be found in Europe. In his letters to Rome describing his campaign against the barbarians in Europe in 58 B.C., Julius Caesar wrote, "All Gaul is divided into three parts." Indeed, the "Gallic" tribes he found there are known to us as Gaels who spoke Gaelic. Also known as Kelts, from the Greek "Keltoi," they are now called Celts.

Evidently, the Galileans had done considerable wandering.

This etymological trail leads us to a remarkable conjecture. Did ancient Israelites living in Northern Israel/Palestine migrate northward in large numbers into Europe anciently, long before the time of Christ, intermingling with the native peoples living there, giving the place name of their homeland, Galilee, to each locale where they settled and to themselves as Galileans?

One of the more enduring enigmas of ancient history is the disappearance of the so-called Lost Tribes — most of the House of Israel. While it is well known that there were once 12 tribes of Israel, today we find only two: Judah and Levi, who are collectively called Jews.

The question is, where are the other ten tribes?

The Old Testament relates that at the death of King Solomon, Israel split into two nations. The tribes of Judah, Levi and some of Benjamin occupied Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom. The other ten tribes occupied the Northern Kingdom. Each territory had its own king, and the inhabitants considered themselves the rightful heirs of the name Israel.

The northward migrations began in Isaiah's time, when the Assyrian king Sennacherib invaded Israel from the northeast. The people living in Northern Israel could choose to stand and fight, or they could seek refuge from the Assyrian juggernaut by migrating north and westward.

Still later, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar also invaded Palestine. Once again, it is likely that large numbers of Israelites fled northward rather than face the invading Babylonians who went on to conquer and deport all the Jews in Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom to the northern extremity of Babylonia.

Finally, many Jews who were later freed from their exile by a more beneficent Babylonian king chose to migrate northward rather than return to Jerusalem.

Could it be that these three were the migrations that found their way into Europe?

Curiously, there is yet another etymological clue that supports this view.

Anciently, Jews or any of the Israelite tribes were properly called Hebrews. Interestingly, ancient Egyptian letters use that very name, confirming our thesis. Called the Amarna tablets after the site where they were discovered in middle Egypt in 1887, they were written to the Egyptian pharaoh Akenaten by vassal kings in Palestine. (See *Tel el-Amarna Letters in the Bible Dictionary in the LDS King James Version of the Bible*, p. 780.)

Some of these letters from rulers in Canaan (Palestine) speak of invading marauders from the east desert, calling them “Habiru” — a name clearly related to our word “Hebrew.” Thus we see that as early as the 14th century B.C., Israelites were identified as Hebrews.

Apparently, Galileans, fleeing first Assyrian and then later Babylonian armies, migrated northward to settle in Europe after detouring around the Black Sea — some through the Caucasus on the east where they came to be called Caucasians, and others across the Bosphorous Straits and modern Istanbul on the west where they could follow the same route into the heart of Europe that the Orient Express takes today.

Interestingly, as we look north and west from the Middle East in the directions where the Ten Tribes likely fled, we find many place-names and people that use some form of the root word Habiru or Hebrew.

In the far north of modern Russia we find a region called Siberia. Once again, the root ‘iberia’ or ‘iberiu’ is prominent, indicating that many Hebrews may have migrated there. Notably, some historians place the Lost Tribes in the area of the Volga River in the Russian Steppes where it is likely that the inhabitants named their city Samara after their homeland Samaria. Additionally, their ruling aristocracy spoke fluent Hebrew. More than 700 inscriptions in the Crimea suggest Hebrew origins, and Hebrew burial tombs have been traced as far north as Sweden where 19 of 22 Hebrew tribal symbols have been found in the area occupied by Germanic tribes. (*Church News*, May 15, 1982, p. 10.)

From the city Tarshish (Tarsis), home of the Apostle Paul on the southwest coast of modern Spain, we learn that the Celts in that

locality called themselves “Iberiu,” a name strikingly similar to the Habiru of the Amarna letters and our word “Hebrew.” Indeed, France, Spain and Portugal occupy a peninsula that is called Iberia to this day, derived from the name of the people who inhabited the region. In fact, the people who live there were historically called Celtiberians, a combination of the two names the Israelites brought with them: Kelts (Galatae, Galileans) and Iberiu (Habiru, Hebrews).

And they persisted in their westward migration. The last bastion of Celtic culture in modern times is Ireland — the furthestmost westerly bit of real estate in Europe — whose ancient name is Hibernia, another derivation of Hebrew (Iberiu).

All these similar sounding names cannot be mere coincidence. Clearly, the migrating Galileans also took the name “Hebrew” with them, subsequently using it as a root word for many place names where they settled on the European continent. If such were the case, then one might expect to find Hebrew words in the many European languages. And so it is.

Linguistic research done by Dr. Terry M. Blodgett, a Latter-day Saint whose doctoral dissertation, “Phonological Similarities in Germanic and Hebrew,” delineates a dramatic “Semitic Sound Shift” that occurred in the Germanic languages (German, English, Dutch and Scandinavian) between 700 B.C. and 500 B.C. — precisely the time frame for the three northward migrations of Israelite tribes detailed previously.

Dr. Blodgett compares the Germanic language changes with ancient Hebrew and finds similarities between the two that are more than coincidental.

“At the same early period of history identified previously, the Germanic dialects added many new words to their vocabularies which were not Indo-European in origin. Approximately one-third of all Germanic vocabulary is listed in the etymological dictionaries as being of unknown origin. A comparison of these words with Hebrew vocabulary reveals that these words are similar to words in Hebrew.” (Church News, May 15, 1982, p. 10.)

There were several identifiable migrations of Hebrew-speaking people into Northern Europe, according to Dr. Blodgett, and it was that sudden influx of Hebrew-speaking people that was the likely cause of the Germanic Sound Shift.

In fact, there may be many ethnic groups names and place names in Europe that are Hebrew in origin but used in a Germanic syntax, a predictable effect of the blending of the two languages which reverses the order of the Hebrew words. For example, “son of Isaac,” in Hebrew (Ben Isaac) becomes “Isaac’s son” in English. Joined and abbreviated over time, the name became “Saxon.”

The word ‘British’ may be a combination of two Hebrew words: brit, meaning ‘covenant,’ and isha, meaning ‘man’ — brit-isha or British.

The conclusion is inescapable. When Joseph Smith sent out the first missionaries to a foreign country, they went to the British Isles because “England is rich in the blood of Israel” — not an idle comment since those wandering Israelites have been moving westward ever since they entered Northern Europe over two millennia ago.

Of course, a prophet of God would know these things. It only makes sense that a restoration of the true gospel in the last days would take place among descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) who would be compelled by subtle, spiritual urges to settle in their “land of promise.”

Hence, we now see new meaning in the words of Joseph Smith when he wrote, “We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent ...” (The Articles of Faith, #10.)

So, if you are of European descent, the next time someone asks you where the Ten Lost Tribes went, you can say, “You’re lookin’ at ‘em!”

---

For more essays from this series:

<http://mormonprophecy.blogspot.com/>

For online classes, videos, newsletters and published books exploring this material in depth:

<http://www.mormonprophecy.com/>

Your questions or comments are welcome:

[anthonyelarson@gmail.com](mailto:anthonyelarson@gmail.com)