

# *Sambatyon*

The Sabbath River  
& The Lost Tribes

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The history of Israel is largely one of rebellion, as the name implies, it's meaning being, "He who strives with the Mighty One." Throughout the centuries the nation resisted obedience to the Commandments of the MOST HIGH, most often opting instead to behave like the nations around them, walking in idolatry and living in resistance to divine instruction.

The Heavenly FATHER tolerated this petulant people for countless generations until finally he had had enough. He divided them in to two kingdoms, one to the north and one to the south. The northern Kingdom retained the name of Israel, though it was often known as Ephraim, the name of the predominant tribe. And the southern kingdom, though still being Israel, became known as Judah, named for the predominant tribe of that kingdom.

Sometimes at peace and sometimes it odds, these two kingdoms existed side-by-side for a number of years before calamity struck. While the southern kingdom of Judah had many righteous kings, The northern kingdom of Israel never had a righteous king and devolved ever deeper into abominable practices.

In 722 BC the Assyrian army conquered the kingdom of Israel and dragged off the inhabitants into exile. Overtime these people lost their individual tribal identity and simply knew themselves as the lost tribes though they were known by the kingdom of Judah as Gentiles. After the time of the first century, these lost tribes were exiled not simply from being Israel but physically from the land of Israel and lost their identity entirely mixing in with the nations.

Only the kingdom of Judah remained until 586 BC when Babylon conquered them and brought them into exile... but for just 70 years when they returned and became a nation once again. Judah remained a nation until AD135 when Rome destroyed Jerusalem and exiled all Judah from the land of Israel. Since that time, the people of Judah have wandered the earth being persecuted and killed even onto the modern day. These are the people who in our time are known as Jews.

To ask a Jew, he would say that Jews are Israel. And to ask a Christian, most would say that Israel is the Jews. But the people who are known as Jews comprise only three tribes of the nation of Israel: Benjamin, Levi, and Judah.... This leaves 10 other tribes unaccounted for. Where are they?

Seems a fairly obvious answer. They had no common ideology, married into the surrounding society and were simply lost to time becoming part of whatever peoples and nations they lived among. Which means quite simply that across the globe and around the world, people who

believe themselves to be gentiles and who are clearly not Jews, are yet in fact unknowingly Israelites by blood.

That said, with how simple a solution this is and quite obvious to anyone, it seems to have gone largely unnoticed by almost everyone. (kind of like how Israel has 13 tribes even though we always say it's 12. But counting should be pretty easy right? Wrong. Tradition is much easier.)

As the centuries passed there developed a tradition that was accepted by many and in fact most that the 10 lost tribes had been exiled beyond the Sambatyon River and were permanently cut off from their fellow Israelites - the Jews - until the coming of the Messiah.

The what river? Sambatyon. It's a variant spelling of Sabbaton. Which is to say the Sabbath River. So where is it and what is it? That's just the thing really. It's entirely fictitious though many important historical figures have referenced it as if it were real, including Rabbi Akiva, and Josephus. In all the places in all the world, no such river is to be found.

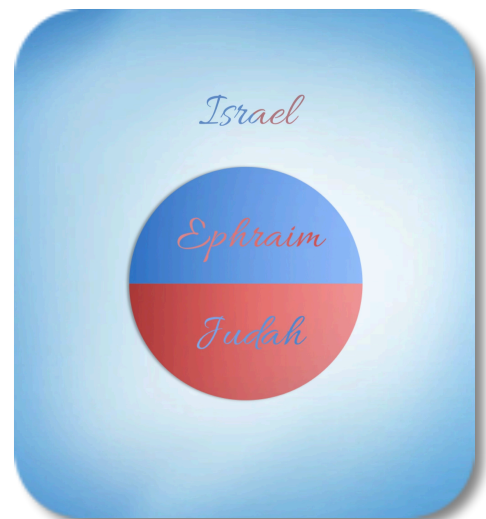
This river is said to be quite fantastic too containing not a single drop of water. But instead is purported to be made entirely of stone and fire. Raging flames and rolling boulders roil about encircling the lost tribes 6 days but ceasing their terror and turmoil upon the seventh day Sabbath.

No doubt if this river actually existed it would be most miraculous, not merely for its makeup of stone and fire instead of water but for its habit of keeping the Sabbath.

Oddly, though the tribes were exiled for refusing to obey the commandments, particularly observing the Sabbath, the legend of the Sambatyon says that the tribes don't cross the river to freedom on the sabbath, the only day they could cross it, because travel is forbidden on the holy day....that's hardly the most absurd aspect of this tale however.

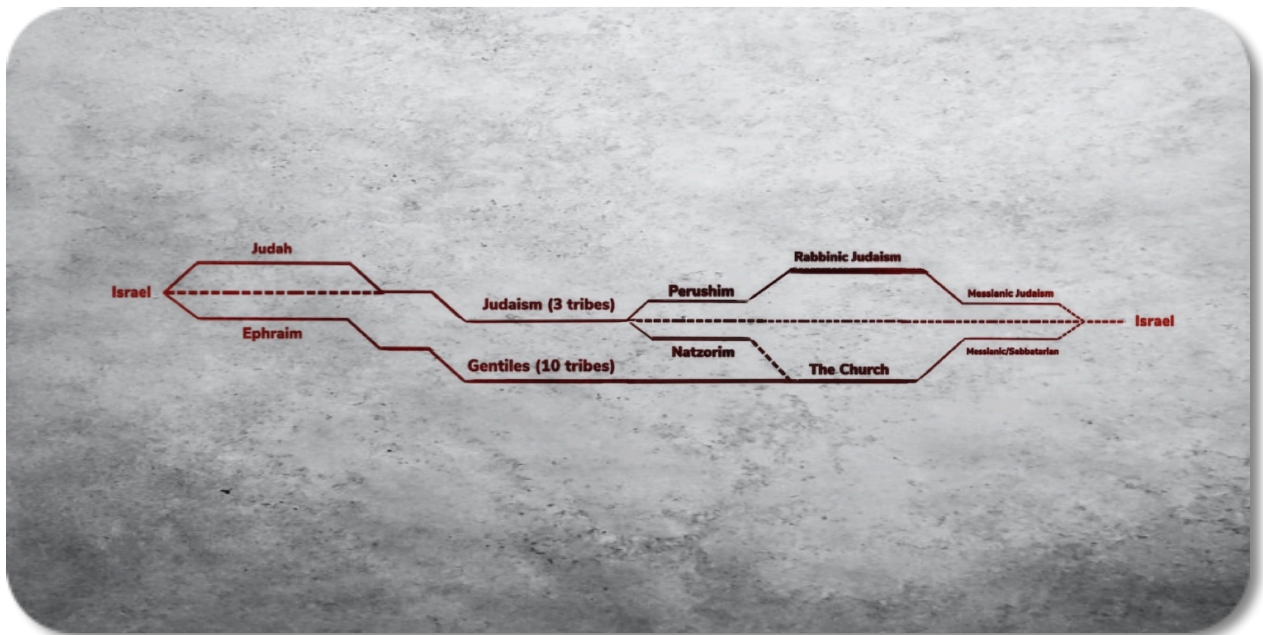
The sheer absurdity of this story would tempt us to dismiss it entirely outright and simply say that the 10 tribes are just lost. Nothing more to it. They intermarried with heathen peoples and mingled with those societies, assuming their customs, cultures and identities in place of the Scriptural Instructions...and became unidentifiable over time.

It would be easiest to disregard the tale of the Sambatyon River, to treat it like a twisted fiction and go with the words of the church instead. Adopting the viewpoint of Judaism about itself that all but ignores the existence of the 10 lost tribes. Instead, telling these ancient tales from Torah as if they all happened only to "the Jews", the church says that Israel is the Jews and the Jews are Israel. And depending on the trending nature of the age and the form of theology being taught at the time, Christendom says of themselves, that they are the New Israel, replacing the Jews in the favor of the FATHER and in the plan of "Heaven". Or they say they are "Spiritual Israel" or the "Israel of 'God'" whatever is necessary to believe the MOST HIGH tossed out HIS *natural children* with all HIS rules for them and adopted *brand new kids* with an anything-goes attitude. But neither of these perspectives, though largely popular among certain peoples, is anything close to what Scripture claims. Nor are these notions aligned with the promises and prophecies about Israel long ago.



When the Nation of Israel was split into two Ezekiel was told by the MOST HIGH to work an odd miracle as a sign of things to come. He was to take two sticks, write Ephraim on one and Judah on the other, and put them together. The miracle happened, and they merged into one stick. Then Ezekiel prophesied about the restoration, that as the sticks became one in his hands, so too the tribes would again become unified someday...a fact that has as yet never happened.

To date the church takes great pains to claim all the wonderful prophetic blessings offered to Israel as if they were really and truly made to Christendom, and Judaism takes all these same blessings made to the whole of Israel (which includes them but is not only them) and applies them exclusively to themselves, ignoring all their fellow brethren scattered among the nations and as yet unidentifiable...though still here.



It is tantamount to a New Englander as a person belonging to 6 of the 50 states claiming New England as being the whole of the United States. This would be folly...yet it's how we perceive Israel in relation to Jews. Jews claim to be all Israel, and everybody accepts this though we wouldn't with our own country. It's insanity.

But this abject madness is not exclusively Jewish either, because there's a disconnect when it comes to gentile Christians understanding their nature and state in the world as well. To attempt to explain to the average churchgoer that the "new" covenant promised in scripture is sworn exclusively with Israel and Judah and doesn't include any gentiles, is very much like trying to use a trampoline on an incline plane.

Really the reason this issue matters though is because of that exact covenant. If it is promised only to Israel and Judah, (that's the 10 lost tribes and the 3 tribes of Jews) where does that leave the rest of us born gentiles? If it was indeed as both churchianity and Jewry claim, that Israel is just the Jewish people, and no one else, then either we must ignore the part of the prophecy that defines the recipient of the "new" covenant as being both Jews and all the rest of Israel or otherwise pretend that Judah and Israel are one and the same, rather than the reality that Judah is

a small part of the whole of Israel which includes numerous others....Moreover, if Israel includes a myriad of other peoples besides just the Jews, then the follow up question must be asked, who are these persons and where may they be found? And moreover, if others are part of Israel unbeknownst to them, what must they do once they discover their heritage in the nation long lost to them?

When we read the story of the covenant the Almighty swore with Israel at Mount Sinai we find there was a mixed multitude of peoples who went up out of Egypt, and these were collectively called "Israel". It didn't matter what regions or religions they had been born into. When they were brought out of Egypt, and decided to stay with Israel, they became a part of Israel. So who is Israel? As it turns out — whoever wants to be....but there are conditions. And what would these possibly be? We turn to the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 56:3,6-7

"Neither let the son of the stranger, that has joined himself to the YAHWEH, speak, saying, YAHWEH has utterly separated me from HIS people...the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to YAHWEH, to serve HIM, and to love the NAME of the YAHWEH, to be HIS servants, every one that keeps the sabbath from polluting it, and takes hold of MY covenant; Even them will I bring to MY holy mountain, and make them joyful in MY house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."

Well that narrows it down then. Everyone can be Israel...if they join themselves to the MOST HIGH to serve HIM, love His NAME, honor HIS Sabbath, and take hold of HIS Covenant. "But that was then" someone will say, "this is now." Well what does scripture say?

Deuteronomy 29:9-15

"Keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do. You stand this day all of you before the YAHWEH Eloheicha; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the stranger that is in your camp, from the hewer of your wood unto the drawer of your water: That you should enter into covenant with YAHWEH Eloheicha, and into HIS oath, which YAHWEH Eloheicha makes with you this day: That HE may establish you today for a people unto Himself, and that HE may be unto you an Elohim, as HE has said unto you, and as he has sworn unto you fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; But with him that stands here with us this day before YAHWEH Eloheicha, and also with him that is not here with us this day..."

The Covenant exists. And is periodically renewed stronger each time till the coming of Messiah. It's something that is just there. And it is available for anyone to take hold of. Then. Now. Always.

Where then does that leave those 10 Lost Tribes? Still lost it seems. But it appears to be of their own free will that they will not be found. And here is where the Sambatyon story becomes

relevant in real life. Sure there's no actual river of stone and fire raging around the lost tribes to isolate them from the rest of their kin in Israel and to prevent them from returning to the land of Israel...but on another level, a spiritual level, this tale is true.

As an image, the Sambatyon River running six days and resting the seventh is a perfect image of its namesake, the Sabbath Day itself. Though, far from being stone and fire, imprisonment and death, the Sabbath actual is water and tree, liberty and life. Quite the opposite of the imagery the Sambatyon displays. But just as the legend of the Sambatyon has evolved over the ages so too has the perspective of the sabbath by those who belong to the Lost Ones.

In the beginning the idea was that of a river of water that was located somewhere in the east and separated the Lost Tribes simply as an ordinary barrier, ordinary but for its peculiar quality of cessation every seventh day. But as time passed, the theory had evolved to be a stone river which later by the Middle Ages included fire as well and encircled the Lost Israelites. The idea that the people don't cross it on sabbath is foolish though since as mentioned they were banished for sabbath breaking and still have not returned to obedience. But what is a river of stone that does not move? It is a wall.

So it is for most gentiles who encounter the Sabbath to this very day. What was once a peaceful river and a tree of life, appears to them now as crashing boulders and blazing flames roaring around them in a torrent. And when they do come up against it on its arrival, they find it, solid and still, immovable, unscalable, and utterly impassable. A solid wall in the way of what they want. And while this is truly an illusion, to the Lost Ones it is a very real experience. They happen upon the water of life and find it to be fire. Attempting to pluck fruit from the tree of life, they find it to be stone.

As they say, "Self-delusion dies hard." And in this case it can't actually be destroyed but only transformed. And only One is capable of making that transformation the Master of that River - The Messiah Himself.

The myth says that the 10 lost tribes will reside behind the river until the arrival of Messiah when He will make it passable to them once again. But we know Messiah has already come once and has promised to return again in glory. And so, it is possible for some of us to find the Sambatyon passable now, if we approach the Messiah as He is instead of as we want Him to be, as Lord of the Sabbath and not just as Lord.

In the end at His return, this Lord of Glory will work a miracle on many gentiles, so we can all finally see what we thought was fire is actually water and what we perceived to be stone is a life giving tree. Till then the Messiah says "I am the Door". And indeed He is the Way through the Wall, the Way out of our self imposed imprisonment and exile, the Way out of the way of the world and the Way back His people, Israel.

The Messiah is the Door through the Sambatyon wall, but it's only a wall on the Sabbath, so the Sabbath is the time we can pass that river. The only time.

Where are the 10 lost tribes? They are scattered everywhere and unknown. How do we know if we are numbered among them? Simply decide to be. Repent and return to obedience in the Messiah. And what is this Way? To love the NAME of YAHWEH, to honor HIS Sabbath, and to hold fast to HIS Covenant. That is the Way. The way over the Sambatyon River and into the commonwealth of Israel.

