

THE RABBINIC VIEW OF THE TEN TRIBES:
"CRIME, PUNISHMENT AND RECLAMATION"

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It is taught in *Pirke Avot* that a student should "provide for oneself a teacher." For in becoming a scholar's student, the pupil is afforded an opportunity to attain spiritual perfection through the teacher's wisdom and knowledge. I have found, in Edward Goldman, my advisor and teacher, a scholar who has been a continued source of inspiration; whose wisdom and knowledge have greatly enhanced my love of Judaism and my understanding of rabbinic lore. His careful and thorough advice throughout the entire process of formulating, researching and writing this thesis has had a profound effect on the finished product. I find myself greatly in his debt.

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DEDICATION

To my parents

Miriam and Michael Looper

who, by their example, have taught me that
no dream is ever too far away to reach.

DIGEST

Much of the recent scholarship on the Ten Tribes has been devoted to an examination of the medieval legends surrounding the location and identity of the descendants of the "Lost Tribes of Israel." Yet, little if any research has sought to examine the rabbinic literature which preceded and in several instances was the precursor to these medieval legends. To my knowledge no works exist, apart from Louis Ginzberg's cursory and incomplete collection and discussion of the midrashim on the Ten Tribes and their kings, which have gathered and analyzed in a thoroughgoing manner the rabbinic literature concerning the Northern Kingdom. The purpose of this thesis is therefore to do precisely that. The thesis brings together the rabbinic views of the Ten Tribes, and in doing so investigates their "crime, punishment and reclamation" as described in the rabbinic corpus.

In order to determine what the rabbis had to say concerning the Ten Tribes of Israel, I have gathered and analyzed midrashim from aggadic and halachic sources compiled between the 3rd and 15th centuries C.E. The first two chapters of this thesis explore the rabbinic view of the rulers of the Ten Tribes, focusing on the rabbis' descriptions of the actions and character of specific kings. Furthermore, I examine the extent to which the rabbis held the rulers responsible for the sins of the people. Chapter Three includes those midrashim which enumerate the sins assigned to the people of the Ten Tribes by the rabbis, sins which

were perceived as having eventually led to the exile of the Northern Kingdom. Chapter Four, the final chapter of the thesis, explores the rabbis' account of the exile and ultimate fate of the Ten Tribes. This final chapter seeks an understanding of whether or not the rabbis held out any hope for the future redemption of the Ten Tribes in the time-to-come (*atid l'vo*). Based on the Bible's description of the Northern Kingdom, the rabbis fashioned numerous descriptions of the crimes - ranging from the spiritual to the physical, the punishment - exile or eternal damnation, and the reclamation - in most cases, of the Ten Tribes.

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TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

Ag Br.....	Agadat Bereshit
A.Z.....	Tractate Avodah Zarah
A.d.R.N.....	Avot de-Rabbi Nathan
B.....	Babylonian Talmud
Deut R.....	Deuteronomy Rabbah
Est R.....	Esther Rabbah
Exod R.....	Exodus Rabbah
Gen R.....	Genesis Rabbah
Lam R.....	Lamentations Rabbah
Lev R.....	Leviticus Rabbah
M. Esser Galuyyot...	Midrash Esser Galuyyot
M. Shmuel.....	Midrash Shmuel
M. Tan.....	Midrash Tanhuma
M. Tan B.....	Midrash Tanhuma Buber
M. Teh.....	Midrash Tehillim
Num R.....	Numbers Rabbah
P.d.R.K.....	Pesikta de-Rav Kahana
Pes Rab.....	Pesikta Rabbati
P.d.R.E.....	Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer
Qoh R.....	Qoheleth Rabbah
R.H.....	Tractate Rosh Hashana
Ruth R.....	Ruth Rabbah
San.....	Tractate Sanhedrin
Seder Olam R.....	Seder Olam Rabbah
Sifre-Deut.....	Sifre to Deuteronomy
S.S.R.....	Song of Songs Rabbah

T.d.V.E.....Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu

Y.....Palestinian Talmud

Yal.....Yalkut Shimoni

INTRODUCTION

During the summers of 1985 and 1986 I helped to supervise an archaeological dig at David's Citadel, just inside of Jaffa Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem. One of the major finds which we unearthed during those two seasons is what appears to be part of Hezekiah's "Broad Wall" built in defense of the city of Jerusalem against the attack of the Assyrians. The "Broad Wall" protected homes which were built outside of the city walls. Along the base of the section of the wall which we excavated, we found idols - horses, bulls and an Ashtarte figurine. I wondered then, as I do now, whether these idols might not have belonged to a remnant of the Ten Tribes who fled to Jerusalem after Assyria attacked and exiled the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C.E. For, I reasoned, you just don't lose Ten Tribes. Some of the people must have fled to the safety of Jerusalem, while the remainder were either killed in battle or exiled to Assyria as the Bible informs us (II Kings 17:5-6). Thus began my interest in the subject of the Ten Tribes; their kings, practices and final destiny.

My research on the rabbinic view of the Ten Tribes started with a thorough reading of the biblical passages and books which discussed any aspect of the Ten Tribes. I found this material in First and Second Kings, First Chronicles, Hosea and Amos (in addition to a few passages in Isaiah and Ezekiel). At this point I organized the biblical material thematically. (These themes, incidentally, were not all

repeated in the midrashim). Having located these biblical passages, I then attempted to find out where they were quoted in the rabbinic literature by referring to Aaron Heyman's Torah Ha'ketuvah Ve'ha'mesurah. I also discovered additional midrashim concerning the Ten Tribes listed in the indexes of the translations to the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, Midrash Rabbah, Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu, Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, Pesikta Rab-bati and Midrash Tehillim. Once I had completed a rather exhaustive search for all the midrashim relevant to this thesis, I then organized them thematically. There are four general subjects which the rabbis addressed and which, therefore, are of interest to me. Each subject is the topic of a chapter. These include: Jeroboam - First King Over the Ten Tribes; The "Other" Kings of Israel; The Sins and Reasons for Exile of the Ten Tribes; and The Exile and Fate of the Ten Tribes.

Each chapter is organized in such a manner as to provide a general picture of the development of the subject(s) which it addresses, both thematically and chronologically. The chronology which I employ is based on the Encyclopedia Judaica's chronological table of *Midreshei Aggadah*. This table divides the aggadic midrashim into four distinct periods: Classical Amoraic Midrashim of the Early Period (400-600 C.E.), referred to simply as the "Early Period" in the body of this thesis; The Middle Period (640-1000 C.E.); The Late Period (1000-1200); and The Period of Yalkutim (1200-1550). In order to provide an even more

"accurate" chronology of the midrashim under study and to facilitate the reading of this thesis for the non-rabbinic specialist, I indicate the century in which the rabbi, to whom each particular midrash is attributed, lived. (This, of course, is not always a true indication of the relative antiquity of a midrashic passage. Clearly, there are midrashim which were not authored by those to whom they were attributed.) As I work my way through the midrashim, I note all parallel and variant texts and comment on any development of a particular theme from one period to the next or from one particular midrashic work to another. I am also cognizant - to the extent possible - of the different provenances of this literature, in order to better be able to see if any patterns or tendencies emerge. Through this process, I have tried to develop a clear and thorough picture of the Ten Tribes which will not only elucidate the rabbis' understanding of the Tribes, but seems also to further our understanding of the actual history of the Northern Kingdom.

It is my intent, through the study of the rabbinic material about the Ten Tribes (aggadic and halachic) to uncover the literary "remains" of the Ten Tribes. Already in my preliminary research, and as indicated in the title of this thesis, I have noticed a pattern in the rabbinic literature on the Ten Tribes. To the extent possible, I will show how and why this pattern emerges in the midrashim. Further, I expect that the rabbis, by way of their comments on and about the leaders of the Northern Kingdom, the sins

of the Tribes, and in their discussion of what became of the Ten Tribes, will greatly enhance our historical as well as mythical understanding of the Northern Kingdom. Outside of Louis Ginzberg's cursory and incomplete collection and discussion of the midrashim on the Ten Tribes and their kings, there are no other works which have attempted to gather and analyze the rabbinic literature concerning the history of the Northern Kingdom. Therefore, I am hopeful that this thesis will lay the foundations for further studies on the rabbinic understanding of the Ten Tribes.

CHAPTER ONE

JEROBOAM

FIRST KING OVER THE TEN TRIBES

Introduction

Jeroboam ben Nebat (henceforth: Jeroboam), was the first king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (i.e., the Ten Tribes). The purpose of this chapter is to examine the rabbinic interpretation of the biblical account of his rise to power, his deeds as king, and his ultimate end. I have divided the chapter into five different sections which parallel the Bible's presentation of Jeroboam. The first section will examine the rabbinic literature on Jeroboam prior to his selection by God to be king over the Ten Tribes. Sections II and III will focus on the sins of Jeroboam and the sins which he caused the people of Israel to perpetrate (I Kings 14:16). In these two sections I will especially look at the rabbis' response to Jeroboam's making of the golden calves, his abrogation of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, his establishment of Sabbaths and festivals in place of those celebrated in Judah (center of the Jerusalem/Temple cult), as well as the literature on Bethel and Dan, the cultic centers of the Northern Kingdom. In addition to this, I will try to determine whom the rabbis blame for the idolatrous practices of the Ten Tribes under the rulership of Jeroboam: Jeroboam himself, the people of

the Ten Tribes, or both. In section IV I will examine the rabbinic material about the change in character of Jeroboam once he assumed rulership over the Ten Tribes. The final section of this chapter, section V, will focus on the rabbis' discussion of the ultimate fate of Jeroboam. What punishment, if any, awaited Jeroboam as a result of the sins which he brought upon Israel and on account of his death as an unrepentant sinner?

I. In Praise of Jeroboam

The rise to power of Jeroboam is described in scant detail in the first Book of Kings. The initial mention of Jeroboam occurs in I Kings 11:26, where he is identified as being "in Solomon's service." Two verses later (I Kings 11:28) a little more detail is provided. Jeroboam is said to be "an able man" and "a capable worker" whom Solomon "appoints over all the forced labor of the House of Joseph."¹ Immediately after this verse Jeroboam goes out from Jerusalem and is met by Ahijah of Shiloh, a prophet. Ahijah tells Jeroboam that God is "about to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand's and...will give (Jeroboam) ten tribes"(vs. 31).

Why Jeroboam is chosen by God to rule over the Ten Tribes is unclear. The lack of detail chronicling his rise to power, with little information about his character prior to his election by God, leaves one to wonder why Jeroboam merited God's choice. Such a paucity of information, no doubt, troubled the rabbis. For, according to the rabbis, God does not act out of whim but only rewards one on account of merit. Therefore, some explanation needed to be provided by the rabbis which would describe why Jeroboam deserved his appointment as king over the Ten Tribes.

The earliest source which explains why Jeroboam "merited" sovereignty is found in the Babylonian Talmud. R. Johanan, (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 1st generation), taught: "Why did Jeroboam merit sovereignty? Because he reproved Solomon."² Surprisingly, this passage is not

repeated in any of the classic midrashic sources until its inclusion in the Yalkut Shimoni, a 14th Century compendium of extant midrashim. The only other source which explicitly explains why Jeroboam was made king over the Ten Tribes is found in Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu (8th c.). It too teaches that Jeroboam merited sovereignty because he reproved Solomon. "Was it not as a reward to Jeroboam b. Nebat who spoke properly to the king (Solomon) that the Ten Tribes were given to him?"³ An additional text which comments on Jeroboam's rebuke of Solomon is found in Leviticus Rabbah (6th c. - Palestine). This text adds detail to the very plain text of the Babylonian Talmud.

R. Hunya said: Eighty kinds of dances did the daughter of Pharaoh dance that night, and Solomon slept until the fourth hour of the day...and his mother entered and reproved him, and some say that Jeroboam b. Nebat entered and rebuked him. Was he then powerful [enough to do that]? R. Haggai said in the name of R. Isaac: He rose and gathered together a thousand men of his tribe, and entered and rebuked him...."⁴

Given that R. Johanan lived sometime around 250 C.E. and R. Isaac some fifty years later, and that both R. Hunya and R. Haggai are 4th century Palestinian Amoraim, it is most likely that R. Hunya and R. Isaac knew of R. Johanan's statement and expanded upon it without quoting it directly. Of course all of this depends whether or not these statements can actually be traced to those to whom they are attributed. The text of Leviticus Rabbah gives us some additional sense of the stature of Jeroboam during the reign of Solomon. Not only did he have status conveyed upon him by Solomon, but it appears that he was a leader, if not the

leader, of his tribe. For he is portrayed as able to marshal a "thousand men" to march with him when he went up to rebuke Solomon. As with the text of R. Johanan in the Talmud, this midrash also appears only once, (in the earliest strata of homiletical midrashim), and is not repeated until its inclusion in the Yalkut Shimoni.⁵

Material attesting to Jeroboam's character is, likewise, found in very few places: two to be exact, the Babylonian Talmud and Midrash Tehillim I (10th c.). Both midrashim contain material attributed to R. Hanina b. Papa (5th c. Babylonian Amora - 6th generation). Additionally, the midrash in the Talmud includes material attributed to R. Nahman (3rd c. Babylonian Amora - 3rd generation), as well as material quoted by Rab Judah in the name of Rab (3rd c. Babylonian Amora - 1st generation). This last section, attributed to Rab, is clearly the oldest extant midrashic piece on the character of Jeroboam, that is if we are to accept that Rab was the true author of this text.

The midrashic passage found in the Talmud is based on I Kings 11:29. It is at this point in scriptures that the prophet Ahijah informs Jeroboam that God has chosen him to be king over the Ten Tribes. The rabbis, commenting on this verse, portray Jeroboam as a Torah scholar par excellence. He was attributed as having possessed greater understanding of Torah than any other scholar of his time, all the reasons of Torah being clear to him. Such accolades of scholarship were usually reserved for Solomon. Perhaps this similarity was intentional on the part of the rabbis. For it is

Jeroboam, essentially, who succeeds Solomon as king; at least over the Ten Tribes.

[Now it came to pass at that time]
that Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem
(I Kings 11:29): R. Hanina b. Papa said:
He went out of the destiny of Jerusalem.
And the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite
found him on the way, and he clad himself
with a new garment, and the two were alone
in the field. (*ibid.*) What is meant by
with a new garment? - R. Nahman said:
As a new garment: just as a new garment
has no defect, so was Jeroboam's scholar-
ship without defect. Another explanation:
A new garment intimates that they
expounded new teachings, such as no ear
had ever heard before. What is taught by,
and they two were alone in the field?
Rab Judah said in Rab's name: All other
scholars were as the herbs of the field
before them. Others say that all the
reasons of the Torah were as manifest
to them as a field.⁶

This text appears once again in the Yalkut Shimoni.⁷

The midrash found in Midrash Tehillim I raises Jeroboam's scholarship to an even higher level than that attributed to him in the text of the Babylonian Talmud. Further, Jeroboam is described in this midrash as being "righteous," a thoroughly surprising and singular occurrence in the rabbinic literature. The text, which follows, is based on the second part of I Kings 11:29. My sense is that this continues R. Hanina's discussion of Jeroboam found in the previous text.

R. Hanina b. Papa read the verse [*The iniquities shall not stand in Your sight*] as referring to Jeroboam who at one time was the equal to Ahijah of Shiloh in understanding, for it is written of them, *And the two were alone in the field*, as if to say that only these two could make clear the mystery of the divine chariot. When the ministering angels stood

up before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said: "Master of the universe, a person like Jeroboam who will one day set up two calves - will You reveal the mystery of the divine chariot to him?" God asked: "At this moment, what sort of person is he? Righteous or wicked?" They answered: "Righteous!" God said: "I do not judge a man except for what he is at the time I am judging him!"⁸

And at this time, God found Jeroboam worthy of being elected as king over the Ten Tribes.

Jeroboam was praised by the rabbis for his reproof of Solomon and for his tremendous scholarly prowess. However, the rabbis' praise of Jeroboam was short lived. For I have already covered in this section all of the extant midrashim which speak favorably of him!

II. Jeroboam as Idolater: The Sins of Jeroboam

Almost immediately after Jeroboam assumed rulership over the Ten Tribes he began to sin. According to the Bible, Jeroboam feared that his dynasty would not last long and that the Ten Tribes would return to Rehoboam. Instead of trusting in the word of God (I Kings 11:38), he reasoned that if the people continued to go up to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice at the Temple, they would eventually "kill [him] and go back to King Rehoboam of Judah" (I Kings 12:27). To stave off this fate Jeroboam "took counsel [and decided to make] two golden calves" (I Kings 12:28). Of them he declared to the Ten Tribes: "This is your god, O Israel who brought you up from the land of Egypt (*ibid.*).\" He set one up at Bethel and the other at Dan and the people worshipped them there.

A. The golden calves

The sin of the golden calves is undoubtedly the most infamous of Jeroboam's sins. By setting up the golden calves, Jeroboam turned an entire kingdom away from God. Of Jeroboam's decision to make the golden calves, the Bible informs us that Jeroboam "took counsel" and subsequently determined to make the golden calves. Was the making of the golden calves then an idea spawned by Jeroboam, by his advisors, or by both? Do the rabbis attribute the sin of the golden calves solely to Jeroboam or was his penchant for

idolatry shared by others in Israel?

There are a number of midrashim found in works of the early period of midrashic activity (400 C.E.-640 C.E.) as well as one later text attributed to a 3rd century Amora, which attribute the decision to make the golden calves solely to Jeroboam. While these texts do not state that Jeroboam "alone" made the golden calves, they do refer to the calves as "Jeroboam's."

According to a text found in the Talmud Yerushalmi, the making of the golden calves was actually an "invention" of Jeroboam's.

And all of [the three kings who have no portion in the world to come] invented new kinds of transgressions. Now what did Jeroboam do? It was because he made two golden calves.⁹

In Genesis Rabbah, "R. Levi (4th c. Palestinian Amora - 3rd generation and a pupil of R. Johanan's who is often quoted in regard to the Ten Tribes,) said: [Joseph told them]: You will set up dumb idols before the calves of Jeroboam are set up and say to them, *This is your god O Israel* (Ex. 32:4)." ¹⁰ R. Berechiah is quoted in Leviticus Rabbah (5th c.) as teaching that the consequences of the golden calf lasted "up to the time the calves of Jeroboam b. Nebat were made."¹¹ In Song of Songs Rabbah (6th or 7th c.) it is stated: "They made me the keeper of the vineyards because I had to watch the calves of Jeroboam."¹² And, in Ruth Rabbah (7th c.), R. Johanan (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 1st generation) is quoted as teaching: "Between Gabbath and Antipatris there were sixty myriads of townships and none

were more corrupt than Jericho and Bethel...Bethel because the golden calf of Jeroboam was set up there."¹³ Additionally, R. Hama (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 2nd generation) is cited in Pesikta Rabbati (9th c.) as teaching that God "foresaw that Jeroboam b. Nebat would rise up out of Ephraim and make two calves of gold."¹⁴ An anonymous text in the same midrash comments that "Jacob foresaw Jeroboam's two calves."¹⁵

I did locate two similar texts, one in the Talmud Yerushalmi and the other in the Babylonian Talmud, which interpret the words: "took counsel" as meaning that Jeroboam employed the services of wicked men to dupe "righteous people" into giving their approval to Jeroboam's decision to make the golden calves. In this case then, the onus of the golden calves still falls upon Jeroboam, but at least a few other "wicked men" share in the culpability.

Talmud Yerushalmi: In this passage, Jeroboam's companions attempted to persuade (by way of a logical syllogism) "honorable men" to assent to the building of golden calves. Frustrated in their attempts they end up revealing their true intention - the building of the golden calves.

He stretched out his hand with the mockers. When he would see an honorable man, he would set up against him two mockers, who would say to him, 'Now what generation do you think is the most cherished of all generations?' He would answer them, 'It was the generation of the wilderness [which received the Torah].'

They would say to him (i.e., the mockers to the honorable man), 'Now did they themselves not worship an idol?' And he would answer them, 'Now do you think that, because they were cherished, they were not punished for their deed?' And they would say to him, 'Shut up! The king wants to do exactly the same thing. Not only so, but [the generation of the wilderness] only made one [calf], while [the king] wants to make two.' [So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold...].¹⁶

Babylonian Talmud: In this passage the making of the golden calves was a hidden agenda. By claiming that Jeroboam only wished to test his subjects' loyalty to him, Jeroboam's companions tricked Ahijah into assenting to the building of the golden calves.

How did he *take counsel*? R. Judah said: He set a wicked man by the side of the righteous [in the counsel chamber] and said to him, 'Will you sign [your approval] of all that I may do?' They replied, 'Yes.' 'Will you execute all my commands?' he asked. Again they replied, 'Yes.' 'Even for the worship of idols?' Whereupon the righteous man rejoined, 'God forbid!' 'But,' urged the wicked upon the righteous, 'do you really think that a man like Jeroboam would serve idols? He only wishes to test us, to see whether we will give full acceptance to his orders.' And even Ahijah the Shilonite erred and signed.¹⁷

There is a unique midrash in the Talmud Yerushalmi which suggests that the golden calves were made at the request of the Ten Tribes. In this case it is clear that the rabbis were cognizant of the literary connection between the golden calf story in the Book of Exodus (32:4) and the story of the golden calves in First Kings (12:28). Like the generation of the wilderness, Jeroboam declares of the golden calves: "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from

the land of Egypt." However, and as in the Book of Exodus, the desire for the golden calves originates with the people. In this Talmud Yerushalmi midrash Jeroboam is portrayed as a semi-innocent Aaron type who reluctantly gives in to their request, but not before attempting to delay such action:

Said R. Yudan, father of R. Mattenaiah, The intention of [a verse of] scripture [such as cited below] was only to make mention of the evil traits of Israel. *On the day of our king [when Jeroboam was made king] the princes became sick with heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with mockers (Hosea 7:5).* On the day on which Jeroboam began to reign over Israel, all Israel came to him at dusk saying to him, 'Rise up and make an idol.' He said to them, 'It is already dusk. I am partly drunk and partly sober, and the whole people is drunk. But if you want, go and come back in the morning....' In the morning they came to him. Thus did he say to them, 'I know what you want....'¹⁸

The innocence, or at least somewhat diminished guilt of Jeroboam is peculiar to this midrash alone. The notion that Jeroboam was persuaded or coerced by the Ten Tribes to make the golden calf is one which is not developed in any later midrashim.

Given the relatively large number of texts, (mostly from the early period of midrashic activity), which address the question of whose idea was it to make the golden calves and which lay the blame solely on Jeroboam, I think one may also safely conclude that the rabbis of the later midrashic periods unanimously held the opinion that Jeroboam was to blame. Their silence on this topic is proof enough that by the middle period (640 C.E-1000 C.E.), the question of responsibility for the golden calves had long been resolved

in favor of Jeroboam.

Concomitant with Jeroboam's decision to make the golden calves was the cessation of pilgrimage to Jerusalem (I Kings: 12:26-33), the establishment of a festival in imitation of the festival in Judah (I Kings 12:32) and the establishment of the cultic places at Bethel and Dan. All of these were labeled sins which the rabbis then attributed to Jeroboam.

B. The edict against pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

The biblical account of the cessation of pilgrimage to Jerusalem under Jeroboam is one of implication. Nowhere in the biblical text does Jeroboam state that it is forbidden to go up to Jerusalem. He does, however, say to the people that they "have been going up to Jerusalem long enough" (I Kings 12:28). He reasoned that if the people continued to "go up to offer sacrifices at the House of the Lord in Jerusalem" (I Kings 12:27), they would finally return to serve Rehoboam and abandon him [i.e., Jeroboam]. The rabbis, from these two lines and their surrounding text, offer a further description for us of the actions which Jeroboam took to prevent the people from continuing to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem. A survey of the rabbinic literature on this topic reveals a synthesis of the literature, rather than a development, from the early to the late periods of midrashic activity.

In Tractate Ta'anit of both the Palestinian and

Babylonian Talmuds the rabbis taught that Jeroboam placed guards along the roads to Jerusalem in order to prevent Israel (the Ten Tribes) from making pilgrimage. "It is reported that once the ruling power [the Greeks] decreed that Israel should not bring wood to the altar and they placed guards on the roads as Jeroboam b. Nebat had done to prevent Israel from going on pilgrimage...."19

R. Johanan, who is an often quoted source on Jeroboam, taught that Jeroboam ordered the death of anyone who attempted to go up to Jerusalem.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said, They have gone deeper than I. I said, Whoever does not go up [to Jerusalem] for the Festival violates a positive injunction, whereas they proclaimed [Jeroboam and his companions], Whoever does go up for the Festival will be pierced with the sword. 20

R. Nachman (3rd c. Babylonian Amora - 3rd generation) elaborated on the reason why Jeroboam decided to forbid pilgrimage.

He [Jeroboam] reasoned thus: It is a tradition that none but the kings of Judah may sit in the Temple Court. Now, when they see Rehoboam sitting and me standing, they will say, The former is king and the latter his subject; while if I sit too, I am guilty of treason, and they will slay me and follow him. Straightaway, So the king took counsel and made two golden calves. He said to them, You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough...." 21

A similar text, found in the Talmud Yerushalmi and attributed to R. Yose b. Jacob (2nd c. Palestinian Tanna - 2nd generation) focuses on the conceit and arrogance of

Jeroboam as the reason that he forbade pilgrimage to Jerusalem. For if he too went up to Jerusalem, he would be forced to stand in a position secondary to Rehoboam, King of Judah.

R. Yose b. Jacob taught...[Jeroboam] said, I shall be called upon to read [the Torah - (the reading for the festival)]. If I get up and read first, they will say to me, *the king of the place [in which the gathering takes place, namely Jerusalem] comes first.* And if I do not read at all, it is a humiliation for me. And, finally, if I let the people go up, they will abandon me and go over to the side of Rehoboam the son of Solomon.²²

For each festival there was a special Torah reading. The first portion was customarily read by the king. It was on account of this that Jeroboam found himself in a "no win" situation. Because he was not the king of Judah he would have had to have read second, which would have been an embarrassment to him before the Ten Tribes. And if he had chosen not to read at all he would have been humiliated before his people. Thus his only option was not to participate in the festival celebrations in Jerusalem and to forbid the Ten Tribes from attending them.

The only other mention of Jeroboam's forbidding pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the midrashic compendiums of either early, middle or late periods is found in Midrash Tanhuma Buber (9th c.). There are two such entries. One simply states: *"For him who does not sacrifice (Qoh 9:2): This is Jeroboam who forbade Israel from going on pilgrimage [to Jerusalem]."*²³ The second passage, which comments on I Kings 12:27-28, states, as a matter of fact, that Jeroboam

forbade pilgrimage to Jerusalem. "And so with Jeroboam, as it is written: *So the king took counsel and made two golden calves...and he placed one in Bethel and one he placed in Dan*, and he did not permit Israel to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem."²⁴

C. Jeroboam's Sabbaths and festivals.

The biblical account of Jeroboam's ordination of his own festival is found in I Kings 12:32-33. There it is stated that: "Jeroboam established a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month; in imitation of the festival in Judah...On the fifteenth day of the eighth month - the month in which he had contrived of his own mind to establish a festival for the Israelites...." The rabbis, in their discussion of this topic, focused on the words "which he had contrived of his own mind." They emphasized that the festival which Jeroboam ordained was for idolatrous worship and not for the worship of God, as was the festival in Judah. Even though it is taught in I Kings 12:32-33 that Jeroboam ordained but one festival, the rabbis attributed to him the ordination of a number of festivals as well as Sabbaths.

In the Talmud Yerushalmi, R. Abba bar Kahana (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 3rd generation), is said to have taught (based on I Kings 12:32 and Leviticus 23:38) that Jeroboam established his own Sabbaths and festivals.

Said R. Abba bar Kahana, Also
in regard to the Sabbaths and the
festivals we find that Jeroboam
invented them on his own. That is

the meaning of the following verse:
*Jeroboam established a festival
 on the fifteenth day of the eighth
 month; in imitation of the
 festival in Judah, he established
 one at Bethel (I Kings 12:32).*
 Thus he did in Bethel, having sacri-
 fices made in a month that he made
 up on his own. As it is written,
*In addition to the Sabbaths of the
 Lord (Lev 23:38).* ²⁵

In another work of the early midrashic period, God is said to have caused the Sabbaths and festivals of Jeroboam to be forgotten. Here too, the rabbis' statement, that Jeroboam ordained his own Sabbaths and festivals, is based on Leviticus 23:38. From this passage we learn how the rabbis arrived at their conclusion that Jeroboam ordained Sabbaths and festivals, in addition to the one festival mentioned in I Kings 12:32.

*The Lord has caused to be for-
 gotten in Zion festival and Sabbath
 (Lam. 2:6).* Is it possible that
 the Holy One, blessed be He, made
 the festivals and Sabbaths of Israel
 to be forgotten? It refers in
 fact to the festivals and Sabbaths
 of Jeroboam b. Nebat, which he
 invented for them; for is it not
 written, *the month in which he had
 contrived of his own mind*
 (I Kings 12:33)? Instead of "milibbo" -
 of his own mind - the consonantal
 text reads "melebad" - in addition
 to - alluding to *In addition to the
 Sabbaths of the Lord (Lev. 23:38).* ²⁶

In addition to these two texts of the early period, I found one other text which is cited in three middle period works, all of which belong to the larger corpus of "Tanhuma Midrashim." In this passage a non-Jew engages Rabbi Akiba in a discussion, asking why the Jews celebrate "festive seasons" even though God had stated *Your new moons and your*

appointed seasons My soul hates (Isa 1:14). Akiba responds by pointing out that it was the "festive seasons which Jeroboam ordained" which God found loathsome.

A non-Jew addressed a question to R. Akiba. He said to him: Why do you celebrate festive seasons? Did not the Holy One, blessed be He say to you: *Your new moons and your appointed seasons My soul hates (Isa 1:14)?* R. Akiba replied: If He had stated, *My new moons and My appointed seasons My soul hates*, you might have spoken as you did. Rather He said: *Your new moons and Your appointed seasons!* That was in reference to those festive seasons which Jeroboam ordained, of which it says: *And Jeroboam established a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month; in imitation of the festival in Judah (I Kings 12:32).* ²⁷

D. Bethel and Dan.

After Jeroboam made the golden calves "he set one up in Bethel and placed the other in Dan" (I K 12:29). As a result, Bethel and Dan became places associated with idolatry. The rabbis, in midrashim throughout the early, middle and late periods, elaborate on the corruption of Bethel and Dan.

In Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, Bethel and Dan are simply identified as the places in which Jeroboam set up altars for worship of his golden calves.

There came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord...And he cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord, and said: O altar, altar (I Kings 13:1-2). Why did Jedo repeat the word altar? Said R. Abba b. Kahana (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 3rd generation): The altar in Bethel and the altar at Dan. ²⁸

There is one additional reference to Bethel, found in Ruth Rabbah (7th c.), and attributed to R. Johanan. It is taught that no township was "more corrupt than Jericho and Bethel...Bethel because the golden calf of Jeroboam was set up there...."²⁹ The midrashic passages on Dan reflect this same sentiment, namely, that Dan became corrupt through the golden calf of Jeroboam.

There are several passages which explain that Abraham's strength failed him at Dan on account of the idolatry which was to be practiced there - the worship of Jeroboam's golden calf. There is a definite development in the midrashic passages as one moves from the early to the middle midrashic period. In Genesis Rabbah it is taught: "*And [Abraham] pursued them as far as Dan* (Gen 14:14). That is a place of idolatry. A plague before him: And he pursued him as far as Dan".³⁰ R. Johanan elaborates briefly on this text in a passage attributed to him in the Babylonian Talmud.

And he pursued them as far as Dan
(Gen 14:14). R. Johanan said: As soon as that righteous man came to Dan his strength failed him, for he foresaw his descendants would practice idolatry in Dan, as it is written, *And he set one in Bethel and the other he set in Dan* (I Kings 12:29).³¹

This text from the Babylonian Talmud is further elaborated on in Midrash Tanhuma, Midrash Tanhuma Buber and Agadat Bereshit.

And he pursued them as far as Dan
(Gen 14:14). Our rabbis said: What did he [Abraham] see when he pursued as far as Dan? Two things - one plague before them and one behind. And these are them - idolatry. How [can this be so]? For Jeroboam b. Nebat had not yet arisen to

fashion idolatry (i.e., the golden calves). Abraham foresaw it, [the golden calf], as it is written: *And he set one in Bethel and other he set in Dan* (I Kings 12:29). And so when Abraham arrived to that place [where Jeroboam set up the golden calf] his strength failed him."³²

There are two additional passages about Dan which appear, respectively, in the Babylonian Talmud and Numbers Rabbah II. Here too the idolatry of Dan is based on the golden calf of Jeroboam. "R. Judah said: Dan is none other than the designation of an idol, for it is said, *Those that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, As your god Dan lives.*"³³ In this passage Dan is considered synonymous with idolatry because of the golden calf which was placed there by Jeroboam.

The following midrash speaks of Dan as "darkening the world with idolatry" on account of its accepting one of the golden calves of Jeroboam.

The North is the region whence darkness issues forth into the world, and on that side shall be the tribe of Dan. Why? For it was that tribe which darkened the world with idolatry. When Jeroboam made the two golden calves he went around to all Israel [inviting them to embrace idolatry] but none of them would agree except the tribe of Dan, as it is said: *And the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold...and the other he set in Dan* (I Kings 12:28-29).³⁴

One should note the similarity between this midrash and the midrashim on God's offering of the Torah to the nations of the world. Only one nation accepted the Torah - Israel. Only one tribe of Israel accepted Jeroboam's golden calf - Dan. The acceptance of the Torah acted as a blessing, the

acceptance of the golden calf brought about a curse.

III. Whose Sin? Jeroboam and the Ten Tribes

The idolatry of Jeroboam was not specific to him alone, but was also practiced by the people over whom he ruled. Clearly it was Jeroboam who instituted the idolatrous practices which Israel followed. Nonetheless, Israel did possess a free will, to do as Jeroboam commanded or to do as God commanded. One is led to ask then, to what extent was the guilt for the idolatry of the people dependent upon Jeroboam? And on the other hand, to what extent were the people of the Ten Tribes held accountable for following in his ways? An examination of the rabbinic literature on these questions reveals that the rabbis overwhelmingly held Jeroboam responsible for the sins of his nation. For as the Bible informs us, "Jeroboam sinned and caused Israel to sin" (I Kings 15:30).

There are a number of passages which say that Jeroboam seduced Israel into practicing idolatry. All of these texts are found in the literature of the early midrashic period. In the Talmud Yerushalmi and in the Babylonian Talmud as well, Jeroboam is said to be the exemplar of sin "because he was the first to corrupt [the Ten Tribes]."³⁵ In Genesis Rabbah, R. Levi, an often cited commentator on Jeroboam, taught that it was preordained that Jeroboam "was to ensnare [the Ten Tribes] into serving *ba'alim*."³⁶ According to the commentary in Albeck's critical edition of Bereshit Rabbah, Ba'al was not worshipped during the time of Jeroboam. Therefore, worship of "*ba'alim*" actually refers to worship of

the golden calves, that is, if we can assume that R. Levi is indeed speaking about Jeroboam and not Ahab.³⁷ Another text in Genesis Rabbah, attributed to R. Nehemiah (2nd c. Palestinian Tanna - 3rd generation) teaches that Jacob, upon seeing the children of Joseph, exclaimed: "Would that I had not thought to see your face! Why? Because *God has let me see your seed also*; this alluding to Jeroboam who was to arise and seduce Israel to idolatry."³⁸ The fullest text concerning Jeroboam's seduction of Israel into idolatry is found in the Talmud Yerushalmi. R. Yose (2nd c. Palestinian Tanna - 3rd generation) is said to have taught that Jeroboam persuaded Israel with gentle words to practice idolatry.

How then does R. Yose interpret: *Bring your sacrifices every morning...*? Concerning the reign of Jeroboam does Scripture speak. Once Jeroboam took up the reign over Israel he began to entice Israel [toward idolatry], saying to them, Come and let us practice idolatrous worship. Idolatry is permissive.³⁹

In addition to the above passages there are several texts which explain that the Israelites were merely being obedient and faithful servants to their Lord, Jeroboam. And so, the idolatry which they practiced was only an imitation of the idolatry of their leader. In Mishnah Aboth, Mishnah Horayoth and Tractate Semahoth of the Babylonian Talmud, it is taught that "Jeroboam b. Nebat sinned and caused others to sin, [therefore] the sin of the many was [considered] dependent on him, as it is said, *for the sins which he sinned and which he caused Israel to sin* (I Kings 15:30)."⁴⁰ This passage is repeated in Pirke de-Rabbi

Eliezer, a midrashic work of the middle period, but in a more literarily sophisticated manner. R. Reuben (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 2nd generation) is portrayed as having taught by metaphor that "The entire body follows the head, and when the shepherd goes astray the sheep go astray after him, as it is said, *For the sins which Jeroboam sinned and which he caused Israel to sin* (I Kings 15:30)." ⁴¹

As a result of the sins which Jeroboam caused Israel to sin, the rabbis taught that a breach was made between Israel and God. This idea is illustrated in a number of Talmudic texts. "R. Hanina b. Papa taught: He is the companion of Jeroboam b. Nebat who destroyed Israel's [faith (or) allegiance] to their Father in heaven."⁴² Additionally, R. Johanan said: "As two sticks which cause each other to rebound, so *Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord and made them sin a great sin* (I Kings 17:21)." ⁴³ A more developed account of the strife between God and Israel resulting from Jeroboam's sinful leadership is found in Tractate Sanhedrin of the Babylonian Talmud. There, it is taught in a baraita that:

[The name] Jeroboam [denotes] that he debased the nation. (Tosephot: He beat Israel and degraded them). Another meaning is that he fomented strife amongst the nation. (Tosephot: He caused each person to argue with his fellow over the matter of idolatry. One worships and the other prohibits and so they end up in an argument). Another explanation, that he caused strife between Israel and their Father in heaven...."⁴⁴

The full extent of the effect of Jeroboam's sins and the sins which he caused Israel to sin is enumerated in a

baraitha attributed to Rabbi Shimon b. Yochai (2nd c. Palestinian Tanna - 3rd generation).

R. Shimon b. Yochai said: They have not rejected you, rather it is I whom they have rejected. In the future they shall reject three things: The Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of the House of David, and the Temple [in Jerusalem]. When shall they reject them? In the time of Jeroboam. As it is written, *The people answered the king: We have no portion in David* - this is the Kingdom of God; *and no share in Jesse's son* - this is the Kingdom of the House of David; *To your tents, O Israel* and not to the Temple [in Jerusalem]. Do not read *to your tents*, rather to your gods (i.e., idols).⁴⁵

It should be noted that there is, in fact, one single passage which teaches that even if it were not for Jeroboam, the Ten Tribes would have sinned through the practice of idolatry. "Israel was destined to serve idols even if Jeroboam b. Nebat had not arisen, as it is stated, *And this people will rise up and go astray after the foreign gods of the land* (Deut 31:16)." ⁴⁶

However, within the corpus of rabbinic/midrashic material Jeroboam is overwhelmingly held responsible for the sins of Israel. In order to differentiate his kingdom from the kingdom of Judah, Jeroboam made two golden calves and constructed a cult around them. Through persuasion, trickery and perhaps a willingness on the people's part, Jeroboam caused Israel to sin. As taught by R. Oshia (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 1st generation), Jeroboam increased the sin of Israel three-fold when he made the golden calves and caused Israel to worship them. "R. Oshia said: Until Jeroboam, Israel imbibed [a sinful disposition] from one

calf; but from him onwards, from two or three calves."⁴⁷

IV. The Wickedness of Jeroboam

Prior to being chosen by God to rule over the Ten Tribes of Israel, Jeroboam is said to have been a scholar of Torah par excellence and one who knew the mysteries of the divine chariot (cf., Section I). However, soon after his rise to power, Jeroboam forsook God and Torah for idolatry. He made the golden calves and set them up in Bethel and Dan, forbade pilgrimage to Jerusalem, ordained his own Sabbaths and festivals, and through his own idolatry he caused all of Israel to sin. In response to the thoroughgoing idolatry of Jeroboam, the rabbis labeled him a "*rasha*" - a wicked person - and placed him in companionship with Esau and Haman, notorious enemies of Israel and paradigmatic *rasha'im*.

What I assume to be the earliest text which speaks of Jeroboam as a "*rasha*", based both on the date of the midrashic compilation and the rabbi to whom the specific passage is attributed, is found in Genesis Rabbah (5th c. - Palestinian). The midrash itself is attributed to R. Eliezer b. Azariah (1st c. Palestinian Tanna - 2nd generation).

And his eyes were dim from seeing
(Gen 27:1). R. Eliezer b. Azaria said:
It means, from seeing the evil of that
wicked man...Hence it was said: He who
raises a wicked son or a wicked
disciple eventually suffers dimness
of sight. As for a wicked disciple,
that follows from Ahijah the Shilonite,
for he raised Jeroboam and his eyes
grew dim, as it says, *Now Ahijah*
could not see, for he had become
sightless with age (I Kings 14:4) -
because he had raised up Jeroboam,
a wicked disciple. As for a wicked

son, that follows from Isaac.⁴⁸

A parallel to the aforementioned text is located in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana (6th c. - Palestinian). Yet, it varies from the Genesis Rabbah text in two essential ways. Whereas Jeroboam is the central figure in the Genesis Rabbah text (Esau being mentioned almost as an afterthought), in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana both Jeroboam and Esau receive equal attention. The other significant difference is that the text in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana explains why Jeroboam is called a "wicked disciple." For he sinned and caused Israel to sin.

Hence it was said: He who raises a wicked son or a wicked disciple eventually suffers dimness of sight. As for a wicked son, that follows from our father Isaac; *when Isaac was old and his eyes were dim from seeing*. Why? Because he had raised Esau, a wicked son. As for a wicked disciple, that follows from Ahijah the Shilonite. *And Ahijah could not see for his eyes had become sightless with age*. Why? Because he had raised a wicked disciple. And who was it? It was Jeroboam b. Nebat who sinned and caused Israel to sin [through the golden calves].⁴⁹

This midrash is repeated, with minor variations in: Midrash Shmuel (7th or 8th c. - Palestinian), Midrash Tanhuma (9th c.), Midrash Tanhuma Buber (9th c.), and in the Yalkut Shimoni.⁵⁰

There are additional midrashim which identify Jeroboam as wicked. The earliest of these is found in the Talmud Yerushalmi and is repeated in the Babylonian Talmud. "*The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing* (Proverbs 10:7): and of Jeroboam and his companions the verse adds, *But the name of the wicked shall rot.*" ⁵¹Another midrash,

in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, and attributed to R. Yudan (4th c. Palestinian Amora - 4th generation) comments: "*The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth.* The words *The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver* refer to Jedo the prophet; and the words *the heart of the wicked is of little worth* refer to Jeroboam.⁵² In this same midrashic passage, the wickedness of Jeroboam is attributed to his denial of God and a refusal to forsake idolatry.

For when Jeroboam was in the act of offering to an idol, his hand did not dry up, but the moment he put forth his hand against a righteous man, at once his hand dried up. Thus it is written: *And his hand dried up because he put [it] forth against a man of God* (I Kings 13:4). *Thereupon the king spoke up and said to the man of God: Entreat now the favor of the Lord your God, and pray for me (ibid., vs.6).* Concerning Jeroboam's use of the expression *Your God*, two Amoraim differ. One maintained that Jeroboam meant: *Your God*, but not *my God*. The other Amora asked, however: By what brazenness could Jeroboam have spoken of the Lord as *my God*? After all, since he had just been in the act of offering to an idol, how could he have called Israel's Lord *my God*? Whatever Jeroboam may have meant by saying *my God*, on his behalf *The man of God entreated the Lord, and the king's hand was restored him; nevertheless it was as before.* (I Kings 13:6). What is meant by *it was as before*? R. Berechiah (4th c. Palestinian Amora - 5th generation) and R. Judah b. R. Simon (4th c. Palestinian Amora - 4th generation) said in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi (2nd c. Palestinian Amora - 1st generation): Though you pound a fool in an artisan's mortar, you cannot make anything worthwhile out of him. Thus with Jeroboam: even as he had previously made offerings to an idol, so afterwards he kept on making offerings to an idol.⁵³

Perhaps the most damning condemnation of Jeroboam is

found in the midrashim which associate him with Esau and Haman, the paradigmatic wicked ones and enemies of Israel. For it is Esau and Haman who are portrayed by the rabbis as people who sought the ultimate destruction of the Jewish People. Thus, for Jeroboam to be associated with them implies that he too sought to cut off at least a portion of the Jewish People (i.e., the Ten Tribes) from the world. This triumvirate, of Esau, Jeroboam and Haman, is not specific to any one or two midrashic compilations, but is found in the literature of the early, middle and late midrashic periods.

Initially the triumvirate of Esau, Jeroboam, and Haman appears in Genesis Rabbah, a midrash of greatest antiquity. There are two variants in this work. Both texts, however, share a common passage which links Esau, Jeroboam and Haman together as one. Thus what is said of one, may certainly be applied to the other two. The rabbis fashioned this triumvirate out of the scriptural passage which states (of all three): "And...said in his heart."

In the first text the triumvirate of Esau, Jeroboam and Haman is identified as "*rasha'im*" - wicked ones.

The wicked are ruled by what is in their heart. *The fool hath said in his heart* (Ps 14:1). *And Esau said in his heart* (Ps. 27:41); *And Jeroboam said in his heart* (I Kings 12:26); *Now Haman said in his heart* (Est 6:6). ⁵⁴

In the second text Esau, Jeroboam and Haman are all said to have "schemed evil, but did not succeed in carrying it out." This text, as applied to Esau and Haman, is clearly

understood, for both of their schemes to destroy Israel came to naught. However, of Jeroboam it may be said that he did succeed, for the Ten Tribes were cut off from the remainder of Israel. Yet, perhaps the Ten Tribes were not utterly destroyed. This possibility will be dealt with in chapter four.

He [Esau] was one of the three men who schemed evil, but did not succeed in carrying it out, viz. Esau, Jeroboam and Haman. Of Esau, it is written: *And Esau said in his heart* (Gen 27:41); *And Jeroboam said in his heart* (I Kings 12:26); *Now Haman said in his heart* (Est 6:6).⁵⁵

The final texts to be considered in this section mention Jeroboam in tandem with either Esau or Haman. There is one primary text in each case. The midrash which mentions both Jeroboam and Esau has already been examined (cf. p. 32 footnote #49). In this text Esau and Jeroboam are labeled as "*rasha'im*." The earliest extant midrash which mentions Haman and Jeroboam (only) is found in Leviticus Rabbah (6th c.) and is repeated in Midrash Shmuel and cited twice in the Yalkut Shimoni. It is attributed to Resh Lakish (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 2nd generation). In this case both the names of Jeroboam and Haman are cursed when recalled.

Some are remembered and blessed while others are remembered and cursed...
Remembered and cursed: *For Haman the son of Hammedatha* (Est. 9:24)...
Remembered and cursed: *And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite...*
(I Kings 11:26).⁵⁶

Essentially, the importance of these two texts, as well as all other midrashim in this section, is in their equating of

Jeroboam with Esau and Haman - the paradigms for evil in rabbinic literature. For this enhances our understanding of the rabbis' attitude toward Jeroboam.

V. The Fate of Jeroboam

When God elected Jeroboam as king over the Ten Tribes He made an oath with Jeroboam saying: "If you heed all that I command you, and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, keeping My laws and commandments as My servant David did, then I will be with you and I will build for you a lasting dynasty as I did for David" (I Kings 12:38). Yet, as has been demonstrated in the examination of the rabbinic material up to this point, Jeroboam failed to fulfill his end of the bargain. As a result of Jeroboam's thoroughgoing idolatry, God declared that He "will bring disaster upon the House of Jeroboam and will...sweep away the House of Jeroboam utterly, as dung is swept away" (I Kings 14:10). The punishment, which the God of the Bible brings upon Jeroboam and his House, is an earthly punishment. The punishment, which the God of the rabbinic material brings upon Jeroboam, as shall be demonstrated, is effected not only in this world, but in the world-to-come.

Had Jeroboam repented of his evil ways, his dynasty would have been like David's, and he would have had a place in the world-to-come with all the other "righteous" Jews. However, according to the rabbinic material, Jeroboam could never attain penitence, for he had not the ability nor the opportunity to repent. In Mishnah Horayot it is taught: "Whosoever causes the community ("many") to sin, they do not afford him the faculty to repent."⁵⁷ Similarly, in Tractate Yoma of the Babylonian Talmud it is taught: "Whosoever

causes the community to sin, they do not afford him the opportunity to repent."⁵⁸

In seeming contradiction to the notion that Jeroboam could never attain penitence, a passage in the Babylonian Talmud attributed to R. Abba (4th c. Palestinian Amora - 3rd generation) tells of God urging Jeroboam to repent.

*After this thing Jeroboam turned not from his evil way (I Kings 13:33). What is meant by after this thing? R. Abba said: After the Holy One, blessed be He, had seized Jeroboam by his garment and urged him, Repent, then I and you and the son of Jesse (i.e., David) will walk in the Garden of Eden. And who shall be at the head? he (Jeroboam) inquired. The son of Jesse shall be at the head. If so [Jeroboam replied], I do not desire [to repent].*⁵⁹

However, this contradiction is eliminated when one adds an additional piece to complete the puzzle. It is taught in Tractate Yoma: "And whosoever causes the community to sin, no opportunity will be granted him for repentance, unless he be in the Garden of Eden and his disciples in Gehinnom...."⁶⁰ Therefore, in refusing to follow David in the Garden of Eden, Jeroboam denies himself the opportunity to repent.

As a consequence of not being able to attain penitence in this world, and so dying unrepentant, Jeroboam was sentenced to eternal damnation.

*[He] will go down to Gehinnom and be punished there for all generations, as it says, And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have rebelled against me... (Isa 66:24). Gehinnom will be consumed but they will not be consumed, as it says, and their form shall wear away the nether world (Ps 49:15).*⁶¹

The context of this passage is echoed in another text found

in the Babylonian Talmud. It is taught there that "all the kings of Israel of whom it is written, *And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord* will neither live [in the world-to-come] or be judged [there]."⁶² Instead they will lead an indifferent existence in Gehinnom eternally.

There are a number of texts which very succinctly teach that Jeroboam has no portion in the world-to-come. These passages are found largely in the literature of the early period, but are also found in midrashim of the middle and late periods of midrashic activity. It is taught that "Three kings...have no portion in the world-to-come: Jeroboam, Ahab and Manasseh."⁶³ There are two variations on this text. One increases the number of kings to four, including Ahaz, while the other lists five kings - "Jeroboam, Ahab, Manasseh, Basha, Ahaziah and all the kings of Israel...."⁶⁴ The reason why these kings have no portion in the world-to-come is explained in the 10th c. midrash, Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu. "Whoever practices idolatry, whether in his youth or old age, and [unrepentant] dies an idolater...has no portion in the world to come, as it is said, *They that swear by the sin of Samaria and say: As your God, O Dan lives...shall fall and never rise again* (Amos 8:14)."⁶⁵

The fate of eternal damnation which Jeroboam suffers in consequence of the sins which he sinned and caused the people to sin is overwhelmingly attested to in all phases of the rabbinic/midrashic literature. However, and as perhaps might have been expected (given that the rabbinic literature is a literature replete with nehemta) there is a solitary

midrash which teaches that even Jeroboam will rise up from the dead in the time of the Messiah. Yet, it should be noted that the atonement which Jeroboam attains is not as a result of any penitence which he might have done prior to his death, but only by the accident of his burial in Eretz Yisrael.

However, when David spoke of the lands of the living he meant the Land whose dead will be the first to come to life in the days of the Messiah.

R. Ammi asked Resh Lakish: Even such dead as Jeroboam b. Nebat? He replied: Brimstone and salt. R. Helbo asked R. Ammi: Such as Jeroboam b. Nebat? He replied: I asked Resh Lakish and he said to me, Brimstone and salt.

R. Berechiah asked R. Helbo: Such as Jeroboam b. Nebat? He replied: I asked R. Ammi, and he said to me, I asked Resh Lakish, and he replied likewise, saying to me: Brimstone and salt.

R. Berechiah said: To explain what the teachers were holding back in their enigmatic reply of *Brimstone*, [we should say:] With brimstone and salt the Holy One, blessed be He, intends to inflict punishment upon the wicked in Gehinnom. But [upon the wicked buried in Eretz Yisrael such punishment had already been inflicted] at the time when the Temple was destroyed.

Accordingly, the punishment which God ordained for Jeroboam b. Nebat and his companions, He had exacted in the seven years that Eretz Yisrael was burning with fire. You may therefore conclude that even Jeroboam b. Nebat and his companions will come to life in the days of the Messiah. And what is the cause of their deliverance from being punished in Gehinnom and their coming back to life? Burial in Eretz Yisrael....⁶⁶

Conclusion

As I worked my way through the literature on Jeroboam, I attempted to note if there was any development in the midrashim from the early period of midrashic activity to the subsequent middle and late periods. While I cannot claim to have found a regular pattern in the midrashim, I did, in several cases, find some development from the early to later midrashim. This was manifest in two ways. Either there was an expansion of a theme or passage from an earlier midrash to a midrash of a later period or a uniquely different text was expounded. In all cases, the development in the midrashic passages was from the early to the middle period. Unfortunately, such development was not pervasive enough to allow one to argue a case for significant development in the rabbinic literature from one period to the next. Moreover, a majority of the passages I found in my research on Jeroboam were composed in the early period of midrashic activity, and more often than not were embedded in the Babylonian Talmud rather than in any of the classic midrashic texts.

A survey of the rabbinic literature on Jeroboam has yielded up a picture of a man who was thoroughly dedicated to idolatry and who, through his idolatry, caused the Ten Tribes to sin. By way of their exegesis/eisegesis of the biblical passages on Jeroboam and his acts as king, as well as their developing of a fuller picture of the life and character of Jeroboam which is not attested to in Scripture, the rabbis have greatly enhanced and embellished our under-

standing of this idolater par excellence. The midrash describes Jeroboam's metamorphosis from a person devoted to Torah and God, one who was considered wholly righteous, into a paradigmatic wicked person who suffers a fate accorded only the most sinful. Unable or unwilling to repent, Jeroboam was sentenced to suffer eternally in Gehinnom.

Throughout the Bible's portrayal of the Northern Kingdom, from its inception under Jeroboam to its exile at the hands of the Assyrian foe, the paradigmatic figure of the Ten Tribes' sinfulness is Jeroboam. It is he to whom all the other kings of Israel are compared, whether or not they "followed all the ways of Jeroboam b. Nebat and the sins which he committed and caused Israel to commit (I Kings 16:26)." As will be demonstrated, the acts of Jeroboam affected not only his destiny, but the destiny of the Ten Tribes.

1. I Kings 11:28. The "House of Joseph" is the Ten Tribes, (cf. Amos 5:6).
2. B. San 101b, Yal II: I Kings 11 (196) p. 753.
3. T.d.V.E. Chapt. 22, p. 125 - Friedman edition.
4. Lev R. 12:5.
5. Yal II: Jeremiah 32 (320) p. 830.
6. B. San 102a.
7. Yal II: I Kings 11 (197) p. 754.
8. M. Teh I 5:8.
9. Y. San 10:2 - 28b.
10. Gen R. 84:10.
11. Lev R. 2:3.
12. S.S.R. I 6:4.
13. Ruth R. - Proem II.
14. Pes Rab Piska 3:4.
15. Ibid.; Ag Br 5:2.
16. Y. A.Z. 1:1 - 39b; Yal II: I Kings 12 (199) p. 754.
17. B. San 101b-102a; Yal II: Amos 4 (542) p. 856.
18. Y. A.Z. 1:1 - 39a-b.
19. Y. Ta'anit 4:7 - 68b; B. Ta'anit 28a; B. Moed Katan 28b; Yal II: I Kings 14 (199) p. 755: "What was that 'good thing' [which Abijah, Jeroboam's son had done]? He removed the military guards that his father had posted on the roads to prevent the Israelites from going on pilgrimage."
20. B. San 102a.
21. B. San 101b.
22. Y. A.Z. 1:1 - 39b; Yal II: Amos 4 (542) p. 856.
23. M. Tan. B. Achare Mot:1.
24. Ibid. Hosephot 1'parshat Va'etchanan: 2.
25. Y. A.Z. 1:1 - 39b.
26. Lam R. 2:10.
27. M. Tan Pinchas:17; M. Tan B. Pinchas 17; Num R. 21:25; Yal II: Isaiah 1 (388) p. 773.
28. P.d.R.K. Ki Tisa 2:6; M. Tan Ki Tisa:6, Toledot: 12; Yal II: I Kings 13 (199) p. 754.
29. Ruth R. Proem II.
30. Gen R. 43:2.
31. B. San 96a; P.d.R.E. Chapt. 27.
32. M. Tan B. Lech Lecha:13; M. Tan Lech Lecha:13; Ag Br 13:3.
33. B. Shab 67b.
34. Num R. I 2:10, 3:12: "The North is the region from whence the darkness goes forth to the world, and there camped the tribe of Dan which was plunged into darkness by the worship of the idol which Jeroboam made and placed in Dan."
35. B. San 102b, Y. San 10:2 - 28b.
36. Gen R. 84:14.
37. Critical Edition by Albeck. Gen R. 84:14 p. 1017 (cf. under 84:19).
38. Gen R. 97:8.
39. Y. A.Z. 1:1 - 39a; Yal II: Amos 4 (542) p. 855.
40. Mishnah Aboth 5:18 - What follows is Kahati's commentary from his edition of the Mishnah on Aboth 5:18. "Jeroboam sinned - Because he made the golden calves

and because he said to the Israelites: It is too much trouble for you to go up to Jerusalem; this is your god, Israel, who brought you up from Egypt (I Kings 12:28). *And caused others to sin* - They bowed down to the calves and practiced idolatry. *The sin of many was [considered] dependent on him* - As if he himself committed all the sins which Israel committed. As it is said, *for the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and wherewith he made Israel to sin.* - It is not written: for the sins which Jeroboam and Israel committed but, for the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned and wherewith he made Israel to sin. From here we learn that all [sin] was dependent upon Jeroboam." Mishnah Horayoth 5:18; B. Semahoth 47b.

41. P.d.R.E. 42.
42. B. Berachot 35b, B. San 102a.
43. B. San 102a.
44. B. San 101b.
45. M. Shmuel 13:4; Yal II: I Kings 11 (196) p. 753.
46. B. Semahoth 47b.
47. B. San 102a.
48. Gen R. 65:10.; Yal I: Toledot 27 (114) p. 68 - In this parallel text Jeroboam is referred to as "Jeroboam the wicked one."
49. P.d.R.K. Tetzeh 3:1.
50. M. Shmuel 5:8; M. Tan B. Tetzeh; Yal II: I Kings 14 (199) p. 755.
51. Y. Ta'anit 4:7 - 68b; B. Ta'anit 28a.
52. P.d.R.K. Ki Tisa 2:6; M. Tan Ki Tisa:6; Yal II: Prov 27 (961) p. 998.
53. Ibid.
54. Gen R. 34:10, 67:8; With minor variations this text is repeated in: Est R. 10:3; Qoh R. 52; M. Teh I 1:14; Yal I: Noah 8 (61) p. 31, Yal II: I Samuel 1 (78) p. 714, I Kings 12 (198) p. 754 and Isaiah 14 (418) p. 780. Additionally, there is a passage in Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu which lists six "wicked persons: Eliphaz the Temanite, his son Amalek and Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon" along with the triumvirate of Esau, Jeroboam and Haman.
55. Gen 75:9.
56. Lev R. 32:6; M. Shmuel 1:3; Yal I: Ki Tisa 31 (390) p. 230, Yal II: Joshua 7 (18) p. 698.
57. Mishnah Horayoth 5:18c; B. Semachot 47b; B. Sotah 47a.
58. B. Yoma 87a.
59. B. San 102 a; Yal II: I Kings 13 (199) p. 755.
60. B. Yoma 87a.
61. B. R.H. 17a.
62. B. San 103b.
63. B. San 90a; Y. San 10:2 - 28b; B. Hagigah 15b; Pes Rab 6:11; Num R. I 14:1.
64. T.d.V.E. 16; A.d.R.N. 32a & 34b.
65. Ibid.
66. Pes Rab 1:4-5.

CHAPTER TWO

THE "OTHER" KINGS OF ISRAEL

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the rabbinic material on the kings of the Ten Tribes who ruled after Jeroboam b. Nebat. Not all of these kings are mentioned within the midrashic corpus, so naturally I will only be able to consider those kings about whom the rabbis comment. In examining the literature on each king, I will first look at the biblical account of that king's reign, (i.e., deeds and actions) and then will detail the rabbis' expansion of the skeletal text of the Bible. I will divide this chapter into six different sections. Each section will detail the rabbinic material about a specific king.

The first section, on Ahab b. Omri (henceforth: Ahab), is divided into seven sub-sections: A - G. In sub-section A, I examine the rabbis' explanation for Ahab's long reign. Sub-sections B, C & D focus on Ahab's idolatrous practices as well as his denial of God and Torah. In these sub-sections, I am investigating what the rabbis considered to be the sins for which Ahab is labeled even more wicked than Jeroboam. Sub-sections E and F concentrate on the rabbinic material which describes the character of Ahab - bad and good - as a wholly sinful person and as a repentant. Sub-section G explores the ultimate fate of Ahab according to

the rabbis. Was he punished for his sins and the sins which he caused Israel to sin or was he saved from the same punishment suffered by Jeroboam because he repented of his ways?

The remaining sections, II - VI, investigate the midrashim which speak about other kings of Israel: II. Basha b. Ahijah, III. Joram b. Ahab, IV. Jehu b. Nimshi, V. Jeroboam b. Joash, and VI. Hoshea b. Elah.

I. Ahab b. Omri - Sixth King Over Israel

Ahab, according to the Bible, was more sinful than any king of the Northern Kingdom who ruled before or after him, as it is written, "there never was anyone like Ahab who committed himself to doing what was displeasing to the Lord..." (I Kings 21:25). He worshipped Ba'al, building a temple in Samaria and erecting an altar there for Ba'al worship. He also made a sacred post and strayed after fetishes (I K 16:32-33 & 21:26). Even as compared to Jeroboam, Ahab is said to have been far more sinful (I Kings 16:31). R. Yohanan (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 2nd generation; and an oft quoted source on Jeroboam) commenting on I Kings 16:31 taught:

It was a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam
(I Kings 16:31). R. Yohanan said:
The light [minor] transgressions which Ahab committed were equal to the gravest committed by Jeroboam. Why then does Scripture make Jeroboam the exemplar of sin? Because he was the first to corrupt."¹

Nevertheless, within the midrashic material on the kings of the Ten Tribes, Ahab receives much less attention than does Jeroboam. It should be noted, however, that Ahab is the second most referred to King of Israel within the corpus of the rabbinic material under study.

A. On Ahab's long rule.

While Jeroboam was appointed by God to rule over the

Ten Tribes, Ahab came to power only as an accident of birth. For he inherited rulership over the Ten Tribes from his father, Omri. Because of this, there is no discussion by the rabbis as to why Ahab initially merited being king over the Northern Kingdom. What is a topic for discussion, however, is why Ahab, who is said to have been the most sinful of the kings of Israel, merited such a long rule - twenty-two years. According to R. Johanan, Ahab merited royalty for twenty-two years because he honored Torah.

R. Johanan said: Why did Ahab merit royalty for twenty-two years? Because he honored the Torah, which was given in twenty-two letters (the number of letters in the aleph bet), as it is written, *And he sent messengers to Ahab inside the city to say to him, Thus said Ben-hadad: Your silver and gold are mine, and your beautiful wives and children are mine...I meant that tomorrow at this time I will send my servants to you and they will search your house and the houses of your courtiers and seize everything you prize and take it away...So he (Ahab) said to Ben-hadad's messengers, Tell my lord the king: All that you demanded of your servant I shall do, but this thing I cannot do (I Kings 20:3,6,9). Now what is meant by everything you prize? Surely the Scroll of the Torah! (Rashi: Thus showing that he honored it [the Torah] and it was in this respect that Ahab defied Ben-hadad).*²

In contrast to R. Johanan's statement, there is a large body of literature which portrays Ahab as an idolater, and, more specifically, as one who rejected God and His Torah. Certainly this is more in keeping with the Bible's description of Ahab, who is said to have "forsaken the commandments of the Lord and gone after Ba'alim" (I Kings 18:18).

B. Ahab's denial of God.

According to an anonymous text, first cited in Leviticus Rabbah (5th c.), Ahab abrogated sacrifices to God, (i.e., rejecting God), instead bringing them in honor of human beings. This text is repeated again, with minor variations, in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana and in two works of the middle period, Qoheleth Rabbah (8th c.) and Midrash Tanhuma Buber (9th c.).

And to him that does not sacrifice
(Qoh. 9:2) applies to Ahab who
abolished sacrifices, as is borne out
by the text, *Ahab slaughtered sheep*
and oxen in abundance for him
and for the people with him (II Chron 18:2),
which implies that he killed them for
him (i.e., Jehoshaphat, King of Judah),
but not as sacrifices (in honor to God).³

In addition, there are three texts which unequivocally state or demonstrate Ahab's denial of God.

In a midrash attributed to R. Johanan, (by now a commentator well known to us on both Jeroboam and Ahab), it is taught that Ahab wrote upon the gates of Samaria for all Israel to see: "Ahab denies the God of Israel."

And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab
did more to provoke the Lord God
of Israel to anger than all the
kings of Israel that came before
him (I Kings 16:33) (which meant)
that he wrote upon the gates of
Samaria, 'Ahab denies the God of
Israel.'⁴

In Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu (10th c. - Italy), Ahab is accused of spurning God, the Creator of heaven and earth, just as he spurned the words of God's Torah.

At once, Elijah was filled with

great wrath at Ahab, and said to him: You good-for-nothing wretch! You spurned Him who created the entire world, every bit of it, for His glory - spurned Him who gave us the words of the Torah for His glory.⁵

And in Midrash Tanhuma Buber (9th c.), Ahab is said to have erased God's name from His Torah, writing in its place the name of Ba'al.

And Ahab did more to vex the Lord than any king who preceded him (I Kings 16:30)...He caused the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, to be forgotten [in Israel]. How? He erased all the mentions of God's name [from the Torah] and wrote in its place: In the beginning Ba'al created.... And Ba'al spoke and thus the entire Torah was created...Of him (Ahab) the prophet said: That plan to make My people forget My name...just as their fathers forgot My name because of Ba'al (Jer 23:27). ⁶

Concerning these final two texts from the middle period, one is able to discern a development, or should I say a continuation of the creative process, from one midrashic period to the next. The passages from Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu and Midrash Tanhuma Buber are not documented in any of the midrashic compilations of the early period, nor do they contain any of the same material as the midrashim from the early period on this same subject. Therefore I am led to conclude that these two texts were compositions of the middle period which build upon the rabbis' description of Ahab's denial of God.

C. Ahab's rejection of Torah.

There are two midrashim, one from the early midrashic period and the other from the middle period, which describe Ahab as being bereft of or opposed to Torah. In a statement found in the Talmud and attributed to R. Judah, it is implied that Ahab did not fulfill the Torah.

Our Rabbis taught: *And they did him honor at his death* (II Chron 32:33), in the case of Hezekiah the king of Judah, means that there marched before him thirty-six thousand with bare shoulders; this is the view of R. Judah. R. Nehemiah, however, said to him: Did they not do the same before Ahab? [In the case of Hezekiah] they placed the scroll of the Law upon his coffin and declared: This one fulfilled all that which is written there [while of that one - Ahab - they declared: This one did not fulfill all that which is written there].⁷

In a more succinct passage in Qoheleth Rabbah (8th c.), Ahab is described as being bereft of Torah. "*For it comes in vanity, and departs in darkness* (Qoh 6:4): [Was Ahab, then,] without light or bath? It means, without Torah and good deeds."⁸

Ahab's rejection of God and Torah is tied together in a discussion in the Babylonian Talmud over whether or not one is allowed to eat of the sacrifices of an Israelite who is an idolatrous apostate. In a text which expounds the same scriptural passage (II Chron 18:2) as the Leviticus Rabbah text cited above (namely, the one used to demonstrate Ahab's denial of God), R. Anan in the name of Samuel (3rd c. Babylonian Amora - 1st generation) taught:

In the case of an Israelite apostate in respect of idolatry, we may eat of his slaughtering; for so we find written concerning Jehoshaphat, king

of Judah, that he partook of the feast of Ahab, as it is written, *Ahab slaughtered sheep and oxen in abundance for him (i.e., Jehoshaphat) and for the people with him...* (II Chron 18:2).⁹

Further on, in the same discussion, it is taught that "One that is an apostate in respect to idolatry (i.e., Ahab) is regarded as opposed to the whole Torah."¹⁰ Indeed, the pendulum has swung 180 degrees from R. Johanan's original statement which teaches that Ahab honored Torah.

D. Ahab's Idolatry.

Although the Bible mentions Ba'al worship as Ahab's particular contribution to the idolatrous practices of Israel, the midrashim on his penchant for Ba'al worship are few in number. In fact, the midrashic text in which Ahab is said to have erased God's name from the Torah and replaced it with the name "Ba'al" is the only passage I have come across in my investigation (p.50 , #6). I can only venture that either my research on this count was not thorough enough; that Ahab's worship of Ba'al was blamed on Jezebel (My research did not include the midrashic material on Jezebel); or that the rabbis speak of Ahab's idolatry only in very general terms.

In I Kings 21:25 it is stated that "Indeed, there never was anyone like Ahab, who committed himself to doing what was displeasing to the Lord...." The intent of this verse was not lost on the rabbis. For they described Ahab as one so thoroughly steeped in idolatry that there was no idol

that he failed to worship. There are two basic texts which explore this theme. Both have their roots in the early midrashic period.

In the Talmud Yerushalmi, Ahab was quoted as saying to Elijah, "Now I have not left a single idol in the world which I have not worshipped."¹¹ This text is repeated in Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu (10th c. - Italy) and in the Yalkut Shimoni.¹² The other text is found in the Babylonian Talmud. R. Yohanan, (who seems to have foreseen that I was going to write this thesis and so spoke at length about the Ten Tribes), is supposed to have taught that Ahab inundated Palestine with idols. "*The altars of these are also like stone heaps in the furrows of the fields.* R. Yohanan said: [This teaches that] there is no furrow in Palestine upon which Ahab did not plant an idol and worship it."¹³

There are three other midrashim which speak of the depth of Ahab's idolatry. One, already referred to at the inception of this chapter, teaches that the gravest of Jeroboam's transgressions were equal to the most minor of Ahab's sins (p. 47, #1). The continuation of this passage, as quoted in the Talmud Yerushalmi, adds:

[Ahab] would adorn himself every day and get up before Hiel, commander of his army and would say to him, *How much am I worth today?* And he would say to him, *Thus and so.* Then he would take the amount and set it apart for an idol.¹⁴

The second of the three midrashim is found in the Babylonian Talmud. As Jeroboam's name was divided up into smaller units and interpreted to describe his character and

deeds, so too was Ahab's name interpreted. According to R. Ashi (5th c. Babylonian Amora - 6th generation), "Ahab denotes that he was an "ah" [a brother] to Heaven, and an ab [a father] to idolatry. An ah to Heaven, as it is written, *a brother is born for trouble* (Prov. 17:17); an ab to idolatry, as it is written, *As a father loves his children*" (Ps. 103).¹⁵

The final text, cited in Midrash Tanhuma Buber, sums up, in very brief fashion, the Bible's and the rabbis' attitude toward Ahab. "You should know that [Ahab] committed (literally: sold) himself to idolatry as it is said, *Indeed, there never was anyone like Ahab, who committed himself to doing what was displeasing to the Lord*" (I Kings 21:25).¹⁶

As with Jeroboam, Ahab was also blamed for having led the people of the Ten Tribes to sin (I Kings 21:22). Of all the rabbinic literature which focuses on the idolatry of Ahab, this subject includes the largest and most expansive collection of midrashim. Moreover, there is only one talmudic passage in this entire corpus, while the remainder of the texts to be discussed are found in the classic midrashic sources.

According to R. Joshua b. Levi (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 1st generation) the Courts of Justice during Ahab's rule sanctioned idolatry. "R. Joshua b. Levi said: The land of Israel was not laid waste until seven Courts of Justice had sanctioned idolatry, namely, [those of] Jeroboam b. Nebat, Basha b. Ahijah, Ahab b. Omri...."¹⁷

There are two texts, both from the corpus referred to as "Tanhuma Midrashim" (8th-9th c.), which portray Ahab as a veritable pied piper. In Pesikta Rabbati it is taught that Elijah beheld Israel going astray after Ahab.¹⁸ And in Midrash Tanhuma Buber, Ahab is accused as "having caused Israel to sin more than the *rasha'im* who came before him."¹⁹

In addition to these three texts, there are a number of parallel passages, first cited in Leviticus Rabbah (5th c.), which state that "The generation of Ahab were all worshippers of idols."²⁰ This text is further cited in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, Deuteronomy Rabbah, Midrash Tanhuma Buber, Numbers Rabbah II and Midrash Tehillim I.²¹ No other King of Israel, not even Jeroboam, was accorded this dubious honor. This one short statement reveals the extent to which Ahab led Israel to sin. For even in the generation of Jeroboam there were righteous people.

E. Ahab the "*Rasha*".

As happened with Jeroboam, so too the rabbis labeled Ahab a "*rasha*". Most of the literature on this topic is found in the midrashim of the early period; and all but one of these passages are located in the Babylonian Talmud. Interestingly, none of the texts are cited more than once.

In Aboth d'Rabbi Nathan, a minor Babylonian tractate, it is taught that one should not associate with a "*rasha*" - a wicked person. In this case Ahab is viewed as the paradigm

for the wicked person:

Associate not with the wicked. This teaches that a man should not associate himself either with an evil man or a wicked man. We find it so in the case of Jehoshaphat; because he associated with Ahab and went up with him to Ramoth Gilead, the wrath of the Lord came upon him, as it is stated, *Should one give aid to the wicked and befriend those who hate the Lord? For this, wrath is upon you from the Lord* (II Chron 19:2). 22

This midrash is very similar to the text which teaches that Ahijah suffered blindness, assumingly brought about as punishment by God, because he raised a "wicked disciple" (i.e., Jeroboam).

R. Aha b. Hanina (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 3rd generation) is cited in the Babylonian Talmud as having stated: *"When the wicked perish, there is song* (Prov 11:10); [thus] when Ahab b. Omri perished there was a song."²³ Here too Ahab was portrayed as the paradigmatic "rasha."

There are two midrashim, also found in the Babylonian Talmud, which are very closely related. Although it is not completely clear, it appears that both of these texts were attributed to Rab (3rd c. Babylonian Amora - 1st generation). The first text teaches that the wicked, in this case Ahab, are favored in this world. The second passage explains the premise of the first passage. According to Raba, this world was created solely for the "totally wicked," (i.e., Ahab).

- I. *It is not good to respect a wicked person* (Prov 18:5). It is not good for the wicked that they are being favored [by the Holy One, blessed be He] in this world. It was not good for Ahab that he was favored in

this world, as it is said: *Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the disaster in his lifetime* (I Kings 21:29). *And subvert the innocent in judgment* (Prov 18:5).²⁴

II.

Raba further said: The world was created only for either the totally wicked or the totally righteous. Raba said: Let a man know concerning himself whether he is completely righteous or not! Rab said: The world was created only for Ahab b. Omri and for R. Hanina b. Dosa; for Ahab this world, and for R. Hanina b. Dosa the future world.²⁵

There is one additional text from the early midrashic period, from Esther Rabbah (6th c.) which teaches that the greatness which the wicked attain brings much suffering and strife into this world. So it was when Ahab ruled as king over Israel. For he was understood, in the midrash, to have been one of the wealthiest people who ever lived.²⁶

When, however, the wicked attain to greatness, there is woe (way) and groaning and fierce anger in the world. Thus it says, *And Ahab b. Omri reigned -wayyimlok -* (I Kings 16:29) - as if to say woe (way) that Ahab b. Omri is become king!²⁷

Not only did the "wicked" Ahab bring suffering and strife into the world while he was king over the Ten Tribes, but he was also said to be a portent of suffering for those who dreamt of him, long after his death. "Our Rabbis taught, there are three kings [who are important for dreams]. If one sees David in a dream, he may hope for piety; if Solomon, he may hope for wisdom; if Ahab, let him fear for punishment."

²⁸ It appears that the rabbis considered Ahab so thoroughly wicked that even his image in a dream had efficacy enough to

bring suffering into this world.

The only text from the middle period of midrashic activity which describes Ahab as a "rasha" is cited in Agadat Bereshit (10th c.). There it is stated: "*The prophecy of Obadiah. What did Obadiah see when he prophesied concerning Edom? The Holy One, blessed be He, said, Obadiah was to grow up among two rasha'im; Ahab and Jezebel.*"²⁹

F. Ahab in a positive light.

To this point we have only considered those midrashim in which Ahab is portrayed as a person thoroughly dedicated to the practice of idolatry. Outside of R. Yohanan's statement, that Ahab merited royalty for twenty-two years because he honored Torah, the rabbis, thus far considered, have not had anything complimentary to say about Ahab. Yet, as might be expected in a literature which is forgiving or praising, to some extent, of almost every character which it speaks about, the rabbis' harsh words against Ahab in many midrashim are somewhat mitigated in others. At the very least, the rabbis found one good thing to say about Ahab.

Why, if Ahab, King of Israel, who had done but one good thing - as it is written: *The battle raged all day long, and the king (Ahab, who was mortally wounded) remained propped up in the chariot facing Aram; the blood from the wound ran down into the hollow of the chariot, and at dust he died (I Kings 22:35) - was lamented thus how much the more so is due to the sons of Ishmael!*³⁰

"Ahab's 'good deed' consisted in his being propped up [in his chariot] so as not to discourage the fighting men and not to give the enemy an advantage."³¹ Such praise is a bit macabre! However, there is another midrashic passage which is less so.

In contrast to the many midrashim which described Ahab as an idolater par excellence - as one who worshipped every idol in the world, and which labeled him a "rasha" - seemingly the most damning of epitaphs, it is stated in the Babylonian Talmud that Ahab's deeds were half sinful and half meritorious. The first section of this passage seems to parallel the previous midrashic text. Yet it credits Ahab with having done more than "one good deed."

R. Nahman said: Ahab was equally balanced, since it is written, *The Lord asked, Who will entice Ahab so that he will march and fall at Ramoth-gilead? Then one said thus and another said thus* (I Kings 22:20). R. Joseph objected: He of whom it is written, *Indeed, there never was anyone like Ahab, who committed himself to doing what was displeasing to the Lord, at the instigation of his wife Jezebel* (I Kings 21:25); whereon it was taught: Every day she used to weigh out gold shekels for idols - yet you say that he was equally balanced! - But Ahab was generous with his money, and because he used to benefit scholars with his wealth, half [his sins] were forgiven.³²

Ahab, unlike Jeroboam, repented of his sinful ways. Subsequent to the prophet Elijah's declaration of God's decree that He was going to bring disaster upon Ahab and upon his House in retribution for his having "committed himself to doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord" (I Kings 21:20), Ahab rent his clothes, put on sackcloth and

fasted (I Kings 21:27). The rabbis rather begrudgingly (for I have only found three midrashim on this topic) speak of Ahab's repentance. Two of the three midrashim are from the early midrashic period (Talmud Yerushalmi and Pesikta de-Rav Kahana) and are very similar in content and in whom they quote. However, the scriptural passages which they expound are different. The third midrash is found in Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer (9th c.), a middle period work. Although it shares some similarities with its predecessors - especially with the text found in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, it shows evidence of being a more developed text; i.e., it includes more independent prose. In all of these midrashim, Ahab's repentance resulted in the forstalling of evil until "his son's days." Nevertheless, as a response to his repentance the "evil" did not occur in Ahab's lifetime (I Kings 21:29).

Talmud Yerushalmi: In this passage it is taught that Elijah informed Ahab that God was going to bring about a draught. Upon hearing this, Ahab began to mourn. He rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, fasted, and walked about barefoot. Because Ahab humbled himself before God, even his repentance, no matter how abundantly he had previously sinned, was accepted by God.

Elijah then said to him, As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain these years, but

according to my word (I Kings 17:1). When he heard this, he began to cry. Thus it is written, *When Ahab heard these words, he rent his clothes and put sackcloth on his body. He fasted and lay in sackcloth and walked about subdued* (I Kings 21:27). How long did he afflict himself? It was in periods of three hours. If he was accustomed to eat every three hours, he ate every six. If he was accustomed to six, he ate every nine. *And he walked about subdued.* What is the meaning of *subdued*? R. Joshua b. Levi said, That he went about barefoot. It is written, *Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the disaster in his lifetime; I will bring the disaster upon his house in his son's time* (I Kings 21:28-29). Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to Elijah, Now see the good lot which I have given in my world. If a man sins before me in abundance but repents, I accept him back. Thus it is written, *Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before Me?* 33

Pesikta de-Rav Kahana: In this passage it is taught that the repentance of even the most inveterate sinners, i.e., Ahab, is accepted by God. This passage parallels the midrash cited above in the Talmud Yerushalmi. However, its initial scriptural passage is different.

I accepted the repentance of Ahab, therefore shall I not accept your repentance? For a harsh decree was issued against him, as it is written: *Say to him, Thus said the Lord: Would you murder and take possession? Thus said the Lord:*

*In the very place where the dogs lapped up Naboth's blood, the dogs will lap up your blood too (I Kings 21:19). When Ahab heard these words, he rent his clothes and put sackcloth on his body. He fasted and lay in sackcloth and walked about subdued (I Kings 21:27). How did he fast? If he was accustomed to eat every three hours, he would eat every six, and if he was accustomed to eat every six, he ate every nine. What is the meaning of walked about subdued? R. Joshua b. Levi said, He went about barefooted. What is written there? Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the disaster in his lifetime; I will bring the disaster upon his house in his son's time (I Kings 21:28-29). Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to Elijah, You have seen that Ahab repented: Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? And shall I not therefore accept your repentance?*³⁴

Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer: In this passage Ahab is portrayed as a Ba'al T'shuvah. He is said to have: summoned Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to administer lashes three times a day; fasted; prayed; and studied Torah until his death. Thus Ahab repented of the evil which he had done.

Repent, you children of men (Ps. 90:3). Know the power of tzedakah and repentance. Come and see from Ahab, king of Israel, who sincerely repented. For he had robbed, coveted and murdered, as it is said, Would you murder and take possession (I Kings 21:19)? He sent and called for Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, who

gave him forty lashes - three times a day. And in fasting and with prayer he rose up early and retired late, before the Holy One, blessed be He. He busied himself with Torah every day of his life and he did not return to his evil deeds. His repentance was accepted, as it is said, *Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the disaster in his lifetime...* (I Kings 21:29).³⁵

G. No portion in the world-to-come.

According to the rabbis, if one repents of one's sins before dying, then that person is granted a portion in the world-to-come. Contrary to this notion, Ahab, who is said to have repented of the evil which he committed before God, was not (according to the rabbis) granted a portion in the world-to-come. It seems odd that the same literature which proclaims that Ahab repented condemns him to suffer a fate reserved for the unrepentant.

There is a mishnaic passage, cited in Tractate Sanhedrin of the Babylonian Talmud, which states, "Three kings and four commoners have no portion in the world-to-come: the three kings are Jeroboam, Ahab and Manasseh."³⁶ This passage is repeated numerous times in other tractates of the Talmud - Babylonian as well as Palestinian, and in midrashim of the middle and late midrashic periods.³⁷ The explanation given in the gemara of Tractate Sanhedrin as to why Ahab had no portion in the world-to-come is somewhat cryptic. R. Johanan teaches, "From where do we know that he (Ahab) will not

enter the future world? From the verse, *And I will cut off from Ahab him that urinates against the wall, him that is shut up and forsaken in Israel* (I Kings 21:21); *shut up* [implies] in this world; *forsaken*, in the next.³⁸ Perhaps confused by R. Johanan's explanation, his colleagues provided simpler and clearer answers. There is a saying attributed to Rab (a Babylonian contemporary of R. Johanan's): "The world was created only for Ahab b. Omri and R. Hanina b. Dosa; for Ahab b. Omri this world and for R. Hanina b. Dosa the future world."³⁹ In another talmudic passage Rab elaborates on this statement, explaining that the wicked (e.g., Ahab) are favored in this world and the righteous in the world-to-come.⁴⁰

Finally, there are two additional texts, found in Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu (10th c.), which explain Ahab's fate. One blames Jezebel, Ahab's wife, for causing him to be cut-off from the world-to-come. "And who caused Ahab to perish from this world and from the world-to-come and caused his sons to perish with him? You must say: Jezebel his wife, of course!"⁴¹ The other passage is contradictory to the Bible and the midrashim which teach that Ahab repented of his evil ways before God. Here, Ahab is said to have died an [unrepentant] idolater.

The Sages taught: Four kings - Jeroboam, Ahab, Ahaz and Manasseh - have no portion in the world-to-come. Indeed, I say that whoever practices idolatry, whether in his youth or old age, and [unrepentant] dies an idolater..., has no portion in the world to come....⁴²

Of the other kings of the Ten Tribes, the rabbis only

comment on a few. The midrashim are few in number, and only one or two different texts can be found in reference to each of these kings.

II. Basha b. Ahijah - Third King Over Israel

Basha b. Ahijah (henceforth: Basha), was the third king of Israel. "As soon as he became king, he struck down all the House of Jeroboam...in accordance with the word that the Lord had spoken...because of the sins which Jeroboam committed and which he caused Israel to commit..." (I Kings 15:29 - 30). However, Basha too "followed the way of Jeroboam and caused...Israel to sin" (I Kings 16:2). Therefore he was condemned to suffer the same fate as Jeroboam.

The rabbis wrote very little about Basha's sinfulness. Even regarding those events of his life which paralleled Jeroboam's (and of which the rabbis had much to say in respect to Jeroboam), they did not seem to feel the need to comment in the case of Basha. There are but two midrashim about Basha. In both instances he is mentioned in tandem with Jeroboam, Ahab, Jehu, Pekah, Menahem and Hoshea. The first text relates the idolatrous nature of Basha's rule.

R. Joshua b. Levi said: The land of Israel was not laid waste until seven Courts of Justice had sanctioned idolatry, namely, [those of] Jeroboam b. Nebat, Basha b. Ahijah, Ahab b. Omri, Jehu b. Nimshi, Pekah b. Remaliah, Menahem b. Gadi and Hoshea b. Elah.⁴³

The second text, seeming to comment on this first passage, was really written about the "wickedness" of the royal dynasty of Basha. "R. Levi said: Israel was not exiled until seven royal dynasties became wicked."⁴⁴ (According to the Ma'har'zo the "seven royal dynasties" were those of Jeroboam, Basha, Ahab, Jehu, Pekah, Menahem and Hoshea).

These two texts are also the only midrashim on Pekah b. Remaliah and Menahem b. Gadi, of whom it is said that they "did not depart from the sins which Jeroboam b. Nebat had caused Israel to commit" (II Kings 15:18 & 28).

III. Joram b. Ahab - Eighth King Over Israel

While Joram b. Ahab (henceforth: Joram) was said to have "done what was displeasing to the Lord...clinging to the sins which Jeroboam b. Nebat caused Israel to commit" (II Kings 3:2-3), he was also praised for removing "the pillars of Ba'al that his father made" (*ibid.*, 3:2). The rabbis, however, found nothing praiseworthy about Joram. Moreover, Joram was said to have taken usurious interest - a crime for which he was punished by death - and to have never heeded the prophecy of Elisha, a true prophet of God. The midrashim on Joram appear only in the middle period and all of them belong to the corpus of "Tanhuma Midrashim."

Of Joram taking usurious interest, it is taught in Midrash Tanhuma and repeated verbatim in Exodus Rabbah that,

If you lend money to any of my people, [to the poor among you, do not act toward them as a creditor: exact no interest from them] (Exod 22:24). Thus it is written, Who has never lent money at interest (Ps. 15:5). Come and see: anyone who has riches and gives charity to the poor, and does not lend on interest is regarded as if he observed all the commandments, for it says, Who has never lent money at interest, or accepted a bribe against the innocent. The man who acts thus shall never be shaken (ibid.). Who was this? Obadiah, who was a wealthy man and the administrator of Ahab, for it says, Ahab had summoned Obadiah, the steward of the palace (I Kings 18:3). He was extraordinarily wealthy but spent his wealth in charity, for it was he who fed all the prophets. When that great trouble came, he borrowed on interest from Joram b. Ahab in order to support the

prophets. He fulfilled the verse,
*Who has never lent money on
 interest.* Of Joram, however,
 who lent on interest, God said: This
 man still lives! Let Jehu come and
 slay him, as it says, *But Jehu
 drew his bow and hit Joram between
 the shoulders, so that the arrow
 pierced his heart...* (II Kings 9:24).
 Why *between the shoulders* and *at
 his heart*? Because he hardened
 his heart and stretched out his
 hand to receive usury, so as to
 fulfill what Ezekiel said, *has lent
 at advance interest, or exacted
 accrued interest - shall he live?*
[He shall not live]! (Ezek 18:13). 45

By juxtaposing Joram's taking of usurious interest against
 Obadiah's extreme generosity, the rabbis sought to under-
 score Joram's sin.

The midrash which was written about how Joram never
 heeded the prophecy of Elisha is found in Midrash Tanhuma
 and is repeated verbatim in Numbers Rabbah II.

You find, in fact, that when
 Joram king of Israel went to
 fight against Moab...Jehoshaphat
 answered him: *Isn't there a
 prophet of the Lord here, through
 whom we may inquire of the Lord?*
*One of the courtiers of the king of
 Israel spoke up and said, Elisha son
 of Shaphat, who poured water on
 the hands of Elijah...* (II Kings 3:11).
 This serves to make known the
 wickedness of Joram, inasmuch as he
 did not acknowledge his
 (i.e., Elisha's) authority.
 (Instead he sought the advice of
 false prophets).46

IV. Jehu b. Nimshi - Ninth King Over Israel

Jehu b. Nimshi (henceforth: Jehu) was praised as well as derided in Scripture. Jehu carried out God's word by wiping the House of Ahab off the face of the earth: he killed Joram, Jezebel and all of the House of Ahab (II Kings 9:24,33 & 10:11). He also "eradicated the Ba'al from Israel" (II Kings 10:28). Nonetheless, he persisted in the ways of Jeroboam, worshipping the golden calves at Bethel and at Dan (*ibid.*, vs. 29). The verdict on Jehu in the midrash is also mixed, although it is decidedly more negative than positive. The rabbis of the early period were a bit more forgiving of Jehu than the rabbis of the middle period.

In a passage found in Tractate Sanhedrin of the Babylonian Talmud, the rabbis both praised and derided Jehu. On the one hand, he was said to have been a "very righteous man" who acted according to God's will. Yet, on the other hand, he was said to have been careless once he ascended to the throne, forsaking God's Teachings and worshipping Ba'al.

But, urged the wicked upon the
righteous, do you really think that a
man like Jeroboam would serve idols?
He only wishes to test us, to
see whether we will give full
acceptance to his orders? And even
Ahijah the Shilonite erred and
signed. For Jehu was a very righteous
man, as it is written, *The Lord said
to Jehu, Because you have acted
well and done what was pleasing
to Me, having carried out all that I
desired upon the House of Ahab,
four generations of your descendants
shall occupy the throne of Israel*
(II Kings 10:30). Yet, it is written,
*But Jehu was not careful to follow
the Teaching of the Lord, the God*

of Israel, with all his heart; he did not turn away from the sins that Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit (ibid., vs. 31). Now what caused this? Abaye (4th c. Babylonian Amora - 4th generation) said: A covenant is made for the lips, as it is written, [Jehu assembled all the people and said to them], Ahab served Baal little; Jehu shall serve him much (ibid., vs. 18)! Raba (4th c. Babylonian Amora - 4th generation) said: He saw the signature of Ahijah the Shilonite, and was thus led into error.⁴⁷

The following passage, from Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu (10th c.), omits Raba's rejoinder which stated that Jehu, quite mistakenly, worshipped the golden calves of Jeroboam. In this passage Jehu is portrayed as a good man gone bad. Prior to becoming king, Jehu was God-fearing and did "good deed(s)." However, once he became king, "his deeds became corrupt" and he worshipped the golden calves.

Come and see the measure of well-being [a person can enjoy]. When a man has done a good deed, well-being is bestowed upon him [and his descendants] through four generations. So it was with Jehu b. Nimshi, as it is said, The Lord said to Jehu, Because you have acted well and done what was pleasing to Me...four generations of your descendants shall occupy the throne of Israel (II Kings 10:30). Of Jehu b. Nimshi it is said that he was a God-fearing man to begin with and was not drawn to worship of the golden calves that Jeroboam b. Nebat had made. Once Jehu reached eminence, however, and entered upon his reign, his deeds became corrupt. (But Jehu was not careful to follow the Teaching of the Lord, the God of Israel, with all his heart; he did not turn away from the sins that Jeroboam had caused

Israel to commit (ibid., vs. 31). 48

Additionally, as cited above regarding Basha, the Courts of Justice during Jehu's reign sanctioned idolatry, and Jehu's dynasty was said to have been a "wicked" one (cf. footnotes 43 and 44).

V. Jeroboam b. Joash - Twelfth King Over Israel

The biblical record of Jeroboam b. Joash (henceforth: Jeroboam II) is very brief. He "restored the territory of Israel from Lebo-hamath to the sea of the Aravah, in accordance with the promise that the Lord...had made through...Jonah" (II Kings 14:25). Also during his reign "the Lord saw the very bitter plight of Israel...and resolved not to blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; and he delivered them through Jeroboam b. Joash" (II Kings 14:26-27). However, Jeroboam II also did what was displeasing to the Lord and did not depart from the sins which Jeroboam caused Israel to commit (*ibid.*, vs. 24).

As has been demonstrated, a basic premise of rabbinic literature is that you deserve what you get. Therefore, Jeroboam II, having merited God's resolution not to destroy Israel during his reign, as well as the restoration of the territory of Israel from Lebo-hamath to the sea of the Aravah, should, according to the rabbis, have done something positive to deserve this. Indeed, in Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu, we find the rabbi's explanation.

Of Jeroboam b. Joash it is said that he was a man who accorded honor to Prophets. Therefore what territory the Holy One did not turn over to Joshua b. Nun and to David, king of Israel, he turned over to Jeroboam, as it is said, *It was he who restored the territory of Israel from Lebo-hamath to the sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the promise that the Lord...made through His servant, the prophet Jonah b. Amittai...* (II Kings 14:25).
*Of Jeroboam, Scripture says

further, *For the Lord saw the very bitter plight of Israel...and the Lord resolved not to blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; and he delivered them through Jeroboam b. Joash (ibid., vss. 26-27).* But why such special regard for Jeroboam? Was not Jeroboam an idol-worshiper? Yes, but he refused to accept Amaziah's slander of the prophet Amos, as it is said, *Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent this message to King Jeroboam of Israel: Amos is conspiring against you...For Amos has said, Jeroboam shall die by the sword... (Amos 7:10 - 11).* At once Jeroboam rebuked Amaziah and sent him away with a reprimand, for he said: God forbid! The prophet could not have uttered such a prophecy. If he did utter it, however, it would not have been his own prophecy but Heaven's.

Thereupon the Holy One said: Here is a generation that worships idols! The head of the generation, [its king], worships idols! Nevertheless, [God went on to say]: The land which I promised - *The land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, To your offspring will I give it (Exod 33:1) - I shall give into the hand of this very person. Then, as Scripture tells us, [Jeroboam II] restored the territory of Israel from Lebo-hamath to the sea of the Aravah (II Kings 14:25).* Thus it is said: Through the agency of good men, good things are brought about, and through the agency of evil men, evil things are brought about.⁴⁹

As demonstrated in the preceding passage from Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu, Jeroboam II was considered meritorious because he "accorded honor to [God's] prophet" and because he rebuked Amaziah, a priest of idolatry from Bethel, for slighting the prophet's words. On account of these deeds, the rabbis described Jeroboam II as a "good man" on whose

account "good things (were) brought about."

The rabbis' praise of Jeroboam II can also be found in a midrash within the Babylonian Talmud. It appears that the midrash of Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu is based on a section of this text. In this instance, Jeroboam II was written of as one who did not listen to words of slight, in general, and specifically, against Amos. Further, it is taught that Jeroboam II merited being counted together with the kings of Judah.

R. Johanan said: How did Jeroboam b. Joash, king of Israel, merit to be counted together with the kings of Judah? Because he did not heed slander against Amos. From where do we know that he was counted [with them]? Because it is written, *The word of the Lord that came to Hosea b. Beerai, in the reigns of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, and in the reign of King Jeroboam b. Joash of Israel (Amos 1:1). From where do we know that he did not heed slander? Because it is written, Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent this message to King Jeroboam of Israel: Amos is conspiring against you within the House of Israel...For Amos has said, Jeroboam shall die by the sword... (Amos 7:10-11).* He (Jeroboam II) said; God forbid that that righteous man should have said this! Yet if he did say it, what can I do to him! The Divine Presence told it to him.⁵⁰

As has been demonstrated, the merit of Jeroboam II rested in his having accepted the word of God's prophet and in forsaking the counsel of his own idolatrous priesthood.

VI. Hoshea b. Elah - The Last King Over Israel

Hoshea b. Elah (henceforth: Hoshea) the last king over the Ten Tribes, according to the Bible, "did what was displeasing to the Lord, though not as much as the kings of Israel who had preceded him" (II Kings 17:2). However, it is during his reign that the Ten Tribes were exiled by Assyria. Why then, according to the rabbis, if Hoshea was less sinful than all the kings who preceded him, was Israel exiled during his reign? What did he do to cause Israel's exile? According to the midrash, he removed the guards from along side of the road to Jerusalem, therefore making it possible for the people to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem. What appears to be a meritorious act, proves to be the end, for the time being, of the Ten Tribes.

Commenting on Hoshea's removal of the guards from the road to Jerusalem, the rabbis teach in the Babylonian Talmud,

One well understands why the Day of Atonement [should be such a festive occasion for it is] a day of pardon and forgiveness...[It was] the day on which Hoshea b. Elah removed the guards whom Jeroboam had placed on the road to prevent Israel from making the pilgrimages to Jerusalem.⁵¹

Certainly Hoshea's action, associated with Yom Kippur, seems to represent atonement. Why Israel was exiled during his reign, then, is still not clear. However, this riddle can be solved by a further perusal of the rabbinic literature. As it is taught in Lamentations Rabbah, as well as other paral-

lel or like texts, Hoshea "removed the chain from off his own neck and set it round the necks of the masses."⁵² In other words (and as it was taught in Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu and other texts) the sin of idolatry was transferred from the individual (i.e., the king) to the people. No longer were the people judged innocent for the sins which their rulers had caused them to commit.

In the reign of Hoshea b. Elah the Land was taken, and in his reign the Ten Tribes were exiled. Was Hoshea b. Elah any different from all the kings of Israel who had come before him in that the Land was taken during his reign and the Ten Tribes were exiled during his reign? He was different because from the time Jeroboam b. Nebat ruled until Hoshea b. Elah came to the throne, the transgression of idolatry was identified with an individual [each successive king], and it was difficult for the Father of mercy to exile the congregation [of Israel] because of the iniquity of an individual...But what Hoshea did was remove the collar from his own neck and hang it on the neck of the many. [Thus the transgression of idolatry was identified with all the people of the Ten Tribes].⁵³

Conclusion

The rabbinic literature concerning the kings of Israel subsequent to Jeroboam b. Nebat provides a singular picture of a continuous tradition of idolatrous leadership until the exile of the Ten Tribes. What is most important for this study on the Ten Tribes, and specifically for the examination of the sins which led to the exile of the Ten Tribes, was the overwhelming tendency of the rabbis to place the burden of the blame upon each consecutive king of Israel. For it was through their leadership and through their official institutionalization of idolatry that the masses were led to practice idolatry. This point is poignantly illustrated in a midrashic passage found in Deuteronomy Rabbah.

R. Samuel b. Nahmani said: Whatever the leaders do, the masses do. How? The Nasi (or in this case, the King) rules that a thing is permissible; the President of the Court then says: The (King) has ruled that the thing is permissible; shall I then forbid it? And the Judges say: The President of the Court has ruled that the thing is permissible; shall we then forbid it? And the masses say: The Judges ruled that the thing is permissible; shall we then forbid it? Who then caused the whole generation to sin? It is surely the (King) who was the first to sin.⁵⁴

One may conclude from this midrash that the sin of each generation of the people of the Ten Tribes was dependent upon their king. Yet, with the abrogation of Jeroboam's edict against making pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Hoshea b. Elah

transferred the guilt of the sin from the individual king to the masses over whom he ruled. (The sins of the people of the Ten Tribes and their eventual exile will be the topic of the next chapter. There, one will be able to see that the sins of the people were also many and diverse, as were the reasons for their exile.)

As for the kings of Israel, ultimately their 'reward' was to share Jeroboam's fate: to waste away eternally in Gehinnom. "Of all the kings of Israel of whom it is written, *And he did that which was displeasing in the sight of the Lord*, will neither live [in the future world] nor be judged [there].⁵⁵ The only king to which this text does not apply is Jehu b. Nimshi, of whom it is written, "The Lord said to Jehu, Because you have acted well and done what was pleasing to Me..." (II Kings 10:30). Nonetheless, "he did not turn away from the sins that Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit" (*ibid.*, vs. 31). And so, one may assume that even Jehu suffered the same fate as all the other kings of Israel.

1. B. San 102b; Y. San 10:2 - 28b; Yal II: I Kings 16 (207) p. 756.
2. B. San 102b; Yal II: I Kings 20 (219) p. 759.
3. Lev R. 20:1; P.d.R.K. 26:1; Qoh R. 9:1.
4. B. San 102b; Yal II: I Kings 16 (207) p. 756.
5. T.d.V.E. 185.
6. M. Tan B. Hosephot L'parshat Va'etchanan 2.
7. B. Baba Kama 17a.
8. Qoh R. 6:4.
9. B. Hullin 4b.
10. Ibid.
11. Y. San 10:2 - 28b.
12. T.d.V.E. 185; Yal II: Hosea 12 (528) p. 852.
13. B. San 102b; Yal II: I Kings 16 (207) p. 756.
14. Y. San 10:2 - 28b.
15. B. San 102b.
16. M. Tan B. Hosephot L'parshat Va'etchanan 2.
17. B. Gittin 88a.
18. Pes Rab 44:3.
19. M. Tan B. Hosephot L'parshat Va'etchanan 1.
20. Lev R. 26:2.
21. P.d.R.K. 4:2; Deut R. 5:10; M. Tan B. Chukat:7; Num R. II 19:2; M. Teh I 7.
22. A.d.R.N 22a.
23. B. San 39b; Yal II: I Kings 22 (223) p. 760.
24. B. Yoma 87a.
25. B. Berakoth 61b.
26. Yal II: I Kings 16 (207) p. 756.
27. Est R. Proem 6.
28. B. Berakoth 57b.
29. Ag Br 58:3.
30. B. Moed Katan 28b.
31. Ibid. - Soncino p. 189, footnote #4.
32. B. San 102b.
33. Y. San 10:2 - 28b.
34. P.d.R.K. 24:11.
35. P.d.R.E. 43.
36. B. San 90a.
37. Ibid.; A.d.R.N. 32a - There is another passage found in 32a and also 34b which lists five kings: "Jeroboam, Ahab, Manasseh, Basha & Ahazia (and all the kings of Israel)."; B. Hagigah 15b; Y. San 10:2 - Neusner; Pes Rab 6:4; Num R. I 14:1.
38. B. San 102b; Yal II: I Kings 16 (207) p. 756.
39. B. Berakoth 61b.
40. B. Yoma 87a.
41. T.d.V.E. 49.
42. Ibid. 16.
43. B. Gittin 88a.
44. Deut R. 2:21.
45. Exod R. 31:4; M. Tan Mishpatim:9.
46. M. Tan Pinchas:3; Num R. II 21:6.
47. B. San 101b-102a; Yal II: I Kings 12 (199) p. 754 and II Kings 9 (232) p. 764.
48. T.d.V.E. 184; Yal II: II Kings 9 (232) p. 764.
49. T.d.V.E. ibid., 88; Yal II: II Kings 9 (232) p. 764.

50. B. Pesachim 87b; Yal II: Hosea 1 (515) p. 847.
51. B. Baba Bathra 121a-121b.
52. Lam R. Proem 33; Yal II: II Kings 17 (234) p. 765.
53. T.d.V.E. 188; Lam R. ibid., B. Gittin 88a; Seder Olam
R. 22: Yal II: II Kings 17 (234) p. 765 and II Kings 18
(236)p. 766.
54. Deut R. 2:19; B. Hullin 4b.
55. B. San 103b.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SINS AND REASONS FOR EXILE
OF THE TEN TRIBES

Introduction

To this point, the rabbinic literature which I have examined on the Ten Tribes has placed the responsibility for their sins squarely on the shoulders of the kings of the Northern Kingdom. Yet, it should be noted that there are also a large number of midrashim which discuss sins which the people of the Ten Tribes committed willingly and without coercion by royal decrees. The purpose of this chapter is to examine these midrashim which discuss the sins of the people in order to determine the reason(s) why, according to the rabbis, the Ten Tribes were exiled. In examining the literature on the sins and reason(s) for the exile of the Ten Tribes, I will look first at the biblical account of each sin and will then look at the midrashim which are based contextually or literarily on that account.

This chapter will include five different sections. The sins of the Ten Tribes (discussed in the first four sections) may all be listed under the larger rubric, "cultic sins", for they all relate to one's relationship to God and Torah and to one's participation in the cultic practices at the Temple in Jerusalem. The first section examines the sin of idolatry. The second section focuses on the sins of

forsaking God and the Torah. The third section deals with the sin of not keeping the covenant of circumcision. And the fourth section examines the midrashim on the sin of not making pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

The final section (section five) is comprised of three sub-sections: A - C. In sub-section A, I explore the topic of the Ten Tribes' lust for meat and the consequence of that lust. Sub-section B investigates the Ten Tribes' fondness for wine and the consequence of that fondness. And sub-section C looks at the midrashim about the rampant adultery of the Ten Tribes and the consequences of that adultery (i.e., divorce, bastard children, and ultimately, exile.)

I. For the Sin of Idolatry

The exile of the Ten Tribes, in part, resulted from their adherence to idolatry. According to the Bible, the Ten Tribes...

sinned against the Lord their God
 ...They worshipped other gods...
 The people set up pillars...and
 they worshipped fetishes...They
 made molten idols for themselves
 - two calves - and they made a
 sacred post...and they worshipped
 Ba'al...[On account of all this]
 the Lord was incensed at Israel
 and He banished them from His
 presence
 (II Kings 17:7-8, 10, 12, 16 & 18).

Thus, at the time of their exile, the entire population of the Ten Tribes was held culpable for the sin of idolatry, and not just its kings (II Kings 17:22).

In contrast to the Bible's description of the idolatrous practices of the Ten Tribes, the midrashim on this subject are very non-descript and relatively monolithic. They do not enumerate any of the particulars of Israel's worship, (e.g., worship of fetishes, making of sacred posts, etc.), but only speak in the most general of terms of the "idolatry" of the Ten Tribes.¹

In Genesis Rabbah, Judah ha'Nasi (2nd c. Palestinian Tanna - 4th generation), is said to have taught that the Ten Tribes were devoted to idolatry. Yet, because they "maintained peace among themselves," God did not punish them.

Rabbi said: Great is peace, for even if Israel practices idolatry but maintains peace among themselves, the Holy One, blessed be He, says, as it were I have no dominion over them; for it is said *Ephraim is united in idol worship; let him alone* (Hos 4:17). ²

This passage is also cited in Numbers Rabbah II and in the Yalkut Shimoni.

In another midrash from the early period, attributed to R. Hanina and to R. Jonathan, both the Ten Tribes and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin are said to have practiced idolatry up until the time of their exile. Here the rabbis employed a metaphor of two men fighting over a cloak (of idolatry) on a winter's day to illustrate their point.

R. Hanina and R. Jonathan both say: What did the Ten Tribes and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin resemble? Two men who were both wrapped in the same new cloak on a winter's day; one pulled one way and one pulled the other way until they ripped it. Similarly the Ten Tribes did not cease worshipping idols in Samaria (until their exile) and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin worshipping them in Jerusalem, until they caused Jerusalem to be destroyed.³

The Ten Tribes' total and unceasing devotion to idolatry is further illustrated in Sifre to Deuteronomy (4th c.) and in Seder Olam Rabbah (12th c.). In the passage found in Sifre, Israel is described as the purveyor of molds from which the entire world made their idols.

They sacrificed to demons, no gods, gods they had never known (Deut 32:17)...That even the nations of the world would not recognize. *New ones, who came but lately (ibid.)*: So that whenever someone from another

nation saw it, he would say, This is an idol of the Jews, as it is said, *Since I was able to seize the insignificant kingdoms, whose images exceeded Jerusalem's and Samaria's* (Isa. 10:10). This shows that Jerusalem and Samaria supplied molds (for idols) to all mankind.⁴

In Seder Olam Rabbah, it is taught that from their very beginning until their exile by Assyria, the Ten Tribes never ceased from practicing idolatry. "From the time that Israel entered into Eretz Yisrael, they angered God [with their idolatry] until they departed from it 390 years later (i.e., at the time of the exile of the Ten Tribes)."⁵

According to the rabbis, the Ten Tribes were exiled as a result of their unceasing practice of idolatry. There are two midrashim which attest to this. The first one, located in the Babylonian Talmud and attributed to Rab (3rd c. Babylonian Amora - 1st generation), taught that both the Ten Tribes and Judah were exiled on account of idolatry.

Had not David paid heed to slander,
the kingdom of the House of David
would not have been divided, Israel
(i.e., the Ten Tribes) would not have
engaged in idolatry, and we (Israel
and Judah) would not have been exiled
from our country.⁶

The second passage is from the "Tanhuma Yelammedenu Midrashim" and is found in the Yalkut Shimoni. It teaches that because the Ten Tribes practiced idolatry, they suffered the same fate as the Canaanites who dwelt in the land before them. Further, the Ten Tribes were exiled from Eretz Yisrael in much the same manner - "little by little" - as were the Canaanites.

Moses said to them: *If you do forget the Lord your God and follow other gods to serve them (Deut 8:19), and if you make idols for yourselves, then you shall certainly perish. And not this only. But like the nations that the Lord will cause to perish before you (ibid., 20), like the Canaanites who were little by little exiled (from Eretz Yisrael), as it is written, I will drive them out before you little by little (Exod 23:30) so too will you be exiled. Thus it is written, only the former [king] would have brought abasement to the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali (Isa. 8:23). And he carried them away, namely, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (I Chron 5:26).*⁷

Warned by Moses not to serve other gods or make idols, the Ten Tribes, nonetheless, disobeyed this admonition. Indeed, from the moment they entered Eretz Yisrael the Ten Tribes worshipped idols. Because of this, the Ten Tribes were exiled. For as Moses stated: "If you make idols for yourselves, then you shall certainly perish" (Deut 8:19).

II. On Account of Forsaking God and Torah

The Ten Tribes were not exiled solely on account of idolatry, but as a result of numerous other sins too. Among these sins were the forsaking of God and God's Torah.

It is stated in Scriptures that:

King Shalmaneser of Assyria marched against Samaria and besieged it, and...he exiled the Israelites to Assyria...[This happened] because they did not obey the Lord their God; they transgressed His covenant - all that Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded (II Kings 18:9, 11-12).

The subject of Israel's exile as a result of forsaking God and Torah is discussed at greater length in the midrashim than is its exile on account of idolatry. I would venture to guess that this has occurred because of the theological orientation of the rabbis. They were probably more concerned with the keeping of the Law and the maintaining of a belief in God, than in speaking out against idolatry *per se*. The time period and the social ethos in which the rabbis wrote suggest further explanations.

In Lamentations Rabbah (6th c.), as well as in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, R. Johanan is said to have taught, by way of a parable, that the Ten Tribes were exiled because they forsook the Lord their God. In this parable God is likened to a king with two sons. The first son represents the Ten Tribes. He is banished because he rebels against his father, the king.

*Thus said the Lord of Hosts:
Listen! Summon the dirge-singers, let
them come (Jer. 9:16). R. Johanan,*

R. Simeon b. Lakish, and the Rabbis [comment as follows]. R. Johanan said: God may be likened to a king who had two sons. He became enraged against the first of them, took a stick, thrashed him, drove him into banishment and exclaimed [of the Ten Tribes]... *Woe to them for straying from Me; destruction to them for rebelling against Me! For I was their Redeemer; yet they have plotted treason against Me* (Hosea 7:13). ⁸

The Ten Tribes' forsaking of God, according to the rabbis, was also manifest in their denial of God's power to bring about victory for them. In Sifre to Deuteronomy (4th c.) it is stated: "*Lest they should say: Our own hand has prevailed; none of this was wrought by the Lord* (Deut 32:27). Such as what those fools* (*read as "tribes") had said, *By our might we have captured Karnaïm* (Amos 6:13)." In this instance, the Ten Tribes claimed that it was through their own ability, and not through the grace of God, that victory was achieved.⁹

In Midrash Tanhuma Buber, it is taught that from the time that God redeemed Israel at the Red Sea the Ten Tribes denied God's power to save them from peril.

By your life, you think that all the tribes were exiled? But the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were not exiled with them. Why? Because these two tribes believed in Me and sanctified My name with Moses at the Sea. R. Abba b. Kahana (3rd C. Palestinian Amora - 3rd generation and a student of R. Johanan's) in the name of R. Levi said; When the Sea parted for Israel there was mud in its place. The tribe of Reuben said to the tribe of Simeon, 'From mud you came and to mud you shall return' (i.e., you shall die in this mud that is before you),

as it is said, *Ephraim surrounds Me with deceit, the House of Israel with guile. But Judah stands firm with God and is faithful to the Holy One* (Hosea 12:1). ¹⁰

Not only did Reuben slight God's creation of humankind, but he also implied that God was leading the people to their deaths, rather than to lives of freedom.

In turning away from God, the Ten Tribes also abandoned God's Teachings (Torah).¹¹ The midrashim which follow speak of the consequences which befell the Ten Tribes on account of this.

In the Talmud Yerushalmi, R. Judah b. Pazzi (4th c. Palestinian Amora - 4th generation) taught that because the Ten Tribes rejected God's Torah, He sent Assyria to destroy them. "Said R. Judah b. Pazzi: *Israel rejects what is good; An enemy (Assyria) shall pursue him* (Hosea 8:3). And *good* means only Torah. As it is written: *For I have given you good instruction; my Torah, do not forsake it* (Prov. 4:2)."

¹² This text is also cited in Lamentations Rabbah.

Another midrash, cited in the same section of Lamentations Rabbah as the previous text, teaches that God may choose to forgive one the sins of idolatry, immorality or bloodshed, but not the rejection of Torah. It states further that it was on account of the rejection of Torah that the exile occurred.

R. Huna (4th c. Palestinian Amora - 4th generation) and R. Jeremiah said in the name of R. Samuel b. R. Isaac: We find that the Holy One, blessed be He, may overlook idolatry, immorality or bloodshed, but He does not overlook rejection of the Torah; as it is said, *Why is the land in ruins*

(Jer 9:11)? It is not written here because of idolatry, immorality or bloodshed, but *because they forsook the Teaching (Torah) I had set before them* (*ibid.*, vs. 12).¹³

The final two texts which I will examine in this section are middle period works from the corpus of "Tanhuma Midrashim" (8th c. - 10th c.). In contrast to the midrashim found in the Palestinian Talmud and Lamentations Rabbah (midrashim from the early period), the texts from "Tanhuma Midrashim" - Numbers Rabbah II and Exodus Rabbah II - are more expansive and prosaic.

In Numbers Rabbah II it is taught that the Ten Tribes were exiled because they failed to fulfill what their ancestors declared at Mount Sinai - to "do" and to "hearken" to God's Torah. This passage is based on II Kings 18:12, which states that Israel was exiled "because they did not obey the Lord their God: they transgressed His covenant - all that Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded. They did not obey and they did not fulfill it."

Who is meant by, *So now, children, hearken unto me* (Prov. 5:7)? Scripture is speaking of the Ten Tribes on the one hand and of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin on the other; for all Israel are called 'children', as it says, *You are the children of the Lord your God* (Deut. 14:1). *Hearken unto me*: Scripture exhorts them to fulfill their duty of 'hearkening' [to the commandments]; *And do not swerve from the words of my mouth* (Prov 5:7): He exhorts them to keep their promise of doing them, as they had undertaken at Sinai, *All that the Lord has spoken we will do and hearken* (Exod 24:7). For they were exiled on account of having transgressed both of these things;

as it says, *And the king of Assyria deported the Israelites to Assyria...because they did not obey the Lord their God..and would not hear it, nor do it* (II Kings 18:11 f.).¹⁴

The midrashic passage found in Exodus Rabbah II essentially echoes all the different themes of this section. This midrash claims that on account of forsaking both God and Torah the Ten Tribes were exiled by Sennacherib.

R. Samuel (3rd c. Babylonian Amora - 1st generation) says...If Ham, the father of Canaan, who did not smite but only looked [at his father] was condemned, with his descendants, to perpetual slavery, then how much more so he who both curses and smites? To whom is the allusion? To the Ten Tribes who refused to bear the yoke of God, with the result that Sennacherib came and led them into captivity. It is like a king who had ten sons that rebelled against him and nullified his edicts, whereupon he said to them: As you have nullified my edicts, I will summon the fly to exact vengeance from you. Similarly, the Ten Tribes rebelled against God and disregarded the Torah, as it says, *They have been false to the Lord, and said: it is not He* (Jer. 5:12); hence did He bring upon them the fly, as it says, *That the Lord will whistle for the fly* (Isa 7:18) - this is Sennacherib. When Israel disregards the Commandments, it is as if they curse their parents, for God is our father, as it says, *But now, O Lord, You are our father* (*ibid.*, 64:7), and the Torah is our mother, for it says, *And do not forsake the teaching of your mother* (Prov. 1:8). She reared us at Sinai, as it says, *I have taught you in the way of wisdom* (*ibid.*, 4:11).¹⁵

In Exodus Rabbah II then, the Ten Tribes' forsaking of God and Torah was envisioned as akin to a child cursing both

mother and father. The child, in having done so, forsook his heritage and separated himself not only from parents, but a long line of tradition. Likewise, the Ten Tribes separated or exiled themselves from among the family of the Twelve Tribes through their denial of father and mother, God and Torah, respectively.

III. For the Sin of Not Circumcising

The Ten Tribes' spurning of God's "covenant" was interpreted by the rabbis as having meant not only the forsaking of the Torah, but also in a few midrashic passages, as the forsaking of the covenant of circumcision by Israel. In this section, I will reverse the chronological order of my examination of the midrashim, because it is only the earliest text which speaks of exile as the result of the sin of not circumcising.

It is taught in Pirke de-Rabbi Eleazar (9th c. Palestinian text), that as soon as the Ten Tribes separated from Judah and Benjamin, they ceased to keep the covenant of circumcision. This passage is also cited three times in the Yalkut Shimoni. "Thus the Israelites were wont to circumcise until they were divided into two kingdoms. The kingdom of Ephraim (the Ten Tribes) cast off from themselves the covenant of circumcision."¹⁶

In another text also of the middle period, it is taught that the Ten Tribes, in addition to forsaking the Torah, ceased also to practice circumcision. In this passage the rabbis interpreted the word "l'zot" as referring to the covenant of circumcision, which Israel had forsaken.

Why should I forgive you this
(Jer. 5:7)? Why should I forgive
you for forsaking the Torah? Torah
is referred to as *this*: *This*
is the Torah (Deut 4:44). And
you forsook it, as it is written,
Because they forsook my Torah
(Jer 9:12). Another interpretation:
Why should I forgive you *this*?
For forsaking circumcision.

Circumcision is referred to as *this: This shall be the covenant between Me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep; every male among you shall be circumcised* (Gen 17:10). And you forsook it, as it is written, *For the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant* (I Kings 19:10). ¹⁷

The only passage which teaches that the Ten Tribes were exiled because they ceased to practice circumcision is found in Tractate Sanhedrin of the Babylonian Talmud (early period). Surprisingly, the two previously cited middle-period texts do not explicitly state that the Ten Tribes were exiled as a result of forsaking the covenant of circumcision. This is especially striking, since they do seem otherwise to build upon Tractate Sanhedrin's theme that the Ten Tribes ceased to practice circumcision.

According to either R. Eleazar (2nd c. Palestinian Tanna) or R. Judah (1st c. Palestinian Tanna), it was on account of the Ten Tribes forsaking of the covenant of circumcision that they were exiled.

R. Eleazar and R. Judah - One said, They did not go into exile until they had become uncircumcised. And the other said, They did not go into exile until they had become *mamzerim*. The one who said, 'Uncircumcised', refers the verse [*Because they have broken faith with the Lord, because they have begotten alien children. Therefore, the new moon shall devour their portion* (Hosea 5:7)] to circumcision and practice of religious duties....¹⁸

IV. On Account of Not Making Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

The final exile of the Ten Tribes occurred during the reign of Hoshea b. Elah. As I noted in chapter two, Hoshea abrogated Jeroboam's decree against making pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He removed the guards from the road and made it possible for the people to resume going up to Jerusalem for the festivals. This, of course, might appear to be a righteous act. Yet, according to the rabbis, it was Hoshea's "good deed" which led to Israel's exile.

There are two midrashim attributed to Rab, (3rd c. Babylonian Amora - 1st generation) which explain the consequences of Hoshea's act. For it was through his actions that the Ten Tribes actually incurred guilt for the sin of not making pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

In Tractate Gittin of the Babylonian Talmud, Rab is said to have taught that even after Hoshea disbanded the guards which Jeroboam had stationed on the roads to prevent the Israelites from going up to Jerusalem, the people still refrained from making pilgrimage. It was on account of their failure to go up to Jerusalem (once Hoshea had again made it possible for them to do so) that God exiled them. Prior to Hoshea's act, the guilt had always rested with Jeroboam and the kings who came after him.

Jeroboam had stationed guards on the roads to prevent the Israelites from going up [to Jerusalem] for the festivals, and Hoshea disbanded them, and for all that the Israelites did not go up to the festivals. Thereupon God decreed that for those years during which the Israelites

had not gone up to the festival they should go a corresponding number into captivity.¹⁹

The second text attributed to Rab is found in Lamentations Rabbah (6th c. Palestine). In this passage Rab explained that up until Hoshea, the sin of not making pilgrimage rested with the kings of the Ten Tribes. But when Hoshea abrogated Jeroboam's edict against making pilgrimage, he transferred the sin from the kings to the masses.

R. Kahana asked Rab: Is it possible that [Hoshea] can have accomplished so much good, and yet it is reported of him, *King Shalmaneser marched against him...* (II Kings 17:3)? But this happened to him because he removed the chain from off his own neck and set it round the necks of the masses, and he did not say, 'Let all the people go up and pray,' but 'Let whoever wants to go up do so'.²⁰

Because Hoshea made pilgrimage to Jerusalem optional, rather than obligatory, the people did not go up to Jerusalem. On account of this, they incurred guilt and were subsequently exiled. For "he who begins doing a command (i.e., Hoshea), but does not carry it out to the end, makes himself, and all that are his (i.e., the Ten Tribes), liable to the death penalty (i.e., exile)."²¹

V. On Account of Lust - Meat, Wine, Women and *Mamzerim*

To this point I have examined the literature which condemned the Ten Tribes for their idolatry and for their forsaking of God, Torah and Covenant (including circumcision and pilgrimage to Jerusalem). Yet, this is not a complete list of the sins which the Ten Tribes were said to have committed. They were indeed also guilty of sins "of the flesh." As enumerated in Scriptures and in the midrash, the Ten Tribes had a lust for meat and drank an abundance of wine (perhaps this was a sign of rampant alcoholism). In addition to these two sins, Israel was guilty of adultery, which caused divorce and of the conceiving of bastard children. And, according to the rabbis, for all these sins, too, the Ten Tribes were exiled.

A. On account of a lust for meat.

The biblical account of the Ten Tribes' lust for meat is described in two short passages in the Prophets. In Hosea, the Ten Tribes were accused of bringing sacrifices to God only for the sake of providing "flesh for them(selves) to eat" (Hosea 8:13). And in Amos, the leaders of the people were said to have lolled on their couches, "feasting on lambs from the flock and on calves from the stalls" (Amos 6:4). Building on this second passage, the rabbis elaborated briefly on the Ten Tribes' sin of lust for meat. I have found only three midrashim on this topic; two of these

describe the Ten Tribes' lust for meat, and the third explains the result of that lust.

In a passage found in Leviticus Rabbah (5th c.), the people of the Ten Tribes are portrayed as gluttons. For when one of them wished to eat meat, it is written, that he would inspect all his flocks and herds and then take the fattest from amongst them for food. Moreover, the rabbis taught, that once an Israelite chose the fattest animal he had, he would, as if overpowered by his desire for meat, immediately slaughter it.

*Feasting on lambs from the flock
and on calves from the stalls*
(Amos 6:4). When one of them
(an Israelite) wished to eat a kid,
he used to drag the whole flock
before him, and he then took the fattest
of them, stood over it and slaughtered
it; and when one wished to eat
a calf, he would drag all the cattle
before him, [choose the fattest],
stand over it and slaughter it.
This is what is meant by the passage
*Feasting on lambs from the flock
and on calves from the stalls (ibid.).* 22

The other descriptive passage concerning the Ten Tribes' lust for meat is found in Sifre to Deuteronomy (4th c.). In this midrash the sacrifices which were brought in the time of King Solomon are juxtaposed to those brought during the time of the Ten Tribes. What this juxtaposition yields is a picture of a group of people (the Ten Tribes) who are portrayed as having had an insatiable appetite for meat and a blatant disregard for animal life.

*Curd of kine, and milk of sheep
- this was the situation at the
time of Solomon, as it is said,
Ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of
the pastures, and a hundred sheep*

(I Kings 5:3). *With fat of lambs and rams* - this was the situation at the time of the Ten Tribes, as it is said, *Feasting on lambs from the flock, and calves from the stalls* (Amos 6:4). ²³

According to the rabbis, it was, in part, on account of the Ten Tribes' voracious appetite for meat that they were exiled.

Again you find that the Ten Tribes were exiled only because of (abundance of) food, drink, and ease, as it is said, *They lie on ivory beds...feasting on lambs... and on calves...they drink from the wine bowls....Assuredly, right soon they shall head the column of exiles* (Amos 6:4, 6-7). ²⁴

B. On account of wine.

The Ten Tribes' lust for meat was surpassed only by their unquenchable thirst for wine. According to Scriptures, the people of Israel were so fond of wine that they drank "to excess" (Hosea 4:18), and directly "from the wine bowls" (Amos 6:6) (not mixing the wine with water, as was customary).

The rabbis' discussion of this topic is two tiered. On one level the midrashim describe the Ten Tribes' unceasing desire for wine and their exile because of that desire. And on a second level, the drinking of wine is described as acting as a catalyst, leading to adultery, mamzerim and divorce. The midrashim about the Ten Tribes' fondness for wine, and their exile because of it, are largely embedded in texts from the early midrashic period.

In Genesis Rabbah (5th c.) it is taught, quite succinctly, that the Ten Tribes were exiled because of their love for wine. "The Ten Tribes were exiled only because of wine, as it is written, *Woe to those who chase strong drink from early in the morning, and till late in the evening are inflamed by wine (Isa. 5:11)!*" ²⁵ This passage was expanded upon in Leviticus Rabbah (5th c.). Likening wine to a poisonous snake, the rabbis wrote that just as the venom of a poisonous snake separates one from the living, so did the venom of the grape separate the Ten Tribes from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, causing them to go into exile.

*[Who cries, 'Woe!' who, 'Alas!';
Who has quarrels, who complaints;
Who has wounds without cause; Who
has bleary eyes? Those whom wine
keeps till the small hours, those
who gather to drain the cups. Do
not ogle that red wine as it lends
its color to the cup, as it flows
smoothly; In the end, it bites
like a snake;] and separates like an
adder (Prov. 23:29-32). Just as
an adder separates life from death
so wine separated the Ten Tribes
causing them to go into exile, as it
says, Woe to those who chase strong
drink from early in the morning,
and till late in the evening are
inflamed by wine (Isa. 5:11), They
drink from the wine bowls (Amos 6:6).
On account of this They shall head
the column of exiles (ibid., vs. 7). ²⁶*

There are two midrashim, both from the early period, which identify the place from which the Ten Tribes obtained their wine - a town near Tiberias. In both instances, the Ten Tribes are said to have been exiled on account of the wine purchased from this town. In a passage attributed to R. Helbo (4th c. - Palestinian Amora who lived for some time in

Babylonia - 4th generation), it is stated: "The wine of Perugitha and the water of Diomsith cut off the Ten Tribes from Israel."²⁷ In a nearly identical midrash in Leviticus Rabbah it is taught: "The rabbis said in the name of R. Hanina: [They obtained their wine] from Pelugta, since through their wine, the Ten Tribes were seduced and were exiled."²⁸ In this text, the rabbis changed the name of "Perugitha" to read "Pelugta." "Pelugta", taken literally, means separation. Thus, the wine from "Pelugta" separated the Ten Tribes (who went into exile) from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Certainly an incisive word play!

There is one additional midrash, found in Midrash Tanhuma and also in Midrash Tanhuma Buber (middle period works), which teaches that the Ten Tribes were exiled on account of wine. In this passage it is Israel's leaders who are accused of causing the exile of the Ten Tribes. For they cared only for wine and personal pleasure, and not for the affairs of their kingdom.

And thus you find that the Ten Tribes were exiled on account of wine. See what Scripture states: *Woe to you who are at ease in Zion and confident on the hill of Samaria, you notables of the leading nation on whom the House of Israel pin their hopes* (Amos 6:1). *Who are at ease in Zion: They sit in their palaces of pleasure in repose. And confident on the hill of Samaria: They sit in safety in Sebastî, drink and become drunk. You notables of the leading nation....Why did they act this way? Because they were inflamed with a passion for wine.*²⁹

According to the rabbis, the Ten Tribes were not only exiled on account of their unquenchable thirst for wine, but also

for the sins which they committed under the influence of wine. As demonstrated in the previous passage from Midrash Tanhuma, the leaders of Israel neglected their duties because they were drunk with wine. As we shall see, it is further taught in the Midrash, as well as in the Bible, that wine led the Israelites to commit adultery.

C. On account of adultery

Israel's inflamed sexual passion on account of wine is wonderfully illustrated in Hosea 4:11-12. In terms explicitly sexual, it is said of the Ten Tribes: "Wine and new wine destroy(ed) the mind of my people: It consult(ed) its stick, its rod direct(ed) it! A lecherous impulse had made them go wrong...."

The rabbis, no doubt aware of this text, taught, in Leviticus Rabbah (5th c.), that the Ten Tribes acquired their wine from "Pethugta" (a slight variation on the infamous "Pelugta" - seemingly the same town though). In this midrash, "Pethugta" is interpreted as meaning 'seduced their body'. Thus, on account of wine, Israel was seduced to commit immoral acts.

And where did they [obtain it, to] drink their wine? R. Abbahu (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 3rd generation) said in the name of R. Hanina: From Pethugta, seeing that their wine seduced (pittah) their body (guf) to immorality...and were exiled.³⁰

This text is also cited in Numbers Rabbah I (13th c.).

In another passage, found in the same section of Numbers Rabbah as the preceding text, the 'immoral' act which the Ten Tribes committed under the influence of wine is unambiguously stated to have been "adultery."

Through the wine they were enticed and committed adultery, and for this reason they were to go into exile. Thus it is written, *Assuredly they shall head the column of exiles* (Amos 6:7). Thus we have learned that wherever there is wine there is immorality...for

wine leads to immorality, and consequently a man should separate himself from it so that it may not lead him into error.³¹

Unfortunately for the Ten Tribes, they did not heed this lesson. And thus they were cut off from the land of the living - the land of Eretz Yisrael.

In a midrash found in the Babylonian Talmud and attributed to R. Abbahu (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 3rd generation), the sins of lust for meat and wine, and the sin of adultery, are all brought together. In this passage it is taught that the Ten Tribes were exiled on account of a combination of three things: food, wine and adultery.

They lie on ivory beds, lolling on their couches (Amos 6:4).

R. Jose b. R. Hanina said: This refers to people who urinate before their beds naked. R. Abbahu derided this: If so, is that why it is written: *Assuredly, they shall head the column of exiles* (*ibid.*, vs. 7) Rather, said R. Abbahu: this refers to people who eat and drink together, join their couches, exchange their wives, and make their couches foul with semen that is not theirs.³²

There is one final passage, of some length, on the subject of the adulterous practices of the Ten Tribes and their consequences. I will divide the passage into three parts for the sake of discussion. The first part of the midrash appears to be marginally based on the previously cited passage from the Babylonian Talmud and is found in Numbers Rabbah I (12th c.). It omits all discussion of food and drink, but adds detail to the rabbis' description of Israel's adulterous ways. In this portion of the midrash,

the men of the Ten Tribes were said to have been "steeped in debauchery;" engaging in wife-swapping.

And the king of Assyria deported the Israelites to Assyria (II Kings 18:11). All this befell the Ten Tribes because they were steeped in debauchery with married women, this being the crime for which their doom was sealed; as it says about them, *They lie on ivory beds, lolling on their couches* (Amos 6:4), which indicates that they befouled their beds with effusion of semen that was not theirs, for they were wont to exchange their wives with one another. What is written afterwards? *Assuredly, they shall head the column of exiles; they shall loll no more at festive meals* (*ibid.*, vs. 7); the joy of those who were befouled shall pass away at that moment.³³

The second part of the passage informs us that because the men of the Ten Tribes had intercourse with other men's wives (committed adultery), these women became "forbidden" to their husbands. On account of this, the wives' husbands divorced them.

Micah too prophesies about them, *You drive the women of My people away from their pleasant homes; you deprive their infants of My glory forever* (Micah 2:9). Scripture tells us here that they were wont to violate men's wives and make them forbidden to their husbands, and these used to divorce them. Thus, *You drive the women of My people away from their pleasant homes; that is, from the house of the husband which the wife found 'pleasant'.*³⁴

The third and longest section of this midrash focuses on the offspring which resulted from these adulterous relationships involving the members of Ten Tribes. The rabbis taught that

these offspring were *mamzerim* ³⁵ and thus had no place in "God's assembly," for they broke the continuity of the people (i.e., destroying the pure line of descent back to Abraham). Thus, through adultery, the Ten Tribes cut themselves off from the rest of Israel (i.e., Judah and Benjamin). This point is illustrated through the interpretation of the phrase: *chevel nimratz* (Micah 2:10), in which the rabbis gave additional meaning(s) to each word. *Chevel* was understood as a rope which tied one to the continuity of Israel. And, each letter of *NiMRaTZ* was interpreted as representing an aspect of the Ten Tribes which led to their exile.

What is the meaning of You
deprive their infants of My glory
forever? I had no other glory
in the world, says God, but the young
children - as it says, *From the
mouths of infants and sucklings you
have have founded strength* (Ps. 8:3)
- and I glory in them - as you
read, *In the young, of the people
is the Kings's glory* (Prov. 14:28)
- and you have made them bastards,
and have put to naught that
glory of Mine, for I have no delight
in bastards; even as it is
written, *A bastard (i.e., the
offspring of adultery or incest
between Jews) shall not be admitted
into the assembly of the Lord*
(Deut 23:3). What then is written
afterwards? *Up and depart!*
*This is no resting place because
of [your] defilement. Terrible
destruction - chevel nimratz*
- shall befall (Micah 2:10). The
Holy One, blessed be He, said to
them, in effect: For other sins I
showed you long-suffering, but
seeing that you have stretched forth
your hand to commit adultery, *Up
and depart*. What is the
implication of *chevel nimratz*?
I had imagined, God means, that

*the Lord's portion is His people,
 Jacob His own allotment (chevel)*
 (Deut 32:9); I had taken Jacob
 as My inheritance and he was my
 portion because his seed was like
 a rope (chevel) which is all
 intertwined, since they could all
 trace their descent back to their
 ancestors, and no strange offspring
 broke their continuity, for they
 all guarded themselves from adultery
 and no bastards had crept in.
 How so? It is written, *Elezar
 begot Phinehas, Phinehas begot
 Abishua...* (I Chron 5:30).
 But when the chain comes to you, you
 go in to cohabit with your neighbor's
 wife, and defile the inheritance.
 How can he count a particular child
 as his son when he is not his son,
 being a bastard? You have snapped
 the cord! This explains *chevel nimratz*.
 What is the meaning of *nimratz*? It
 stands for: Noef (adulterer),
 Mamzer (bastard), Rasha (wicked),
 TZorer (oppressor). Thus you learn
 that in the case of the Ten Tribes
 their doom was sealed solely on account
 of the iniquity of adultery.³⁶

Because of the sin of adultery, the Ten Tribes,
 "snapped the cord" which bound them to their ancestors and
 which guaranteed the continuity of the Jewish People through
 them. On account of this, God's decree of their exile by
 Assyria was sealed.

Conclusion

The rabbinic literature written about the sins of the Ten Tribes creates a picture of a group of people who were thoroughly iniquitous, completely devoted to idolatry and the satisfaction of their physical desires. The extent of the Ten Tribes' perceived iniquity is well demonstrated in a midrashic passage attributed to R. Abba b. Kahana (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 3rd generation and a pupil of R. Johanan). It is found in Genesis Rabbah. In this passage the Ten Tribes were compared to the generation of the Flood (which was completely washed off the face of the earth), and found lacking even by comparison with such an unredeemed generation.

All existence on earth was blotted out (Gen 7:23). R. Abba b. Kahana said: The Ten Tribes did what was not done even by the generation of the Flood. With reference to the generation of the Flood, it is written, (The Lord saw how great was man's wickedness on earth,) and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all day (Gen 6:5), whereas with reference to the Ten Tribes it is written, Woe to those who plan iniquity and design evil on their beds (Micah 2:1), implying, at night. And how do we know that they did so by day too? Because it is stated, When morning dawns, they do it (ibid.). ³⁷

According to R. Abba b. Kahana, the Ten Tribes were so iniquitous that they never ceased from their idolatrous worship or from satisfying their animal-like lusts. Nevertheless, he did teach that there was a remnant left of the Ten Tribes, whereas the generation of the Flood was

completely destroyed. (Yet, as one will notice in the next chapter, there are those who differed from R. Abba regarding the topic of a remnant of the Ten Tribes!)

As has been shown throughout this chapter, there was not "one" unique sin for which the Ten Tribes were exiled. Rather, the Ten Tribes were exiled on account of a rather creative variety of sins. Their practice of idolatry led them away from God, Torah, Covenant and Cult; and their satisfaction of hunger and thirst led them to excess and to succumb to their sexual desires, thus causing divorce and tainted offspring. For all these sins, the Ten Tribes were exiled.

1. I did locate midrashim which detail the idolatrous practices of Israel, but all these passages are directed against Judah and Benjamin rather than the Ten Tribes. Perhaps the exiles of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were viewed by the rabbis as one exile - of the Twelve Tribes. Thus what is said of Judah and Benjamin may also be applied to the Ten Tribes. However, in this thesis, I determined to examine the midrashim which specifically mention the "Ten Tribes." Therefore, I must forego including the passages about Judah and Benjamin in this chapter, even though they shared the same sins as the Ten Tribes.
2. Gen R. 38.6; Num R. II 11:7; Yal I: Noah 12 (62) p. 33 and Naso 6 (711) p. 464, Yal II: Hosea 4 (320) p. 849 and Psalms 29 (711) p. 904.
3. Lam R. Proem 12.
4. Sifre-Deut Piska 318; Yal II: Ha'azinu 32 (945) p. 674.
5. Seder Olam R. 26. The only other passage which mentions Israel's complete devotion to idolatry has been previously cited in chapter two in the section on Ahab. According to the rabbis, the entire generation of Ahab were idolaters. Lev R. 16:2; P.d.R.K. 4:2; Ag Br 79; M. Teh I 7; Num R. II 19:2.
6. B. Shabbat 56b.
7. Yal I: Ekev 8 (851) p. 588 - There are a few texts which teach that Zebulun and Naphtali were the first of the Ten Tribes to be exiled, followed by Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh.
8. Lam R. Proem 2; P.d.R.K. 15:4.
9. Sifre-Deut Piska 322 - The critical edition reads "fools" - "shotim" (with a 'vav') as "shvatim" - "tribes" (with a 'vet').
10. M. Tan B. Va'yigash:8.
11. It is apparent from the parallels in the texts that "Torah", in these texts, is used in the sense of instruction and not in any of its other meanings.
12. Y. R.H. 3:8 - 59a; Lam R. Proem 2.
13. Lam R. ibid.
14. Num R. II 9:7.
15. Exod R. II 30:5.
16. P.d.R.E. 29; Yal I: Lech-Lecha 13 (71) p. 38 and Balak 23 (766) 531, Yal II: Joshua 5 (15) p. 695.
17. Ag Br 70:2.
18. Y. San 10:6 - 29c.
19. B. Gittin 88a.
20. Lam R. Proem 33; T.d.V.E. 188; Seder Olam R. 22.
21. T.d.V.E. ibid.
22. Lev R. 5:3.
23. Sifre-Deut Piska 317.
24. Ibid. Piska 318.
25. Gen R. 36:4. It is equally possible that the midrash in Genesis Rabbah was a synthesis of the midrash in Leviticus Rabbah.
26. Lev R. 12:1.; Est R. 5:1 - In this parallel passage wine is said to have "separated the Ten Tribes from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin when the former went into

exile." In addition to this, the text in Esther R. omits the Amos 6:6-7 passages, instead quoting Isaiah 5:13: "Assuredly, my people will suffer exile for not giving heed."; M. Tan B. Noah:21 - this midrash is a synthesis of Lev R. 12:1.

27. B. Shabbat 147b.
28. Lev R. 5:3; Num R. 10:3.
29. M. Tan Shemini: 5; M. Tan B. Shemini: 8.
30. Lev R. 5:3; Num R. I 10:3.
31. Num R. *ibid*.
32. B. Shabbat 62b; B. Kiddushin 71b.
33. Num R. I 9:7.
34. *Ibid*.
35. A *mamzer* is one born of an unlawful, incestuous, or adulterous marriage. The law specifies that a *mamzer* may not marry a member of the Jewish community (Deut 23:3).
36. *Ibid*.
37. Gen R. 28:5; S.S.R. I. 4:3; Yal II: Ezekiel 14 (353) p. 838 and Micah 2 (551) pp. 860-861.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EXILE AND FATE OF THE TEN TRIBES

Introduction

In the first three chapters I have examined the rabbinic material which details the events leading up to the exile of the Ten Tribes and the reasons for their exile. The purpose of this concluding chapter is to explore the rabbinic material which chronicles that exile and which explains what happened to (or what will happen to) the Ten Tribes subsequent to their exile. To this end I have divided the chapter into four sections. The first two sections focus on midrashim relevant to the period of the exile of the Ten Tribes, while the final two sections attempt to determine what the rabbis saw as the fate of the Ten Tribes following their exile to Assyria.

In the first section of this chapter I examine the rabbinic material on the order in which the Ten Tribes were exiled. Section II explores the midrashim which detail, according to the rabbis, the exact places of exile of the Ten Tribes. In section III, I focus on the rabbinic literature which teaches that the Ten Tribes were hopelessly lost, not to return in this world or in the world-to-come. The final section of this chapter (section IV) is comprised of three sub-sections: A-C. In sub-section A, I explore the topic of the interminability of all Twelve Tribes. Sub-

section B examines the midrashim which maintain that the Ten Tribes, within 100-200 years after their exile, returned to their tribal lands. And, in sub-section C, I investigate the rabbinic material which promises the redemption of the Ten Tribes in a time-to-come (*atid l'vo*).

In addition to these four sections, I have also attached an appendix (Appendix 1) to this chapter. The midrashim in this appendix are related to the subject of the exile of the Ten Tribes. While they only provide a very general accounting of the exile of Israel, these midrashim are important in that they express two different perspectives of the exile of the Ten Tribes relative to the exile of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. One body of midrashim presents an historical account of the exile of the Twelve Tribes (i.e., two chronologically separated exile traditions), while the other set of midrashim teaches that the exile of the Twelve Tribes was one continuous exile. This second viewpoint is non-historic, but nonetheless figures into the rabbis' redemptive scheme of history. As the Twelve Tribes were all part of a single exile, so too shall they all be as one in the process of redemption in the *atid l'vo* - in the messianic future.

I. Order of Exile of the Ten Tribes

The exile of the Ten Tribes did not occur in one fell swoop, but rather happened over a period of some fourteen years.¹ From the biblical accounts of this exile, one cannot be absolutely clear about which tribe or tribes were exiled first. According to the Second Book of Kings, the tribe of Naphtali is the only tribe which one is able to say, with certainty, was among the first tribes to be exiled. For it is taught that Tiglath-pileser captured "Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor - Gilead, Galilee, the entire region of Naphtali; and he deported the inhabitants to Assyria" (II King 15:29). However, there is a parallel passage in First Chronicles which specifically states that Tilgath-pilneser² exiled the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh (I Chron 5:26). Thus, the TaNaKH provides us with two different accounts about which tribe (II Kings) or tribes (I Chronicles) were the first of the Ten Tribes to be exiled.

No doubt, these two varying accounts troubled the rabbis. How could the Bible provide two different explanations of one event? I would expect (given the overwhelming tendency of the rabbis to explain away contradictions in the biblical text) that the rabbis would provide us with one definitive account of the order of the exile of the Ten Tribes. In this case, they do provide us with one definitive account and then again, they don't.

In Lamentations Rabbah (6th c. - an early period work),

R. Eleazar (2nd c. Palestinian Tanna - 3rd generation) taught in conjunction with what is written in I Chron 5:26, that the tribes of Reuben and Gad were the first of the Ten Tribes to go into exile. Yet, in the same passage, R. Samuel b. Nachman (late 3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 3rd generation) is said to have taught, in conjunction with what is written in II Kings 15:29, that the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun were the first to go into exile. Clearly, both accounts of the order of the exile of the Ten Tribes vary slightly from their biblical precursors. R. Eleazar omitted the half-tribe of Manasseh from his list, while R. Samuel b. Nachman added the tribe of Zebulun to his.³

In what order were they exiled?
 R. Eleazar says: The tribes of Reuben and Gad went into exile first. R. Samuel b. Nachman says: The tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali went into exile first; and so it is written, *As at the first time He made light the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali* (Isa 8:23). How, then, does R. Eleazar interpret the verse quoted by R. Samuel b. Nachman? As the tribes of Reuben and Gad went into exile, so did the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali go into exile (i.e., the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali had the same experience as had already befallen Reuben and Gad).⁴

The only other midrashic passage which lists Naphtali as being the first of the Ten Tribes to be exiled is found in the late period work, Seder Olam Rabbah (12th c.). In this instance, I had to rely heavily on the notes to the text in order to understand and interpret this passage.

At the same time Ahaz took the gold [and silver that were on hand in the House of the Lord and in the

treasuries of the royal palace and sent them as a gift to the king of Assyria.] The king of Assyria responded to his request... (II Kings 16:8-9). In the twentieth year of Pekah King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria came... (II Kings 15:29) and took the golden calf that was in Dan and departed. And then it is written, And Tiglath-pileser, King of Assyria, came and besieged it....⁵

According to the notes to the text of Seder Olam Rabbah, the Ten Tribes were exiled in three different groups. First was Naphtali, second were Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh and third were the remainder of the Ten Tribes.

The first time was in the days of Pekah, when the entire region of Naphtali was captured [and Tiglath-pileser deported the inhabitants to Assyria] (II Kings 15:29). This happened in the fourth year of Ahaz, King of Judah. The second exile occurred in the twelfth year of the reign of Ahaz. He roused King Pul of Assyria...and he carried them away, namely, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (I Chron 5:26). This was in the twelfth year of Ahaz and at the beginning of the revolt by Hoshea after he had been a vassal to Assyria for eight years (II Kings 17:3). The third exile occurred in the sixth year of the reign of Hezekiah, in the ninth year of the revolt of Hoshea. The king of Assyria captured Samaria. He deported the Israelites to Assyria... (II Kings 17:6).⁶

This midrash solves the dilemma of which tribe(s) was exiled first by following II Kings first and I Chronicles second - but most midrashim don't follow this order.

The majority of midrashim which discuss which tribe or tribes were exiled first, however, side with R. Eleazar,

stating that Reuben and Gad were the first tribes to be exiled. In many midrashim, the half-tribe of Manasseh is also included (as was taught in I Chronicles 5:26) in the list of which tribes were exiled first.

There is one other text from the early midrashic period, in addition to the passage found in Lamentations Rabbah, which teaches that the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh were the first of the Ten Tribes to be exiled. It can be found both in the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmuds.

But did they count the years of release and Jubilees [after the return from Babylon]? If even after the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh went into exile, the Jubilees were abolished, should Ezra in connection with whom it is said: *The sum of the entire community was 42,360* (Ezra 2:64), have counted them? For it was taught: When the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh went into exile, the Jubilees were abolished as it is said: *You shall proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants* (Lev 25:10), (i.e., only at the time when all the inhabitants dwell upon it, but not at the time when some of them are exiled).⁷

This midrash implies that the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh were exiled first. For as soon as a portion of the people no longer dwelt in Eretz Yisrael, the years of release and the Jubilees were abolished. In this case, the midrash informs us that the years of release and the Jubilees were abolished when the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh were exiled. Therefore,

one may conclude from this midrash that these three tribes were perceived as the first of the Ten Tribes to be exiled.

This conclusion is given further credence by the testimony of a large number of midrashim from the middle period. Essentially, these middle period midrashim include three different passages (and their parallels).

In Numbers Rabbah II and Midrash Tanhuma Buber, two works from the corpus of "Tanhuma Midrashim," (late 8th-9th c.) the rabbis taught that because the tribes of Reuben and Gad had settled outside of Eretz Yisrael, they were the first of the Ten Tribes to be exiled.

Likewise in the case of the children of Gad and the children of Reuben, you find that they were rich, possessing large numbers of cattle, but they loved their money and settled outside of Eretz Yisrael. Consequently they were the first of all the tribes to go into exile; as is borne out by the text, *And he carried them away, namely, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh* (I Chron 5:26). What brought it on them? The fact that they separated themselves from their brethren because of their possessions. From where can we infer this? From what is written in the Torah, *The Reubenites and the Gadites owned cattle in very great numbers* (Num 32:1). ⁸

The order of the exile of the Ten Tribes is explored further in a midrash which appears in Qoheleth Rabbah (8th c.), Numbers Rabbah II, Midrash Tanhuma and Midrash Tanhuma Buber. What is unique about this passage is that the exile of the Ten Tribes is attributed to the efforts of Sennacherib. According to the biblical text, Sennacherib did indeed march against Judah, but he is not referred to in the

biblical account of the exile of the Ten Tribes. Rather, Tiglath-pileser and Shalmaneser were the ones who supposedly exiled the Ten Tribes according to the biblical account (II Kings 15:29 and 17:5-6). In fact, it seems likely that the basis of the rabbis' statement, that Sennacherib exiled the Ten Tribes, may be found in a midrash in Tractate Sanhedrin of the Babylonian Talmud. In this passage one finds a list of eight other names of Assyrian leaders which were considered synonymous with the name Sennacherib. These names are "Tiglath-pileser, Tilgath-pilneser, Shalmaneser, Pul, Sargon, Asnapper, Rabba, and Yakkira."⁹ This midrashic passage has not only listed Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh as the first tribes to be exiled, but it has also provided an account of the order of the exile of the remaining tribes.

You find that Sennacherib carried them off in three sections. On the first occasion he exiled the Reubenites, Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh. On the second occasion, the tribe of Zebulun and the tribe of Naphtali; as it says, *In the former time He made light the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali* (Isa 8:23). On the third occasion he exiled the rest of the tribes; as it says, *But on the latter he has dealt a more grievous blow - (hikbid) (ibid.)*; hikbid implies that he swept them out (*hikbidam*) as with a broom (*makbed*). ¹⁰

In this text, the rabbis eliminated the contradiction of the two varying biblical accounts of the order of the exile of the Ten Tribes. By interpreting the word *rishon* as former rather than as first, the rabbis were able to determine the position of the exile of Zebulun and Naphtali as coming

after the exile of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

The final text to be examined in this section is found in Midrash Eser Galuyyot (9th c.), an aggadic work of the middle period. It also teaches that Sennacherib exiled the Ten Tribes in four separate "exiles." Further, it provides the most detailed account of the order of the exile of the Ten Tribes by referring to nine of the Ten Tribes: Reuben, Gad, Manasseh, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Naphtali, Ephraim and Simeon, respectively.

Israel suffered ten exiles:
 four by Sennacherib, four by
 Nebuchadnezzar, one by Vespasian
 and one by Hadrian. On the first
 occasion Sennacherib came and
 exiled the Reubenites, the Gadites
 and the half-tribe of Manasseh.
 In addition, he took the golden calf
 that Jeroboam b. Nebat had made
 and set in Dan. He brought them all
 to Halah, Habor, the river Gozan
 and in the towns of Media. All this
 happened in the days of
 Pekah b. Remaliah. This was
 the first exile. The second:
 Hoshea b. Elah arose and killed
 Pekah b. Remaliah. Then
 Hoshea b. Elah was made a vassal
 to Sennacherib for seven years. At
 that time Sennacherib came a second
 time and exiled the tribes of
 Asher, Issachar, Zebulun and Naphtali.
 Of them there only remained one out
 of every eight, as it is written,
*Thus said the Lord: As a shepherd
 rescues from the lion's jaw... (Amos 3:12).*
 He also took the second golden calf
 which was in Bethel, as it is written,
*It (i.e., the golden calf of Bethel
 - cf. vs. 5) too shall be brought to
 Assyria as tribute to a patron king
 (Hosea 10:6).* This was the second
 exile. When Ahaz died, King Hezekiah,
 his son, ruled in his place. In the
 fourth year of King Hezekiah,
 Sennacherib came and attacked Samaria

for three years and he captured it in the sixth year of the reign of Hezekiah and exiled Israel, those who were in Samaria - the tribe of Ephraim and Manasseh and he settled in their place people from Cuthah, Babylon, Cush, Hamath, Avva, and Sepharvaim, as it is written, *The king of Assyria brought [people] from Babylon, [Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and he settled them in the towns of Samaria in place of the Israelites]* (II Kings 17:24). This was the third exile. Nebuchadnezzar was enthroned for eight years when he (i.e., Sennacherib) came up against Jerusalem, and he brought people from Cuthah, Babylon, Cush, Hamath, Avva and Sepharvaim, as it is written, *And the king of Assyria [came up against] Jerusalem (ibid.)*. And he came up against Judah and took from the land of Judah one hundred and three townships that belonged to the tribes of Judah and Simeon. He took them with the intent of bringing them to Halah and Habor. But the king of Cush revolted against him. So he took with him Judah and Simeon and made war with the king of Cush, and the Holy One, blessed be He, hid them (i.e., Judah and Simeon) in mountains of darkness. These were the four exiles which the Ten Tribes suffered under Sennacherib.¹¹

The only tribe which is not mentioned in the above passage, from Midrash Eser Galuyyot, is the tribe of Dan. Yet, one may assume that the tribe of Dan was exiled along with its golden calf. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that this text provides us with a full account of the order of the exile of the Ten Tribes.

II. Places of Exile

The rabbis' tripartite description of the order of the exile of the Ten Tribes, discussed in the first section of this chapter, is repeated in their discussion of where the tribes were exiled to. In a passage from the Palestinian Talmud attributed to R. Berechiah (4th c. Palestinian Amora - 5th generation) and R. Helbo (4th c. Palestinian Amora - 4th generation), it is taught that the Ten Tribes were exiled beyond the River Sambatyon, to Daphne and to an unnamed place where they were covered by a cloud. This account of the places of exile of the Ten Tribes is based more on myth than on substantiated fact. The River Sambatyon is a legendary river which is said to have stopped flowing on the Sabbath, while the cloud appears to be an allusion to the cloud which protected the fleeing Israelites from the Egyptians at the Sea (Exod 14:20).

R. Berechiah and R. Helbo in the name of R. Samuel bar Nahman: The Israelites went into three different lands of exile, one beyond the River Sambatyon, one to Daphne at Antioch, and one on which the cloud descended, and which the cloud covered.¹²

This passage is repeated in Lamentations Rabbah (6th c.), albeit in a rather convoluted manner. In this case two of the three places of exile are areas relative to the River Sambatyon, the other place of exile being Daphne at Antioch. The unnamed land where a cloud descended and covered the people is omitted in this passage.

R. Berechiah in the name of R. Helbo,
in the name of R. Samuel bar Nahman:

The Israelites were exiled into three different lands, one beyond the River Sambatyon, as it is written, *Saying to the prisoners, Go free, to those who are in darkness, Show yourselves* (Isa. 49:9), one outside of the land of the River Sambatyon. *They shall pasture along the roads - on every bare height shall be their pasture* (*ibid.*), this refers to those who were exiled to Daphne of Antioch.¹³

The two aforementioned midrashic passages are combined in a text found in the middle period work, Numbers Rabbah II (10th c.). In this text, the places of exile parallel those mentioned in the passage found in the Palestinian Talmud (beyond the River Sambatyon, to Daphne at Antioch and behind a cloud of darkness), while the proof text found in the passage from Lamentations Rabbah (Isaiah 49:9) is properly expounded.

Isaiah stated: *Saying to the prisoners, Go free* (Isa. 49:9). He was referring to those exiles who were living beyond Sambatyon. *To those who are in darkness, Show yourselves* (*ibid.*). By this he was referring to those who were living beyond the cloud of darkness. *They shall pasture along the roads, on every bare height shall be their pasture* (*ibid.*). By this he was referring to those who were living in Daphne of Antioch.¹⁴

In addition to the midrashim which list the River Sambatyon, Daphne of Antioch, and an unnamed place covered by a dark cloud, as the lands of exile for the Ten Tribes, there is a passage attributed to R. Abba b. Kahana (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 3rd generation) which parallels the biblical account of the places of exile for the Ten Tribes (II Kings 17:5-6). Surprisingly, this is the only passage

which teaches that the Ten Tribes were exiled to where the Bible says they were.¹⁵ In this case, Halah, the River Habor, the River Gozan and the towns of Media are identified with their 3rd c. C.E. names.

R. Abba b. Kahana said: *And he settled them in Halah, at the [River] Habor, at the River Gozan, and in the towns of Media* (II Kings 17:6); *Halah* is Halwan, and *Habor* is Hadyab, the River Gozan is Ginzak, and the towns of Media are Hamdan and its neighboring towns; others say, Nihar and its neighboring towns.¹⁶

There is one other text, found in the Yalkut Shimoni, which provides us with a third interpretation of the places of exile for two of the Ten Tribes. According to this passage, one of the tribes of Israel was exiled to the East African Coast, and one to Britain.

*The voice of my beloved, this is the Messiah. At the time when he will come and say to Israel, In this month you shall be redeemed, they shall respond saying, 'Did not the Holy One, blessed be He, say to us that he would enslave us in seventy nations?' He will have two responses. He shall say to them, one of you He exiled to Barbaria - the East African Coast, and one of you He exiled to Britain, as if he exiled all of you.*¹⁷

Interestingly, one tradition holds that the British are descendants of one of the "Ten Lost Tribes." Whether this passage is the progenitor of this legend or is commenting on a pre-existing legend is unclear. Nevertheless, it is a striking statement, for it shows that at least some rabbis of the 13th and 14th centuries held the opinion that the Ten Tribes were not completely lost or beyond reclamation. As

will be demonstrated in the following two sections, whether or not the Ten Tribes could be reclaimed or found after their exile to Assyria was a subject of debate amongst the rabbis who taught during the early, middle, and late midrashic periods.

III. Lost and Gone Forever

In the year 721 B.C.E., Assyria exiled the Ten Tribes from their land, hence giving us the "Ten Lost Tribes." According to Scriptures, it is taught that, "In the end, the Lord removed Israel from His presence...So the Israelites were deported from their land to Assyria, as is still the case" (II Kings 17:23). Based on this passage from the book of II Kings, it is not at all clear whether or not the Ten Tribes were lost and gone forever. Do the words "as is still the case" mean that the Ten Tribes remained in Assyria, eventually disappearing at some later time, never to return to Eretz Yisrael? Indeed, relatively few midrashim teach that they were destined never to return to Eretz Yisrael in this world or in the world-to-come. A majority of these midrashim are found in rabbinic literature from the early period (400-640 C.E.).

In a passage attributed to R. Akiba (2nd c. Palestinian Tanna - 2nd generation) in Tractate Sanhedrin of both the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, it is taught that the Ten Tribes were destined not to return to Eretz Yisrael in this world or in the world-to-come. In this passage the Ten Tribes were likened to a day. As the hours of a day are spent and cannot be reclaimed, so too were the Ten Tribes exiled and destined never to return again.

MISHNAH. The Ten Tribes will not return [to Eretz Yisrael], for it is said, *And cast them into another land, as is this day* (Deut 29:27): Just as the day goes and does not return, so they too went and will

not return: This is R. Akiba's view....
 GEMARA. Our Rabbis taught: The
 Ten Tribes have no portion in the
 world to come, as it says, *The
 Lord uprooted them from their soil
 in anger, fury, and great wrath,
 and cast them into another land*
 (*ibid.*): And the Lord uprooted
 them from their soil, refers to
 this world; and cast them into
 another land - [other than]
 to the world to come: this is
 R. Akiba's view.¹⁸

R. Akiba is also cited in Lamentations Rabbah (6th c.)
 as having taught that the Ten Tribes would never return to
 Eretz Yisrael. In this passage the land of Israel is com-
 pared to a widow bereft of the Ten Tribes.

Another interpretation of *Is
 become like a widow* (Lam 1:1)!
 R. Akiba and the Rabbis offer
 explanations. R. Akiba says: She
 is a widow, and you state as a
 widow. The meaning, however, is:
 she is a widow bereft of the Ten Tribes
 but not of the tribes of Judah and
 Benjamin.¹⁹

Just as a widow's husband is dead, never to return, so too
 were the Ten Tribes destroyed, never to return to Eretz
 Yisrael.

In a passage quite similar to the mishnaic section of
 the Tractate Sanhedrin passage cited above, R. Simeon b.
 Yohai (2nd c. Palestinian Tanna - 3rd generation) is said to
 have taught that the Ten Tribes will neither be resurrected
 nor be judged in the world-to-come. This midrash is found in
 Aboth de-Rabbi Nathan (5th-6th c.).

The Ten Tribes will neither come to
 life [in the hereafter] nor be
 brought to judgment, as it is stated,
*The Lord uprooted them from their
 soil in anger, fury, and great wrath,
 and cast them into another land, as*

it is this day (Deut 29:27).
 R. Simeon b. Yohai said: As *this day*
 (in which they rebelled) has passed
 never to return, so they will never
 return.²⁰

There is one additional midrash from the early period which implies that the Ten Tribes (much like Humpty Dumpty) could never be put back together again. In this passage, the Ten Tribes are compared with a *great house* which has been smashed into tiny fragments. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin, however, are relatively better off as they are compared to a *little house* which has been smashed into retrievable (larger) pieces.

It is written, *For the Lord will command, and the great house shall be smashed to bits, and the little house to splinters* (Amos 6:11).
 A bit is a tiny fragment, but a splinter is a larger piece. ²¹

According to the notes to this midrash in the Soncino translation, "The destruction of the [Ten Tribes] was complete, the house being broken up into tiny fragments, as it were (this symbolically pictures their absorption into the Assyrian Empire)." The tribes of Judah and Benjamin, on the other hand, were broken up into distinct pieces, which could easily be restored "at the proper time."²²

The final passage, from Qoheleth Rabbah (8th c.), is a middle period midrash. This text declares that the Ten Tribes were utterly destroyed by the Assyrian foe, such that not even a remnant was left. "The Ten Tribes were exiled and none of them remained; the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were exiled and some remained."²³

The idea that the Ten Tribes were completely destroyed,

never to return in this world or in the world-to-come, is one which nevertheless appears to have been a minority opinion. The five midrashim which I have cited in this section are the only texts which do not hold out any hope of redemption for the Ten Tribes. In the following section we will see that most midrashim take quite a different point of view from these five, pointing instead to a widespread view among the rabbis that the Ten Tribes would have a portion in the world-to-come. R. Johanan and R. Judah even made the rather specific suggestion that a remnant of the Ten Tribes did indeed return to Eretz Yisrael in the days of King Josiah of Judah.

IV. Redemption

As noted in the last section of this chapter, the Bible leaves ambiguous the question of whether or not the Ten Tribes were completely destroyed. We are left to conclude what we will from the vague statement that "the Israelites were deported from their land to Assyria, as is still the case" (II Kings 17:23). If we interpret this concerning the fate of the Ten Tribes, does this statement mean that the Ten Tribes maintained a separate identity even in their exile or were they perhaps assimilated into the existing majority population after a period of time? Perhaps it was on account of the Bible's ambiguousness on this subject that the many medieval legends of the Ten Lost Tribes sprang up. However, it seems more reasonable to posit an oral and literary tradition which bridged the millennial gap between the Bible's statement on the exile of the Ten Tribes and the medieval legends which claimed to have found the descendants of some of these tribes. Indeed, the rabbinic literature would seem to bear this out.

A. The Interminability of the Twelve Tribes

In my examination of the rabbinic literature on the topic of the redemption of the Ten Tribes, I found three midrashim (in two middle period works) which teach that the Twelve Tribes are the *sine qua non* for the creation and maintenance of the world. Thus, according to the logic of

the rabbis', since the world still exists, so too a remnant of the descendants of the Ten Tribes must still exist.

In Exodus Rabbah II (9th c.) it is taught, that just as the heavens cannot endure without the twelve zodiacal constellations, so too the world cannot exist without the Twelve Tribes.

What is the meaning of *Awesome as bannered hosts* (S.S. 6:10)? You will find that there are twelve constellations in the sky, and just as the heavens cannot endure without the twelve constellations, so the world cannot exist without the twelve tribes; for it says:
[Thus said the Lord, who established the sun for light by day, the laws of moon and stars for light by night]...If these laws should ever be annulled by Me - declares the Lord - Only then would the offspring of Israel cease to be a nation before Me for all time (Jer 31:35-36). ²⁴

Clearly, just as the stars still exist in the heavens, so too at least a remnant of the Twelve Tribes must still exist.

The other two midrashim on this subject are found in Pesikta Rabbati (9th c.). In a short, pithy statement, Joseph is said to have avoided visiting with Jacob when he was ill, lest he should have provided his father with an opportunity to curse his brothers. For if Jacob cursed Joseph's brothers, "the whole world would have been destroyed, which was created only for the sake of the (Twelve) Tribes."

And so if I chanced to say something which would give him (Jacob) cause to curse my brothers, he would curse them, with the result that I would have destroyed the whole world, which

was created, only for the sake of the
(Twelve) Tribes.²⁵

In the other passage found in Pesikta Rabbati, it is taught that God will rebuild the Temple for the sake of the Twelve Tribes. Further, it is stated that all the miracles which God performed and will perform, as well as all that He created, was done for the sake of the Twelve Tribes only.

You find that all the miracles which the Holy One, blessed be He, did for Israel and will do for them are for the sake of the Tribes. Even the Temple is to be rebuilt for the sake of the Tribes, as is said *Jerusalem, you shall be rebuilt* (Ps 122:3). And what follows in the text? *Because there the Tribes are to go up* (*ibid.* vs. 4). So, too, everything that the Holy One, blessed be He, created, He created for the sake of the Tribes. Thus, you find that there are twelve months in the year, twelve signs of the Zodiac in the firmament, twelve hours in a day, twelve hours in a night. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Even the upper and lower worlds I created only for the sake of the Tribes, as is evident from the verse *For [the sake of] all these, has My hand made* (Isa 66:2); in this context the phrase *all these* intimates *For [the sake of] all these Twelve Tribes of Israel* (Gen 49:28), with the number twelve, as already stated, represented also in the twelve signs of the Zodiac and in the twelve hours of the day.²⁶

If one is to contend that the Ten Tribes were cut off from this world and from the world-to-come, then, according to the above passage, creation is meaningless, God's miracles are as nothing and the Temple will never be rebuilt. In the eyes of the rabbis, none of this could be further from the truth. Therefore, at least a remnant of the descendants of the Ten Tribes, as well as a remnant of Judah

and Benjamin, must exist (the rabbis would say - even to this day).

B. A Remnant of the Ten Tribes in This World

The idea that there was a remnant of the Ten Tribes in Assyria, which did not assimilate into the majority culture, is initially alluded to in the book of Amos. There it is written, "Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; Perhaps the Lord, the God of Hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:15).

The rabbis, in their discussion of the existence of a remnant of the Ten Tribes, not only explained why this specific group of people merited survival, but also taught that this remnant was returned to Eretz Yisrael by the Prophet Jeremiah in the days of King Josiah of Judah.

In a passage found in the early period midrashic works, Genesis Rabbah (5th c.) and Song of Songs Rabbah (6th c.), it is taught that the Ten Tribes were more iniquitous than the generation of the Flood. Nevertheless, a remnant of the Ten Tribes (and not of the generation of the Flood) was left.

R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Eleazar: The Ten Tribes did what was not done even by the generation of the Flood. With reference to the generation of the Flood, it is written (*The Lord saw how great was man's wickedness on earth, and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all day* (Gen 6:5), whereas with reference to the Ten Tribes it is written, *Woe to those who plan iniquity and design*

evil on their beds (Micah 2:1), implying, at night. And how do we know that they did so by day too? Because it is stated, *When morning dawns, they do it (ibid.)*. Yet of those others not a remnant was left, while of these a remnant was left. For whose sake was this? Rabbi said: Because *there was left a [righteous] remnant therein* (Ezek 14:22). It does not say that *are brought forth*, but that *shall be brought forth* [from them], the reference being to the righteous men and women, the prophets and prophetesses who shall spring from them.²⁷

Even though the Ten Tribes were more sinful than the generation of the Flood, a remnant of the Ten Tribes was left solely on account of the "righteous men and women (and) prophets and prophetesses" which were to arise from them.

As I mentioned above, the rabbis not only taught that a remnant of the Ten Tribes survived the Assyrian exile, but that Jeremiah brought back this "righteous" remnant to Eretz Yisrael. There are two midrashim which discuss this, both of which are found in the Babylonian Talmud.

In a passage from Tractate Megillah, it is written that Josiah, king of Judah, sent for the prophet Hulda, instead of Jeremiah, because Jeremiah had gone off to bring back the Ten Tribes. This passage is attributed to R. Johanan (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 2nd generation).

Hulda, as it is written, *So the priest Hilkiyah, and Ahikam...went to the prophetess Huldah* (II Kings 22:14). But if Jeremiah was there, how could she prophesy? It was said in the school of Rab in the name of Rab: Hulda was a near relative of Jeremiah, and he did not object to her doing so. But how could Josiah himself pass over Jeremiah and send to her?...R. Johanan said:

Jeremiah was not there, as he had gone to bring back the Ten Tribes. From where do we know that they returned? Because it is written, *For the seller shall not return to what he sold so long as they (i.e., the remnant of the Ten Tribes) remain among the living (Ezek 7:13).* Now is it possible that after the Jubilee had ceased the prophet should prophesy that it will cease? The fact is that it teaches that Jeremiah brought them back. Josiah the son of Amon ruled over them, as it says, *He asked, What is the marker I see there? And the men of the town replied, That is the grave of the man of God who came from Judah and foretold these things that you have done to the altar of Bethel (II Kings 23:17).* Now what connection is there between Josiah and the altar in Bethel? What it teaches therefore is that Josiah reigned over them (i.e., the remnant of the Ten Tribes).²⁸

As was stated in chapter three, when the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh were exiled, the Jubilee ceased to be counted. The reason for this was that the Jubilee was counted only when all Twelve Tribes of Israel were in Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, in order for Jeremiah's prophecy, that the Jubilee will cease, not to have been superfluous, the Ten Tribes (or a remnant thereof) must have already returned to Eretz Yisrael.

The return of the remnant of the Ten Tribes by Jeremiah is further attested to in Tractate Arakin. In a passage attributed to R. Judah, it is taught that (regarding the reckoning of the jubilee cycles from the time Israel entered the Land until the destruction of the First Temple) from the time of the exile of the Ten Tribes by Sennacherib until their return through Jeremiah, the Jubilee was not counted.

But according to R. Judah, you must count the seventeen years of the seventeen jubilee [cycles], and add them to these (i.e., the deduction of the seven years of the conquest and the seven years during which the Land was distributed), so that it happened (i.e., the destruction of the First Temple) in the third year of a seven years' cycle! The years from the exile by Sennacherib until their return through Jeremiah are not counted.²⁹

There is one additional midrash, also found in the Babylonian Talmud, on the subject of the return of the Ten Tribes to Eretz Yisrael in this world. Although it does not specifically state that a remnant of the Ten Tribes returned to Eretz Yisrael, such a conclusion is implied.

As for the punishment brought about by God in retribution for the Ten Tribes not making pilgrimage to Jerusalem even after Hoshea b. Elah allowed it, it is written, "Thereupon God decreed that for those years during which the Israelites had not gone up to the festival they should go a corresponding number into captivity."³⁰ According to my reckoning, the period of exile of the Ten Tribes would have been approximately two hundred years. Once this period was completed, according to the midrash, one would have expected their return to Eretz Yisrael.

The four passages which I have examined in this subsection are the only midrashim which attest to the notion that the Ten Tribes, or a remnant thereof, actually returned to the Land of Israel in this world. Surely these four midrashim, all from the early midrashic period, are not proof enough to state that it was the accepted opinion among

the rabbis that the Ten Tribes were not lost to us in this world. What is certain, however, is that the rabbis held that the Ten Tribes were not lost to us in the world-to-come. For there are a vast and wide variety of midrashim, from the early and middle periods of midrashic activity, which teach that the Ten Tribes will be returned to Eretz Yisrael in the days of the Messiah.

C. Return of the Ten Tribes in a Future Time (*atid l'vo*)

The rabbis' discussion of the redemption of the Ten Tribes in a future time, is, in one way, similar to their discussion of the exile of the Ten Tribes (cf. Appendix 1). As there are midrashim which describe the exile of the Twelve Tribes as one continuous exile, so too there are midrashim on the subject of the redemption of all Twelve Tribes together.³¹ And, as there are midrashim which teach that the exile of the Ten Tribes was separate and distinct from the exile of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, so too there are several midrashim which focus solely on the redemption of the Ten Tribes.

a. Redemption of the Twelve Tribes

An over-arching statement in the Palestinian Talmud declares that "all Israelites have a share in the world-to-come."³² This view is further attested in Leviticus Rabbah (5th c.). In a passage attributed to R. Abin (4th c. Pales-

tinian Amora - 4th generation), Israel (i.e., the Twelve Tribes) is likened to a lily.

R. Abin said: As in the case of the lily, when the dry heat comes she wilts but when the dew comes she blossoms, so also as long as the shadow of Esau endures so long does Israel, as it were, appear as if it was wilting in this world. In the world-to-come, however, Esau's shadow will pass away and Israel will thrive more and more. Hence, it is written, *I will be to Israel like dew; he shall blossom like the lily* (Hos 14:6). As the lily, solely on account of her fragrance, does not pass out of existence (because people preserve its seed), so Israel, solely on account of the commandments and good deeds, does not cease to exist. As the lily exists purely for smelling, so the righteous were created solely for effecting Israel's redemption. As the lily is placed upon the table of kings at the beginning and at the end [of meals], so Israel is to be found in this world and is to be found in the world-to-come. As the lily is recognizable among the herbs, so is Israel recognizable among the nations; as it says, *All who see them shall recognize that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed* (Isa 61:9). As the lily is designed for Sabbaths and festivals, so is Israel designated for the forthcoming redemption.³³

According to R. Abin, as a lily is distinct from among all other herbs, so are the Twelve Tribes of Israel recognizable from among the nations of their exile. Moreover, just as a lily is found at the beginning and end, so too shall Israel be found in this world and in the world-to-come.³⁴

There are three additional midrashim from the early and middle periods which explain that all the exiled of Israel shall be gathered together from their places of exile and

come (or be brought by God) to Jerusalem in the time of the Messiah.

In a midrash attributed to R. Johanan (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 2nd generation) found in the Babylonian Talmud, it is taught that the ingathering of the exiles of "the people of Judah and the people of Israel" is as important as was the first day of creation.

R. Johanan said: The reunion of the Exiles is as important as the day when heaven and earth were created, for it is said, *The people of Judah and the people of Israel shall assemble together and appoint one head over them; and they shall rise from the ground - for marvelous shall be the day of Jezreel* (Hos 2:2); and it is written, *And there was evening and there was morning, a first day* (Gen 1:4). 35

According to this passage, the Twelve Tribes will be reunited in the time-to-come under the kingship of David (i.e., the Messianic Kingship) and be resurrected.

The ingathering of the exiles of all of Israel is also mentioned in a midrash found in Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer (9th c.). In this passage it is stated that in "the time to come," God will gather together Israel (i.e., all the exiles) from the four corners of the earth.

(God said,) I will also give you and your sons your reward in the future; for when the Holy One, blessed be He, in the time to come will gather Israel from the four corners of the earth, the first one whom He will gather, will be the half-tribe of Manasseh, as it is said, *Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine* (Ps 60:7). Afterwards (He will gather in) Ephraim, as it is said, *Ephraim is the defense of my head* (*ibid.*). Afterward Judah

(will be gathered in), as it is said, *Judah is my sceptre (ibid.)*. 36

Interestingly, this midrash provides us with a rough order of the ingathering of the Twelve Tribes. The half-tribe of Manasseh will be redeemed first, followed by Ephraim (i.e., the remainder of the Ten Tribes) and then, lastly, the tribes of Judah (and Benjamin). Further, this midrash which distinguishes different stages of the "ingathering", contradicts the portrayal of all Twelve Tribes' simultaneous ingathering in the previous passage (attributed to R. Johanan in the Babylonian Talmud).

The final midrashic passage which mentions the ingathering of all Israel is found in Midrash Tanhuma and Midrash Tanhuma Buber (both 9th c. works). In this passage it is taught that Israel was exiled to the ends of the earth on account of her sins, but in the "time to come", God shall gather her from the four corners of the earth.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said,
it was on account of her sins
that Israel was exiled - scattered
in the gates of the earth, as it
is written, *And I will scatter her
as with a winnowing fork through
the settlements of the earth.*
(Jer 15:7). But in the time to
come, *Even if your outcasts are at
the ends of the earth, from there
the Lord your God will gather you,
from there He will fetch you*
(Deut 30:4).³⁷

b. Redemption of the Ten Tribes

In addition to the midrashim already cited in this subsection which teach that all Twelve Tribes will be redeemed

in the Messianic Era, there are a number of midrashim which specifically refer to the redemption of the Ten Tribes alone.

In third section of this chapter I cited a text from the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, attributed to R. Akiba, in which it was taught that the Ten Tribes were "lost and gone forever." It should be noted, however, that immediately following R. Akiba's statement, one finds the dissenting opinion of R. Eliezer. According to R. Eliezer (1st c. Palestinian Tanna), the scriptural passage; "And cast them into another land, as is this day" (Deut 29:27) is properly interpreted as meaning that the Ten Tribes will be redeemed.

MISHNAH. The Ten Tribes will not return [to Palestine], for it is said, *And cast them into another land, as is this day* (Deut 29:27)...
R. Eliezer said: As this day - Just as the day darkens and then becomes light again, so the Ten Tribes - Even as it went dark for them (on account of exile), so will it become light for them (in the world-to-come).³⁸

Like a day which grows dark at night only to become light again towards morning, so were the Ten Tribes exiled only to be redeemed in the coming of a "new day."

In the Gemarah for the above Babylonian Talmud passage, Rabbi (aka R. Judah Hanasi - 2nd c. Palestinian Tanna - 4th generation) understood R. Eliezer's statement in the Mishnah as meaning that the Ten Tribes "will enter the world-to-come."

Rabbi said: They (the Ten Tribes) will enter the future world, as it

is said, *And in that day, a great ram's horn shall be sounded; and the strayed who are in the land of Assyria and the expelled who are in the land of Egypt shall come and worship the Lord on the holy mount, in Jerusalem* (Isa 27:13). ³⁹

According to Rabbi, on the day when the shofar sounds, marking the advent of the world-to-come, those who were exiled to Assyria will return to Jerusalem.

In addition to Rabbi, who taught that the Ten Tribes "will enter the future world" - basing his argument on the scriptural passage from Isaiah 27:13, there are three other rabbis who also use Isaiah 27:13 as proof that the Ten Tribes will return to Eretz Yisrael in the future.

It is taught in Genesis Rabbah (5th c.) that God made the words *we-hayah* - "it shall come to pass" - the metonymical phrase for the redemption of the descendants of the Patriarchs. Isaiah 27:13, which speaks of the redemption of the Ten Tribes, begins with these same words. Thus, according to R. Levi (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 3rd generation), the Ten Tribes will be redeemed in the time-to-come.

If I return safe to my father's house, the Lord shall be my God (Gen 28:21). R. Joshua of Siknin said in R. Levi's name: The Holy One, blessed be He, took the words used by the Patriarchs and made them a key for the redemption of their descendants. Thus God said to him: You have said, *the Lord shall be (we-hayah) my God*. By your life! All the benefits, blessings and consolations which I am to confer upon your children, I will confer with the very expression, as it says...*And it shall come to pass (we-hayah) in that day,*

*that a great horn shall be blown;
and they shall come that were lost
in the land of Assyria...(Isa 27:13). 40*

In Tractate Makkoth of the Babylonian Talmud, R. Jose b. Hanina (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 2nd generation) taught that four prophets came and revoked the four adverse sentences Moses pronounced on Israel. One of the four sentences was that Israel was to "perish among the nations." The prophet Isaiah reversed this sentence, stating that those exiled to Assyria (i.e., the Ten Tribes) shall return to Eretz Yisrael (Isa 27:13).

Said R. Jose b. Hanina: Our Master Moses pronounced four [adverse] sentences on Israel, but four prophets came and revoked them...Moses had said, *You shall perish among the nations; and the land of your enemies shall consume you* (Lev 26:38); Isaiah came and said, *And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great horn shall be blown; and they shall come that were lost in the land of Assyria...(Isa 27:13). 41*

The third and final passage based on Isaiah 27:13 is found in Midrash Tehillim II (11th c.). This midrash specifically links the Isaiah passage to the redemption of the Ten Tribes in the time-to-come.

Another comment: *He gathers in the exiles of Israel* (Ps 147:2). These are the Ten Tribes of Israel, of whom it is said, *The Lord...cast them into another land, like this day* (Deut 29:27). So, too, Scripture says, *And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great horn shall be blown; and they shall come that were lost in the land of Assyria...(Isa 27:13). 42*

This passage appears to be based on the statements of R. Eliezer and Rabbi in Tractate Sanhedrin of the Babylonian

Talmud (discussed above). It further develops the word play on "day", as well as citing the Isaiah proof-text (also cited by Rabbi) as evidence for the impending redemption of the Ten Tribes in a future time.

Among the remaining midrashim which teach that the Ten Tribes will be redeemed in the Messianic Age, there is a midrash originally cited in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana (6th c.), which teaches that the father of the prophet Hosea died in exile so that the Ten Tribes might be redeemed in the Messianic future.

The rabbis said, The Holy One, blessed be He, said to [Reuben], You sought to restore the beloved son to his father. By your life, your son's son will restore Israel to her Father in heaven. And who is that? It is Hosea. As it is written, *The word of the Lord that came to Hosea b. Beerah* (Hos 1:1), and it is written, *his son Beerah* (I Chron 5:4). Why is his name *Beerah*? Because he is a well (*beerah*) of Torah. And why did Beerah die in exile? So that the Ten Tribes might return [in the Messianic future] on account of his merit. And why did Moses die in the desert? So that the generation of the wilderness might return [in the Messianic future] on account of his merit.⁴³

This midrash is repeated, with minor variations, in Pesikta Rabbati (9th c.). In Pesikta Rabbati, the explanation of Beerah's name, meaning that he was a "well of Torah," is omitted. However, it is made exceedingly clear in Pesikta Rabbati that it is on account of the merit of Hosea's father, and not Hosea himself, that the Ten Tribes will return to Jerusalem in the time of the Messiah.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Reuben, you sought to return Joseph, the beloved son, to your father. By your life, your son's son will bring about the return of Israel in perfect repentance to their Father in heaven. And who is that? Hosea b. Beeri. Of him it is written, *With Hosea the Lord first spoke [of repentance]* (Hos 1:2); and of Hosea's father it is written, *Beerah, [Baal's] son, whom King Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria exiled - was chieftain of the Reubenites* (I Chron 5:6). Why did Beerah die in exile? So that the Ten Tribes might [rise up at the time of resurrection] and return to Jerusalem. And why did Moses die in the desert? So that the generation of the Wilderness might rise up [at the time of resurrection] and return on account of the merit of Moses.⁴⁴

Like Moses, who taught the Israelites the words of the Torah, so was Hosea's father a teacher of Torah to the exiles of the Ten Tribes. And, just as the generation of the Wilderness shall rise up in the days of the Messiah and return to Jerusalem on account of the merit of Moses, so too shall the Ten Tribes arise and return on account of the merit of Hosea's father, Beerah, who died in exile.

The final text to be examined in this chapter (found in two middle period works: Numbers Rabbah II (9th c.) and Pesikta Rabbati (9th c.) teaches that the Ten Tribes will return in the "time-to-come" from the three places to which they were exiled: from beyond the River Sambatyon, from Daphne of Antioch, and from a land covered by a cloud.

In the time to come the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring them together; as may be inferred from the text, *Behold, these shall come from fâr; and lo, these from the north and from the west, and these*

from the land of Sinim (Isa 49:12). The other exiles shall come with them, and the tribes who are living beyond the River Sambatyon and beyond the Mountains of Darkness shall gather together and come to Jerusalem [in the days of the Messiah]. Isaiah stated: Saying to the prisoners, Go forth (Isa 49:9). He was referring to those exiles who were living beyond Sambatyon. To those who are in darkness, Show yourselves (ibid.). By this he was referring to those who were living beyond the cloud of darkness. They shall pasture along the roads, on every bare height shall be their pasture (ibid.). By this he was referring to those who were living in Daphne of Antioch. When the time comes they will be redeemed and will come to Zion in gladness; as it says, So let the ransom of the Lord return, and come shouting to Zion (Isa 51:11). 45

According to the passage cited above, from Numbers Rabbah II (9th c.), God will bring back all the exiles of Israel to Jerusalem in the "time to come," including the Ten Tribes. That the Ten Tribes will be gathered and come to "Jerusalem," implies that this redemption will occur in the days of the Messiah. This is made clear in a parallel, although slightly varying passage found in Pesikta Rabbati (9th c.). One difference in these two passages is in their description of the three places of exile of the Ten Tribes. Whereas the midrash from Numbers Rabbah II teaches that the Ten Tribes will be gathered from beyond the River Sambatyon, from Daphne of Antioch and from a land covered by a cloud, the passage from Pesikta Rabbati teaches that the Ten Tribes will be gathered from Sambatyon, from beyond the region of Sambatyon, and from Daphne near Riblah. Further, the midrash

found in Pesikta Rabbati also adds a description of the resurrection of the dead of Israel by God.

What is meant by the Messiah's *saying to the prisoners: Go forth* (Isa 49:9)? It means that the Messiah will say *Go forth*, and so on, to the Ten Tribes who were separated long ago into three companies of exiles, one which was banished beyond the Sambatyon, and one to Daphne near Riblah where it was swallowed up, as is said, *Israel is swallowed up* (Hos 8:8). The Messiah will be *saying to the prisoners: Go forth* (Isa 49:9) - speaking to those held in Sambatyon; and to *them that are in darkness* [he will say], *Show yourselves* (*ibid.*) - speaking to those held in the region beyond Sambatyon. As for those swallowed up in Riblah, the Holy One, blessed be He, will make passageway after passageway for them, and they will find their way underground through them, until they arrive under the Mount of Olives which is in Jerusalem. And the Holy One, blessed be He, will stand upon the mount, and after it is cleaved open for the exiles, they will come up out of it...And these three companies of exiles will not come alone. Wherever there are Jews, they also will be gathered up and come.⁴⁶

It is taught, according to the rabbis, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Ezekiel (37:1-28), that in the Messianic Era, all the bones of Jews buried throughout the world will roll their way underground until they reach the Mount of Olives. There they shall be joined by sinews, and flesh shall grow on them and God will lift these bodies from their graves and breathe a new life into the resurrected. Such will be the fate of all Jews, including the Ten Tribes.

Conclusion

The rabbis' discussion of the order and places of exile not only adds to our knowledge of the exile traditions surrounding the Ten Tribes, but also provides the basis for the rabbis' discussion of their redemption. For in knowing to where the Ten Tribes were exiled enables one to find and bring them back to Eretz Yisrael.

At the outset of my research on the rabbinic view of the Ten Tribes I speculated that I would find in the literature (which is after all a literature replete with nemhemta) some promise of eventual reconciliation between God and the descendants of the Ten Tribes. As has been demonstrated in this chapter, although not unanimously, the rabbis did indeed teach that the Ten Tribes will return to Eretz Yisrael in the time-to-come. What is surprising, however, is that there are only a limited number of midrashim which teach that a remnant of the descendants of the Ten Tribes returned to their tribal lands in this world. Further, this tradition is only attested in midrashic works of the early period. It seems odd that this idea was not repeated in any of the middle or later period midrashim. Why this occurred I am not exactly sure. Perhaps the rabbis of the later periods found their hope in the Messianic future and not in this world. For the midrashim from the middle and late periods only profess to a redemption of the Ten Tribes in the time-to-come.

Just as the dove travels far afield,
and yet comes back to her cote,

so Israel, as it says *They shall come trembling as a bird out of Egypt* - this refers to the generation of the wilderness - *and as a dove out of the land of Assyria* (Hos 11:11) - this refers to the Ten Tribes. And of both of them it says, *And I will make them to dwell [once again] in their houses, saith the Lord (ibid.).* ⁴⁷

Whether or not the Ten Tribes will ever return to Eretz Yisrael in the world-to-come is not yet known. Yet, aside from R. Akiba and R. Simeon b. Yohai, the rabbis taught that they indeed will. For as a dove who travels far from its nest yet returns, so too have the Ten Tribes been cast far from their land....

1. In the seventeenth year of Pekah, who reigned for twenty-two years, Pekah, king of Israel and Rezin, king of Aram, marched against Ahaz, king of Judah. Ahaz paid protection money to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria who subsequently marched against Damascus (i.e., Israel and Aram) and deported its inhabitants (II Kings 16:1-9). Hoshea became king over Israel after Pekah. He reigned for nine years. In his ninth year he was imprisoned by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. In that same year Israel was deported to Assyria (II Kings 17:1-6). The five years which remained to Pekah added to the nine years of Hoshea equal fourteen years. Therefore, I reckoned that the Ten Tribes were exiled over a period not exceeding fourteen years.
2. I assume that Tiglath-pileser and Tilgath-pilneser were the same person.
3. R. Samuel b. Nachman's inclusion of Zebulun in his list of which tribes among the Ten Tribes were exiled first seems to be based upon the geographical proximity of the territory of Zebulun to the territory of Naphtali. Whether his statement has any historical truth is unclear and is not substantiated in the Bible.
4. Lam R. Proem: 5.
5. Seder Olam R. 22.
6. Ibid.
7. B. Arakin 32b; Y. Gittin 4:3 - 45d.
8. Num R. II 22:7; M. Tan B. Matot:8.
9. B. San 94a.
10. Num R. II 23:14; Qoh R. 9:18.3 - this text is corrupt. It lists only the tribes of Reuben and Gad, then skips to the exile of the remainder of the Ten Tribes and then lists the third group to be exiled as Judah.; M. Tan Masa'eh: 13; M. Tan B. Masa'eh: 10.
11. M. Eser Galuyyot pp. 2-7.
12. Y. San 10:6 - 29c.
13. Lam R. 2:9; Pes Rab 31:10 - This text teaches that the Ten Tribes "were separated long ago into three companies of exiles, one which was banished to the River Sambatyon, one banished to the region beyond the Sambatyon, and one to Daphne near Riblah." Gen R. 73:6 - In this text the Ten Tribes are only said to have been exiled "beyond the River Sambatyon." The Gen R. 73:6 text is also cited in Yal I Vayetze 30 (130) p. 77 and Yal II Song of Songs 1 (985) p. 1068.
14. Num R. II 16:25.
15. Then the king of Assyria marched against the whole land; he came to Samaria and besieged it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria. He deported the Israelites to Assyria and settled them in Halah, at the [River] Habor, at the River Gozan and in the towns of Media.
16. B. Yebamoth 16b-17a; B. Kiddushin 72a.
17. Yal II Song of Songs 2 (986) p. 1070.
18. B. San 110b; Y. San 10:6 - 29c. This passage omits the Gemara section of the Babylonian text, instead stating: "The Ten Tribes have no portion in the world to come and

will not live in the world to come, since it is said, *And he cast them into another land, as on this day* (Deut 29:27). Just as the day passes and does not return, so they have gone their way and will not return, the words of R. Akiba."

19. Lam R. 1:3.
20. A.d.R.N. 31b.
21. S.S.R. 4:14.
22. S.S.R. 4:14,1, footnote #6, Soncino translation, p. 225.
23. Qoh R. 5:16.
24. Exod R. 15:6.
25. Pes Rab, Piska 3:4.
26. Pes Rab, Piska 4:1.
27. S.S.R. 1:4; Gen R. 28:5 - this passage does not include "prophets and prophetesses" and is attributed to R. Abba b. Kahana.
28. B. Megillah 14b.
29. B. Arakin 12b.
30. B. Gittin 88a.
31. Having examined the authorship and midrashic works which taught that the Twelve Tribes were exiled in one continuous exile as well as those which taught that they will be redeemed together, I cannot claim to have found any common connection between the two bodies of midrashim - either in authorship or in midrashic works.
32. Y. San 10:1 - 27b.
33. Lev R. 23:6.
34. That the Tribes will have a portion in the world-to-come, according to the eschatological schema of the rabbis, is an ipso facto guarantee that they will be gathered together and resurrected in the Messianic Era - which precedes the world-to-come.
35. B. Pesahim 88a.
36. P.d.R.E. Piska 17.
37. M. Tan, Masa'eh 13; M. Tan B., Masa'eh 10.
38. B. San 110b; Y. San 10:6 - 29c.
39. B. San 110b.
40. Gen R. 70:6.
41. B. Makkoth 24a.
42. M. Teh II 147:3.
43. P.d.R.K., Piska 24:9; Yal II Hosea 1 (516) p. 847.
44. Pes Rab, Piska 50:4.
45. Num R. II 16:25.
46. Pes Rab, Piska 31:10.
47. S.S.R. 4:1, 1:15.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

At the outset of my research on the rabbinic view of the Ten Tribes, I was not certain that I would find enough midrashim about the Ten Tribes around which to construct a thesis (and this was a "shared" view!). Yet, much to my surprise and delight, the rabbis did not ignore the Ten Tribes in favor of their brethren in the South, at least not entirely. What I found was a literature which contributes significantly to our understanding of the deeds and personalities of the kings of the Northern Kingdom, specifically Jeroboam b. Nebat and Ahab b. Omri, as well as Basha b. Ahijah, Joram b. Ahab, Jehu b. Nimshi, Jeroboam b. Joash and Hoshea b. Elah. A majority of the rabbinic material about the kings of Israel was devoted to Jeroboam b. Nebat, the first king to reign over the Ten Tribes and Ahab b. Omri, the sixth king of Israel. Jeroboam was characterized both as the maker of the golden calves and the paradigm of evil to which all the other kings of Israel were compared. Ahab, on the other hand, according to the rabbis, far outdid Jeroboam in the practice of idolatry. For Ahab was said to have worshipped not only the golden calves of Jeroboam, but all the idols which humanity had ever made. In addition to chronicling the rise, acts and ultimate ends of the kings of the Ten Tribes, the rabbis also taught about the sins for which the Ten Tribes were exiled. The midrashim on the sins of the people of the Northern kingdom enhance our understanding of the social ethos of the Ten Tribes (as well as

the rabbis' comprehension of the reasons for their exile). The rabbis inform us of the people's undying devotion to idolatry, teaching in one instance that even if Jeroboam had not caused them to practice idolatry they would have worshipped idols on their own volition. Further, the rabbis comment on the rampant hedonism which gripped the inhabitants of the Ten Tribes, teaching that they cared for little else but for the satisfaction of physical desires. The only other subject which the rabbis addressed was the exile and the ultimate destiny of the Ten Tribes. In the literature on this subject we witness the imaginative and mythical aspects of rabbinic literature. The rabbis describe for us the order of the exile of the Tribes, their whereabouts and the pending redemption of the Ten Tribes, basing their words on fancy rather than fact. Yet, just because the literature is "imaginative" does not negate its importance. For the rabbis need to supply from their imaginations what is lacking in fact in order not to lose the Ten Tribes. The scheme of redemption was the only way to have hope for the future of Israel. Most rabbis taught that the people of the Ten Tribes, as distinct from their rulers, will have a portion in the world-to-come. Yet, a couple of the more cynical rabbis taught that even the general populous of the Ten Tribes are destined to suffer the same fate as their rulers.

Overall, the picture which the rabbis portrayed of the Ten Tribes is one of a wholly iniquitous people who had forsaken God, covenant and peoplehood for idolatry and

licentiousness. And yet, despite all this, the rabbis needed to find some mode of redemption for them whether it be in this world (a rare point of view) or in the world-to-come (more likely). The words of the midrashim, I hope, have greatly enhanced our knowledge of the Ten Tribes and will prove of value in further studies about this "lost" lot.

APPENDIX

Exile of the Twelve Tribes - Shared or Separate Traditions?

In my examination of the midrashim on the sins which led to the exile of the Ten Tribes, I found passages which, although they in part mentioned sins specific to the Ten Tribes, always concluded by teaching that the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were exiled as a result of these sins. This led me to think that perhaps the rabbis had assimilated an earlier exile tradition of the Ten Tribes into their discussion of the exile of Judah and Benjamin. Could one, perhaps, distinguish in these passages an earlier strata of "exile literature" specific to the Ten Tribes? If so, could one then make a compelling argument for the idea that rabbis, in combining these two traditions, viewed the exile of the Ten Tribes as well as that of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin as one continuous exile, rather than as two separate events?

I did find several midrashim on the subject of the exile of the Ten Tribes and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin which support the idea that the rabbis did indeed view the exile of the Northern and Southern kingdoms as one continuous exile. What is interesting about this point of view is that it does not agree with history. For the exile of the Ten Tribes and the exile of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were, historically, separate events.

A. A Shared Tradition

In a passage found in Genesis Rabbah (5th c.), and attributed to R. Jose b. R. Hanina (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 2nd generation and a pupil of R. Johanan's), the Twelve Tribes are likened to Adam. Just as God set Adam in the garden of Eden and commanded him not to transgress His commandments, so did God command the tribes not to transgress His commandments when He brought them into Eretz Yisrael. Similarly, just as Adam transgressed and was exiled from the garden of Eden, so were the people of Israel exiled from Eretz Yisrael on account of their transgressions. In this midrash, the Twelve Tribes are referred to as *B'nai Yisrael* - the children of Israel.

R. Abbahu said in the name of R. Jose b. R. Hanina: It is written, *But they are like a man* (Adam), *they have transgressed the covenant* (Hos 6:7). *They are like a man* (Adam) means like Adam; just as I led Adam into the garden of Eden and commanded him, and he transgressed My commandment, whereupon I punished him by dismissal and expulsion, and bewailed him with *ekah* (how)! I led him into the garden of Eden, as it is written, *And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden* (Gen 2:15); and I commanded him: *And the Lord commanded the man* (*ibid.*, vs. 17); and he transgressed My commandment: *Did you eat of the tree from which I commanded you not to eat* (*ibid.*, 2:3)? and I punished him by dismissal: *So the Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden* (*ibid.*, vs. 23); and I punished him by expulsion: *He drove the man out* (*ibid.*, vs. 24); I bewailed him with *ekah* (how)! And said unto him: *ayyekah*: *ekah* is written;

so also did I bring his descendants into Eretz Israel and command them and they transgressed My commandment, and I punished them by sending them away and expelling them, and I bewailed them with *ekah!* I brought them into Eretz Israel, as it is written, *I brought you to this country of farm land* (Jer 2:7); I commanded them: You shall command the children of Israel (Ex 27:20), also, *Command the children of Israel* (Lev 24:2); they transgressed My command: *All Israel has transgressed your law* (Dan 9:11); I punished them by sending them away: *Dismiss them from My presence, and let them go forth* (Jer 15:1); by expulsion: *I will drive them out of My house* (Hos 9:15); and I bewailed them with *ekah: Ekah* (how) *lonely sits the city* (Lam 1:1).¹

What is particularly significant about this passage is that the exile of *B'nai Yisrael* - the children of Israel (i.e., the Twelve Tribes), is described as a singular event, rather than as two historically separated instances of exile. This passage is repeated in *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* (6th c.).

The rabbis' portrayal of the exile of the Northern and Southern kingdoms as one continuous process is further illustrated in a passage found in two other midrashic works from the early period. It is taught, in *Lamentations Rabbah* and in *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana*, that the Twelve Tribes were exiled (or figuratively, "died") in groups of two. Although neither the "Twelve Tribes" nor "exile" are specifically mentioned in this passage, this midrash is found in the context of midrashim which speak about the exile of the Ten Tribes as well as the exile of the tribes of Judah and

Benjamin. Further, one of this group of midrashim also refers to the exile figuratively as the dying of the tribes. Therefore, I assume that this passage too is about the exile of the Twelve Tribes.

The rabbis say: God may be likened to a king who had twelve sons of whom two died. He began to console himself with the ten. Two more died and he began to console himself with the eight. Two more died and he began to console himself with the six. Two more died and he began to console himself with the four. Two more died and he began to console himself with the two. But when they had all died, he began to lament over them, *Alas! Lonely sits the city* (Lam 1:1). ²

Certainly one might argue that the last two sons represented the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Nevertheless, their "death" (or exile) was not a unique event, but rather part of a sequence which began with the death of two of twelve sons and did not cease until all twelve sons had died (i.e., were exiled).

The last midrashic passage to be examined in this subsection goes so far as to suggest that the exile of the Northern and Southern kingdoms was not only a continuous process which culminated in the exile of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the destruction of the Temple, but that the Ten Tribes were exiled in the days of King Zedekiah. It is taught in Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu (10th c.) that "the Ten Tribes were exiled in the days of King Zedekiah and along with them the tribe of Judah and Benjamin and all of Jerusalem...."³ Actually, according to Scriptures, it was the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, alone, who were exiled

during the reign of Zedekiah (II Kings 25:1-21). The Ten Tribes were exiled some one hundred and thirty-five years prior to this.

B. Separate Traditions

Although I found a number of midrashim which support the theory that the rabbis viewed the exile of the Northern and Southern kingdoms as one continuous process, there are also several midrashim which point to an opposing viewpoint. In these midrashic passages, the exile of the Ten Tribes is seen as an event unique and separate from the exile of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. This view agrees with the historical account of the exile of the Northern and Southern kingdoms.

In Lamentations Rabbah (6th c.), both R. Johanan and R. Simeon b. Lakish (3rd c. Palestinian Amoraim - 2nd generation), in separate passages, likened the Twelve Tribes to two sons of a king. A first son stands for the Ten Tribes, while a second son is understood as the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

In the midrash attributed to R. Johanan, God is compared to a king with two sons. The first son (i.e., the Ten Tribes) enraged the king and so he banished him from his kingdom. Likewise, the king later became enraged with the second son (i.e., the tribes of Judah and Benjamin) and banished him.

R. Johanan said: God may be likened to a king who had two sons. He

became enraged against the first of them, took a stick, thrashed him, drove him into banishment, and exclaimed, 'Woe to him! From what comfort has he been banished!' He later became enraged against the second son, took a stick, thrashed him, drove him into banishment, and exclaimed, 'The fault is with me, since I must have brought them up badly.' Similarly the Ten Tribes were exiled, and the Holy One, blessed be He, began to proclaim this verse over them, *Woe to them for straying from Me* (Hos 7:13). But when Judah and Benjamin were exiled, the Holy One, blessed be He - if it is possible to say so - declared, *Woe unto me for my hurt* (Jer 10:19). ⁴

R. Simeon b. Lakish began his exposition with the same words used by R. Johanan. Yet he wrote that when the king thrashed his sons with a stick, they "writhed in agony and died." One might interpret this as an allusion to the travail suffered by both the Ten Tribes and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin at the hands of their enemies, prior to their exile.

R. Simeon B. Lakish said: God may be likened to a king who had two sons. He became enraged against the first of them, took a stick, and thrashed him so that he writhed in agony and died; and the father then began to lament over him. He later became enraged against the second son, took a stick, and thrashed him so that he writhed in agony and died; and the father then exclaimed, 'No longer have I the strength to lament over them, so call the mourning women and let them lament over them.' Similarly the Ten Tribes were exiled, and He began to lament over them, *Hear this word which I intone as a dirge over you, O House of Israel* (Amos 5:1). But when Judah and Benjamin were exiled, the Holy One, blessed be He - if it

is possible to say so - declared,
 'No longer have I the strength to
 lament over them.' Hence it is
 written, *Summon the dirge-singers,
 let them come; send for the skilled
 women...let them quickly start a
 wailing for us* (Jer 9:16-17). ⁵

In both of the passages cited above, the exile of the Ten Tribes and the exile of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin are clearly portrayed as two distinct events. Just as the two sons of the king were unique, so too were the Ten Tribes and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin separate and distinct kingdoms. Therefore, it is not surprising that their exiles are understood as separate and distinguishable events. Both midrashim can also be found in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana (6th c.) and twice in the Yalkut Shimoni (14th c.).

The distinction between the exile of the Northern kingdom and that of the Southern kingdom is further illustrated by another passage found in Lamentations Rabbah (6th c.). In this passage, attributed to R. Jose b. Hanina (3rd c. Palestinian Amora - 2nd generation), the Ten Tribes, who were already in exile, complain to God that He has shown favor to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who were not exiled with them.

R. Abbahu, in the name of
 R. Jose b. Hanina, opened his
 discourse with the text, *Ephraim
 shall be desolate* (Hos 5:9).
 When? *In the day of rebuke*
 (tokehah), i.e., the day on which
 the Holy One, blessed be He, will
 argue (*hithwakkah*) with them in
 judgment. You find that when the
 Ten Tribes were exiled, Judah and
 Benjamin were not exiled; and the
 Ten Tribes kept asking, 'Why did
 He exile us and not them? Is it
 because they reside in His Palace?

Is there perhaps some favoritism here?' God forbid! There is no favoritism here; but the reason is that they had not yet sinned. When they did sin, He exiled them.⁶

The exile of the Ten Tribes, according to the above passage from Lamentations Rabbah, was distinguished from the exile of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Each group was exiled as a result of the sins which they sinned individually, and not collectively. This midrashic passage is also found, with some variations, in Midrash Tehillim I (10th c.), Numbers Rabbah I (12th c.) and in the Yalkut Shimoni (14th c.).

Another example of the distinction the rabbis made between the exiles of the Northern and the Southern kingdoms is found in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana (6th c.) and is repeated twice in Pesikta Rabbati (9th c.). It was taught, according to R. Yose (2nd c. Palestinian Tanna - 3rd generation), that God first exiled the Ten Tribes and then the tribes of Judah and Benjamin so that they could take comfort in each other's exile.

R. Yose said, On what account did the Ten Tribes go into exile and only afterward the tribes of Judah and Benjamin? It was so that the one should draw comfort from [what had happened to] the other. Hence, *Comfort each other, comfort each other, O My people* (Isa 40:1).⁷

The final passage to be examined in this sub-section is found in Numbers Rabbah I (12th c.). Of all the midrashim which attest to the view that the exiles of Israel and Judah were two completely separate events, this passage offers the most conclusive proof. It is taught that the nation of Israel was exiled from Eretz Yisrael six times. In this

midrash, the exile of the Ten Tribes to Assyria and the exile of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to Babylonia are mentioned as two of these six exiles.

This is the reason why *who* (Prov 23:9) is written six times [in one verse]; in allusion to the six times which Israel was exiled among the nations, of whom all were punished on their account. They are as follows: Egypt first, then Assyria, Babylon, Media, Greece, and Edom.⁸

As has been demonstrated, there are both midrashim which support the idea that the rabbis considered the exile of the Ten Tribes and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin as inexorably bound together in one continuous event, as well as midrashim which teach that the exile of these two groups were separate and distinct events. Thus, one can only conclude that some rabbis viewed the exile of the Northern and Southern kingdoms as one continuous process while others viewed their exiles as two unique events. Why some midrashim would describe the exiles as one continuous event, I venture to guess, is based on a viewpoint which sees the history of Israel as a series of contiguous events. It should be noted, however, that a majority of the midrashim follow history in viewing the exile of the Ten Tribes as distinct from the exile of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

1. Gen R. 19:9; P.d.R.K. 15:1; The rabbis' designation of *B'nai Yisrael* - the children of Israel, as representing both the Ten Tribes and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, is further illustrated in a passage found in Numbers Rabbah I (13th c.). "Who is meant by, *So now, children, pay heed to me* (Prov 5:7)? Scripture is speaking of the Ten Tribes on the one hand and of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin on the other; for all Israel are called *children*, as it says, *You are children of the Lord your God* (Deut 14:1)." Num R. I 9:7.
2. Lam R. Proem 2; P.d.R.K. 15:4.
3. T.d.V.E. 188.
4. Lam R. Proem 2; P.d.R.K. Piska 15:4; Yal II Jeremiah 9 (283) p. 820 and Lamentations 1 (995) p. 1040.
5. Ibid.
6. Lam R. Proem 6; M. Teh I 76:1 - This parallel text is not attributed to any specific rabbi. Further, it is the nations of the world who make the claim of God showing favoritism to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.; Num R. I 13:4 - This passage parallels the M. Tehillim text.; Yal II p. 932 - This passage parallels the Num R. text and is attributed to R. Johanan b. Nuri (2nd c. Palestinian Tanna - 2nd generation).
7. P.d.R.K. Piska 16:7; Pes Rab 29/30a:8, 33:11.
8. Num R. I 10:2.

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