

But was the Jewish state founded at Mount Sinai in 1200 B.C. really dead?

Indeed, it looked as if Jewish history were going to be no exception to Spengler's rule. The Ten Tribes of Israel never reappeared in the pages of history after their defeat at the hands of the Assyrians. When the Babylonians exiled the Jews of Judah, it looked as if this would be the end of them too. But it did not turn out that way. Something happened in the interim between the defeat of Israel in 722 B.C. and the defeat of Judah in 586 B.C. which made it possible for the latter to survive and to germinate a new phase of Jewish life.

In pagan days, captives marching into exile usually marched to extinction—not physically, but as a national entity. Because one set of idols was exchangeable for another, captive peoples usually embraced both the idols and the *Weltanschauung* (way of looking at things) of the conquerors. This was the starting point for assimilation, further hastened by the custom of embracing each other's women, an exchange of good will between victor and vanquished which added pleasure to a semblance of democracy. The captives did not particularly care whether or not they survived as Hittites, Phoenicians, Syrians, or Jebusites, as long as they had a chance to continue to live. The pagan was willing to lose both his religious and national identity. Such was the case with the kingdom of Israel. Such, however, was not the case with Judah.

Why did the Jews of Judah survive whereas the Jews of Israel did not? The political and economic interpreters of history give this answer: The Assyrian policy was to break up conquered nations into small segments, then to disperse the segments throughout the empire in order to destroy national and ethnic unity, in contrast to the Babylonian policy of keeping exiled peoples intact. But this rule did not hold true in every case. Many nations vanquished by Assyria lived in spite of this fragmentation policy, only to disintegrate later when conquered by some other power. Other nations defeated by Babylonia lost their national identities without being strewn all over the map.

There must be more to survival in exile than mere chance. There must be a continuous and conscious effort on the part of the exiles to retain their identities, both religious and national. The Israelites did not have such a conscious will to remain Jews, whereas the captives of Judah carried with them

into captivity an implacable will to survive as Jews. What gave them the will to retain their Jewishness in the face of every obstacle and threat? Somewhere between the fall of Israel and the fall of Judah a spiritual reawakening of the people of Judah took place. A new Jewish character and a new concept of Jewishness itself was forged.

We have seen how Judah, after the fall of Israel, was divided into bitter factions. In addition to external threats, she was beset with internal strife. Idolatry was gaining greater strength, the rich were oppressing the poor, intermarriage was diluting the Jewish strain—again the triple threat to Jewish identity, a threat to her religion, morality, and racial purity. The former unity was all but gone. The historic stage was set for the disappearance of Judah too.

This is a classic example of a Toynbeeian challenge facing a civilization. Because Judah did not respond with solutions permitting her to continue as an independent nation, Toynbee, like Spengler, felt that Jewish civilization came to an end at this point. But the Jews persistently bob up in subsequent history, refusing to fit into his framework. Whereas Spengler just ignored the Jews after this date, Toynbee swept them off his tidy pages into footnotes, characterizing them as fossils. One is reminded of the perhaps apocryphal story about the Swedish botanist Linnaeus (1707–1778), who, after having classified all plants, began the classification of animals. He implicitly believed in the theory of special creation as opposed to the theory of evolution. One day, when walking in his garden, he saw a bug which his expert eye immediately told him was a proof for the theory of evolution as against the theory of special creation. Linnaeus stepped on the bug and buried it in the sand. He missed the chance of being Darwin.

Toynbee notwithstanding, Judah met the challenge of the times by responding with two ideas which not only saved her from national extinction but are still influencing the Western world today. The first idea was the canonization of part of Holy Scripture, making it the word of God. This gave the world first the Old Testament, then the New. The second idea was the "packaging" of Jewish religion for export. This gave the world first Christianity, then Islamism.

In her hour of crisis, Judah had the good fortune to inherit King Josiah (638 B.C.), a ruler with a fertile mind and a flexible conscience dedicated to a good cause. His father, a pro-Assyrian king of Judah, had been assassinated by the