

HERODOTUS, SCYTHIANS, PERSIANS & PROPHECY

By: William Finck

The purpose of this exposé is to show how, if one is not familiar with secular history (of which much is found in the Greek Classics), one will not fully understand Scripture. The Judaeen nation comprised mostly of “bad figs” (today called “Jews”) was not dispersed until 70 A.D., as prophesied at Jer. 24:8-10, 26:6, 29: 17-19 et al., affirmed by Christ Himself at Luke 21:24. While James at 1:1 speaks of the “twelve tribes which are scattered abroad”, and James died before 70 A.D., as Josephus attests, James was not addressing the so-called “Jews” dispersed in 70 A.D., and neither could the “Jews” already spread abroad claim descent from tribes other than three only, Judah, Benjamin and Levi, and only a tiny fraction of those resettled Judaea on their return from Babylon.

Except for his long description of Egypt in Book 2, and his other forays into the past, Herodotus gave the history of Persia covering the reign of five kings: Cyrus (1. 46), Cambyses (2. 1), Pseudo-Smerdis (3. 67), Darius (3. 88), and Xerxes (7. 5). These kings are the same exact kings which Daniel our prophet speaks of in Daniel 11:1-2.

Where at Daniel 11:1 in the A.V. reads “Darius the Mede” (a satrap at Babylon), the LXX has 11:1 thusly: “And I in the first year of Cyrus stood to strengthen and confirm him.” But regardless, the record is clear that Cyrus was king of Persia as Daniel wrote these last chapters. 11:2 continues: “... there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia ...” (So we have Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis, and Darius who actually began the war with the Greeks, defeated at the battle of Marathon), “... and the fourth shall be far richer than all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.” And Xerxes, Daniel’s fourth king, not only invaded Greece, leveling Athens itself, but also incited the Phoenicians of Carthage (with their Iberian brethren and others – Herodotus 7. 165) to attack the Greeks of Sicily at the same time. Where Xerxes is defeated, Herodotus – having fulfilled his testimony of this war – ends his *Histories*.

On the fate of the “ten” tribes: II Esdras 13:39-45, and Josephus’ *Antiquities* 8:11:1, 10:9:7 and 11:5:2, not only do the Arians and Parthians beyond Babylon meet the description of being “beyond the Euphrates”, but so do the Armenians, Iberians, Sacae, Massagetae, and all the Scythians who ventured up through the Black and Caspian coasts and the Caucasus, looking at the river’s course.

Hosea at 12:9 says of the Israelites being deported by the Assyrians: “And I Yahweh thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles (tents), as in the days of the solemn feasts.” And not only do we have descriptions of the Scythians living in such a fashion by Herodotus (4. 46), but their very name, “Scythian”, may certainly be derived from the Hebrew word for “tabernacle” or “tent”, succoth. Strabo tells us that over 400 years later, the Scythians and Scythian Germans were still living in this fashion (7. 1. 3, 11. 2. 1)! It makes no sense, that the people who rapidly became – and still are – the world’s greatest engineers, would for so long dwell without house nor city: except the prophet said that they would.

Herodotus at 4. 61 describes the Scythians’ use of animal bones for firewood, where Rawlinson in his notes in his edition compares Ezekiel 24:5. More strikingly, Herodotus says that the Scythians “never use swine for any purpose”, nor do they breed them (4. 63), although it is evident that this had changed by Strabo’s time (4. 4. 3), and Herodotus describes a Scythian mode of divination from bundles of rods, or sticks, to which may be compared (as Rawlinson again noticed) Hosea 4:12. (& Tacitus, *Germania* , 10).

Strabo (11. 3. 6, 11. 4. 7) discusses some customs among the Iberians and Albanians of the Caucasus which we find much like many in our Old Testament, and Herodotus even describes sacrifice procedures among the Magi and Persians much like the Levitical (1. 132). In many instances from Gaul to India, the priesthoods are said to belong to a particular tribe, such as the Magi (Herodotus 1. 101, 140), a practice also to be found at times among the Greeks (i.e., the Arcadians at Strabo 8. 3. 25). As the Persians would not sacrifice without a Magus (Herodotus 1. 132), the Kelts would not without a Druid (Strabo 8. 3. 25). Also found among the Greeks, swine were considered impure (Strabo 12. 8. 9) and were only accepted for sacrifice at certain temples of Aphrodite (Strabo 9. 5. 17).

From a map drawn from the accounts of Diodorus Siculus, found in volume 2 of Harvard’s Loeb Library edition of his *Library of History* we see several branches of the Scythians, notably the Sakae and Massagetae, the Sogdians and the Tocharians, dwelling about the Iaxartes river, north of the sources of the Indus. Their location here is evident also from the accounts of Herodotus and Strabo. The Massagetae and the Sakae were among the last of the Scythian tribes to have entered into Europe, as traced across the continent by Sharon Turner in his *History of the Anglo-Saxons*.

When this early home of these Scythian tribes is noticed, and we realize that the “rivers of Ethiopia” in the Bible are in Hebrew the “rivers of Kush”, and that the eastern, or Hindu-Kush, only then Zephaniah may be understood, at 3:10 where he writes “From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia [Kush] my suppliants, the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring my offering” and he can only be talking about the Massagetae, Sakae, and their Kin! – the dispersed of Israel! It was to these tribes that the Kingdom of Yahweh would come (Micah 4:8, Dan, 2:44, Matt. 21:43), and the further from Mesopotamia the dispersed traveled, the stronger and more lasting a nation they became (Micah 4:7, Isaiah 41).

Herodotus' description of a barren northern Europe (5. 9-10, et al.) and the evidence of Scythian, or German and Keltic migration westward to inhabit it, calls to mind Deut. 32:8. "When the most High divided to the (Genesis 10) nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the (Adamic) people according to the number of the children of Israel." Yet the Thracians claimed that "the country beyond the Ister (the Lower Danube) is possessed by bees (Rawlinson footnotes 'mosquitoes'), on account of which it is impossible to penetrate farther." (Herodotus 5. 10). Yet I suspect there are reasons, besides mosquitoes, that the Thracians were so prevented. [Note: Exodus 23:28, and Wisdom of Sal. 12:8 in the *Apocrypha*.]

Isaiah 10:5-16 foretells the destruction of Assyria. 10:17-18, 10:20-27 and 11:16 fully assure that Israelites will be actively involved in that destruction. Isaiah 14:24-27 mentions this destruction again. Herodotus relates that the Medes were already at war with the Assyrians, when the Scythians invaded Media during the reign of the Median King Cyaxares (625-585 B.C., according to Herodotus' chronology). The Scythians prevented the Medes from destroying Nineveh, and themselves "became masters of Asia", a position they held for 28 years. While Herodotus states that Cyaxares conquered Nineveh himself, after becoming free of the Scythians, this is impossible since Nineveh was destroyed before 612 B.C., and Herodotus is likely repeating later Median propaganda. Strabo tells us rather that "In ancient times Greater Armenia ruled the whole of Asia, after it broke up the empire of the Syrians", where he is obviously confusing Syrians with Assyrians (and he mentions "Greater Media" later in the paragraph). Greater Armenia, that first Scythian land, according to Diodorus Siculus (refer to *Watchman's Letter* #72, p. 1, Diodorus Siculus 2. 43), with the witness of Herodotus, albeit indirectly, show that Isaiah was correct, the Israelites – and surely with Medes alongside them – destroyed Nineveh, and the Assyrian Empire. (Herodotus 1. 102-106, Strabo 11. 13. 5).

Isaiah 13 foretells the destruction of Babylon. 13:4 states that "the kingdoms of the nations" will perform such destruction. 13:17 indicates that the Medes are one of these nations. 13:3 indicates that the children of Israel are also. 13:12 is surely an allusion to Cyrus, king of Persia, who led the takeover of Babylon (see Isa. 44:28). Isaiah 14:3-23 is a parable foretelling Babylon's destruction. Note Isaiah's statement concerning Cyrus at 45:1: "Thus saith Yahweh to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loin of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut." And Herodotus said of the Babylonians: "A battle was fought at a short distance from the city, in which the Babylonians were defeated by the Persian king, whereupon they withdrew within their defences. Here they shut themselves up, and made light of his siege, having laid a store of provisions for many years in preparation against this attack; for when they saw Cyrus conquering nation after nation, they were convinced that he would never stop, and that their turn would come at last." (1. 190). After a short time as Herodotus describes (1. 191) the Persians easily gained access to the city, by redirecting the

Euphrates river which ran under its walls, dividing the city in two; something the Babylonians did not foresee, and a project they took notice of too late.

Isaiah 21 is a parable involving Elam (Persia) and Media in the destruction of Babylon. Jeremiah 50 and 51 also prophesy the fall of Babylon. Jeremiah 50:3-4 surely indicate that the Israelites will participate with the Persian conquest of Babylon, as do 50:9, 50:20-28, 33-34 and 41-42. Jeremiah also indicates this at 51:27, where from history we know that people related to the Scythians (Israelites) inhabited the mountains of Ararat, Armenia. Ashkenaz is a Japhethite tribe (Gen. 10:3). Jeremiah 51:31 describes the Persian system of post discussed by Herodotus at 8. 98, a sort of Persian "pony express." While we can't tell from Herodotus whether the Sakae, Scythians, or other Israelites were with the Persians when they took Babylon, surely Persian records themselves indicate such. Herodotus does describe the Persian forces in great detail as they were less than 60 years later under Xerxes, during his great invasion of Greece. At 7. 64 he mentions the "The Sacae, or Scyths" along with the Bactrians. At 7. 66 he mentions the Arians, Parthians, Sogdians, the Caspians at 7. 67, and several times relates some custom or implement of these people to the Medes. At 7. 62 he says "These Medes were called anciently by all people Arians" yet Herodotus is certainly again confusing the Medes with Israelites who were settled in Media by the Assyrians. For the word "Arya" is certainly Hebrew for "Mountain of Yahweh" (note Daniel 2:44-45). The Scythians were said by Herodotus three times (1. 215, 4. 5, 7. 64) to have the *σάγαις* as a favorite weapon, and only the Scyths are mentioned by him with this weapon (once as Massagetae), which Rawlinson translates "battle axe" (compare Jeremiah 51:20). Sharon Turner in his *History of the Anglo-Saxons* states that the battle axe was the preferred weapon of the Saxon at least until the Norman Conquest (vol. 1, page 82; vol. 2, pages 58, 75 & 76).

At 7. 64, Herodotus also states that the Sacae, the Scyths, were "clad in trousers, and had on their heads tall stiff caps rising to a point." A similar pointed cap, not so stiff, may be seen on the head of a Germanic chieftain, pictured on a cup and shown paying homage to Augustus, on page 43 of the May-June 2001 issue of *Archaeology Odyssey*. The same type of hat worn by the Germanic chieftain can be seen on page 52 of the November-December 2002 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* on the head of a figure excavated at Dor in Israel. On page 49 of the same issue, this same hat is seen in the famous inscription of the Israelite King Jehu on the Black Obelisk of Assyria. A Scythian head dress indeed!

By now I would hope it is evident that Herodotus, supported to a greater extent by later historians, was an excellent and most valuable witness to the dispersion of the Israelites and then their fulfillment of so many prophecies concerning them as we have here seen from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah and Zephaniah, and even evidenced in Daniel, another story entirely. It should now be evident that the Israelites of the Old Testament are not the same people being touted as "Jews" today. *WRJ*