

# **The Tribe of Judah and the Igbo**

**Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk. – Gen. 49:8-12**

**And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies. – Deut. 33:7**

Just as Jews have made their home in exile in virtually every country of the world so too will you find the Igbo. Because of this trait and phenomena the Igbo have often been called, “The Jews of Africa” or “The Jews of Nigeria.”

Jews are made up of the Ancient Southern Kingdom of Israel, which was comprised of the Tribes of Judah, Levi and a small portion of Benjamin. They were taken off into Babylonian captivity, which eventually ended, and some of them decided to stay in Babylon but the majority of them returned to the Land of Israel to rebuild Jerusalem, its walls and the Temple. The descendants of these Jews are whom we recognize as the Jewish People today, who now reside on virtually every continent of the world.

Judah and Levi are one of these Tribes that traveled far and wide and can be found wherever Hebrews and or Israelites can be found. It is almost certain Judah can be found among the Igbo People. They likely traveled with Gad's sons Eri, Areli and Arodi with Levi and Zebulon and others such as the Egyptians and Babylonians who made their way to Nigeria.

Even when the Northern Kingdom of Israel was steeped deep in paganism and idolatry Judah fared not much better, but were nonetheless known as the keepers of custom, culture and traditions of the Hebrew People and even today the Jewish Faith is named after their Tribe.

Because the traditions and customs (Omeana) of the Igbo People parallel that of Judaism in most every way, testifies to the fact that Judah is most certainly among and apart of the Igbo. The Uda clan of Enugu state say they are from the Tribe of Judah.

Another way that Judah ended up in Nigeria is that the students of Babylonian Jewish Rabbi, Abba ben Ibo due to persecution

fled to Africa via the Sahara, Nuba and eventually settled in Nigeria.

Some who claim the Ebonites were a faction or splinter group of the Essenes (some being students of descendants of the students of Rabbi Ibo) fled to Africa after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 A.D.

Furthermore it is believed by some that Rabbi Ibo and even the Ebonites were black and that the word Ebony comes from the Ebo in Ebonite; Ebo meaning poor in monetarily and implied in a spiritual sense of being wealthy. Many ancient cultures revere the color black and the black man as a symbol of great wisdom and prophetic insight. But were some Jews Black?

It is believed that the handmaids Zilpah and Bilah were Canaanite or half Canaanite, thus from Noah's son Hamm and therefore black women. Thus, the tribes of Israel they bore would have been darker than the Tribes Rachel and Leah birthed. Rachel and Leah, like Jacob came from Noah's son Shem, the father of the Hebrew and Arab peoples and is believed to be dark, but lighter than Hamm.

Also not that Judah had children by Tamar (Gen. 38) who was a Canaanite woman and therefore, black. King Solomon of Judah whose mother was from Sheba was a black woman and Solomon is rumored to have had a son by the Queen of Sheba. Song of Solomon reveals that Solomon definitely had at least one (albeit more) black wife. Also, recall that Moses married a Cushite woman. Cush coming from Hamm and his son Canaan, therefore black and thus establishing black Levites such as is

found among the Ethiopian Lemba Tribe who DNA tests prove them to be descendants of Levi, possibly sent back with Queen Sheba and the son her and Solomon was said to have with her.

Finally, recall Abraham who married Hagar also believed to be a black Egyptian woman. All Egyptians were black people prior to the Hyksos. Thus, the door is blown open wide for there to be plenty of black Jews and Hebrews. In fact, the White Jews and Hebrews may very well be in the minority considering all the Lost Tribes. Not to mention the exiles of Judah and Israel and them having children by peoples of the lands where they had been exiled, some of which were black. The Jews and Hebrews who found themselves in Nigeria intermarried with the indigenous people already occupying Nigeria when Gad's son Eri and the others from Israel came. Therefore, it is entirely plausible and almost certain that there are Jews of Judah among the Igbo.

Professor O. Alaezi in his book Ibo Exodus says on pages 128-129:

**“The Ibo towns and villages are Jewish Item, to start with, is from the Jewish name “Etam” (pronounced as it is written in Hebrew) from the family of Zorathites of the tribe of Judah (see I Chronicles 4:3). There is a counterpart Item town, Itam near Utyo in Akwa Ibom, also pronounced as the original Etam. Our immediate neighbors are also of the same tribe of Judah. Examples. Alayi (see “Alayi” of the tribe of Judah I Chron. 2:31); Ugwueke (of “Eker” of the tribe of Judah – I Chron. 2:27); Edda of “Eldad” (See Numbers 11:27). Akaeze (“Eker Ezer”) and so on. Jewish**

**family names that are still prevalent in Them include Amaeke (of “Eker), Amukabi (or Umuakabia as written in other parts of Iboland) – of “Abia” I Chron. 3:10); Abieye from ‘Prophet Abieye’, one of the minor Prophets of Israel, Ete from “Ether” – Joshua 15:34), Amabo Okoko (“Akan” I Chron. 1:34). Eleke (“Helek”, - Numbers 6:30); Erinma (of “Eri” – Gen. 46:16); Eke (“Eker”, I Chron. 2:27) Eze (“Ezer”, Neh, 3:19); Offia (“Ophra”, I Chron. 4:13); Ubani (“Uban”, Ezra 2:10) Alaezi (“Eliezer”, Exodus. 18:14). Onam or Unam (“Onam” I Chron. 1:40) Iheaka (“El Iheaka”, one of the attribute names of God); Usa (name of person in Okoko Item) from the Hebrew name, Joshua pronounced as Yoshua. ‘J’ is pronounced ‘y’ in Hebrew. We also have Isi or Isi (See “Ishi”, I Chron. 4:20). Examples. Isiosu, Amabo, Okok Item, Umuisi in Igbere, Ishiagu, Isiokpo, Ishi Nnewi, Amichi, Umuichi, etc...”**