

THE TEN TRIBES WILL RETURN!

The Bible Says So!

The Two Sticks of Ezekiel 37

by

Nachmanides (Moshe ben Nachman. 1194-1270)

Nachmanides was one of the greatest Biblical scholars of all times. He attached importance to the subject of the Lost Ten Tribes and spoke of them in several places. In the following articles Nachmanides gives us some important insights. There were actually thirteen tribes of Israel. The people of Israel include two sections, which are the Ten Tribes of “Israel” and the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin known collectively as Judah. Several Exiles occurred to the people of Israel. The Bible prophesied each one separately. Nachmanides discusses these prophecies and distinguishes between them. Just as part of Judah was exiled with the northern tribes so too did some people from the ten tribes remain with Judah. Their descendants are now to be found amongst the present-day Jews. The overwhelming majority of the Ten Tribes HOWEVER were exiled by the Assyrians and never returned though they are destined to do so. The Ten Tribes (said Nachmanides in ca. 1260 CE) are still in Tserfath (France and its neighborhood) and “at the ends of the north”, meaning at that time the northern areas of Europe.

The Two Sticks of Ezekiel 37

In Ezekiel [chapter thirty-seven] it speaks of future re-union:

[Ezek 37:16] Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and for all the house of Israel his companions:

Here it speaks of a future Redemption for both Judah and Israel. Where it says, “For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions” by “the children of Israel his companions” it means Benjamin who was attached to Judah. Similarly it says, “For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and for all the house of Israel his companions.” The section is quite plain. The two kingdoms will unite into one kingdom under the House of David. The Israelites went into Exile and ever since then Ephraim and all [the ten tribes of northern] Israel have never been in the Land of Israel. Concerning the future it says, “And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore”

Behold I will recall a matter that is expressly mentioned many times in Scripture. It is known that with the Return of the Exiles under Ezra only the Tribes of Judah and Benjamin returned. These had been exiled to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. This is what it says concerning the beginning of that Redemption, [Ezra 1:5] Then rose up the chief of

the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem". And on their return it says, [Ezra 2:1] Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; When they laid the foundations of the Temple it says, [Ezra 4:1] Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel;

This is the highest level. The establishment of the status of Ezra is expressly mentioned here, [Ezra 8:1] These are now the chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king.

After this, [Ezra 10:7] And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; concerning the deportation of foreign women. It says, [Ezra 10:9] Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem

Whilst they had settled in the land it says,

[Neh 11:1] And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities.

And it says there,

]Neh 11:4] And at Jerusalem dwelt certain of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the children of Judah;

Neh 11:7] And these are the sons of Benjamin; The cities of their settlement are related:

]Neh 11:25] And for the villages, with their fields, some of the children of Judah dwelt at Kiryat Arba, and in...

These same cities are also recalled as being in the inheritances of Judah and Benjamin in the Book of Joshua [when they first entered the land]. Together with all this we acknowledge the view of our sages may their memories be blessed and Heaven Forbid that we should not agree with them. They said in the Midrash Seder Olam, <Of those who came into the Land in the time of Ezra the whole community together numbered 42,360. The total whose names are recorded however only numbered 30,360. What happened therefore to the missing 12,000? These were those from the other Tribes who came up with Ezra.

Let me clarify the matter for you. You have already noticed that in the Second Redemption [i.e. the redemption of Ezra, the First Redemption was the coming out of Egypt]. Only those returned who had been exiled to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Over these people had the decree of a seventy-year Exile been made. These are Judah and Benjamin as well as the Cohanim [priests] who dwelt in Jerusalem and who pertained to the Kingdom of Judah. This was as it was written concerning the initial split of the

Kingdom between the northern ten tribes and the Kingdom of Judah, “having Judah and Benjamin on his side” (2-Chronicles 11;12), “And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts” (2-Chronicles 11;13): [i.e. The Levites moved southward to Judah. The southern Kingdom of Judah then encompassed the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi]. The Kingdom of Israel included the ten northern Tribes. These were exiled by Sancherib [Sancherib in Rabbinical Literature is a figure taken to represent ALL of the Assyrian monarchs] as it says, “For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin” (2-Kings 17;11). “Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight...so was Israel exiled out of their own land to Assyria unto this day” (2-Kings 17;12). This is a proof that all the Kingdom of Israel was exiled to Assyria but the Kingdom of David remained as it was until Nebuchadnessar exiled them to Babylon. The Kingdom of David included Judah and Benjamin. It says, “There was none left but the tribe of Judah only” (2-Kings 17;18). This indicates the Kingdom of the Tribe of Judah that included the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

It also appears from the simple meaning of the text, that before the exile of the northern country by Senacherib there were gathered into the cities of Judah people from the neighboring tribes of Menasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon and these then dwelt in the heritage of Judah. This explains what was said concerning King Josiah, “They delivered the money that was brought into the house of God which the Levites that kept the doors had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin” (2-Chronicles 34; 9). Prior to that time in the period King Asa it was written, “And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Menasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance when they saw the LORD his God was with him” (2-Chronicles 15; 9).

Those from the Tribes of Ephraim and Shimeon from Israel that were present (2-Chronicles 35;18) with Judah were they who dwelt in the Land of Judah or perhaps to some degree also those who had dwelt in their own territories adjoining Judah and had fled to Judah. They are referred to in a general sense as “from Israel” (in 2-Chronicles 35;18) and not by their specific tribes since they represented **only a small portion of their tribe**. These are they who returned under Ezra with the Jews from Babylon. They were not expressly mentioned by their tribes since they were attached to Judah. They all settled in the cities of Judah. There was no Redemption for the Ten Tribes who remained in exile.

I will now explain somewhat a clearly expressed section that still requires clarification. It speaks of the genealogy of Benjamin in the Book of Chronicles. It is written about the genealogy of all Israel in this work (1-Chronicles 9;1-3). Judah was exiled to Babylon due to their infidelity. Out of the first to return from this exile were priests (“Cohans”) and Levites and the Nathins [Gibeonites] who settled in the cities of Israel. In Jerusalem there settled descendants of Judah and Benjamin along with descendants of Ephraim, and Menasseh:

[1Chr 9:1] So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they were written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon for their transgression.

[1Chr 9:2] Now the first inhabitants that dwelt in their possessions in their cities were, the Israelites, the priests, Levites, and the Nathins.

[1Chr 9:3] And in Jerusalem dwelt of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim, and Manasseh;

Our sages (Talmud, Baba Batra 15;a) recalled that Ezra was the one who wrote the Book of Chronicles. His aim was to let us know the genealogies of those who returned with him from Babylon. Ezra in Chronicles begins his account with Adam at the head and from whom all the genealogies begin. He keeps going in summary manner until he comes to our own tribes of Israel. He then first gives the genealogy of Judah at length. After that he does not give the genealogies of all the other tribes but only some of them and these he goes through in summarized form until he gets to Benjamin. He then becomes apologetic and says, "So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they were written in The Book of the Kings of Israel" [1Chr 9:1]. This is as if to say that he does not need to recount their genealogies at length for they are still in exile. He goes on to say, "And Judah, who were carried away to Babylon for their transgression" [1Chr 9:1]. It is as if he is saying that, he really has only to relate the genealogy of one other tribe apart from Judah. The tribe spoken of is the tribe of Benjamin whose genealogy together with that of Judah he has already given. They are the ones who were exiled to Babylon and they are the ones returning in the time of Ezra. The other tribes have their genealogies given in "The Book of the Kings of Israel." This book [-that we do not possess] is perhaps in their hands in their place of exile. Ezra then goes on to tell of the settlement of those who returned with him: "Now the first inhabitants that dwelt in their possessions" [1Chr 9:2]. That is to say, those who were the first to return from Babylon settled in their cities. These included Israelites, Cohans (i.e. priests), Levites, and Nathins as stated expressly in the Book of Ezra, "in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, to wit, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nathins, and the children of Solomon's servants" (Nehemiah 11;3). [The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are now separate books but Nachmanides refers to both of them together as "The Book of Ezra."]. He goes on to say, "And at Jerusalem dwelt certain of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. [Neh 11:4]. He also said, "And in Jerusalem dwelt of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim, and Manasseh" [1Chr 9:3]. He only recalls in detail however the genealogies of Judah and Benjamin whose names and family trees he elaborates upon. Even here he does not give all the genealogies but only a section of them as is the practice in Scripture. He also speaks of the Priestly families and the Levites, whom he says "hitherto waited in the king's gate eastward: they were porters in the companies of the children of Levi"[1Chr 9:18]. That is to say, that with their return from exile they were appointed on the gates of the Second Temple just as they had been so appointed in the First: "All these which were chosen to be porters in the gates were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned by their genealogy in their villages, whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office" [1Chr 9:22].

We have explained this section in accordance with the opinion of our sages of blessed memory. These said that in the time of the Second Temple a few refugees from the other tribes also came up. They did not come from all of the other tribes but only from Ephraim and Menasseh. [Another authority however, Tosefot in Arakin 32;a, says that, "from each

and every tribe a few returned”]. These few were not enough to be termed a tribe in their own right or even part of a tribe. Due to their minority position they were included amongst the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin and dwelt in their cities. This Second Redemption was not meant for the other tribes. Look at the genealogy of the Tribe of Rueben in this Book of Chronicles and you will find that Ezra gives their familial connections until he reaches Beera who was exiled by Tiglathpileser the King of Assyria (1-Chronicles 5). He then stops. All of those other tribes whose family trees he mentions he also does not continue with after the Assyrian Exile. Rueben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Menasseh: “And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day” [1-Chr 5:26]. When he recalls the genealogy of Judah he speaks firstly of the King and of Zerubabel and his sons who were amongst those coming into the Land with Ezra himself. “And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia” [2-Chr 36; 20}. The Book of Chronicles speaks of the exile to Babylon and of the first year of Cyrus, “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia” [2-Chr 36:22]. The Book of Ezra also speaks of these events in the same way and this is additional proof that Ezra wrote Chronicles. Where Chronicles finishes the Book of Ezra begins. They are in effect like unto one book concerning genealogies and the Second Redemption that took place at that time.

We have not revealed very much that is new in the above discussion but by bringing a few scattered verses together we have clarified an issue. It has been made quite clear from our study that the only ones who returned from the Babylonian Exile were they who belonged to the Kingdom of Judah. Those however who are termed the House of Ephraim, or The House of Israel, meaning the Ten Tribes are still in Exile in Assyria. These Tribes did not have any participants in the Second Redemption, as I have noted.

The Second Redemption took place with the permission of Cyrus, King of Persia. Before then it is known from the Book of Esther the great dispersion and enormous division that existed amongst our people in all the countries of King Ahaserus from India to Cush. After this only a few came up with Ezra from Babylon, about 1,500 men. In my opinion it seems probably that the license of Cyrus applied only to those who had belonged to the Kingdom of Judah meaning the people of Jerusalem. Cyrus commanded these wherever they may then have been in his entire kingdom to return to their land. The commandment was directed to these to go forth and to re-build the Temple. “Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah...” [Ezra 1:3]. If you wish to claim that permission was given to all of Israel as it says, “Cyrus king of Persia...made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom” [Ezra 1:1], meaning that the proclamation also must have reached the Ten Tribes then it may be answered that the other tribes did not wish to go up at that stage since they knew their time had not come.

The vision of Obadiah deals with events that were to occur after the exile of Jerusalem to Babylon. [Obad 1:11] In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast

lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them.

[Obad 1:18] And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it.

There are those who say that this prophecy of Obadiah is referring to King Hezekiah in the Second Temple period but those who think so are in error. It is obvious from Scripture that this term, i.e. House of Joseph, applies to the Kingdom of Israel who are the Ten Tribes. They should be ashamed not to recognize this fact! The above verse proves it! When was the House of Joseph like a flame devouring the stubble of Esau? Not in Biblical times! The Ten Tribes had already been exiled and they are still in Exile, in the area of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath: “And this first exile of the children of Israel who are [now] from Canaan unto Zarephath” [Obadiah 1:20]. [Rashi, Iben Ezra, Radak and others say that Zarephath means France, Abarbanel says it means France and Britain]. These places are at the extremes of the north. The verse continues, “and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south” [Obadiah 1:20]. Those who were exiled to “Sepharad” [meaning Spain] were the Jews of Jerusalem who were taken away by Titus and Vespasian when the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans and not before then. The others were the Ten Tribes who were exiled in the First Exile. These have not returned as has been claimed.

Editor’s Note: <<[[It says,

[Obad 1:19] And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.

[Obad 1:20] And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south.

[Obad 1:21] And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's.

“**Zarephath**” according to Rabbinical Commentators (Rashi, Iben Ezra, Radak, and all Medieval authorities) refers to France or more specifically northern France and probably included present-day Belgium and Holland. Abarbanel said that “**Zarephath**” included both France and “Island of England” (i.e. Britain). ”The words translated in the KJ as “the captivity of this host” in Hebrew [“Galut HaChail”] can also mean “the first exile” and so was the understanding of Rabbinical Commentators.]]>> *End of Editor’s Note*

Nachmanides continues:

When did they [the Ten Tribes] come back and when were these enormous exiled groups ingathered to inherit the cities of Ephraim and Samaria? When did saviours go up on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau? In the time of Ezra only a few returned as pigeons to their dovecotes. It says, “the kingdom shall be the LORD's” [Obadiah 1:21]. At that time everyone will openly acknowledge the Kingdom of God. “And the LORD

shall be King over all the earth” (Zechariah 14;9). This too will happen in the future. The general principle concerning these and all similar verses concerning the Redemption of Israel and the fall of Edom and the like is that it is all for the future. “The punishment of your iniquity is finished daughter of Zion; he will no more carry you away into captivity. He will visit your iniquity, daughter of Edom; he will discover your sins” (Lamentations 4;22). This is all for the future. “He will no more carry you away into captivity,” is instructing us about the future redemption. If it was otherwise what would be the point of saying to those in exile that they would no longer be exiled unless it meant that they really are destined to be redeemed from the exile they are in? Also, “he will visit your iniquity, daughter of Edom; he will discover your sins”, must be for the future. It could not be speaking of the past for it was they [i.e. the Israelite Jews] who were beaten by Herod the Edomite in the time of the Second Temple. It all must pertain to the future. It is impossible that this was all conditional, that they did not deserve it, and that the prophecies were spoken for nothing. It is pertinent that at the time of their exile Israel were sinning and transgressing. Even so, it was prophesied, “The punishment of your iniquity is finished daughter of Zion; he will no more carry you away into captivity” (Lamentations 4;22). This was not conditional, meaning to say that on condition that they repented then they would have been redeemed. This is not the way of Prophecies to make such limited conditions. Rather it all pertains to the future. Zechariah lived in the Second Temple period. Zechariah said, “Behold, the day of the LORD is coming,” and so on in great detail that without any doubt can only be referring to some future day. So too, were these passages explained by the Commentators and by our holy sages of blessed memory.