

## Chapter 5: The Captivity and Deportation of Israel

Both the Bible and history record that the ten tribes of Israel-descendants of the Patriarch Jacob-were deported from their land by a series of invasions. Long before this period, however, the tribe of Dan had already disappeared, and Asher and Gad had abandoned their brethren in large numbers. Both Dan and Asher were linked in sea trade and in the establishment of settlements with their coastal neighbors. As early as the twelfth century BC, Irish historians trace part of the tribe of Dan to Ireland-200 years after the Exodus (Capt, 64). The Irish historian Keating related that the Danaan, who had been in Greece, settled in Ireland and Denmark because they did not want to fall into the hands of the Assyrians. The ancient name for the Danes was Dansk or Donsk (Rutherford, 38). During Trojan times Danites lived in the vicinity of Troy but crossed the Dardenelles after the fall of Troy. They migrated in a northwesterly direction giving their name to such rivers as the Danube, Donetz, Daniester, Daniepr, Don, and Eridanus. They eventually settled in Norway, but were driven out by Odin and the Asir. Settling in Scania, they became known as the Danes (Hannay, 58). Bible students are aware of the Danite practice of migrating and naming locations after their forefather Dan (Judges 18:29).

The Danites were criticized for failing to come to the aid of their brethren when Jabin attacked Israel. They remained in their ships instead (Judges 5:17). They were closely allied with the Phœnicians in maritime ventures, and after the time of Baasha, king of Israel, do not appear to have remained in the land in large numbers. The account of the captivity in 2 Kings 15:29 does not mention the Danites, or their towns or territories. The indication is they had already left. At an early date Phœnician trade was occurring between Palestine and the British Isles. We can assume the Danites were familiar with the western Mediterranean and beyond, including the British Isles. In the ninth century AD, the Jewish writer Eldud wrote that in the days of Jeroboam the tribe of Dan was unwilling to shed the blood of their brothers and left the country. It has never been disputed that a tribe by the name of Tuatha De Danaan settled in Ireland. Tuatha De Danaan means "tribeship of Dan" (Hannay, 34-35, 105, 47-48).

Excerpts from ancient Assyrian and Babylonian records describe how Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, subjugated Menahem, king of Israel, and took the territories of Naphtali, Galilee, and Gilead. In the process he carried away many of the people. Tiglath-Pileser was a military usurper, known as Pul in the Bible. According to these excerpts, Tiglath-Pileser also deposed Pekah and put Hoshea in his place (Bible Research Handbook, serials 10 and 27). However, the Bible states that Pekah was assassinated by Hoshea (2 Kings 15:30). So, if the excerpts are correct, after the assassination, the Assyrian king allowed Hoshea to be tributary to him. The Assyrians had an interest in deporting captured peoples. They wanted to protect their northern frontier from the kingdom of Ararat, so the deported Israelites were placed in these areas (Capt, 49). One Assyrian inscription states that Tiglath-Pileser captured the Bit-Humria (house of Omri) and the land of Naphtali (Olson, 65). The Bible relates that Shalmaneser, who ruled after Tiglath-Pileser, besieged Samaria and took it captive after three years (2 Kings 17). The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser lists the tribute paid by Jehu, the son of Khumir (Omri), along with the tribute paid by a number of other subjected rulers (Bible Research Handbook, serial 22b). It is generally believed that the Jehu, mentioned on the obelisk, was Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi (2 Kings 9:2). The Jehu mentioned in 2 Kings 9:2 was born about 150 years earlier than the one who paid tribute to Shalmaneser. More than likely the Jehu who paid the tribute had been appointed governor by the Assyrians after Israel had been subjugated.

The Assyrian policy of deportation continued in the reign of Sargon. Inscriptions of Sargon give the number of people deported from the city of Samaria as 27,280 (Bible Research Handbook, serial 24). This is quite a small figure when compared with the total number of Israelites deported by Tiglath-Pileser and

## Bethel Church of God

Chapter 5: The Captivity and Deportation of Israel

Shalmaneser. The Bible tells us they were placed by the River Gozan and in the cities that the Assyrians had recently taken from the Medes (2 Kings 17:6).

The ten tribes in the northern kingdom were not the only ones deported. About 15 years later, Sennacherib, the son of Sargon, came against the southern kingdom of Judah. He took all the fenced cities of Judah (2 Kings 18:13), but at that time was not able to take Jerusalem. God intervened and delivered Jerusalem and king Hezekiah by a great miracle (2 Kings 19:35-36). The attack by Sennacherib against Judah is recorded on the Taylor Prism, now in the British Museum. It states: “. . . I came up against him, and by force of arms and by the might of my power I took forty-six of his strong fenced cities; and of the smaller towns which were scattered about I took and plundered a countless number. And from these places I captured and carried off as spoil 200,150 people, old and young, male and female, together with horses and mares, asses and camels, oxen and sheep, a countless multitude. . . .” (Rawlinson, 1887a, 2:161). The Babylonians took Judah captive about 120 years later, but large numbers of Jews had already been deported long before that time. Jews and Benjamites taken captive at various times were placed in three different areas: (1) Some taken by the Syrians during the reign of Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:5) were placed in Kir, a region near the Caucasus; (2) the number carried by Sennacherib into Assyria was 200,150; (3) the remainder taken to Babylon during the reign of Zedekiah. A relatively small number were taken to Babylon, most of these earlier captives placed in the same regions as the people of the northern kingdom (Bible Research Handbook, serial 32c).

In 1861, a column excavated at Kurkh on the Tigris recorded the victories of Shalmaneser III over ten kings. Among the names was Ahab, the Israelite. The Bible does not list an Ahab during this time period, but what is significant is that this column is the last record of the Assyrians using the name Israel in any form when referring to the northern kingdom. Subsequently, all references to the northern kingdom use the name Ghomri or Khumri—the Assyrian pronunciation for Omri. The name Khumri is found in the annals of Tiglath-Pileser III, which indicates it was in usage before the time of Shalmaneser. Shalmaneser’s column records: “The cities of Gilead and Abel-beth-maachah on the borders of the land of Khumri, and the widespread land of Hazael to its whole extent, I brought within the territory of Assyria.” Upon Shalmaneser’s death, Sargon II assumed the throne of Assyria. He was the king who conquered Israel. He mentions the Khumri and calls himself the conquerer of Bit-Khumri—the house of Omri (Capt, 99).

In 1847, Sir Henry Layard discovered over 23,000 cuneiform tablets in the ruins of the great royal library of the Assyrian kings. Cuneiform is an arrow-headed type of writing. About a dozen of these tablets came from the seventh-century BC and referred to the captive Israelites. At the time translators failed to recognize these references to be the Israelites because they were called Gamera, or Gimera. The Assyrians used this appellation for Israel, which was derived from Khumri.

The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that the Israelites were placed in Media-Persia (Ant., IX, xiii-xiv). This area we know today as northwest Persia. The book of Ezra records that Ezra sent messengers to Iddo, the chief of the place called Casiphia “that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God” (Ezra 8:17). Henderson’s “Russian Researches” names Casiphia as a country bordering the Caspian Sea (Gawler, 6). The prevailing view today is that the “Lost Ten Tribes of Israel” were mixed with the peoples in the land of their captivity and are, therefore, “cast away.” One thing is certain: They did not return to their homeland in Palestine, and even the majority of Jews never returned from the Babylonian captivity. Fewer than 50,000 Jews returned under Ezra and Nehemiah.

The book of 2 Kings states that Israel was carried away to Halah, and in Habor, by the river Gozan in the cities of the Medes (2 Kings 17:6). Where are these places called Halah, and Habor by the river Gozan? Authorities generally agree as to the location of Habor (Khabor, Hara), but argue over whether or not Gozan is a river or a country. The accepted view regarding Halah is that it is identified with the modern Khabour on the river Aborrhaz, which empties into the Euphrates south of Carchemish. However, some

# Bethel Church of God

## Chapter 5: The Captivity and Deportation of Israel

Bible reference sources tell us that Halah was the Hallahuh, an Assyrian city and district northeast of Nineveh, and that other proposed locations are far less likely. The work entitled *Russia in Central Asia in 1889*, by G. N. Curzon, has a map that lists a river named Kizil Uzen for part of its course and Safid Rud for the remainder of its course. Both these names stand for "White River." Spuner's Historical Atlas names this river as Gozan. This ancient Gozan is identical with the Kizil Uzen. Since the Gozan river is mentioned in conjunction with the Medes, the Scripture must be referring to the Kizil Uzen. Another river in the vicinity is known as the Abhar Chai, which is Turkish for Abhar River, as well as a town nearby named Abhar. The Septuagint calls this river Abor. Other versions of the Bible refer to it as Habor and Khavor. Near the upper courses of a small tributary that empties into the Kizil Uzen is a town by the name of Haran. Some maps list it as Hour. Stieler's Hand Atlas calls it Haru, and it corresponds to the ancient Hara or Ara. It was in these locations of the Elburz Mountains, not in Mesopotamia, that the Assyrians placed the Israelites.

It was mentioned above that the district where Ezra sought help for the Temple at Jerusalem was Casiphia. It was in the region of the Caucasus (Hannay, 112-115). When Israel was taken captive, the Medes did not possess Mesopotamia. The Israelites were placed in the cities of the Medes, as the Assyrians had also conquered these. This area was close to the southwest edge of the Caspian Sea and northeast of Mesopotamia. Heinrich Ewald wrote that these places were north of Nineveh and south of Lake Van. He said that the Gozan is still known by the name of Ozen, that it rises south of the lake of Ourmia and forms approximately the northern boundary of Media. One town in the area was called Rages (afterward shortened to Rai). It is mentioned in the book of Tobit, and its ruins are not far from the Persian city of Teheran. Another city north of Nineveh was Elkosh which is believed to have been the home of the prophet Nahum. Ewald tells us that we can easily understand the locations where the deportations were mostly directed, but other Israelites may have been sent elsewhere. It seems probable, Ewald says, that one assigned place was Hamath (Ewald, 42). (The interested reader may wish to consult the Bible Research Handbook, serials 29b and 29c, for a number of authoritative maps and sources that place Halah, Hara, and Gozan in the vicinity of the Caspian Sea.)

At this point, let us compare a few names. Large numbers of Israelites had been placed in the area south of Lake Urmia, which was adjacent to Media. It was called the land of Gamir. Sargon had previously depopulated this area by removing the people of Mannai who lived there to the west. Letter 112 in the Assyrian archives identifies the people of Gamir as Gamera and further recognizes them as Cimmerians. The Israelites occupied portions of the land of the Medes and Mannai, but remained distinct from them (Capt, 115-116). These names-Gamera and Cimmerians-should be kept in mind. About 707 BC, a people going by the name of Gimera or Gamera are recorded living among the Mannai in a territory close to Media. This is where the Israelites had been placed about 15 years earlier. Another people to suddenly appear in the land of Mannai were the Iskuza. Modern historians tell us that the Iskuza were called Skuthai by the Greeks and Sacæ by the Persians. The Greek historian Herodotus tells us the Persians called the Sacæ "Scythians." A trilingual inscription found in the tomb of Darius lists three separate groups of Sakkas (Sacæ). In each case the Babylonian text in this inscription has the name Gimiri for the Persian Sakka. Since the Persians called the Iskuza by the name of Sakkas, the inescapable conclusion is that the Iskuza, Sakka, and Gimiri are the same people (ibid, 122-123, 140).

The ancient capital of Media was Ecbatana. Located on a caravan road between Babylon and Ecbatana is an impressive escarpment. Carved on it is a memorial 100 feet in height and 150 feet in length. It is known as the Behistun Rock and was engraved by the order of Darius the Great about 515 BC. The writing on this stone is trilingual-Babylonian, Elamite, and Persian. Sir Henry Rawlinson successfully deciphered the Persian script. The rock listed 23 nations over which Darius ruled. Among those were the Sakka. The Babylonian script on the rock lists them as Gimiri. What this demonstrates is that the people the Babylonians called the Gimiri were called Sakkas by both the Persians and Elamites. Another inscription written on a gold tablet placed the Sakkas beyond Sogdiana (in central Asia just north of Afghanistan and now known as the Uzbek Republic of Russia). This demonstrates that migrations of some of the Sakka

## Bethel Church of God

### Chapter 5: The Captivity and Deportation of Israel

had already taken place before the time of Darius, and that these people had gone to the eastern edge of the Persian Empire (Capt, 139-140). Sir Henry Rawlinson regarded the Gimiri or Cimmerians and the Sacæ as the same people and said they were Israelites. Rawlinson's statement is as follows: "We have reasonable grounds for regarding the Girniri, or Cimmerians, who first appeared on the confines of Assyria and Media in the seventh century (BC), and the Sacæ of the Behistun Rock, nearly two centuries later, as identical with Israel" (quoted in Hannay, 286). It is Hannay's view that the mass of the so-called Hebrew race consisted of Israelites, or house of Isaac, sometimes the house of Omri (Beth Omri). The Assyrian equivalent was Bit-Khumri, or Ghumri, or Humri. The Babylonian equivalent was Gimera (Hannay, 19).

The transformation of the name Gimiri into Kimmerioi/Cimmerii is well-known (Hannay, 288). Another name that has been connected with the Cimmerii is the Umman-Manda, a name the Babylonians and Assyrians gave the Cimmerii. It was Sayce's opinion that the Manda of Ecbatana were the Scythians of classical history (Fasken, 58-59). Kephart tells us that the name Manda was applied to the Cimmerian nation of Scythia (Kephart, 274, 342). (The reader may recall that the Persians called the Sacæ "Scythians.")

The first instance of Scythian tribes appearing in Europe can be placed in the seventh century BC, when they crossed the Araxes River and passed out of Asia. The Araxes is the ancient name of the Aras River in Armenia. The area around the Araxes River is where the Israelites were last known before departing for Europe (Rutherford, 21). They had abandoned their settlements near the Gozan and moved just north of the Araxes due to a series of uprisings around 710 BC in the general area of Urartu (Van)-the name of the ancient kingdom of Ararat. They were known as the Sak-Geloths, the name meaning the captives of Beth-Sak (Beth-Omri, Bit-Khumri) and referred to themselves as Sak-Geloths-the captives of Sak (Hannay, 269-271, 307-308). A later form of the word Sak was Sagh. Diodorus Siculus wrote that the Scythians originally came from the region of the Araxes, had multiplied into a great people and had extended their territory. In the fifth century BC Herodotus placed the Scythians in southern Russia, stating that their territory extended for 500 miles (Rutherford, 9). Around 600 BC the Khumri migrated farther west from their location north of the Araxes. It is believed that an attack upon Sakland by the Assyrians, who had made an alliance with the kings of Urartu (Van), precipitated their exodus. This was about the time the Assyrian Empire was crumbling before the Babylonians.