

# Benjamin Netanyahu on the 10 Tribes of Israel

By Mikkel S. Kragh

The ancient nation of Israel consisted of 12 Tribes. The 12 Tribes of Israel left Egypt in the Exodus and settled in the land of Canaan, which became known as the land of Israel. The 12 Tribes united into a single monarchy under the kings Saul, David and Solomon. But because King Solomon sinned against the God of Israel by worshipping pagan gods, the God of Israel let 10 of the Israelite tribes secede from King Solomon's Royal House in Jerusalem. This took place in the beginning of the reign of Solomon's son, King Rehoboam, where Jeroboam led the secessionist movement among the northern 10 Israelite tribes and succeeded in seceding from King Rehoboam in Jerusalem. Jeroboam's new kingdom consisted of 10 of the Israelite tribes and took the name the Kingdom of Israel. King Rehoboam's rump kingdom in Jerusalem became known as the Kingdom of Judah.

The Kingdom of Israel of the 10 Tribes continued to worship pagan gods, and therefore the God of Israel eventually decided to punish the 10 Tribes of Israel by letting the Assyrian Empire invade and deport almost all of the 10 Tribes of Israel. This took place around 721 BC. The Assyrians settled the 10 Tribes of Israel in areas in the northern part of the Assyrian Empire, in what today is northern Iraq, north-eastern Syria, western Iran and south-eastern Turkey.

The exiled 10 Tribes of Israel soon migrated out of the Assyrian Empire and were lost to world history and the Jewish people.

This story is well documented in the Old Testament, in the Talmud and by a large number of Jewish rabbis.

## Benjamin Netanyahu on the 10 Tribes of Israel

If you are interested in the subject of the Lost 10 Tribes of Israel, you may have wondered "What does Benjamin Netanyahu believe concerning the 10 Tribes of Israel? Does he believe they are not a part of the Jewish? Or that they are a part of the Jewish people? Or does he even have an opinion about the 10 Tribes?"

Benjamin Netanyahu is the State of Israel's longest serving prime minister and has been in the headlines of world news for the last 30 years. It would, indeed, be interesting if he has an opinion about the 10 Tribes of Israel.

And Netanyahu actually does have an opinion about the 10 Tribes.

Recently, I read Netanyahu's autobiography *Bibi: My Story* (2022). Here, Netanyahu did not exactly write a lot about the 10 Tribes of Israel, in fact, only two lines. In a summary of the history of the Jewish people, Netanyahu mentions that the 10 Tribes of Israel were separated from the House of Judah and disappeared to world history:

“The indomitable Joshua conquers the land, wily David establishes his kingdom in Jerusalem, and wise Solomon builds his Temple there, only to have his sons split the realm into two. The northern kingdom, Israel, is destroyed, its ten tribes lost to world history. The southern kingdom, Judea, is conquered and Solomon’s Temple is destroyed by the Babylonians, by whose rivers the exiled Judeans weep as they remember Zion.” (Benjamin Netanyahu: *Bibi: My Story*, p. 207)

Then, Netanyahu proceeds to explain how the Judeans of the southern kingdom rebuild the temple, establish a Jewish state after the revolt of Judah Maccabee. In Netanyahu’s summary of the history of the Jewish people, the first time he refers to the Jews as “Jews” is when describing the revolt of Judah Maccabee against the Hellenistic King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, which took place 167-160 BC. Prior to that, Netanyahu first uses the phrase the “Children of Israel” to describe the 12 Tribes, and after the division of the 12 Tribes under Rehoboam the words “Israel” and “Judea” to describe the 10 Tribes of Israel and the two Tribes of Judah and Benjamin, respectively.

In other words, in his summary of the history of the Jewish people, Netanyahu is being faithful to the narrative of the Old Testament, or the Hebrew Bible as Jews call it, when it comes to the distinction between the 10 Tribes of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah, whose inhabitants became known as Jews.

It is a paradox that an apparently non-religious Jew as Benjamin Netanyahu has a better understanding of the distinction between the 12 Tribes of Israel and the Jews than most Evangelical Christians in America who seem to think that the Jewish people are identical to the 12 Tribes of Israel, which they are not.

### **Israeli schools teach that the Jews will be reunited with the 10 Tribes**

On 3 October, 2025 I uploaded the video *The Scots are Israelites* to my YouTube channel. This video is, so far, my most viewed video with 6,700 views. An Israeli Jew made the following comment to the video:

“I’m from Israel, and I can confirm we are taught this in school. We are waiting for our brothers to return to us.”

### **More curious facts about Netanyahu and the 10 Tribes**

Not only does Benjamin Netanyahu believe that the 10 Tribes of Israel are not a part of the Jewish people. He is also a distant relative of Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilnius, a.k.a. the Vilna Gaon, who is considered to be one of the greatest rabbis of all time, and taught a lot about the 10 Tribes of Israel. See for example the book *Kol HaTor* (‘The Voice of the Turtledove’, 1947), which was published by descendants of one of the Vilna Gaon’s students. In the State of Israel there even is an Orthodox Jewish organization called Kol HaTor, which is devoted to the regathering of the exiled 10 Tribes of Israel with the Jews in Israel. (<https://www.kolhator.com/>)

Benjamin Netanyahu’s father was the distinguished historian Benzion Netanyahu (1910-2012), who is famous for being an editor of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* and for writing about the history of the Jews

in Spain. One of Benzion Netanyahu's main works is the biography *Don Isaac Abravanel: Statesman and philosopher* (1953).

Don Isaac Abravanel (1437-1508, also spelled Abarbanel) was the leader of the Spanish Jews when the Jews were expelled from Spain by the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492. Abravanel moved to Portugal, where the Jews were also expelled from, and from there to Italy, where he became a successful statesman and businessman in Venice.

In his commentary on Obadiah, Abravanel wrote that the Lost 10 Tribes of Israel settled in France, England and Spain:

"Zeraphath is France and so too the exile of Sepharad is Spain ... and let you not err just because Zeraphath [i.e. France] is spoken of and Angleterre [i.e. England] is not recalled, for there too did the exiles go, for lo and behold, that island is considered a part of Zarephath and in the beginning belonged to it and in their ancient books they call it the Isle of Zarephath [i.e. of France] even though it later separated itself from Zarephath [France] and became a kingdom in its own right. ... And maybe the intention is too to those Children of Israel who completely left Religion due to the weight of troubles and persecutions and they remain in France and in Spain in their thousands and tens of thousands, huge communities. They shall return and request the LORD their God..."  
(<https://www.britam.org/obadiah.html>)

Finally, a curious personal co-incidence is the fact Benjamin Netanyahu's father, Benzion Netanyahu, was professor of history at Cornell University, which is an Ivy League university in Upstate New York, between 1971 and 1975. My own father, Helge Stjernholm Kragh – whose field of expertise is history of science - was also a professor of history at Cornell University between 1986 and 1989. During that time I lived outside Ithaca, New York, where Cornell University is situated, and attended an ordinary American Middle School.

### **True identity of the 10 Tribes**

The whereabouts of the 10 Tribes of Israel were lost to mainstream world historians, but many scholars and Bible students have traced the 10 Tribes of Israel to Europe, where they today make up the nucleus of the modern nations of north-western Europe and their daughter nations across the world, including the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the white South Africans. This was, more or less, also the view of Don Isaac ben Judah Abarbanel – whom Benzion Netanyahu wrote a biography about. But that is the subject of another article.

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DAVIDIY, Yair: "Commentary on the Book of OBADIAH" <https://www.britam.org/obadiah.html>

DAVIDIY, Yair: "Israeli PM from David?"

<https://hebrewnations.com/articles/quora/qbible/netdavid.html>

NETANYAHU, Benjamin: *Bibi: My Story* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2022)