

# *What About God's Chosen People?*

## *Part V*



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**Question #21** - *“Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people.”*

In our last segment we were talking about the history of God's chosen nation, in order to see how they came about and what has happened to them through the following centuries. We are doing this to see the truth of the fact God was not interested in simply accepting whatever man came from Abraham as being His chosen nation, while at the same time seeing that God has and continues to focus us all on those He used to create and continue His nation, even if that meant narrowing the existing group down. We ended last time by covering the fact, after Israel had an earthly king in place they eventually separated into a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. Because the southern kingdom continued to possess the temple in Jerusalem, the northern king - named Jeroboam - became concerned the people of the North would return to the southern king of the house of David by going to the temple in Jerusalem. In an attempt to keep his power, he created a false religion so people of the North might stay in the North.

As I mentioned before, Jeroboam knew he could not wipe from the people's minds the Laws and traditions of following God's Law, overnight. However, he was willing to do what he could to give the people in

the North a religion of convenience that would win the hearts of those not truly dedicated to the Laws of God. The fact he chose calves as the graven image is also no coincidence, as this was the chosen image to produce in the wilderness when Israel believed Moses was not coming back. This meant that even though it should have been clear to anyone who really understood the story of what happened in the wilderness, this was a fallacy on Israel's part; among those who did not really know the history well, it would be easy to convince them the calves dated back just as far in Israel's history as the Laws of God. Others would readily accept that there was something to be said for the idea the calf really did then, as well as now, represent The God Israel was to serve, because their ancestors believed it! (Ex. 32:1-35)

Whether it worked for everyone or not was not Jeroboam's concern. He knew it would grow and become the main religion and tradition of the North, creating the separation that he believed would maintain his throne. Now, one might ask why God would allow this to happen, and the answer is, again, what we've been driving at. God was not interested in maintaining the entire nation of Israel as his chosen nation if the people did not want to be a part. God wanted those who, at the very least, had a desire and belief that what He asked of them in the Law was their true history and tradition. Those from the North who believed this way would continue to come to Jerusalem and see its importance. Over the years, as certain kings of the North made this difficult for people to do, even more of these dedicated people would choose to move to the South. It is also worth noting that the opposite would be true as well. Those who felt the Laws of God were not important, and especially those who truly rejected them as too restrictive and/or burdensome, would choose to go to the North and follow the religion there, or something else for that matter. Why not? It was, after all, a kingdom just like the South, made up of people all from the original twelve tribes of Israel!

What this created was more and more of an intermixed population in both the North and the South, where tribal affiliations - meaning the knowledge of which of the twelve tribes you descended from - became less and less important. As the decades went by, the names of the individual tribes were only maintained by those who cared about their family history, and somewhat as it related to certain territory known as that which had belonged to one specific tribe or another. What really began to define and separate the people was whether you were of the northern kingdom or of the southern kingdom. As this happened, the names of these two kingdoms really began to stick. The people in the

North who held the land designated to a majority of the original twelve tribes, took the name Israel. The southern kingdom encompassed the land mostly held by the tribe of Judah and that of Benjamin.

If we study the history a little more in depth, we find the tribe of Benjamin had become a very small tribe and not well preserved, even over the events which preceded the north/south split. This is referred to by Saul, who was from the tribe of Benjamin, when Samuel was in the process of telling him he had been chosen of God to be the original king over all Israel. "And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" I Samuel 9:21 One of the key stories that shows us just when this decline really began in earnest is found beginning in the nineteenth chapter of the book of Judges. That chapter begins a story that showed there was great evil in Gibeah - which was a city of Benjamin. This evil was comparable to that of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Israel as a people decided it could not stand. Benjamin, as a tribe, was not willing to destroy the evil out of their tribe, so the rest of Israel ended up in a very bloody war against Benjamin that eventually all but destroyed the tribe of Benjamin.

The rest of Israel had also determined they would no longer give their daughters to Benjamite men for wives. This all but sealed the fate of Benjamin disappearing as a tribe. However, at the time, no one liked the idea of one of the tribes disappearing altogether. To solve this problem, there was a couple solutions for wives to be obtained out of Israel for the men of Benjamin, without anyone in the other tribes having to specifically make a marriage arrangement with a family in Benjamin. (Judg. 19:1-21:25) Benjamin would survive but never grow to be significant in size; and with the exception Saul was from Benjamin, it never had great significance among Israel. All this is simply to point out that when the split happened, Benjamin was almost ignored at that point. God told Jeroboam He would take ten tribes away from the house of David, which left two; but it is recorded that God was only leaving one tribe to the house of David. This tribe would specifically be the tribe David was from - which was Judah; thus, this statement all but ignores Benjamin existing as a tribe of its own at all. (I Kin. 11:26-40) In the end, there was also no attempt made to recognize the southern kingdom with a name that indicated it consisted of two tribes. The southern kingdom was called Judah, and this is where we see the foundation of there being people simply known as Jews!

We all know from the history before our eyes today that the Israel name did not disappear completely, as the nation we know today that resides on a piece of the land God told Abraham the chosen nation would possess is named Israel. However, the people living in that nation are not all of God's chosen nation. In truth, there are many who can say they are Israeli, but only those who identify as being of the line of the chosen nation are referred to as Jews. This is true of those inside and outside of the national land we call Israel. How did this come to be? To understand that, we must continue to go down the history of what happened after Israel split into north and south.

The division between north and south took place about 945 B.C.; and as the years moved forward, God would send many prophets to warn both kingdoms of their failures to be the people He wanted them to be. At times there would be a great response to this, and at others there would not. Even in the South, the true Laws of God were all but lost at times, and many prophets were killed for even having the nerve to question the authority of the kings to do as they pleased. It's hard to truly say just which nation had more of this kind of activity; because while Judah generally had more kings who at least recognized God, that fact was often the very reason more prophets were active in the South. The northern kingdom became so corrupt, most of the time when God sent a prophet to them it was to warn them their kingdom was going to fall if they did not turn from their wickedness. The result of all this is that while God maintained His promise David's throne would continue to be held by David's descendents, the northern kingdom would see a change in dynasty quite often. Many of which did not last long enough to appropriately be called a dynasty.

This became particularly true as the end of the northern kingdom grew closer and closer. God would continue to change the king in order to give a new king the chance to turn things around, but it never happened. Thus, God really did this to prove that the corruption of the North had grown so bad there simply was no house left that could be trusted to lead the people in God's ways. Certainly the North did not desire to rejoin with the South under the house of David; but from the prophesy of the split, God had said the house of David would not be afflicted forever. (I Kin. 11:39) This serves as a good example of how much people believe they know what prophesy is all about, but are often very surprised when the actual event takes place!

Many people who knew of this prophesy no

doubt believed that one day the northern kingdom would rejoin with the southern, and again Israel would be one. However, that is not what happened. Instead, the northern kingdom only lasted for about 224 years. The last six kings of the North would come from five different houses, and leaving out Pekah, who reined for twenty years, the others only reigned somewhere from as little as six months to a high of one decade. Samaria, which had for most of the North's existence, served as the capital of the North, fell to the Assyrian empire in about 721 B.C. At this time, the prophesy about not afflicting David's house forever came to pass, but, again, not in the way many had suspected it would. Instead of a rejoining of the land, there would only be the end to any dynasty being considered the rightful king of all Israel, save the line and lineage of David.

Now, the Assyrians, who had taken the North, had a habit of not just conquering an area and making an attempt at assimilating the people by destroying much of their past culture. The Assyrians believed in mixing people up so as to destroy in the greatest possible way the cultural identity of people and make them simply people of the Assyrian empire. To do this, they employed the practice of taking one people off their land and putting them on the land of another people who they had also transplanted to another place, etc. This, of course, did not have to be done with significant efficiency when it came to transplanting everyone, because those few left would have no choice but to die out as a people or intermarry with those brought in. This would help a great deal in making sure no one group held to their original identity, no matter how much certain groups came to be known by the name of the people that had preceded them just because it had become the regional name.

This kind of action was carried out by the Assyrians on the Israelites of the northern kingdom. This fact is why people who talk about Israel's history, many times, like to talk about "the ten lost tribes of Israel." Now, some will argue there really are ten lost tribes, and some will argue there is not. The real problem comes in the fact both views are right and at the same time wrong! This is where we must really pay attention. Those who believe there really are not ten lost tribes are correct, but they don't often understand the truth of why they are. Many believe and teach there are not ten lost tribes because the ten tribes maintained their identity in spite of the transplanting the Assyrians did. Others believe those handful of Israel that were able to stay on the land were able to maintain their identity. Both of these thoughts have a little bit of truth to them, but the reality is that

other than relatively small pockets of those dispersed maintained their identity as part of God's chosen people. Many intermarried with those outside the nation to such a degree they did not really maintain the bloodline.

This problem even shows up at the time of Jesus, as many Jews in the South looked down on the Samaritans who lived in the northern areas, because they were not of a pure Jewish blood, and considered by many Jews not to be of Israel at all. Setting that issue aside because it leads heavily into a whole other discussion, I think the more important point to our question about the Jews being God's chosen nation is the more dangerous teaching that many people in the world who have for centuries, at the very least, not even attempted to identify themselves as God's chosen nation - are! This is the teaching that there is not ten lost tribes because countless people around the world might have a portion, or a lot, of Israeli blood in their family tree. However, this is like making the argument that just anyone who is of Abraham is God's chosen nation. Because of what the Assyrians did, there is no doubt Israeli blood is in the line of countless families, but this does not mean they are of God's chosen nation. As we have talked about before, from the start the Law had stipulations about people joining the nation, as well as how one can be cut off from the nation no matter what your bloodline. Those stipulations, at their base, have to do with a desire to be part of the chosen nation or being forced out because you do not care to respect and represent the Laws God entrusted to the nation.

These stipulations about being cut out of the nation would have pretty much disqualified almost everyone in the nation at many points; but because the nation was just as much about proving how hard it is for any of us to hold on to God and His righteousness in this world of sin (especially as a group of any size), as it was/is about demonstrating it, God preserved His chosen nation with those from it, who at least had the desire to continue identifying themselves as it. We could spend a lot of time going over the ends and outs of all this, and even today there are arguments among Jewish people of a stricter thinking about who is and who isn't truly of the nation, even among those who identify themselves as Jewish. However, the really important point is this - as it was at the time of The Messiah - is an internal Jewish affair, and has nothing to do with people who have not, at least for many generations, if ever, maintained identifying themselves as Israel. Because of what we talked about earlier in this series, how being of the nation or not has nothing to do with true eternal salvation, there is simply no point in anyone who has not, through the

centuries, maintained an identity of being of Israel in any way, trying to insert themselves at this point! It is simply a blessing that there are those who have held their identity and bloodline. We can be assured through this fact God's plan is still in place, and look to them for God to fulfill His ultimate promises for this earth, of sending The Messiah the second time to them!

To get back to our point about people being right and wrong when they say there is and isn't ten lost tribes, I want to turn to those who say there is. These are tribes in an aspect important to our question. There are ten lost tribes. Remember what I said about the split and the fact two tribes stayed with David's house as their king and Jerusalem as their capital? However, the one, Benjamin, did not remain recognized as a tribe, and its identity was simply absorbed into being those of Judah. In this sense, the tribe of Benjamin was lost, but not because the people were no longer of the chosen nation. There simply became no reason for this tribe to hold on to their identity as a tribe separate from Judah, which had become the southern kingdom's name. This was also true of those who moved out of the northern kingdom and into the southern. While I'm sure there were those who for many years found it important to identify with being of one tribe or another, and those who at least believe to this day they can trace which tribe they are from, it by and large is not a relevant point. Especially without the temple service which requires Levites to be known.

The point is that the system of tribes holding the land which was designated to their tribe, totally fell apart at the time the Assyrians took over the North. Never again was there such a system reestablished as it had once been. It's not as if Judah was divided into small chunks of land at any point after the split to accommodate separation of tribes into territory. In this way it can not only be said that there are ten lost tribes of Israel, but eleven, as only the tribal name and identity of Judah remained. This is the way those who say there are lost tribes are right and wrong. As the northern kingdom failed, and eventually fell, there were even more Israelites who crossed into the South and became part of Judah. While tribal territory was lost to a great degree (though God did send an indication to Assyria they had not fully captured the land as they supposed), (II Kin. 17:24-33) and even tribal identity eventually faded, to say the ten tribes of the North were any more lost than the tribe of Benjamin is untrue!

To truly grasp all this, we need to turn again to the history of God's nation following the fall of the North. Judah survived, and anyone who was desirous to

hold to their identity as part of God's chosen nation had to move to the South or, for those among the dispersed, to other parts of the world; Judah became what you needed to identify with in order for your cultural past to have any significance in the world. This is why I say the fall of the North really fulfilled God's promise that He would not afflict the throne of David forever. For those of God's chosen nation, David's throne and Jerusalem as your capital city is what needed to be held onto in order to maintain your cultural identity. This is why Jews today will never give up Jerusalem, no matter the political pressure!

Now, the etymology of the word "Jew" is, as with so many things, a very long conversation about how the word comes out of the Hebrew language and later languages which might be best described as rooted in ancient Hebrew, then specifically through languages such as Greek, Latin, and eventually English. Again, this is something I find unnecessary for this study, to go into all the details of. Many people would be lost as we waded through linguistic technicalities that would take us far from our main point. Suffice it to say one can do this study for themselves if one desires to, but the end result is that whether you believe the word is spelled or pronounced correctly or even has the right to be taken all the way to an English form, is not the point of the question at hand. The point is, "Jew" is the recognized English term for referring to those of God's chosen nation, and the base word in ancient text it comes to us from can be translated as "Jews" or "Judeans," both of which simply mean, "of Judea," or what might make more sense to modern English to say, "of Judah."

Again, some would argue this is still a reference to all those who lived in the region known as Judae, but let's not be foolish. No group other than those desiring to maintain their identity as the ancient nation God established as His chosen people have, through the centuries, attempted to hold onto a name which has brought with it the great persecution Satan and evil hearted men have pursued against God's nation. Even today, those who desire to pick up the identity as a claim to God's promises in some higher way than they believe is available to all mankind, would and likely will flee from it the moment the seeming good in doing so begins to be outweighed by the persecution it brings! Those not of the chosen nation, but truly desirous of the ways of God do not attempt to hijack the term for themselves, but make the statement they stand shoulder to shoulder with the Jews. Those with this attitude are the ones who traditionally have and will be willing to say to this world, if you want the Jews your going to have to come through

me as well!

To understand the persecution and politics issue better, we again turn back to our look at the event of history and the attempts to rid the world of God's chosen people as well as their very name! God would spare Judah from the Assyrian attacks during Hezekiah's reign - who was the king of Judah when the North fell. However, his son Manasseh would be very evil during his reign, and the Assyrians would be allowed to gain enough control over Judah that Judah became a tributary state to the empire. This is a far cry from what had happened to the North, in light of the fact Judah and most of its people would remain on the land. This would allow the Jews to continue a presence and identity, which the North was not able to do. It would also hold Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish people, and solidify it for all God's chosen nation as the one true capital of their people.

Another thing would happen during Manasseh's reign as king, and that would be the true determination that even Judah would fall eventually; for Manasseh had done and caused Judah to be more evil than the pagan nations God drove out in order to give Israel the land in the first place. (II Kin. 21:10-16) Manasseh would turn to The Lord near the end of his life, but the damage he had done to the nation was not something he could completely turn around. (II Chron. 33:9-20) His son Amon would take the throne and also be evil. Amon would only last for two years before he would be assassinated. The people of Judah would kill those who had assassinated the king, and put his eight year old son Josiah on the throne. Josiah would be a good king who would turn to God like no other. He would reign for thirty-one years and he would begin to repair God's temple in Jerusalem. This process would reveal a true copy of the books of the Law which had been forgotten. When Josiah heard how Judah was truly suppose to be living before God, he started tearing down temples and monuments built to false gods, some which dated all the way back to the reign of Solomon. He did this not just in the territory of Judah, but also in some of the territory the northern kingdom had held. Josiah would bring back the following of the Law like it had not been seen for a very, very long time!

God would not turn back from the decision to destroy Judah, but God would promise Josiah it wouldn't happen during his lifetime, because he cared so much for God's Law. This opened a door of hope that the kings and people of Judah had a chance to keep extending their nation and be on the land, if those who came after them would just continue to seek The One True God! Sadly,

this did not happen. Josiah's son Jehoahaz would come to the throne upon his father's death and return to the evil ways. The Assyrians had begun to fall to what would be known as the Babylonian empire, and they no longer had the hold over the region they once had. However, Jehoahaz would only reign three months before the Pharaoh of Egypt would take him off the throne and make Judah a tribute state to Egypt. Pharaoh would put another of Josiah's sons on the throne named Eliakim, whom Pharaoh renamed Jehoiakim. This son would be no better at serving God.

Also, instead of Egypt, Jehoiakim would quickly be made a servant of the rising power of the Babylonians. He would be warned by God's words through Jeremiah to serve Babylon and remain the people God wanted Judah to be, and on their land. However, the king would not listen and rebelled against Babylon's power. All in all, he would spend eleven years at war with the Babylonian vassals in the region. All this would erode Judah and its territory greatly, and even Jerusalem itself would begin to be ravished. After dieing in disgrace, his son, named Jehoiachin, came to the throne about the time Babylon had subdued even Egypt itself. In spite of this, and again against God's warnings, Jehoiachin would continue to be evil, and rebel against God's instructions. Babylon would soon show up at Jerusalem's gates, and when they did, Jehoiachin would go out to surrender, likely hoping he would remain in Jerusalem as a vassal king of Babylon. Instead, he, his family, princes, officers, most all the skilled people of Judah, and much of the treasures left in Jerusalem and the temple would be removed to Babylon.

The Babylonian king would put another of Josiah's sons on the throne, named Mattaniah, who would be renamed Zedekiah. After all Josiah had done to restore God's Word to the people and the land, after all that had befallen the evil kings which followed Josiah, after all the ravaging of the beautiful city of Jerusalem and the temple which Solomon had built, surly a third son of Josiah, when given the chance to set on the throne and follow God's instructions, would turn to serve The Lord, and take every opportunity God would give him to spare what was left!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

