



The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History

By Zvi Ben-Dor Benite

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The legendary story of the ten lost tribes of Israel has resonated among both Jews and Christians down through the centuries: the compelling idea that some core group of humanity was "lost" and exiled to a secret place, perhaps someday to return triumphant. In *The Ten Lost Tribes*, Zvi Ben-Dor Benite shows for the first time the extent to which the search for the lost tribes of Israel became, over two millennia, an engine for global exploration and a key mechanism for understanding the world.

As the book reveals, the quest for the missing tribes and the fervent belief that their restitution marked a necessary step toward global redemption have been threaded through countless historical moments--from the formation of the first "world" empires to the age of discovery, and from the spread of European imperialism to the rise of modern-day evangelical apocalypticism. More than a historical survey of an enduring myth, *The Ten Lost Tribes* offers a unique prism through which to view the many facets of encounters between cultures, the processes of colonization, and the growth of geographical knowledge.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The 10 northern tribes of ancient Israel exiled by the Assyrians in the eighth century B.C.E., might have been lost in another land as Deuteronomy poetically puts it, but they never vanished from the popular imagination, as NYU Middle East and Islamic studies scholar Benite lays out in his account of the enduring legends surrounding the lost tribes. As he recounts, people in all times and regions have been thought to be descendants of the lost tribes, whether Mongol invaders who terrified Europe or Native Americans, whose descent from the tribes was used to either justify or condemn their conquest and oppression. The tribes have been put to other religious and political uses, such as a proposal in 1524 for an alliance of the Church and the 10 tribes against the Muslims. Joseph Wolff, a 19th-century rabbi's son turned Anglican missionary, believed the Benee Israel of Bombay were the tribes' descendants; and 19th-century biblical scholar William Carpenter pointed to British Anglo-Saxons. Although solidly researched and tantalizing in subject matter, this latest by Benite (*The Dao of Muhammad*) is academic in tone and less engaging than Hillel Halkin's 2002 history/travelogue *Across the Sabbath River*. B&w illus. (Sept.)

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Review

"An interesting and at times even a fascinating read into the efforts of many people over many centuries to rediscover, reclaim, and even restore lost Israel."--*BYU Studies Quarterly*

"This book constitutes a sophisticated, often riveting meditation on those who have dreamed about, sought after, investigated, and longed for the ten Israelite tribes deported (according to the biblical account) by the Assyrians in the eighth century B.C.E. to a remote location, after which they disappeared from human knowledge. More than a history of fantasy, however, Zvi Ben-Dor Benite's survey brings together the variegated oddities--religious, political, scientific, and literary--in which such fixations have played themselves out."--*American Historical Review*

"Writing a 'world history' on this scale demands enviable linguistic and interdisciplinary skills, which Zvi Ben-Dor Benite has in abundance. ...*The Ten Lost Tribes* [is] an exhilarating venture in intellectual history ...[A] readable and enjoyable book." --*Books & Culture*

"Readers will marvel at how belief in the lost tribes benefits the ambitions of British imperialists and at how it has guided modern Israeli leaders in shaping their country's repatriation policies. Scholarship of exceptional breadth, certain to attract a diverse readership." --*Booklist*

"The story of the lost tribes of Israel has been told before, but never placed so successfully within the context of global history. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite's exceptional scholarly range, combined with his exquisite sensitivity to the relationship between presence and absence, promise and loss, will appeal to anyone fascinated with the

ways myth-history and myth-geography function in the real time and real space of world events." -- John Gillis, Professor Emeritus of History, Rutgers University

"From the Book of Isaiah to the Book of Mormon, the loss and recovery of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel were lamented and celebrated. This quintessential episode of loss sounded a leitmotiv in Jewish and Christian imaginations, and informed a western knowledge of world geography, real and imagined, from Biblical to modern times. This is the fascinating story told in this erudite and sweeping book." -- R. Po-chia Hsia, Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of History and Asian Studies, Pennsylvania State University

"Readers of this book are in for a treat." --Abraham D. Lavender

About the Author

Zvi Ben-Dor Benite is an Associate Professor in the Department of History and the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University. He is the author of *The Dao of Muhammad: A Cultural History of Muslims in Late Imperial China*.

Users Review

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