

Ensign » 1998 » July

Gathering Scattered Israel: Then and Now

By Paul K. Browning

Paul K. Browning, "Gathering Scattered Israel: Then and Now," *Ensign*, Jul 1998, 54–61

Latter-day Saints have a divine commission to further the restoration of the house of Israel.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are taught that these are the last days and that many of the signs having to do with the Savior's Second Coming are taking place in our lifetime. One of the signs we discuss is found in the 10th article of faith: "We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the ten tribes." Indeed, the doctrine of the gathering is an important part of our understanding about what is to happen before the Savior's return to earth.

Throughout our lives, we become familiar with the prophecies of Israel's eventual gathering. For example, as we heed the counsel of the prophets to read the Book of Mormon, we learn that the restoration of the house of Israel is one of its dominant themes. The Doctrine and Covenants also is filled with references to this topic. In our hymns we proclaim the doctrine of the gathering when we sing words such as "Jesus will say to all Israel, 'Come home' " ("Now Let Us Rejoice," *Hymns*, no. 3) and "Israel, Israel, God is calling, / Calling thee from lands of woe" ("Israel, Israel, God Is Calling," *Hymns*, no. 7).

Even in the earliest days of the Restoration, 17-year-old Joseph Smith listened as Moroni quoted the 11th chapter of Isaiah and its message of Israel's return: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

"And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" ([Isa. 11:11–12](#); see also [JS—H 1:40](#)).

We see then that the restoration of the house of Israel is an important doctrine. But we are still left with questions to answer if we are to understand what the gathering means and why it matters to us. This article discusses the following questions:

1. Who were those of the house of Israel anciently?
2. How did ancient Israel become scattered?
3. What has happened to the ancient house of Israel since their captivity?
4. What does it mean to gather Israel today?
5. Why is the gathering of Israel so important?

Who were those of the house of Israel anciently?

To understand covenant Israel, we look at Abraham, a 10th-generation descendant of Noah through his son Shem (see [Gen. 11:10–26](#)). He was born and spent his early life in Ur. Abraham informs us that his

own father and some others of his family were idolaters and consented to have him sacrificed to one of the pagan deities they worshiped. Abraham, who was aware of the true gospel as practiced by his forebears, prayed for deliverance. Through divine intervention, his life was saved. The Lord spoke to him and taught him of a mission he was to perform. In performing this mission, Abraham would be led to another land; priesthood would be conferred upon him; and through his ministry the Lord's name would be known in the earth forever (see [Abr. 1:15–19](#)). Subsequent revelations gave him further understanding of his mission and the Lord's covenant with him.

In brief, the covenant promises Abraham the following blessings if he is faithful:

1. Both his literal posterity and all those who accept the gospel will be counted as Abraham's seed (see [Abr. 2:10–11](#)).
2. His seed will be as numerous as the stars of heaven (see [Gen. 15:5](#)).
3. His seed will be inheritors of a land that will be theirs as an everlasting possession (see [Abr. 2:6](#); [Gen. 17:7–8](#)).
4. His seed will be the means of spreading the gospel and the priesthood to all the world (see [Abr. 2:9](#)).

As instructed by the Lord, Abraham left Ur with Sarah, his wife, and other members of his extended family, eventually settling in the land of Canaan, or the land we now call the Holy Land. Abraham and Sarah, in answer to prayer, became the parents of a son they named Isaac. The Lord confirmed to Abraham that the covenant would be passed on through Isaac (see [Gen. 17:21](#)). When Isaac was grown, he and his wife, Rebekah, became parents of two sons, Esau and Jacob.

Through the obedience of Jacob, the Lord conferred upon him the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. Jacob, whose name the Lord changed to Israel, eventually became the father of 12 sons. Through the stewardship of his 11th son, Joseph, the entire family relocated to Egypt to escape a lengthy famine. Sometime after the death of Joseph, a new pharaoh became concerned that the rapidly multiplying Israelites could become allied to Egypt's enemies in the event of a war. His solution was to put them into slavery (see [Ex. 1:10–11](#)).

After generations of servitude, the Israelites were miraculously delivered by Moses. Their migration from Egypt back to the land of Canaan took place over a 40-year period of travail in the wilderness. The exodus from Egypt and subsequent settlement of the promised land was the *first gathering* of the people now called Israel. Moses sought not only to restore them to their land but also to recommit them to their faith in God.

This story of the birth of Israel as a people has been told and retold over the millennia as evidence of God's care for his covenant people. During their earlier wilderness travails, God gave them a law to govern their worship as well as their daily lives. This became known as the law of Moses. The Lord informed the people through Moses that if they turned away from his commandments he would "scatter [them] ... from the one end of the earth even unto the other" ([Deut. 28:64](#)). But he also promised that he would eventually "gather [them] from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered [them]" ([Deut. 30:3](#)).

Under the leadership of Moses' successor, Joshua, Israel took possession of most of the land of Canaan, the promised land. Each of the tribes received a portion of the land for its own (see map 5, Bible appendix). The Israelites were now a nation, as it were, poised to fulfill their destiny to bless the whole world with the gospel. Thus, the Lord placed Abraham's covenant posterity where he did to assist them in their mission. They were located between Egypt and Mesopotamia, two great ancient power centers. Over the coming centuries, one nation after another used the promised land as a land bridge as they went about their business of trade, expansion, or conquest. As a result, Israel was ideally situated to influence nations with the message of the gospel as those nations passed through its borders.

How did ancient Israel become scattered?

During the first two centuries of life in Canaan, Israel apparently united under the judges only when a foreign enemy threatened. The era of the judges ended when the leaders of the tribes went together to the prophet Samuel and requested that he choose a king to rule over them as a nation (see [1 Sam. 8:4–22](#)). By inspiration he chose Saul, a young man out of the tribe of Benjamin. However, in time Saul fell out of favor with the Lord because of subsequent disobedience. As a result, David, of the tribe of Judah, was designated by the Lord as Saul's successor. Upon David's death, his son Solomon reigned. The era of these three kings was a period of expansion, prosperity, and power for Israel despite their disobedience to some of the Lord's commandments.

Upon the death of Solomon, 10 of the tribes of Israel rebelled against Solomon's son Rehoboam and chose Jeroboam from the tribe of Ephraim as their king. Primarily it was the tribe of Judah [1](#) and half of the tribe of Benjamin who stayed loyal to the house of David and Solomon. This split resulted in the formation of two distinct nations. The tribes in the north retained the name Israel with the seat of government located in the city of Samaria, while the tribes in the south were designated as the kingdom of Judah with Jerusalem as its capital (see map 9, Bible appendix).

Soon after their division, both groups progressively turned their backs on the covenant the Lord had made with Abraham and his posterity. For the next 250 years, to one degree or another, both Israel and Judah became involved in idolatry and other wicked practices. The Lord sent among them a succession of prophets to remind them of their spiritual inheritance and promises and to call them to repentance. These prophets warned the people that the ultimate consequence of their rebellion would be conquest and captivity at the hands of other nations.

Speaking of the people's iniquity, Isaiah said they were a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers ... : they have forsaken the Lord. ...

"Why should [they] be stricken any more? [They] will revolt more and more. ...

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores" ([Isa. 1:4–6](#)).

The prophet Amos also spoke of their sinful condition and the efforts the Lord had made to reclaim them:

"And I also have given you cleanness of teeth [famine] in all your cities. ... I have withholden the rain from you. ... I have smitten you with blasting and mildew. ... I have sent among you the pestilence ... : your young men have I slain with the sword. ... I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah ... : yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord" ([Amos 4:6–11](#)).

In consequence of their failure to return to the Lord, Amos further predicted they would be taken captive and sifted among the nations (see [Amos 6:7](#); [Amos 9:9](#)). Isaiah declared that their captors would be Assyria and Babylon (see [Isa. 8:4, 7](#); [Isa. 39:6–7](#)).

The author of the book of 2 Kings summarizes the house of Israel's situation: "Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments. ...

"Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers" ([2 Kgs. 17:13–14](#)).

The northern kingdom of Israel was especially resistant to these warnings. Consequently, in about 721 B.C. the Lord allowed Assyria, a nation to the northeast of Israel, to invade it and take its tribes captive. The scriptures record: "The king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away. ...

"Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe [kingdom] of Judah only" ([2 Kgs. 17:6, 18](#)).

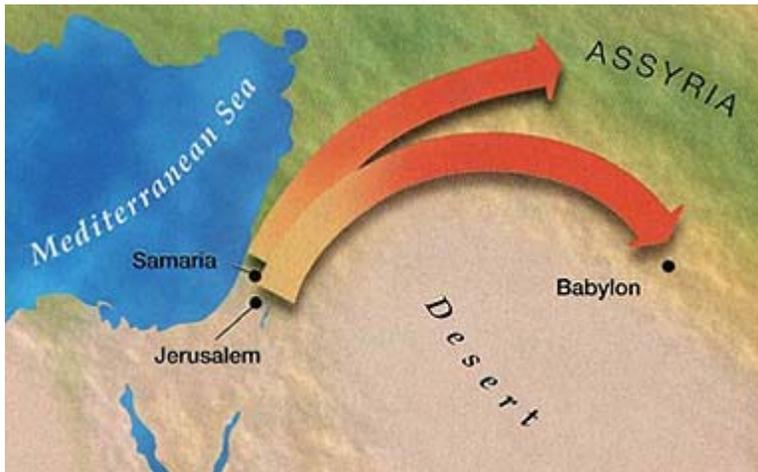
The Bible has very little information about where the Israelites were taken except to say that the Assyrians placed them in the city of Halah and in the cities of the Medes, located north and east of

Assyria's capital, Nineveh (see [2 Kgs. 17:6](#)). Their story thereafter is not discussed in biblical text, and thus they became known as the lost tribes of Israel.

Assyria next set its sights on conquering the kingdom of Judah. Through the guidance of the prophet Isaiah and the righteousness of Hezekiah, Judah's king, the Assyrian army was miraculously defeated and Jerusalem was spared (see 2 Kgs. 18–19). Wicked kings succeeded Hezekiah, however, and Judah slipped back into wickedness. Additional prophets were sent, among them Jeremiah, to warn that their fate would be the same as their northern relatives if they did not repent.

In the meantime, the Assyrian empire was replaced by Babylon, a kingdom to its south, as the dominant power in the Middle East. Around 600 B.C., during the time Jeremiah was still prophesying, the prophet Lehi—a descendant of Joseph—began his ministry in Jerusalem. As prophets before him had done, he warned that if the people did not repent, Jerusalem would be destroyed and those who survived would be taken captive by the Babylonians (see [1 Ne. 1:13, 18](#)). Lehi's warnings fell on deaf ears, and he fled with his family into southern desert lands. In about 587 B.C. the inhabitants of Jerusalem were conquered by Babylon and later became subject to other nations.

Mulek, the son of King Zedekiah of Judah, was among a group who also fled from Jerusalem about the time of Lehi. The Book of Mormon informs us that these people, sometimes called Mulekites, were led to the New World, as were Lehi and his party (see [Omni 1:12–19](#)).



The northern kingdom of Israel was taken captive in 721 B.C. by Assyria. In 587 B.C. Jerusalem was destroyed, and the kingdom of Judah was broken by Babylon.

What has happened to the ancient house of Israel since their captivity?

The answer has two parts. The first concerns the whereabouts of those of the kingdom of Judah, while the second has to do with the location of the lost tribes. The easier of the two concerns the fate of Judah during their captivity. Jeremiah prophesied that Judah would serve the Babylonians for 70 years and then be liberated (see [Jer. 25:11–12](#)). Ezra records the fulfillment of this prophecy when Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon and decreed that the Jews, or those of the kingdom of Judah, were free to return to their country and rebuild their city and temple (see Ezra 1). Details concerning the conditions of their captivity are scarce. It appears, though, that many retained their identity as Jews and longed to return to their land (see Ps. 137). However, when Cyrus gave them permission to return, only a minority actually did so. [2](#) Chapter 2 of Ezra provides a census of the families who returned. The rest remained in the communities of what was the Persian empire. Some surely continued faithful to their spiritual heritage, while others were assimilated into the local population.

Those who returned to Jerusalem rebuilt the city and the temple; over the next five centuries their

descendants became subjects of Persia, Greece, and finally Rome. It was during the Roman occupation that the Lord Jesus Christ was born. Almost 40 years after his Crucifixion, Jews in the Holy Land rebelled against the Romans in an attempt to overthrow what they considered an oppressive foreign power. In A.D. 70 Rome crushed the revolt, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed again, and thousands of the remaining Jews were carried into captivity. The land once populated by the tribes of Israel from that time forward ceased to be dominated by Jews. Instead, Jews were dispersed throughout all parts of the Roman world. Some retained their identity and religion; others adopted the religions of their neighbors and were assimilated into other cultures.

The Book of Mormon account of the Lehites and the Mulekites, two groups of Israelites who were dispersed from Jerusalem just before the main Babylonian invasion, is also important in the story of the scattering of Israel. For Lehi, the commandment to leave Jerusalem resulted in the preservation of a branch of the house of Israel, a branch that Joseph of old foresaw would be “carried into a far country” and would eventually be visited by the Messiah (see JST, Gen. 50:25, Bible appendix). The Book of Mormon tells of their journey, their voyage across the ocean, and their arrival in the Western Hemisphere. We also learn of the Mulekites’ arrival on the American continent sometime after Lehi. The book of Omni informs us that the two peoples became one several hundred years later and were identified as Nephites.

The second part of the answer has to do with what happened to the lost tribes. As noted, once they were taken captive by the Assyrians, the historical narrative about them in the Bible comes to an end. However, other sources both scriptural and nonscriptural give limited information regarding their fate.

“They seem to have departed from Assyria, ... [and] there is abundant evidence that their journey was toward the north. The Lord’s word through Jeremiah promises that the people shall be brought back ‘from the land of the north’ [[Jer. 16:15](#); [Jer. 23:8](#); [Jer. 31:8](#)], and a similar declaration has been made through divine revelation in the present dispensation [see [D&C 133:26–27](#)]. ...

“... We find references to the north-bound migration of the Ten Tribes, which they undertook in accordance with a plan to escape the heathen by going to ‘a farther country where never man dwelt, that they might there keep their statutes which they never kept in their own land’ [see 2 Esdras 13:40–45]. The same writer informs us that they journeyed a year and a half into the north country, but he gives us evidence that many remained in the land of their captivity” (James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [1924], 325).

Concerning the Lord’s willingness to reveal his will to these people, Nephi records that Jesus Christ said, “And I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it” ([2 Ne. 29:12](#)). This passage indicates that at some point in their history these lost tribes understood their identity and had prophets among them. The Savior gives evidence of this when he tells the Nephites, “But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them” ([3 Ne. 17:4](#)).

What eventually would become of the house of Israel? Isaiah lists many lands as their dwelling places, among them the “islands of the sea,” which meant any land separated from Israel by water (see [Isa. 11:11](#)). In fact, Jesus told the Nephites that the ultimate scattering of Israel would be so extensive that when they were finally gathered, it would be from the east, west, south, and north (see [3 Ne. 20:13](#)). Further, the Lord told Ezekiel that the house of Israel would eventually be gathered from *all* countries (see [Ezek. 36:24](#)).

Ultimately many Israelites lost their identity and were assimilated into local populations. A model for this phenomenon can be found in the descendants of Lehi, who are also Israelites. For 1,000 years of Book of Mormon history, Lehites possessed a sense of their identity. Prophets taught them the Lord’s will and the Lord visited them. Eventually, however, they lost their remembrance of and concern for their Abrahamic origins.

What does it mean to gather Israel today?

Just as the Lord had gathered the house of Israel the *first time* under the leadership of Moses, he promised to gather them a *second time* after their long dispersion. The Lord told Jeremiah that this second gathering would be a glorious event (see [Jer. 16:14–15](#)). The scriptures contain a variety of prophecies pointing to the gathering of remnants of Israel, including references of a dramatic nature: “there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt” ([Isa. 11:16](#)).

To the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord said:

“And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence.

“And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. ...

“And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land” ([D&C 133:26–27, 29](#)).

As ancient prophets foretold Israel’s scattering, they also often coupled that prediction with the promise of Israel’s eventual return. Typical of such promises are these words in Isaiah 54:7–8 [[Isa. 54:7–8](#)]:

“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.

“In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.”

How can Israel be gathered if they are dispersed among all nations and have no sense of their identity? How can anyone know who Israel is? And to what do they return? Modern scriptures provide the answers. The Lord said to the Latter-day Saints, “And ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts” ([D&C 29:7](#)). Obviously, of first importance is their receptivity to God and his teachings.

From this scripture and many similar texts, it is clear that an important component of the latter-day gathering of Israel involves worldwide missionary work. Those who are spiritually ready among the nations hearken to the gospel message. That messengers to Israel will be involved in the return of Israel to their God is evident in these words to Jeremiah, given by the Lord as he spoke of this future return: “Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks” ([Jer. 16:16](#)).

In 1836 Moses appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple to restore the keys for the “gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north” ([D&C 110:11](#)). President Harold B. Lee explained the nature of the gathering in the last days: “The gathering of Israel consists of joining the true church; of coming to a knowledge of the true God and of his saving truths” (quoting Bruce R. McConkie in “Strengthen the Stakes of Zion,” *Ensign*, July 1973, 4).

The resurrected Savior outlined to the Nephites a sequence of events that would be a prologue to the gathering of Israel. First, the Gentiles would be established “in this land, and be set up as a free people”; then the gospel would be restored as a “marvelous work among them” and the converts from among the Gentiles would see that the “gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people.” The Lord says, “Verily ... at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, even the tribes which have been lost” (see [3 Ne. 21:4, 9, 26](#)).

The first important part of the restoration of Israel began with the conversion and gathering of many from the tribe of Joseph. “Then Joseph will gather the other tribes” (Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 529). To date, many members of the Church have clearly observed that the lineage declared or appointed to them in their patriarchal blessing is that of Ephraim or Manasseh. The

descendants of these two sons of Joseph were given a divine commission by Moses. He said that their “horns are like the horns of unicorns [wild oxen]: with them he [Joseph] shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh” ([Deut. 33:17](#)).

In this prophecy we see the latter-day descendants of Joseph diligently going about the work of gathering scattered Israel or “pushing them together.” The patriarch Jacob, or Israel himself, foresaw this work as he gave a blessing to Joseph’s two sons: “For thou shalt be a light unto my people, to deliver them in the days of their captivity, from bondage; and to bring salvation unto them, when they are altogether bowed down under sin” (JST, Gen. 48:11, Bible appendix). In due time, other tribes come “unto the children of Ephraim ... and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even [by] the children of Ephraim” ([D&C 133:30, 32](#)).

As Joseph’s seed brings others into the Church, these new members are then commissioned likewise to go and spread the gospel. In the aggregate, millions will be gathered to help them in their return to the Lord. But in individual specificity, the Lord told Jeremiah that sometimes the gathering entity will be small: “I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion” ([Jer. 3:14](#)). Thus, it is only through the work of thousands of missionaries and millions of Church members that those among the nations who want to return actually “return.” In the beginning decades of the Church, converts were encouraged to relocate to places where the Church was headquartered, whether that was Kirtland, Nauvoo, or Salt Lake City. That particular era has passed. Today those who join the Church are encouraged to gather to its stakes—or to build new stakes. Jacob of the Book of Mormon foresaw this development: “They shall be gathered home to the *lands* of their inheritance, and shall be established in *all their lands* of promise” ([2 Ne. 9:2](#); emphasis added).

President Harold B. Lee emphasized this understanding of what it means to gather when he said, “The place of gathering for the Mexican Saints is in Mexico; the place of gathering for the Guatemalan Saints is in Guatemala; the place of gathering for the Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; and so it goes throughout the length and breadth of the whole earth” (“Strengthen the Stakes of Zion,” *Ensign*, July 1973, 5).

Jacob, Nephi’s brother, makes it clear in the allegory of the tame and wild olive trees (see Jacob 5) that the blessings pertaining to the house of Israel belong to all those who are obedient and all who choose to join the gathering.

In summary, it is clear that ancient prophets foresaw the day of a second gathering. It must have thrilled them to look down the corridors of time and see both the tens of millions of Israel’s remnants and many others who would respond to the call to be identified with the covenant of Abraham.

Why is the gathering of Israel so important?

To answer, we need only go back to Abraham’s commission. His “seed”—both his literal posterity and all those who accept the gospel—was charged to bless all the families of the earth with the gospel and the priesthood. In 1834 the Lord emphasized through the Prophet Joseph Smith that the Latter-day Saints “are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham” ([D&C 103:17](#)). In 1836 the Prophet Joseph Smith received from the ancient prophet Elias the keys of the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham (see [D&C 110:12](#)). Thus, the blessings and responsibilities of the Abrahamic covenant have been restored to us.

Whatever might have been the shortcomings of ancient Israel, today all Church members have the opportunity to carry out the assignment outlined so long ago. The assignment is inherent with their receiving gospel covenants. Latter-day Saints thus see themselves as performing some of the concluding scenes of an anciently prophesied plan that was put into motion thousands of years ago. As the seed of Abraham, all of us have the responsibility to gather both our kindred and all others who are willing to gather. By offering them a chance to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ, we help them receive the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant and the opportunity of exaltation, and we further prepare ourselves to receive the blessings of eternal life.

[photos] Globes © Photo Disc

[illustration] Because of Jacob's obedience, the Lord conferred upon him the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. These blessings flow through his twelve sons, who became the house of Israel. (*Jacob Blessing Joseph*, by Harry Anderson.)

[illustration] *The Flight of the Prisoners*, by James Tissot.

[illustration] The daughters of Judah weep by the river Chebar, lamenting the kingdom of Judah's captivity in the land of Babylon. (*The Daughters of Judah in Babylon*, by Herbert Gustave Schmalz.)

[illustration] Before Judah was taken captive by Babylon, Lehi's party fled and was guided across the ocean to the New World. (*Lehi and His People Arrive in the Promised Land*, by Arnold Friberg.)

[illustration] *Missionary Work*, by Robert T. Barrett

Notes

1. The tribe of Simeon had become largely assimilated with the tribe of Judah by the time of Rehoboam, and the term *Judah* generally included Simeon (see John A. Tvedtnes, "The 'Other Tribes,'" *Ensign*, Jan. 1982, 31).
2. See Elmer W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* [1933], 350; see also *Old Testament: 1 Kings–Malachi* [Church Educational System student manual, 1981], 312–13, 319.

Notes

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The Gathering of Israel is the biblical promise of Deuteronomy 30:1-5 given by Moses to the people of Israel prior to their entrance into the Land of Israel (Eretz Yisrael). During the days of the Babylonian exile, writings of the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel encouraged the people of Israel with a promise of a future gathering of the exiles to the land of Israel. The continual hope for a return of the Israelite exiles to the land has been in the hearts of Jews ever since the destruction of the Second... Table of Contents. Gathering Scattered Israel: Then and Now. Bookmarks. Bookmarks.Â We see then that the restoration of the house of Israel is an important doctrine. But we are still left with questions to answer if we are to understand what the gathering means and why it matters to us. This article discusses the following questions: Who were those of the house of Israel anciently? How did ancient Israel become scattered? What has happened to the ancient house of Israel since their captivity? What does it mean to gather Israel today? Israel Became Scattered. As descendants of Abraham, the tribes of ancient Israel had access to priesthood authority and blessings of the gospel, but eventually the people rebelled. They killed the prophets and were punished by the Lord. Ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria. From there they became lost to the records of mankind.Â Godâ€™s promise for the gathering of scattered Israel was equally emphatic.Â Then Elijah the prophet came and proclaimed, â€œBehold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachiâ€”testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comeâ€”to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a.