IMPERIAL BRITISH-ISRAELISM:
JUSTIFICATION FOR AN EMPIRE

A Thesis in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Bachelor of Arts Degree
Southern Methodist University

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May 12, 1987

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BRITISH-ISRAELISM

"British-Israelism" is the theory that the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel comprise the bulk of the population of Great Britain, the British Commonwealth of Nations, and the United States of America. The movement, which began in the 1850s, can be divided into three basic periods: Millennial, Imperial, and Neo-millennial. The first and third periods are similar to each other in that, while they accepted the initial postulate of the theory as stated above, the focus of the movement during these years can be found in their strong eschatological Christology. The Imperial period, on the other hand, had, as its primary goal, the

justification of both the British Empire and the British throne. The purpose of this paper is to show how Imperial British-Israelism did this through Biblical hermeneutics and the use of pseudo-historical and archaeological sources. As a movement locked in history, we will discover that the Imperial period was a dynamic religious/political response to the decline of the Empire which began in 1901.

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IMPERIAL BRITISH-ISRAELISM:
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INTRODUCTION

The sun never set on the British Empire. This was once, quite literally, the truth. From 1850 to the fourth decade of the twentieth century, Great Britain's overseas holdings spanned the globe--from the Isles to Palestine, from India and Australia to Canada and the Caribbean . . . all around the earth, if the sun was in the sky a piece of the British Empire sat, somewhere, underneath it. Such was only fitting, some would say, for the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel--God's chosen people and the birthright nation in the Isles afar off.

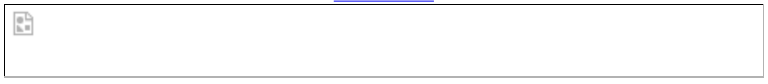
This was the claim of British-Israelism during the early years of the twentieth century, a time in which the Empire stood at the pinnacle of world achievement and, yet, upon the brink of decline. The imperial period of the British-Israelite movement lasted from 1901 to 1947, its initiation being marked by the death of Queen Victoria and its demise coming with the independence of India. As the middle stage in a constantly evolving movement, Imperial British-Israelism inherited much from the preceding millennial phase, and would bequeath much to the neo-millennial stage which would follow. The Imperial period, however, distinguishes itself from her two sister eras in that during these years the movement stood on the crest of popularity, at the high point of its influence and with a singleness of purpose. Essentially, Imperial British-Israelism had one goal above all others: the justification of the Empire.

Unlike the splintered years which preceded and antedated it, the middle period presented a focus any loyal subject of the Crown could take to heart and proudly support. The royal family, they claimed, was directly descended from the tribe of Judah through both Zerah and Perez. This focal point was just one of many elements which made the movement nationalistic in nature, thus providing for a political as well as a religious appeal. In stark contrast, the millennial phase, which stretched from 1840 to 1890, focused on the long-awaited Second Coming of Christ, with a firm understanding of the British people as both spiritual and biological heirs of Abraham. The neo-millennial era, which has lasted from 1950 to the present time, redefined these old millennial doctrines while adding dominant racial and anti-semitic overtones. Neither millennial era gave much importance to the political applications of their theories, and even though they might accept the royal postulate, this galvanizing doctrine never served them as it did the imperial period.

While Imperial British-Israelism claimed followers from all levels of English and colonial society--from commoners to the royal family itself--the millennial periods found support from less prominent, powerful, and diverse sections of the population. The early millennial period found followers within evangelical portions of the Anglican Church, as well as inside American Methodism. The later period of millennialism finds its primary proponents among fringe Pentecostal groups, as well as in the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong and the White-Supremacist Identity Movement of Richard Girnt Butler. These groups rarely agreed on doctrinal specifics or methods of scriptural interpretation, but they did hold one belief in common: the Celtic-Anglo-Saxon peoples of northwest Europe were descended from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. The Imperial years, however, took this focus and honed it especially toward national identity, finding within this doctrine a justification for the continued existence of the British Empire during the twilight years of world domination. In essence, during the Imperial period British-Israelism was, to a very great degree, a political movement.

Our examination of Imperial British-Israelism will focus on the two primary branches of their doctrine: the identity of the British people with the House of Israel and the identity of the British Royal family with the House of Judah. We will do this by looking at the two dominant ways by which they attempted to prove their claims, primarily, their body of pseudo-historical literature and the particulars of their Biblical hermeneutic. Following this, we will proceed to look at the ways in which the British-Israelite understanding of their place in history and in the world affected their view of the United States of America, the decline of Great Britain's imperial realm, and the rise of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

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BRITISH-ISRAELITE THEORY

It is impossible to begin an examination of Imperial British-Israelism without first addressing the key postulates of their doctrine. In doing so one must keep in mind that what is being presented is, in fact, only a rough sketch of the most readily accepted positions of the movement. Indeed, even within the limited confines of the following overview, a few proponents of the imperial period would probably find points with which they might argue. Although I have reduced the beliefs to a core of common agreement, I have attempted nevertheless to present British-Israelite theory with as much honesty and accuracy as possible.

In its simplest form, British-Israelism claims that the British people are the descendants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, deported, initially, by Tiglath Pilezer III, king of Assyria, when he launched an invasion of the Kingdom of Israel in 740 B.C.E., and later by the successor of Shalmaneser V, Sargon II, who destroyed its capital city, Samaria, in 721 B.C.E. While this is the most important "article of faith" to be found in all British-Israelite movements, it is almost always followed by these subordinate, but crucial, points:

1. The English throne is the throne of David

2. The English royal family is of lineal descent from David, King of Israel, and from Zerah, brother of Perez, son of Judah

3. The British Empire and the Church of England are the modern-day manifestation of the true Kingdom of God

4. The British people are chosen by God to rule the earth.

In addition to these key points, it is possible to identify a number of critical, paradigmatic positions within British-Israelite theory which help to define and characterize the movement. The concept of the "birthright" is one of these auxiliary themes. By "birthright" is meant the promises given by God throughout the Hebrew Bible to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's descendants. Among the more important of the birthright promises were those which spoke about the descendants of Abraham as being both a great nation and a multitude of nations, while also being as numerous as "the dust on the sea shore and the stars in the heavens." These promises were also seen as including references to the quality of the birthright people, identifying them as powerful, invincible, and superior to all other nations and races.

These promises were passed, virtually intact, from Abraham to Isaac, and from Isaac to Jacob. Then Jacob, due to the sins of Reuben, his first born, split the birthright promises between his two most prominent sons, Joseph and Judah. The recognition of this division in the Birthright is of paramount importance in British-Israelite ideology, for it allows them to trace the Birthright away from Judah and to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Joseph did not get everything, however, for from the body of the birthright Jacob took the rights of kingship and lawmaking to give to Judah in perpetuity. The House of Joseph, primarily his son Ephraim, later became the nucleus around which the "ten tribes" of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, would rally. The House of Judah would rule over the United Kingdom, as well as being the major part of the Southern Kingdom, Judah, following the political split after the death of Solomon.

Israel and Judah existed as separate kingdoms for two hundred-years until, after a long war with the Assyrian Empire, Israel finally succumbed to the forces of Sargon II in 721 B.C.E. With this begins the British-Israelite themes of Punishment and Displacement, which state that because Israel worshiped idols God allowed the Assyrian Empire to defeat and relocate them just south of Lake Van, along the border between Assyria, Urartu, and the Median Empire.

This is not only an important point in their theory, it is an essential junction for all forms of Celtic-Anglo-Saxon Israelism. Israel, descended from the House of Joseph and possessor of the birthright promises, is re-settled by Assyria. She subsequently vanishes from the pages of Scripture and history, initiating the themes of "the Great Trek", and "the Wilderness Place in the Isles Afar off". These themes follow the displaced tribes of the Northern Kingdom through the Caucasus Mountains and then west, across Europe, to settle in Scandinavia, other areas of northwest Europe, and, finally, in the British Isles. Here, the theme of "Christians in the Wilderness" comes into play, claiming that these Lost Tribes would become Christian in these very same Isles. Through these basic paradigms, the people of Great Britain, and their descendants across the globe, are discovered to be the direct, lineal descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, recipients of the birthright promises, true holders of the name of Israel, destined rulers of the Earth.

At this point British-Israelite theory must return to the division of the Birthright between the Houses of Joseph and Judah, where the themes of "Scepter and Lawmaking", the "Lineage of the Scarlet Thread", the "House of David", and the "Call of Jeremiah" can be found. Until this point, the brunt of the theory has focused on the Northern Kingdom, Israel, and the birthright promises given to it by Jacob. From here, the theory turns its focus to the kingly role of the House of Judah, the division of the kingship between Judah's twin sons, Zerah and Perez, and the eternal establishment of the Throne of David over both Judah and Israel.

British-Israelism's line of argument is fairly straightforward, though its weaving back and forth between scriptural and psudo-historical texts is often confusing. Essentially, however, the course of events is easily told, and begins with the Themes of Scepter and Lawmaking, and of the Scarlet Thread. Following the death of Joseph in Egypt, and in accordance with Jacob's splitting of the birthright, the descendants of Judah--Zerah and his sons, the children of the Scarlet Thread--began to rule in

northern, or Lower Egypt. Eventually, the Zerahite Kings were overthrown by a Pharaoh of Upper Egypt who "knew not Joseph", and the descendants of Judah through Zerah, were forced to flee. They left, by ship, north through the Mediterranean Sea to settle in Greece, Troy, and on the Iberian peninsula. Eventually, in multiple waves and through many different routes, the House of Judah through Zerah would establish itself in the British Isles as the High Kings of Ireland, the royal family into which the Davidic dynasty would be grafted at a later date. Meanwhile, back in Egypt, the rest of the Hebrews are made slaves, and would eventually leave under Moses.

Following the establishment of the tribes in the Promised Land, the period of the Judges, and the kingship of Saul, David, King of the United Empire of Israel, is promised by God that his dynasty would be in existence forever and that a descendant of his would rule over the House of Israel in a place other than Palestine. This is the beginning of the "House of David" theme, which would dominate not only later British-Israelite theology, but certain earlier forms of Jewish and Christian Messianic expectation. After Sol mon, the kingdom is divided, Israel going its own way while Judah continues to be ruled by David's descendants until Nebuchadnezzar takes Jerusalem and has their last king, Zedekiah, and his sons killed. He, however, misses Zedekiah's daughters, and it is through this opening that British-Israel finds its route into the House of David.

Tea Tephi, a daughter of Zedekiah, was given as a ward to Jeremiah not long before the fall of Jerusalem. We are told that Jeremiah and his party would survive the stay in Egypt, not to be killed but to prosper. Then, they vanish from scripture. Within five years of their disappearance from the Biblical narrative, an old man shows up in Ireland with a daughter of a king, named Tea Tephi. This old man, known to the Irish histories as 0llam Folla, marries Tea Tephi to Eochaid, the High King, or "heremon", of all Ireland and himself a descendant of Zerah, thus reuniting the two Judah lines of Zerah and Perez. When the Celts, the House of Israel--the "lost ten tribes", finally arrive in the British Isles sometime before 400 B.C.E., their royal family of the House of Judah, through the Scarlet Thread of Zerah and the Throne of David, is awaiting them.

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BRITISH-ISRAELITE HISTORIOGRAPHY AND BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

British-Israelite teaching, as stated in the preceding sections of this paper, centers around an understanding of the origin of the British people, their monarchy, and their Empire within the Biblical period. In order to support their beliefs they seized on the legendary histories of the Mediterranean civilizations and their own native lands. They also looked to the Old Testament Scriptures, searching them for references to themselves, their national and racial situation, and their destiny as a people and an Empire.

British-Israelite Biblical hermeneutics can be defined within the context of modern fundamentalism. Like its evangelical brethren early in the Twentieth Century, British-Israelism clung tightly to the fundamental doctrines of Biblical inerrancy and the premillennial return of Christ. Additionally, they believed in the "Gospel of Grace":

> . . . which is the Gospel of salvation for all mankind; that personal salvation by faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ is mandatory for all, whether Israelite, Jew, Gentile or heathen.

Since the proponents of the movement came out of a multitude of different Protestant denominations, no single set of doctrinal beliefs which might be easily identified with a major, or even a minor, denomination can be found within their "articles of faith". Instead, they were:

> . . . Christians of many denominations . . . banded together to proclaim the national message of the Bible, upholding the authenticity and accuracy of the whole Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation.

The only outstanding point they stressed was the identity of the Israel of the Scriptures with the British Empire of the post-Victorian era. To do this, they adopted a series of key postulates which served to define the major guidelines of their hermeneutic. These were, as already discussed, the inerrancy of the Scripture, the nature, division, and recipient of the birthright, and the meaning of "Isle" in the King James Translation of the Old Testament. In addition to these, British-Israelite hermeneutics placed a great deal of importance on dichotomies such as: House of Israel vs. House of Judah, Birthright vs. Scepter, Grace vs. Race. Through these, and other interpretive devices, Imperial British-Israelism developed its understanding of scripture. They read with a literal eye, avoiding spritualizations and metaphorical structures while maintaining a clear sense of reality and, in some places, a great deal of continuity. They rejected incompleteness, striving to find significance in every verse of scripture through either interpretation or historical argumentation. This utilization of pseudo-historical midrashim produced an interesting and unique view of the "Holy Writ", one which gave rise to the split between British-Israelism and their evangelical brethren.

The differences between the hermeneutics of Imperial British-Israelism and the interpretive methods of other fundamentalist groups become clear when sources outside the scriptures are sought and quoted as though they were as authoritative as the Bible. For the vast majority of fundamentalist commentators, only the Scr iptures have the validity to warrant an uncritical, literal reading; British Israelites, however, often treat such spurious documents as Geoffrey of Monmouth's "The History of

the Kings of Britain" and the writings of Homer as co-equal in authority with the Bible. By accepting the truth of these stories at face-value, British-Israel can trace the origin of the royal family back to the Troy of Homer, from where it is possible to follow the line even farther back, through the histories of early Greek writers, into Egypt and to Hebrew forebears.

With their use of pseudo-history as a form of Jacob Neusner's "Midrash as Paraphrase" to explain those portions of the Bible which either do not agree, or fail to go far enough in legitimizing their interpretations, British-Israelism produced a dynamic union of Scripture with historical mythology. This melding provided them with a clear story of their origins, a Biblical justification for their Empire and their Royalty, and the promise of a future, eternal greatness.

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JUSTIFYING THE EMPIRE

BIRTHRIGHT

The beginning for all British-Israelite approaches to the Scriptures is found in those verses comprising the birthright promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. While the bulk of the promises were given to Abraham, amplifications and minute modifications were added with each confirmation of the birthright on the descendants. By the time Jacob was ready to bestow the promises on his sons, the following points are understood by British-Israel as having been established as part of the birthright:

1. Abraham's descendants would be a great nation. Those that supported them would be supported by God. Those that opposed them would be opposed by God. From them would come blessing for all the Nations.

2. They would be as numerous as the dust of the Earth.

3. They would inherit a grant of land.

4. Multiple nations, kings, and peoples would come from Abraham's descendants.

5. They would "posses the gates of their enemies."

6. No weapon or military force would ever defeat them.

7. They would control the Earth, "pushing the people to the ends of the Earth."

As understood by British-Israelites, these promises were established, eternally, through dual one-sided covenants--covenants in which "God has assumed all responsibility, and to his integrity alone must we look for [their] fulfillment." Since God is made the sole responsible party in these covenants, the behavior of the people about whom they refer does not come into question. This allows the birthright recipients to maintain their status as God's chosen people, even though they might be exiled in the wilderness.

The children of Abraham would, according to British-Israelite exegesis, receive two "land grants". The first one is found within the text of Genesis 13:14-15,17, and encompasses that region in the Middle East traditionally known as the "Promised Land". The second "land grant" is located in the wilderness, to the north and in the west, and is understood as being given to Israel through a later promise to David.

They would repossess the gates of their enemies, meaning that they were to be in

> . . . possession of great strategic positions in different parts of the world, dominating [their] enemies' lands. These strategic positions in a wonderful manner respond [or are equivalent to] to the Scriptural term 'Gate' . . . .

This promise combines with the final two promises of the birthright paradigm to produce the image of a world spanning, world controlling Empire--much as the British Empire was perceived as being during its peak years, and as the proponents of the Imperial period wished to see confirmed and perpetuated indefinitely. While this represents the totality of the first covenant, as understood within British-Israelite circles, it does not even touch on the second covenant, which is more in line with traditional readings of the scriptures.

While accepted by those of the Imperial period, the second covenant is not, in and of itself, considered intrinsically more important than the first covenant. Indeed, they are often viewed as co-covenants, with the second being inbedded in, and indelibly linked to, the first. It is found in the promise that a descendant of Abraham would bring blessings, by which is understood salvation, to all humanity. This covenant is eschatological in nature, and is thought to be a foretelling of the future coming of Christ. Consequently, while being a part of the later promises given to Judah, this is still an incredibly important

promise for both British-Israelism and Christianity. As the nucleus of the second covenant, it also provided the first with a firm foundation upon which to stand. As J.H. Allen states in his pivotal book, Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright:

> It is evident that one of these covenants is Messianic; that one* is multitudinous; that each is contained in the other; that in them there is no contracting party of the second part; and that both alike do stand on the integrity of God.

Because British-Israelites opposed the spiritualization of scripture, both covenants were viewed as actual. Indeed, if the Christ covenant is actual, then the multitudinous seed covenant must also be actual. In this way the veracity of British-Israel's claims, as viewed in their understanding of the first covenant, is based upon the same authority as the promise of Christ in the second covenant. Hence, if their birthright thesis is false, then Christ's initial coming must also be viewed with skepticism. In addition, the eventual return of Israel to the "family of God" will be tied to this promise and the original coming of Christ which it predicts. By the combination of these factors, and with the perspective of historicity in prophecy which British-Israelites gave to these promises, another tenet of British-Israelite biblical hermeneutics is maintained--that "God's will has been, and forever will be, perfectly fulfilled according to the letter of the scripture."

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DIVISION OF BIRTHRIGHT

Jacob received the birthright from his father, Isaac, as a single blessing. God confirmed this blessing, making additional remarks and bestowing a few refinements such as the name "Israel", but it had basically remained the same since the days of Abraham. With Jacob, however, the simple passing of the birthright, as a single package, from one descendant to the next would end; instead, a division occurred.

According to the ancient law of primogenitor Reuben, Jacob's first-born son, should have received the birthright promises. However, like the two preceding generations in the line from Abraham, the elder son failed to meet the qualifications and was passed over for a younger son--indeed, thanks to Reuben's sins with his father's concubine, Bilhah, the birthright was re-directed to two of Israel's younger, but more prominent sons, Joseph and Judah. This division is an important point for Br itish-Israelism because much of their terminology, and thus their hermeneutic, stems from their conception of the identity of Israel in opposition to the nature of being a Jew. Put succinctly:

> When the term Israel was used in contradistinction to Judah it referred to the northern kingdom of the ten tribes only. The people of the ten-tribed northern kingdom were never called Jews: the term Jew referring exclusively to people in the small southern kingdom of Judah . . . Thus every Jew was also an Israelite, but every Israelite was not a Jew, in the same way as every Scotsman is a Briton but every Briton is not a Scotsman.

Hence the important dichotomy of Israel and Judah is established, one which will make greater sense once the terms of the division are clarified.

As British-Israelite doctrine indicates, God directed Jacob to bestow the birthright promises upon Joseph and his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. He began by adopting them, making them equal with his other sons in terms of secular inheritance, following which he gives them the name "Israel". Ephraim, the younger son, is then blessed over and above Manasseh, the older son:

> Jacob preferred Ephraim before Manasseh; and he is called the firstborn of God, not as the individual, but as the federal head of the Ten-tribed House of Israel . . . . Jacob predicted that Manasseh should become, in the 'latter days', a 'great people', but Ephraim was to become 'a greater [people] than he'. Is it, or is it not, a fact of modern history that the United States of America are a 'great people', and yet are a branch that ran over the wall of our own vineyard? And is it not a fact that, as a 'nation and company of nations', Great Britain and Greater Britain [the British Empire] are greater even than the 'great people' of the United States?

In this way, the birthright is bestowed on the House of Joseph, specifically to Ephraim. Both sons are named "Israel" by Jacob, but Ephraim is promised to be a "multitude of nations", or, more accurately, a "company of nations", Manasseh, on the other hand, is understood as becoming a powerful, crowded country which would, as Jacob later says to Joseph and as Isaiah would illustrate, "run over the wall, breaking away from Ephraim-Israel."

British-Israelite theory understands the division of the birthright as a two stage event. Above is the first stage, in which the birthright itself is divided between the two sons of Joseph, with Ephraim being understood as the ancestor from which the people of Great Britain, and hence her Empire, descended, and Manasseh as being the ancestor of the United States of America. The Second stage of their exegesis comes with the dispersion of the rights of kingship and law making to Judah. We

shall come to this later; for now, suffice it to say that "the birthright was Joseph's", and that Ephraim was understood as the British Empire and Manasseh as the United States.

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SIN, PUNISHMENT, DISPLACEMENT, AND CHRISTIANS IN THE WILDERNESS

The themes of Israel's sin, punishment, and displacement in the wilderness are of great importance in British-Israelite thought. Not only do they actually exist, in one form or another, within the Old Testament text, but they also serve British-Israelism by providing the impetus needed to push, and follow, the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel out of Palestine and into their other promised land, the "appointed place". Their hermeneutic for this draws extensively from the Latter Prophets, including all three of the Majors, and from the Minors: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Zephaniah, and Zechariah. Our examination will draw on only a limited selection of scriptures from the three majors, as well as from Hosea and Micah.

No passage of Scripture more graphically demonstrates the sin of Israel and Judah which precipitated their punishment than the "Parable of the Two Sisters", which is found in Ezekiel 23 and, in a different form, in Jeremiah 3. For British-Israelism this is the proof-text of Israel's failure to live up to God's standard, and the point from which the bill of divorce from God extends.

British-Israelism understands God as having been married, from the separation of the birthright onward, to two wives: Israel and Judah. As in the Ezekiel text, these two peoples are often characterized as two sisters, and/or daughters, who engaged in acts of prostitution with the men of other nations. This was an allegory for the practice of Baal worship in the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, and it is for this sin--idolatry--that Yahweh will punish both sisters. Israel, at first the worse of the two, is "given a bill of divorcement", and "delivered . . . into the hand of her lovers [Assyria]". Judah, who observed this, failed to take heed and "went and played the harlot also". God, responding to Judah's failure at repentance, does not divorce her but, instead, sends her into captivity in Babylon. In this way Israel is now understood as the divorced wife, the "widow", while Judah is perceived as God's only remaining spouse.

British-Israelism looks to Hosea for an interpretation of the events in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It is indeed strange that they would find some of the key verses for the propagation of their movement in Hosea; after all, it is here that we find God passing judgment upon the Kingdom of Israel through the naming of the prophet's children.

Hosea's first son is named Jezreel, a name that has two meanings: "may God scatter" and "may God sow". The first definition of the name is amplified by the text itself, with the statement that God would "put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel", as the means by which the scattering would occur. The second definition of the name is required, however, "for, when the purpose of the judgement upon the House of Israel was accomplished, there was to be a future deliverance." The second child, a daughter, is named "not pitied", which is understood as meaning that "God would no longer have any compassion for Israel." The third child, another son, is named "not my people", which is God's declaration that the children of Israel would not be viewed as his people because He had divorced them.

Following this series of judgments, in which God puts Israel completely away, we find the following set of key verses in British-Israelite thought:

> Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in that place--in the Isles afar off--where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

Here, British-Israel finds a reconfirmation of the original birthright with an additional promise which they interpret to mean that "the House of Israel would be Christianized and under the New Covenant in the Isles afar off." The theme of a Christianized House of Israel in the wilderness can be found, expounded upon in Jeremiah 31: 33-37. Here, British-Israelism identifies the Ten Lost Tribes being made a Christian nation, with God implanting His glorious laws into the hearts of the children in the wilderness, and making them His people once again. The Christianizing of Israel is viewed as a pivotal point because this allows for their return to the marriage covenant with God and the subsequent fulfillment of the birthright promises.

Yet another characterization of Israel, the divorced wife, as a Christian people comes in Isaiah 54, with an unusual interpretation of what must be one of the most important portions of Messianic prophecy within the Christian hermeneutical tradition. Christian exegetes understand Isaiah 53 as a foreshadowing of the life and death of Christ on Earth. British-Israelite interpreters, however, do not give the first application of the benefits of this event to all Jews and Gentiles in general, as in the traditional Christian hermeneutic, but instead they apply it firstly and most importantly to the House of Israel. Isaiah 54:1-8 are the crucial verses in which Israel is identified as the "barren one", "the wife of youth", and the one under the curse of "widowhood". Because the Lost Tribes of Israel are to be restored to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus

Christ, and since reference is made to them immediately following Isaiah 53 as being the primary recipients of this event, British-Israelism comes to understand the Anglo-Saxons as nothing short of first-class citizens in the Kingdom of God. As stated by Commander L.G.A. Roberts, a prominent proponent of the Imperial period, in his commentary on Isaiah:

> The promise here is that the children of the then desolate one (Israel) are to be more in number than the children of the married wife (Judah) who were still in Judaea and were never divorced . . . . She [Israel] is to enlarge her tent and stretch forth the curtain of her habitation. Here is represented the colonization of Israel into all the world, wherever they could find a footing . . . . Here is a picture of Israel as the Christianizer of the world, for as she was the first to receive the Gospel, so she is the primary source for world evangelization.

The length of the punishment phase was understood as being a period of 2520 years. British Israelites arrived at this figure by first establishing that during at least half of the 765 years from the time of the Exodus to the capture of Samaria in 721 B.C.E., idolatry (the worship of Baal) flourished in the Northern Kingdom. These are understood as Hosea's "days of Baalim", one of which being 360 years in length. When identified as the period known as "a time" in Leviticus 26:27-28, where God is interpreted as promising seven times of punishment for Israel's sins, a lengthy span of punishment is established. In other words:

> The judgment that was to be visited upon them under the law was to be according to the days they served Baal multiplied by seven--Seven Times, i.e., 2520 years!

And so, according to this method of calculation, from 721 B.C.E. to the end of the punishment phase would put Israel's birth as a powerful Empire in circa 1800 C.E.. Most British-Israelites explain the delay in the ascendancy of Great Britain to the pinnacle of world achievement following the death and resurrection of Jesus by appealing to the nature of Roman Catholic Christianity in the British Isles. Indeed, it was during the Protestant Reformation, through the publication and distribution of the Bible in the language of the people (indeed, with the printing of the KJV), that the building of the British civilization and their colonization of the world began. As for the seven times method of calculating the punishment phase, it is viewed as applying to this too, for:

> By counting 2520 years from the establishment of idolatry at Dan and Bethel by Jeroboam I in the early 900s B.C., we come to the late 1500s and, most especially, 1611. With the publication of the King James translation of the Holy Scriptures, God's times [of punishment] began to end and Israel was pushed forward on the anointed road of world dominion.

The sin of the House of Israel was idolatry, the punishment was divorce from God and displacement at the hands of the Assyrians, their fate in the wilderness was to become known as the "sons of the living God". The punishment phase is understood by British-Israelites as the process by which the Ten Tribes were purified of their rebellious nature while being placed in the wilderness. Here, they were left to become Christian, returning to God as they came to know their identity as God's birthright nation. As a Christian nation they were authorized to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and as the birthright nation Britain was authorized--indeed, enjoined--to rule the world.

RETURN



THE GREAT TREK AND THE WILDERNESS PLACE IN THE ISLES AFAR OFF

The Biblical account tells us that the House of Israel was relocated by the Assyrians to the cities of Halah and Habor, near the river Gozan, "and in the cities of the Medes." Here, Scripture loses track of them and, consequently, British-Israel finds its mandate for claiming that the Ten Tribes are "lost". The question of their "lostness" has concerned many commentators over the centuries, but it has never been an issue for debate among British-Israelites. As they understand it, from the defeat of Samaria in 721 B.C.E., and following their resettlement along the Assyrian border with Urartu and the Medes, the people of the Northern Kingdom were lost to both Scripture and history. Those rare, isolated verses which appear to have some reference to the Lost Tribes in the wilderness are plucked out of their context and given a meaning within an apocryphal framework which attempts to make sense, but which has very little relation to their original meaning within the text. In solving this problem, and in direct opposition to the prevailing hermeneutical attitudes of most fundamentalists toward the Apocrypha and extra-Biblical sources, British-Israelism turned to a portion of II Esdras, modern archaeological research, and pseudo-historical texts to sketch a picture of the Lost Tribes outside the Biblical account. In this way they were able to follow them north and west, across the plains of Europe to Scandinavia and the British Isles where, after the completion of the 2520 years of punishment, they would finally rise to claim their inheritance: the world. In turning to extrabiblical sources to prove their theory, they unknowingly created something of a modified midrash . . . one which has many affinities with Jacob Neusner's "Midrash as Paraphrase". Essentially, these midrashim interweave foreign material with the original Biblical text to produce new, original stories and interpretations which bear little or no resemblance to the original scriptures. In our examination of their beliefs on the wanderings of the Lost Tribes we will find scripture and non-Biblical sources used, freely,

as both primary and secondary elements with little or no critical assessment of the validity of the picture each paints. For the most part, the apocryphal, scientific, and historical materials are viewed as equal in authority to the Biblical accounts. They also make up the bulk of the British-Israelite argument in this section.

The people of the Northern Kingdom were relocated to the border between Assyria and Urartu, and along the border between eastern Assyria and the Median Empire. Here, they were meant to act as buffer states between the Assyrians and those outlying marauding tribes and rebellious political entities in both Media and Urartu. Resettled here, they fall out of the Biblical narrative and British-Israel turns to the many archaeological finds in Assyria, Babylon, and Media to find and trace these displaced tribes.

One of the most revealing methods for identifying Israel in extra-Biblical literature is through the names given them by those who either displaced or opposed them. Prior to and during the time of displacement, Assyria used the term "House of Omri" to refer to the Northern Kingdom by naming them after their sixth King. In the Assyrian cuneiform script, the name is transliterated into "Beth Khumri". This usage is found in the annals of King Tigiath-Pileser III concerning his invasion of Israel when he removed the first Israelites to Assyria in 740 B.C.E. Additionally:

> Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) also makes mention of the “Khumriu” in his record of the capture of Samaria. He refers to himself as the conqueror of “Bit-Khumri.” Apparently this is the last mention of the Israelites by the name “Khumri.” However, a study of the Assyrian cuneiform tablets known as the "Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire" reveals the history of the Israelites in Assyrian captivity!

From these "letters", British-Israelite scholars have been able to identify the various names and movements of the Lost Tribes through a multitude of border conflicts in the last days of the Assyrian Empire. The names derive logically from "Khumri" and include the well known "Gimiri" and "Cimmerian" tribes of Asia minor and Armenia. The Gimira are identified as being exiles from another land and appear in the very areas where the Israelites had been previously placed by the Assyrians. According to the Royal Correspondences, they are continuously being caught in the midst of battle between the armies of Urartu and Assyria, and many of them are eventually displaced from their resettlement towns to the east, into Media, and west, to the gap between Lakes Van and Umira. Here, many stay until the fall of the Assyrian Empire.

Other groups of the Lost Tribes join forces with the Urartians against both Assyria and Media. Known as "Iskuza", they lived among the Manni tribes in Media and west, in Asia Minor. They are clearly identified in Esarhaddon's prayer texts, which “tell us that the Iskuza invaded the lands of the Medes and competed with the Assyrian expeditions sent into Media to collect tribute." According to E. Raymond Capt, "Iskuza" is just another Assyrian name for lost Israel, apparently referring to another group of Israelites originally in Asia Minor whereas "Gimira" referred to those along the border with Media. As to the derivation of the name, he explains that Isaac could have easily taken the form of "Isaaca" which, in turn, became "Iskuza" when the Assyrians heard it. From Iskuza it is possible to follow Israel even farther for,

> It is universally accepted by modern historians that the Iskuza were called “skuthaen” by the Greeks and "Sacaem" (also "Saka" and "Sakka") by the Persians. Herodotus further tells us the Persians called the Sacae, "scythians". Essentially, the name "Gimira" was strictly an Assyrian name and not one the Israelites would have used.

Additionally, from "Sacae" also came the name "Sacasene", which lengthens over the years in the wilderness into "Sacsooni" and, eventually, "Saxon". Capt demonstrates these derivations by appealing to the writings at Behistun. Much like the Rosetta Stone of Egypt, the inscriptions here were in three languages: Akkadian, Susian and Persian, each arranged parallel one to another. The breaking of the Persian text by Henry Rawlinson lead the way to the final deciphering of the other two languages, and this event opened up the history of Assyria and Babylon. The Behistun wall inscriptions provide British-Israel with two different names for the Lost Tribes in three languages. In both the Persian and Elamite (Susian) versions the original word is "Sakka", but in the Babylonian (Akkadian) version the same people are called "Gimiri".

> This proves that the Assyrians and the Babylonians called the Israelite exiles "Gimiri" regardless of where they lived. It also indicates that by this time (about 517 B.C.) a branch of the Gimiri (called "Sakka" by the Persians) had already migrated a long way beyond Bactria and dwelt on the eastern extremity of the Persian empire.

By the fall of Nineveh, and hence the Assyrian Empire, in 610 B.C.E., the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel were scattered all over the Middle-East and Asia Minor. From Phrygia and Lydia in the west to Bactria east of the Caspian Sea, they were known as "Cimmerian", "Kimmeroii", "Scythian", "sakka", and "Sacasene". The route to Asia Minor is found in II Esdras 13:39-45, where the Ten Tribes are spoken of as deciding to pass through the headwaters of the Euphrates River, heading north and west, along the southern shore of the Black Sea, to a region known as "Arsareth". Here, as discovered in the Royal Correspondences of the Assyrians, the Israelites are known as Cimmerians and can be followed from Asia Minor to the Carpathian Mountains, northwest of the Black Sea, a region British-Israel identifies as "the City of Seth". Here, they reside while their brothers, the Scythians, catch up.

From Urartu the Sacasene navigate the Dariel Pass through the Caucasus Mountains, an event which is claimed to have been alluded to in Micah 2:13, and then over the northern coast of the Black Sea to press against the eastern flanks of the

Cimmerians. These Scythians pushed the Cimmerians north and west, across the plains of Europe, where the Cimmerians become known as the Celts. The Scythians would soon follow, while continually pushing these Celts to the northwest coast of Europe, where they (the Celts) became known as the Frisians, Chauci and Cimbri--the last of these names being the key link to their ancestry as the Cimmerians. According to British-Israelite figures, these Celtic peoples crossed the English channel to the British Isles no later than 300 B.C.E. to join the Tuatha De Daanan in Ireland, who had crossed over from Iberia many centuries earlier.

While British-Israelism identifies some of the Lost Tribes with the Cimmerians, and the Cimmerians with the Celts, they also trace the rest of the House of Israel, through the Scythian line, to the Germanic Anglo-Saxon tribes. They do this by looking to Russian archaeological finds in the steppes of the southern Ukraine. From here they follow the Scythians north, through present-day Poland and East-Germany to the Baltic Sea. Tracing the Scythians in their transformation into Germanic tribes, British-Israel turns to further archaeological evidence from burial mounds, arrowhead construction, and the writings of Roman historians. The reason for difficulty in tracing the Scythians in classical history was because their name was changed in the time of Pliny the Elder and Strabo. Essentially,

> It was to distinguish between the Sarmatian inhabitants and the true Scythians, that the Romans dropped the name "Scythian" and substituted "Sarmatae" and "Germani"(Germans), "Germanus" being the Latin for "genuine".

In this way, the Scythians lost their identity, becoming Germans and, on into Scandinavia, Norsemen.
The Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain was divided into two phases: the first, between C.E. 280-450, when the Saxons periodically raided the coast of Britain and returned home. The second was between C.E. 450-600, when the Angles and Saxons, after the withdrawal of the Roman garrisons from Britain, landed and settled in various parts of the country.

> One group of Saxons, under the rule of Cerdic, (founder of the famous Saxon dynasty which produced, in later years, King Alfred) landed with five ships somewhere west of Solent. The historical King Arthur is believed to have organized the British defense which was able to keep Cerdic from gaining a decisive victory for thirteen years.

Eventually, the Celts of ancient Britain and the invading Anglo-Saxon and Scythians merged to form one people in time to combat the invading Norman Scythians in 1066 C.E. Over time, the Normans were absorbed by the Celtic-Anglo-Saxons and, in this way, the House of Israel was re-united in the British Isles!

British-Israelites found many various descriptions in the Biblical text of the lost tribes in their trek across Europe. Among these are directional clues and other hints which point to the location of the Lost Tribes in the "latter days". Lost Israel, according to their interpretation of Isaiah 49:12, would return to the Promised Land from the north and the west. This northwest location is understood as being on islands because, thanks to the King James translation of the Bible, Isaiah makes multitudinous references to "the isles afar off."

> The Scriptures lead us to Isles of the sea beside the great waters, North and West of Palestine, in our search for Israel. You can take a map of Europe that includes Palestine, scribe yourself a line from Palestine, Northwest to the Isles in the sea beside great waters (The Atlantic Ocean), and there my friends you will find Israel in the Isles.

British-Israel also identifies, in Hosea 12:1, a confirmation of the direction of the wanderings of the Ten Tribes, with Ephraim being described as having been driven west by "the east wind all day long".

We have seen how British-Israelite theory takes the Northern Kingdom into bondage under the Assyrians, tracks them through many name changes, then north and west, across Europe, to the "lsles of the sea beside the great waters". This trek, which brings the birthright people to the British Isles, is the fundamental basis upon which the British-Israelite justification of their Empire is built. If the Celtic-Anglo-Saxons of Great Britain are to be understood as the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, their world-spanning Empire would be the natural out-growth of the birthright promises to Abraham. A Christian people could never hope for a more sound, Biblically based rationale for their political establishment and world empire.

In Micah 2:13 the sons of Jacob, which are understood as being lost Israel, are promised that , although they would go many "days" without a ruler from the House of Judah, one would be sent ahead of them to the appointed place in the wilderness to be their King when they arrived. This, the justification of the British royal family, is the subject of the following pages.

We have already observed that the British-Israelite use of secular history and archaeological evidence is most extensive when the availability of Scripture is sparse. This midrashic appeal to extra-Biblical material for the interpretation and clarification of the Scriptural account is essential if their theory is going to be maintained. The same will be seen to be true in our examination of the Royal Line of Judah. Next, we turn to that portion of British-Israelite theory which encompasses the promises to Judah, David, and Solomon, the saga of the Lineage of the Scarlet Thread, and the Mission of Jeremiah.

RETURN



JUSTIFYING THE ROYAL FAMILY

SCEPTER AND LAWMAKING

While Joseph and his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were given both the name “Israel” and the birthright promises, Judah was given the right to be the King and make the laws for all the tribes. As British-Israelites read the Scriptures Jacob, in Genesis 49:10, promises the following to Judah:

> The Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the right to establish the laws, until Jesus Christ returns, whose right it is to reign, and unto him shall all the people come.

Judah is promised that a descendant of his would rule over the the children of Israel until, as British-Israelism understands it, the second coming of Christ establishes Jesus as King. And, since Jesus is known to be of the House of David, in reality the Scepter is given to Judah for all eternity. This is an interesting interpretation on a number of counts since it does not allow the first coming of Christ to be the one at the end of verse 10. There are a multitude of reasons for this interpretation, not the least of which is British-Israelism's opposition to the spiritualization of anything understood to be literal. This very issue will take on an even greater importance when the throne of David is addressed shortly.

RETURN



THE LINEAGE OF THE SCARLET THREAD

With the birthright promised in perpetuity, the Judah line then proceeds to divide into two streams through the birth of his twins, Zerah and Perez. As in the birth of Jacob and Esau, where the twins were born with one grabbing at the other's heel, so in the birth of Judah's twin sons, Zerah's arm appears first. The midwife tied a red ribbon around it to mark the first-born child, but the hand retreated unexpectedly into the womb. Then, a boy without a scarlet thread around its arm is born. Perez, in actuality the first-born, is followed, a moment later, by the baby with the thread--Zerah. No reason for this event is given in the Scriptures, and most traditional commentators tend to be fairly silent as to its meaning. British-Israelites, unable to accept the possibility that a whole chapter of Biblical text might not have a divinely inspired purpose, embark on what must be the best and most interesting example of midrashic interpretation in their entire hermenutical tradition. They accept the Biblical account through the end of Genesis, simply adding a whole extra story before Exodus 1:8 by drawing from ancient histories, various chronicles, and the legends and myths of Homer and Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Following the death of Joseph a fight broke out among the descendants of Jacob as to who should rule in Lower Egypt. Judah claimed pre-eminence since Israel had promised him the right to hold the scepter and make the laws, but which of his two sons would rule? This question was especially difficult to answer due to the issue of the Scarlet Thread. The argument is easy to anticipate: While Zerah's arm might have come out first, it was Perez who was first to be full-born; which credentials for first-born status would be honored, the Scarlet Thread of Zerah or the full-birth of Perez? While the British-Israelite midrash does not describe how the tribes came about their answer, we are told that it was Zerah who gained the right to rule over Lower Egypt and the twelve tribes, with his descendants continuing to rule after him for at least a century. Eventually, a Pharaoh in Upper Egypt was born and grew up not knowing of the great and mighty deeds of the long-dead governor of Lower Egypt. Instead, all he saw in the the north was a weak kingdom ruled by "Shepherd Kings", or the Hyksos, which British-Israel identifies as the sons of Zerah. He waged war and, when Lower Egypt fell to Upper Egypt, the rulers of Lower Egypt fled. According to the legends, Zerah's descendants packed up everything, including vast stores of gold and silver, and sailed north into the Mediterranean Sea, never to be seen in Egypt again. The descendants of Perez, and of most of the other tribes, remained behind to be enslaved by the Egyptians.

According to a major British-Israelite historical argument, long before Moses led the twelve tribes out of Egypt there had been continuous migrations of Hebrews to Greece and other parts of Asia Minor and Europe:

> There are numerous references by the classical writers to the "Egyptian" origin of the Greeks. Hecataeus of Abdere (6th century B.C.) quoted by Diodorus Siculus (50 B.C.) tells us that the Egyptians "expelled all the aliens gathered together in Egypt. The most distinguished of the expelled foreigners followed Danaus and Cadmus into Greece: but the greater number were led by Moses into Judaea."

Further appeals to classical historians abound, including numerous quotations from Diodorus on the origin of Troy and Greece from migrations out of Egypt. Additionally, from Herodotus they quote:

> If we ascend from Danae, the daughter of Acrisius, we shall find that the ancestors of the Dorian princes were of Egyptian origin. Such is the Grecian account of their descent.

The migrations out of Egypt led by Danaus and Cadmus, who are identified as descendants of Zerah, are not the only ones referenced by British-Israel. Another important Grecian colony was founded by Cecrops, also identified as a descendant of Zerah, who became the first legendary king of Attica. British-Israel was most interested in the Zerah-line exodus of Calcol and Darda because they supposedly lead to the British Isles. Calcol, who is identified with the descendant of Zerah listed in I Chronicles 2:6, and with the Chalcol of I Kings 4:31, was said to be the founder of the ancient Kings of Ireland. Calcol's brother Darda, who is identified as the Dardanus of Homer, is claimed to be the founder of Troy. Both, it is said, had migrated from Egypt before the Exodus under Moses.

Cecrops (or Calcol) was the mythological founder of Athens, its first king, and was thought to have been the leader of a band of Hebrew colonists from Egypt. For British-Israelite theory, he was not mythological at all but, in fact, very real . They trace the westward migration of the descendants of Calcol along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea through the founding of "Iberian," or hebrew, trading settlements:

> One of these settlements, which is now called 'Saragossa', in the Ebro (Hebrew) Valley in Spain, was originally known as 'Zarah-gassa', meaning "The stronghold of Zarah", until as late as 330 A.D. The Iberians continue on to the British Isles, where the Iberians gave their name to Ireland, calling the island 'Iberne', which was later abbreviated to 'Ernen' and subsequently Latinized to 'Hibernia', a name that still adheres to Ireland.

Drawing liberally from Geoffrey of Monmouth's "History of the Kings of Britain", British-Israelism follows yet another, and somewhat more famous line of Troy to Ireland. The descendants of Darda, or Dardanius, ruled Troy for several hundred years until the city was destroyed in the famous seize described by Homer. Aeneas, who is understood as the last of the royal blood of Zerah, collected the survivors of his devastated city and lead them to Italy. There, he married the daughter of King Latinus, founding the Roman Republic in the process. Aeneas' grandson Brutus, accompanied by a large group of Trojans, migrated to "the Great White Island" (an early name for Britain due to its chalk cliffs). Tradition says that on the way to the "White Island" Brutus came across four other Trojan colonies upon the coast of Spain and persuaded them to join him.

> At Totnes on the River Dart, twelve miles inland from Torbay (the oldest seaport in South Devon) is an historical stone that commemorates the coming of Brutus to Britain (cir. 1103 B.C.). The stone is known, today, as the "Brutus Stone", the tradition being that the Trojan prince set foot upon it when he first landed. The Welsh records state that three tribes of his countrymen received Brutus and his company as brethren and proclaimed Brutus king at a national convention of the whole island. Brutus' name heads the roll in all the genealogies of the British kings, preserved as faithfully as were those of the kings of Israel and Judah.

British-Israel's tracing of the multiple lines to Ireland, through both Troy and Iberia, produces an interesting situation because, through this series of historic-mythological acrobatics, one half of the Judah line is placed in the appointed place long before the Lost Tribes were even taken into the Assyrian captivity. The other half of the House of Judah, descending from the line of Perez, must also be brought to the Isles before the arrival of the Celtic-Israelites. This other half is "the House of David, the throne which would never end."

RETURN



THE HOUSE OF DAVID

David was a descendant of Judah through Perez, initially a shepherd boy born of Jesse. Exceedingly important in almost all Jewish and Christian interpretations of Scripture, the line of David is often viewed as that from which the Messiah would eventually come. British-Israelism looks upon the Davidic dynasty as not only the one from which Jesus Christ would issue, but also as the source from which their own monarchy draws its authority and mandate. By establishing a connection between the Royal family of Great Britain and the House of David, Imperial British-Israelism sought to root their monarchy in the most ancient antiquity, within the Biblical era, and with an assurance of eternal longevity.

In II Samuel 7:11-13,16 David is promised, by God through the Prophet Nathan, that his House and his throne would last forever and that, even though his descendants might not be worthy of it, they would rule over the everlasting Davidic dynasty. Unlike the nominal Christian interpretation, which tends to spiritualize these promises and see them fulfilled in Jesus Christ, British-Israelites maintain their staunch disregard for anything other than a literal interpretation:

> It is not the spiritual throne, the spiritual sceptre, the spiritual house, nor the heavenly kingdom, which are therein spoken of, but that it is the literal throne, the earthly kingdom, and the lineal house of the Judo-Davidic family which are the subjects of this prophecy; and that all these are to endure FOREVER!

A confirmation of these promises can be found in Psalm 89:29-37, where it is said of David: "His line shall endure for ever, his throne as long as the sun before me." This covenant is understood as being unconditional, eternal, and containing one additional clause--the Second Land Grant.

British-Israelite thought identifies two land grants in the Scriptures. The first was given to Abraham, and includes Palestine and those adjoining regions known as the "Promised Land". The second was given to the people of Israel through a promise of David's continued kingship in II Samuel 7:10. David is promised that the Ten Tribes of Israel would be given a place of their own to live, that there they would not be bothered by their age-old enemies, and that a descendant of David would rule over them in this place! This place, however,

> . . . cannot be Palestine, for the people were already dwelling there and, during the years following David's reign, the surrounding Gentile nations continued to afflict Israel. . . The ten tribes (not the Jews) were to be allured into the wilderness . . . to find "grace" and "rest" and while there they were to be restored to God's favor again!

With the Second Land Grant, which promised that his descendants would rule over the Northern Kingdom in their "appointed place", and the promise that his House and Throne would continue forever, the Davidic dynasty is set into a mold which cannot be broken. From David to Zedekiah, the line continues and, though far from righteous, God maintains them in power until the final fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar's forces in 586 B.C.E. With the Babylonian captivity, the Royal House of David is viewed as ending--an event which is clearly impossible if God's promises to David are to be understood as literal pronouncements.

This dilemma is solved by British-Israelites through a clever series of connections in Biblical history, interpretations of prophetic utterances in Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and an appeal to extra-Biblical mythologies and pseudo-historical sources.

RETURN



THE CALL OF JEREMIAH

Jeremiah must be one of the most interesting characters in all British-Israelite literature. Not only is he viewed as the most important Old Testament prophet to both Israel and Judah, he is also understood as the prime human motivator which brought the Davidic Dynasty to the British Isles, reuniting the David-Perez and Zerah lines while establishing the Royal House of Judah in Ireland. In this capacity he is identified as the 'righteous man from the east' of Isaiah 41:2, the instrument of the Lord in the 'Riddle of Ezekiel 17', and the custodian of 'Jacob's Pillar' as viewed in Ezekiel 21:25-27. Finally, while traditional Judeo-Christian interpretations leave Jeremiah to die in Egypt at the hands of his enemies, British-Israelism follows him out of Egypt and into Ireland as Ollam Folla, the great law giver of the ancient Irish chronicles.

The reason for the attention given to this dynamic prophet has more to do with the perceived failure of Jeremiah's calling than with anything he might have accomplished in the Biblical narrative. The Lord sent Jeremiah,

> . . . with a mission to root out, tear down, and destroy, on the one hand; but--hear it!--he was also Divinely commissioned to BUILD AND PLANT!

British-Israel has little difficulty in locating where and how Jeremiah destroyed both the Kingdom of Judah and the Throne of David in Palestine. But, as the original text indicates, and as they read it, Jeremiah fails to finish his Divine calling. He does not 'build and plant' the House of David anywhere. This is the problem which British-Israel struggles with and finds an answer for through their use of extra-Biblical sources in yet another, this time much more interesting, series of Midrashic interpretations.

Traditional Christian exegetes read Jeremiah's mission as having been completed with the coming of Christ and the passing of the scepter away from the House of Judah to the Messiah. In some forms of British Israelite thinking, this is viewed as a form of building and planting, but it is not a literal interpretation and is therefore rejected by most British-Israelite interpretations:

The most charitable construction which can be put upon such accommodating, mollifying, weak and abortive efforts to vindicate the truth of God, is that the persons are ignorant of just some such vital point as the fact that Jeremiah was called and commissioned of God to build and plant anew the plucked-up kingdom of David in Israel--in the ten tribes, that is, not in Judah!

As understood by British-Israelite exegetes, the first coming was not the Shiloh event for: "the people did not gather to him, as the promise in Genesis 49:10 indicates!" Instead, the Scepter is destined to depart from the human King and transfer to the eternal King, Jesus Christ, at the second coming. Until then, a descendant of the House of David must rule over the House of Israel in the wilderness. Jeremiah's task is to transfer that descendent from Judah to the House of Israel in the Isles afar off, a

duty which is understood as at least being alluded to in both Scriptural and extra-Biblical sources.

The Riddle of Chapter 17 is interpreted as an allegorical sketch of Jeremiah's mission in building and planting. The text speaks about two great eagles, one being Nebuchadnezzar and the other being the Pharaoh of Egypt, and a young cedar: Zedekiah. First, Nebuchadnezzar is depicted as coming and establishing Zedekiah as a puppet king in Jerusalem, following which this "vine of low stature", goes to the Pharaoh of Egypt in hopes of gaining aid in throwing off the Babylonian yoke. The Egyptians send a force to the assistance of the King of Judah, but it is defeated by Nebuchadnezzar's army. As a result, Zedekiah and all his sons are taken to Babylon and Jerusalem is destroyed.

This was the dreadful fulfillment: the "roots" of the plant were torn up, and its fruit was "cut off". Zedekiah saw his sons slain in his sight, and then his own eyes were put out. The House of David is apparently at an end, but the allegory in chapter 17 is not finished. God Himself proclaims that He would take a "tender" twig of this same cedar, Zedekiah, and plant it in the "mountain of Israel". The term "tender one" in verse 22 is understood as denoting a female descendant, and within the already established allegorical structure it could only mean the daughter, or daughters, of Zedekiah. This is the salvation of the throne of David as viewed by British-Israelism for, although Nebuchadnezzar had killed all the male heirs to the throne of David, he had failed to exterminate the daughters of Zedekiah. According to Numbers 27:8-11, any one of these daughters could carry on the line if they married into their own House--in this case, into the House of Judah.

Jeremiah's call to build and plant involved taking the daughters Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, to the only place where they could marry back into a still thriving portion of the House of Judah and, in this way re-establish the Throne of David over the House of Israel. This, Jeremiah is claimed to have done in Ireland.

To follow the movements of Jeremiah and the daughters of Zedekiah outside the Biblical narrative is extremely difficult for British-Israel to do due to the lack of traditions about them beyond the British Isles. The local traditions of Ireland, however, are extensive and the British-Israelites drew heavily upon pre-Christian myths and folk legends for sources on this topic. The choices were selective, as might be expected, and center around those stories focusing on Tea Tephi, Simon Barech, and Ollam Folla.

The most widely accepted British-Israelite version of Jeremiah's arrival in Ireland says that in about 584 or 583 B.C.E. an old man arrived in the Isle of Erne with the daughter of an eastern king, Tea Tephi; also with him were his aid, Simon Barech, and three items of immense wealth: a stone, a gold chest, and a harp. The stone is said to have been the stone upon which Jacob had laid his head at Bethel in Genesis 28; the gold chest was said to be none other that the Ark of the Covenant; and the harp was the one upon which David had played for the benefit of Saul in I Samuel 16:23. The stone, as we shall see, is believed to have survived and is still in use, but the Ark of the Covenant and David's harp are both missing. In Ireland, this old man marries Tea Tephi to the High King of Ireland, Eochaidh, and exacts a dowry which makes him the great law-giver of all the western isles. As the British Israelists tell the story:

> The stone, known as the "Stone of Destiny", came from Spain and, before that, from Egypt. It came in the company of an aged guardian, who was called “Ollam Folla". Eochaidh, the Eremhon of Ireland, with his Queen Tea Tephi was re-crowned King upon the Stone which remained at the Palace of Team-hair Breagh. It was the Coronation Stone of every High King of "Eireann" for a period of about 1040 years.

This event is known in British-Israelite hermeneutics as the "First Overturn". According to their understanding of Ezekiel 21:25-27, they identify three Overturns in the Throne of David before the second coming of Christ. The first was the transfer of the line of David to Ireland, as represented in both the daughter of Zedekiah and, symbolically, in the "Stone of Destiny", also known as "Jacob's Pillar". Here, the House of David-Perez was joined with the House of Zerah, reuniting the two branches of the House of Judah! The second Overturn came in about 500 C.E. when Fergus Mor McEre, the King of the Irish Gaelic Kingdom of Dairiada, invaded the western coasts of Scotland and the land of the Picts. Establishing Scottish Dalriada, Fergus brought the Stone of Destiny, by then known as "Lia Fail", over from Ireland and had himself crowned King of Scotland upon that Stone. The third Overturn occurred in 1296 C.E. when Edward I of England defeated Scotland and took the stone to Westminster Abbey. There, it became the coronation stone of the successors to the English Throne. The two kingdoms were united when King James VI of Scotland was crowned on the Stone in Westminster Abbey, becoming James I of England . . . "today, Britain's lovely Queen is Scottish." The Scriptures are not entirely silent about the actual trip across the Mediterranean sea to Spain and Ireland. British-Israel finds Jeremiah in Isaiah 41 where, as it is interpreted, islands are told to be quiet about their heritage until they "renew their strength". Meanwhile, a "righteous man from the east" is called by God and given the nations of Israel to rule over, like a king. He is a powerful man who follows after the Lost Tribes "by the way that he had not gone with his feet." Traditional and academic exegetes identify this "righteous man" as Cyrus, the King of Persia who allowed the Jews to return to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity; British-Israelites identify this same man as Jeremiah. In their hermeneutic Cyrus cannot be "righteous" by sheer definition of being something other than a Hebrew. Additionally, there are no Islands in Palestine, so the target of this chapter cannot be anywhere in the "promised land" of Abraham. Instead, the Islands spoken of are the British Isles, the people who are to "renew their strength" are the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, and the "righteous man" is Jeremiah, who came to the Isles "by ship, a way his feet had never trod."

"Lia Fail" plays a special role in this entire story because it is the only tangible object, other than the believed descendants of

Tea Tephi, left over from Jeremiah's trip. Today, it sits in a cavity built into the Coronation chair in Westminster Abby. As believed by British-Israel, "Jacob's Pillar" (or "Lia Fail") had been carried by the Israelites into Egypt during the days of Joseph, then brought out in the Exodus under Moses. It had gone before them to Mount Sinai, was the rock which Moses struck to get water, it produced steam in the day and a fire at night for the Israelites to follow, and had served as the stone upon which the kings of Judah were crowned up through Zedekiah. Jeremiah had taken it with him when he fled to Egypt with Tea Tephi, and then took it to Ireland from where it migrated, in two successive leaps, to England and Westminster Abbey. The Monarchs of the Great Britain are crowned upon (or over) it, just as their ancestors had been in Palestine. In this way the line of continuity in the House of David is maintained, the House of Judah is reunited, and the Ten Tribes of Israel are given their promised monarch of the House of David. According to British-Israelite doctrine, the royal house of Great Britain will never be deposed from the British Throne thanks to the promises of the Davidic Covenant--it is everlasting,

> . . . even unto the day of the Lord's return, when a descendant of David on the English Throne will step aside for the Almighty to sit down, in the chair containing Jacob's Pillar, and take His rightful place as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, with our mighty Empire as the foundation of the Kingdom of God.

This eternal quality of the royal house of Britain, combined with the divine ordination of the British Empire to rule the world, provides British-Israelism with its mandate for continued existence. It also provides for certain applications of the theory within British society. Next, we turn to examine the ways in which those within the Imperial period viewed the United States of America, the League of Anglo-Saxon nations, and the end of the British Empire.

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IMPERIAL BRITISH-ISRAELITE APPLICATIONS

MANASSEH: THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The United States of America plays a unique role in British-Israelite theory, and especially within the Imperial Period. The many Anglo-Israelite movements in the United States both inherited and carried forward much of what British-Israelism promoted, but they are not our focus in this paper. Instead, of much more immediate importance for the Imperial movement was the way in which Britain's brother country was perceived by the Empire.

As might be expected, British-Israelism found Scripture which they interpreted to refer to the United States of America. Indeed, more than just a few verses were identified as having direct relevance for the United States and their relations with the British Empire. Fundamentally, these passages are understood as stressing not only the relatedness of America to the British people but also their subordinate and supportive role. We will begin by reviewing the promises to Ephraim and Manasseh, then follow Manasseh through the British-Israelite interpretation of Genesis 49:22, Isaiah 49:20 and 18:1-4.

We have already seen how British-Israelism relates the United States of America and Great Britain: they are Manasseh and Ephraim, the sons of Joseph and heirs to the birthright promises. To reiterate the particulars about these promises, Jacob indicated that Ephraim would become a "great multitude" or "company of nations" while Manasseh would become simply a "great nation". The interpretation of "multitude", as "company", and finally as an "Empire of Nations" is characteristic of early Imperial interpretations, and an understanding which would eventually change as the Empire gave way to the Commonwealth in 1946. As for the term "great nation", most British-Israelites would have little or no trouble applying it to the United States just so long as it was remembered that Ephraim was promised pre-eminence.

In Genesis 49 we find that Jacob, when blessing all of his sons, makes a few additional comments about Joseph. Essentially, Jacob is interpreted as prophesying the day when Manasseh would separate from Ephraim, or "run over the wall", with the "branches" being understood as Manasseh's descendants leaving the confines of Ephraim's domination. This is amplified in Isaiah 49:20 --

> The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.

British-Israel finds another biblical allusion to the pulling away of the American colonies from the Empire, with the "other" being understood as referring to the United States. Later Imperial exegetes would continue with the body of the text, identifying the "children" as the member states of the Empire and their complaint being heeded by the eventual foundation of the Commonwealth Nations.

In their interpretation of Isaiah 18:1-4, we find disagreement among many British-Israelites. Some, though by no means even half, identify Great Britain as the nation referenced here. Another group, and a larger one than the first set, identifies a different country in this chapter--the United States at her height. In either case, the interpretation is fundamentally the same with only a few, minor alterations. The Land with "whirring" or, as one British-Israelite translates it, "Outstretched Wings" is

the United States because it reflects the image of a great Eagle, "and which nation claims an eagle in its heraldry?" For these exegetes, the phrase which places this nation beyond the rivers of Ethiopia is not to be understood literally but, instead, accepted as simply a metaphor for a distant land. "Vessels of bulrushes" is interpreted to mean "water sucking boats--ie, steamships!" and the reference to ambassadors represents this nations's great influence and great power. Verse 3 is a key verse for the United States exegetes because here it is understood that "when this country goes to war, it is known the world over. They raise up the flag and march to the notes of the 'stars and stripes forever'! Amen!" Additionally, verse 2c is interpreted to mean a nation of vast expanses with many rivers which cut across wide plains. According to some, Great Britain fails to meet the descriptions. For others, however, the location beyond Ethiopia is the key which applies this passage to the Empire. Great Britain, after all, "possess the Nile region, beyond both branches, and Atbara and the Soudan," which allows the interpretation to adhere to the near-literal vision which characterizes the vast majority of British-Israelite exegesis. However, the Great Britain party does not represent even half of British-Israelite exegetes in interpreting this chapter, and especially not since Britain lost control of the Suez Canal, so we will continue with the first group.

Understanding the United States as its brother Manasseh, Great Britain could view America with a kindred, warm affection, sometimes patronizing but never negative. America continued to prove that the Celtic-Anglo-Saxons were the birthright nation in terms of both population and world power, and during times of war the United States would become a source of strength and support for her elder brother, Ephraim.

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LORD ADMIRAL FISHER: THE ANGLO-SAXON LEAGUE AND THE GREAT WORLD WAR

Great Britain, in the decade prior to the First World War, was an Empire in political and religious turmoil. Domestically, the nation was blessed with a stable, two-party political system and a booming economy, but the rise of "new Imperialism" in the 1880s, combined with the increased push for colonial holdings at the turn of the century, posed a real challenge to the future of the Empire. In the midst of, and perhaps because of this, Imperial British-Israelism grew quite quickly into a full-blown cross-denominational movement which permeated all levels of British society. As might be expected, the growing middle class latched onto the doctrines of British-Israelism as a means by which they could legitimize their upwardly mobile ambitions. Leading clerics of the Anglican Church, like Archbishop Bond of Montreal and Bishops Titicomb, Alexander, Gobat, and Thornton, all gave the movement a basis for respectability within the trappings of authorized religion. The movement was not without important followers among the aristocracy in this period, with such notables as Queen Victoria, King Edward VII, King George VI, and currently Queen Elizabeth II all embracing the tenets of British-Israelism. These, and many others in the aristocratic and wealthy circles of British society, looked to the movement for different things. Many of them found a rationale for their continued rule and their Empire's existence amidst a world of growing adversaries.

A few members of the British aristocracy had slightly different but nevertheless quite powerful reasons for becoming British-Israelites. The most illustrious example of this group would have to be Fleet Admiral Sir John A. F. Fisher, First Sea Lord of the British Navy during the First World War and the primary architect of 20th century naval principles. According to Admiral Fisher, Great Britain must be Israel because, despite the extreme stupidity of the Members of Parliament, it had managed to achieve an empire. This, combined with his great admiration for the American people, drove him to the conclusion that God had destined the Empire and the United States for leadership in a world union. He envisioned:

> ... a great Commonwealth--yes a great Federation--of all those speaking the same tongue [English] . . . . And I suppose now we have got [sic] Palestine that this Federal House of Commons of the future will meet at Jerusalem, the capital of the lost Ten Tribes of Israel, whom we are without a doubt, for how otherwise could ever we have so prospered when we have had such idiots to guide us and rule us as those who gave up Heligoland, Tangier, Caracoa, Corfu, Delagoa Bay, Java, Sumartra, Minorca, etc.? I have been at all the places named, so am able to state from personal knowledge that only congenital idiots could have been guilty of such inconceivable folly as the surrender of them, and again I say: "Let us thank God that we are the lost ten tribes of Israel!"

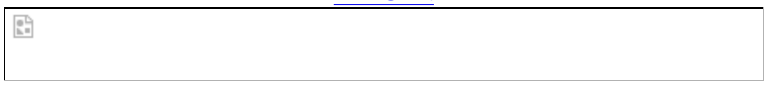
Lord Fisher opposed the elitism of most British-Israelites, viewing the doctrine as a simple amplification of nominal Anglican Christianity, which he accepted whole-heartily. But his belief in the national promises of Israel directed his life in the service of his people. On his death bed it is said that he whispered in the ear of a close vicar: "Lord, in thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded." And, in an epitaph it was said of him:

> He confounded many enemies of Britain and spent his days and night working with might and main to protect God's Kingdom and its enduring throne, upon which sits the seed of David.

This was the pattern of most British-Israelites who influenced, or were a part of, the ruling elites of English society. Their beliefs affected their actions, confirming their goals and giving them the tenacity to push forward in their quest for a greater

Britain and the coming Kingdom of God.

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THE BRITISH-ISRAEL WORLD FEDERATION AND THE END OF THE EMPIRE

In opposition to the League of Nations most British-Israelites, including Lord Admiral Fisher, viewed the Empire and the United States as the final arbiter of world peace:

> The British, Americans, and their offspring will cause a league of the Anglo-Saxon-Celt nations the world over, and they, haying the same languages, ideas, and ideals of justice and truth, and being God's chosen company or commonwealth of nations, will bring about what the Creator has ordained from the beginning--righteous peace.

Being Israel, both in people and in the faith of Jesus Christ, no other alliance or world power could be trusted with such a responsibility; indeed, God would never give it to any people other than His chosen elect.

This union was symbolized by the shield of the British-Israel World Federation, the parent organization out of which most Anglo-Israelite movements have come. It depicts a globe, upon which sits an open Bible with "THE LOVE OF GOD" written across it. To the left side of the world is the British "Union Jack", on the other the American "Stars and Stripes", and underneath is written "IN GOD . . . WE TRUST." Beneath all this is written "ISRAEL HEIR OF THE WORLD", and above all this is written, as if straight from the mouth of God, "YE ARE MY WITNESSES", witnesses to "God's glory throughout the world." It lit the path for continued unity between Great Britain and America as the world rushed toward the Second World War, and it was this devastating conflict, more than anything else, which precipitated the final demise of the Empire. Though victorious on the battle field, Great Britain gave way in world dominion to the United States and began to fade into the sunset of history. A trend which had been manifest since the 1901 death of Queen Yictoria was finally becoming dominant: the British Empire was in decline.

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CONCLUSION: THE MANDATE OF IMPERIAL BRITISH-ISRAELISM

If the British people are understood as the modern-day descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, then their "just title" to a world empire should be obvious. Their mandate is their birthright as the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, their royalty as descending from Judah and David, and their faith in Jesus Christ. God had promised that they would be as numerous as the stars in the night sky and the sand on all the beaches of the world. Their domain was to be characterized by a large community of nations which would push the inhabitants of the regions they occupied to the very ends of their land. They were to be the most powerful nation on the earth--indeed, they would OWN the world. They would control the strategic positions of the planet, the economic points of power would be within their sphere rule, and under their flags would reside the people who would herald the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. The British people would have nothing to fear from their upstart neighbors on the continent; France had been put in her place through the defeat of Napoleon's navy at the Battle of Trafalgar, and his army at Waterloo. Both the Kaiser's Germany and the Fuehrer's Third Reich would continue to be an irritant, but both would eventually crumble to the mighty Anglo-Saxon Union of the British Empire and the United States, the modern day manifestations of Ephraim and Manasseh.

As Israel, everything they did had cosmic importance, and every war they fought was just, noble, and within God's plan. While being waged, each of the world wars had been viewed as the war of Armageddon: the First World War had been the "war to end all wars", and many British-Israelites viewed the Second World War as just a precursor to a war with the Soviet Union which would usher in the Second Coming of Christ and the Millennium. None of them foresaw, nor would they have accepted or understood it if they had, that the final outcome of the great conflict between the "forces of modern Assyria and modern Israel," would be the decline and fall of the British Empire!

Imperial British-Israelism began with the death of Queen Victoria in 1901. As a movement, its primary goal was to justify both the Empire and the royal family by equating them, respectively, with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah. The reason for the rise of the movement should be clear enough considering the world situation at the turn of the century. Great Britain was the victor of the "Old Imperialism", her former opponents--Spain, France, Portugal--having collapsed under the weight of their empires. The sixty-three year long Victorian Era had been its height, however, and with the passing of the longest reign in English history also passed the golden era of the Empire. The years leading up to the First World War saw

increasing competition among the European powers for a piece of the colonial pie as the era of the "New Imperialism" was born. On the other hand, growing indignation among Christian moralists in Great Britain and the United States over the squalor and the inhumanity of imperialism, linked to and spurred forward by the anti-imperialist writings of English economist J.A. Hobson, also added to the British need for a justification of their position.

With the progression of the new century, the Empire began to slip through Britain's fingers as, one by one, the colonies sought and gained their independence. In response to this, the British-Israelites of the Imperial phase simply modified their theory, viewing the commonwealth as the logical extension of the Empire in her latter years. But, with the Second World War Great Britain fell from the pinnacle of planetary power and the United States rose to take her place. While this event was a great boon for Anglo-Israelite groups in the United States, it spelled doom for the Imperial phase of British-Israelism and, in actuality, the British-Israel World Federation. By mid-century it was American nationalism and racism which dominated Anglo-Israelite theory, and the motivating force behind its rise in the United States can be traced to many of the same reasons that Imperial British-Israelism had flourished: the need to rationalize a world dominion.

The Imperial phase of British-Israelism was born out of the need to justify the existence of the Empire precisely because of its decline. In rationalizing the Anglo-Saxon right to world empire, British-Israelism provided a much-needed balm for the conscience of millions. By rooting their justifications within a Christian context, they made their doctrine palatable to many. And, by basing their monarchy on the authority of the House of Judah, they added a nationalistic element which was hard for any "good" subject of the Crown to resist. Additionally, their rationale for the Empire's right to exist in the present also provided assurances for its future. Indeed, their eternal birthright and their eternal throne gave them the confidence to make almost anything possible. As Lord Admiral Fisher said, "There is nothing you can't have if you want it enough." This characterizes the whole of Imperial British-Israelism: they wanted to maintain their status as "the World Empire", and refused to accept any vision of the future which denied their identity as God's birthright nation. Hence the darkness and decline that was visible on the horizon in the first decades of the twentieth century could not be the end. Great Britain, as the House of Israel, would prevail. God would see to that.

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