

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX The Kimmerians

Crucial to understanding of the fall of Israel, and the scattering among the nations, is the fact of deportation to other lands. The people were not slaughtered or persecuted in pogroms; they were carried away and resettled. For reasons which we can now more deeply appreciate, they were given opportunity to reestablish themselves in small groups in separate foreign locations. The purpose behind the deportation may have been to break the unity of the people, but this action greatly served God's purpose. Faced with the consequences of insurrection against Assyrian authority they had to suppress their tribal pride. Thus they may have recognized the futility of attempts to reestablish themselves as a unified people. With return to their homeland now closed to them they may have become discontented; they may have cast their eyes on other geographical locations.

Furthermore, we should always keep in mind their wandering proclivities and desire to mix with other people, both suited to God's purpose.

These conditions and natural genetic tendencies may have led to ambitions to move beyond the range of Assyrian power, outside the control of empire. They may have relocated to more attractive distant regions. No longer identifying themselves as the people of Israel under the protecting hand of Yahweh, they may have reverted to former ethnic designations. It is well within the range of possibility that they renamed themselves in their new homes. No longer were they "ben Yishrael," the sons of Israel, but rather *Iberi*, or perhaps other designations which denoted their special status. They may have become disillusioned with their special status as "ben Yishrael." Since they were also eager to follow the pagan traditions, they may have identified themselves according to the older traditions of Adamic descent and forsaken their special status as the people of Yahweh.

We also should not neglect the great intellectual, artistic, and administrative potentials of these people. While not finding full expression under the complacent ease of life in Canaan those potentials may have been stimulated by the hardships of establishing new lives in less amenable situations. We know from the biblical record that such potentials certainly existed. The great social respect accorded these people is clearly evident for the Babylonian captivity. The Jews were placed in high administrative positions. Those who were skillful in wisdom and endowed with knowledge, "who were capable of learning and competent to serve in the king's palace," were taught the letters and language of the Chaldeans, Dan 1. Daniel was made ruler over the whole province of Babylon, Dan 2:48. These highly influential positions as teachers and administrators were also demonstrated by the unique honor accorded Joseph in Egypt. Continued bondage in Egypt may have been the natural result of a desire on the part of the Egyptian ruling classes to employ those outstanding Hebrew

tribesmen. They were regarded as far more than mere witless slaves. Some of the greatest architectural wonders of Egypt come out of the era when the Iberi were indentured servants.

We have been witness to similar cultural processes in our own day. The scientific staffs of Germany were prized by both Russia and the United States after World War II. During the Hungarian uprising of 1956 thousands of selected refugees were admitted to the United States, based on their education and their technical abilities.

Although the policy of deportation and resettlement in foreign locations broke up resistance among subject populations it also resulted in the loss of strong patriotic unity. This was one of the elements that led to the eventual fragmentation and fall of the Assyrian empire. When people lose their ethnic identity they no longer feel a sense of cultural unity. They may continue their respective social customs but they no longer identify with a national purpose. The many different social elements scattered around the Assyrian empire posed no threat to royal power but they also did not build a solid nationalistic spirit.

Given these social conditions and ethnic expectations we should expect groups to emigrate to other regions. The Eberi/Iberi name was witness to just such process. We also might find it in other names.

A second group that deserve attention are the Kimmerians. The Kimmeri or, in the manner of the Semitic verb inflections, Kimri, were first alluded to by the Greek elegiac poets Archilochus and Callinus^{HOAG}. Archilochus was born on Paros and lived from about 720 to 660 BC. Callinus was born in Ephesus and lived somewhat contemporaneous with Archilochus. They mention a Kimmerian invasion of Asia Minor taking place in their own day.

Note the inflectional parallels between the Ibri/Iberi and the Kimri/Kimmeri.

Herodotus gave us more detailed account of the Kimmeri but his versions are subject to debate. In IV.11 he states the following:

... The wandering Scythians once dwelt in Asia, and there warred with the Massagetae, but with ill success; they therefore quitted their homes, crossed the Araxes, and entered the land of Kimmeria. For the land which is now inhabited by the Scyths was formerly the country of the Kimmerians.

This passage is difficult because the land of the Scyths was a vague and general term for regions north and east of the Black Sea. If the Scythians had crossed the Araxes they would be in Media, the exact location of the Iberi deported to "the cities of the Medes" described in II Kings 17:6 and 18:11.

Herodotus further complicates matters by stating in IV.12:

Scythia still retains traces of the Kimmerians; there are Kimmerian walls, and a Kimmerian ferry, also a tract called Kimmeria, and a Kimmerian Bosphorus. It appears likewise that the Kimmerians, when they fled into Asia to escape the Scyths,

made settlement in the peninsula where the Greek city of Sinope was afterwards built. The Scyths, it is plain, pursued them, and missing the road, poured into Media. For the Kimmerians kept the line which led along the (Black) seashore, but the Scyths in their pursuit held the Caucasus upon their right, thus proceeding inland, and falling upon Media.

He remarks further in IV.13:

... The Arimaspi drove the Issedonians from their country, while the Issedonians dispossessed the Scyths; and the Scyths, pressing upon the Kimmerians, who dwelt on the shores of the Southern (Black) Sea, forced them to leave their land.

The difficulty with the route of the Kimmerian flight described by Herodotus is the impossible terrain where the Caucasus come down steeply to the eastern shore of the Black Sea. This area has topography that is nearly impassible, especially for a group of fleeing people. Furthermore, if the Scythians were in hot pursuit, as Herodotus suggests, it seems difficult to understand how they could have missed the road, moved east along the northern side of the Caucasus, and made their way into Media along the shore of the Caspian Sea. This would have been a geographical mistake of nearly 500 miles.

A resolution to the dilemmas created by Herodotus is to suggest that the Scythians were on the move, probably due to the pressure of people who lived farther north and east in Asia, and that they moved in both westerly and southerly directions, forcing the Kimmeri from their habitations north of the Black Sea, and also pouring along the shore of the Caspian into Media. Other groups of Kimmeri living in the “cities of the Medes” may have escaped over the Black Sea, as well as moved through passes in the Caucasian mountains to reach the northern regions of Asia Minor.

The information from Herodotus is instructive in spite of its difficulties. The tract of land known to Herodotus as Kimmeria is now known as the Crimea. The name Crimea derives directly from Kimmeria. The Kimmerian Bosphorus is the narrow passage of water from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov, now known as the Kerch Strait. The Sea of Azov was then known as the Palus Maeotis. The Kimmerian wall probably refers to a wall that ran across the narrow isthmus which connects the Crimea to mainland Russia, about three miles wide.

It is important to note that regions on both the northern and southern shores of the Black Sea occupied by the Kimmerians correspond roughly to the regions occupied by the Iberi. We found the latter attested historically by Pompey and Theophanes just south of the Caucasus mountains. Montanus placed them around the Sea of Azov. The available evidence suggests that both groups were in the same geographical regions at the same time. It is interesting, and pertinent, that the Irish folk traditions also say their ancestors came from the land of Scythia, reinforcing the possibility that the Iberi and Kimmeri were related racial stock.

The date of the movements by the Kimmeri in Asia Minor was sometime during the eighth century BC. The existence of a simultaneous movement of Scythians and Kimmeri is affirmed not only by Greek writers but also in the historical records of Assyria. Sargon II fought Kimmeri attacking his northern provinces. In 706 he marched to Tabal (Tubal) where he met the Kimmeri. Sargon was killed in 705 in one of those battles. Esarhaddon, king of Assyria who reigned from 681 to 668 BC, listed the Kimmeri as one of the groups whom he fought on his northern borders. Ashurbanipal, 668-616 BC, also fought the Kimmeri in Asia Minor^{HOL.NET,CAH}. At the time of Aristaeus of Proconnesus (Marmora) about 550 BC, quoted by Herodotus, there were Kimmeri still remaining in the regions of the Crimea, although Herodotus does not recognize Kimmeri living in those regions a hundred years later.

The Kimmeri were on the move along the southern shore of the Black Sea and in the central regions of Asia Minor through this period. They destroyed the Midas dynasty in Phrygia and controlled that section of Asia Minor for at least thirty years. They reached the borders of the Lydian kingdom in western Asia Minor by 685 BC; by 660 the Lydians were in danger of being overrun. Gyges (Assyrian Gugu), king of the Lydians, appealed for help to the Assyrians, hoping that Assyrian attacks on the southern flanks of the Kimmeri would inhibit their adventures in Lydia. According to the Assyrian annals Gyges won a victory over the Kimmeri. But attempts by Gyges to sustain a strong alliance with Assyria were not successful; the Kimmeri fell on Lydia in 652 and captured Sardis, the capital. The success of this venture emboldened Tugdamme, the leader of the Kimmeri, to return through Cilicia toward Assyria. Unfortunately the records are incomplete. Apparently the Kimmeri were not successful in prosecuting further action on their own. They may have made alliance with other groups; Assyrian records use the general term Umman-manda for groups of tribes who were defeated in battle in Cilicia shortly afterward.

Such alliance is attested in the Assyrian records for Esarhaddon about 670 BC. He proposed to use Bartatu, king of the Ashguzai (Scythians) against a league of Gimirrai, Sapardai, Madai and Mannai threatening his borders around Lake Van. The Madai are the Medes, the Sapardai are the Sepharad of Obadiah 20, the Mannai are the Minni of Jeremiah 51:27, while the Ashguzai are the biblical Ashkenaz. Gimirrai is the Assyrian name for the Kimmeri.

Origin of the Kimmeri is subject to considerable scholarly debate. Strabo equated them with a group of Bulgarian people called the Treres. More than one ancient historian knew a tradition that Lydia had been invaded by a northern horde to which the name Kimmeri was attached, long before the historic attack on Sardis. Eusebius mentions invasions as far back as the twelfth century^{CAH}. How much of the movement in Asia Minor was composed of Kimmeri who had settled there in the eighth century and how much was due to infusion of new people from northern regions is totally unknown. Herodotus' use of the term suggests almost a generic designation, that he meant more than one small tribe; the invasions in Asia Minor and the attacks against the Assyrians also suggest a large diverse group. For both Assyrians and Greeks the term stood for any non-Scythian horde which invaded from the north^{CAH}. As with the Puni and Iberi, through cultural infusion and interbreeding, imposition of the name on large groups of people probably was part of that powerful

Semitic social phenomenon. Groups which had been blessed with the genetic and cultural gift of the noble descendants of Abraham might welcome assumption of a designation which helped uplift them.

Xerxes, the king of Persia circa 470 BC differentiated between Amyrgian Kimmerians and Kimmerians wearing pointed caps^{NET}. The name was not applied to one group as a unique designation, by either Greek classical or Assyrian writers, but rather was used in later records as a generic term for northern foreign invaders.

The language and social customs of the Kimmeri are equally unknown. They are believed to have spoken an Indo-European tongue. The names of their leaders suggest an Iranian origin. The Medes referred to the regions of Cappadocia, location of the Kimmeri, as Gamir. This name is similar to the biblical Gomer. Both Gamir and Gomer are thought to refer to the Kimmeri. Other Assyrian historical records show a group of people living in Media called the Kumri. There was a fortified town on the Araxes River called Gumri. Again, ancient records and traditions confirm the same geographic location for Iberi and Kimri.

This information takes on even more intriguing aspects when we examine the Semitic root word — *khamar*.

Brown, Driver, and Briggs, on page 331, show #IV of *khamar* as a verb which means “to be red.” In Arabic it is used for “dye red,” “redness,” and “reddish brown, apparently a skin color.” In Job 16:16 it is translated in some versions as “my face is reddened from weeping.” The verb also means “to boil up” or “to ferment²⁵⁶⁰.” It has the following inflections:

- 1) Kimmer = Pi’el singular third person past tense.
- 2) Kimri = Kal singular female imperative.
- 3) Kimru = Kal plural male imperative.
- 4) Kammri = Pi’el singular female imperative.
- 5) Kamru = Kal plural third person past tense.
- 6) Komer = Kal first person present tense.

Gomer is sometimes thought to derive from *gamar*, a cognate word which means “to end,” in the sense of completion or failure. However K-to-G phonetic changes could have given the name *Gomer* from *Komer*. The *Kumri*, *Gumri*, and *Gamir* names are all phonetic variations of words readily identified in Hebrew. The designation Kimmeri/Gimirrai, as a description for red skin color, may have developed from groups of red-skinned Iberi who integrated among the native tribes around the Black Sea. The appellatives *Kimmeri*, *Kimri* or *Gimmeria* denoted the visible skin color rather than the *Iberi* racial designation.

As I indicated above, the Kimmerian name was well-known to Greece by the latter part of the eighth century. If it derived from groups of red-skinned Iberi coming out of Canaan those people would have had to migrate appreciably earlier, perhaps as much as a hundred years before. This would take such movement into the latter part of the ninth century, the time of the conquest of the eastern Israelite tribes by Hazael. Although deportation is not attested at that time, groups of Israelites may have moved elsewhere. If they mixed with tribes on the northern shore of the Black Sea the

Kimmeri name may have been acquired that early by those mixed people. More than one group using the physical Kimmeri designation may have settled on both the northern and southern shores.

We should not neglect the possibility that the Ibri were sensitive to the destiny ordained by God. If their prophets had reminded them of the promises made to their forefathers, and if those prophets were telling of a sifting among the nations, the promises and warnings may have weighed heavily on their minds. It is conceivable they carried such doctrines with them. If they were an impressive group, displaying outstanding talents, native populations could have welcomed them as major contributors to their cultures. With such social prominence their theological doctrines also might have had major influence. The blended people might easily have adopted the *Kimmeri* and *Kimri* names. God was creating a ferment among the nations; the Kimmeri name not only reflects the red skin color; it also could have meant a great boiling up.

After the events with Lydia in the middle of the seventh century the Kimmeri of Asia Minor fade from the historical scene. Although mention is made of them by Aristeeas as existing in Asia Minor a century later, they are, by that time, of little importance.

Where did they go? Did the pursuit of the Scythians and the Assyrians rout them completely? Were they absorbed into other tribal groups? Did they lose their Kimmerian identity to become known by other names on the pages of history? Did they migrate to other regions — as did the Iberians?

Considerable evidence exists to show Kimmeri/Kimri movements. Kimri is a town in Russia some fifty or sixty miles north of Moscow^{RHDEL}. The name is straight out of the Hebrew dictionary - shown by the list above. Was it assigned by wandering Kimmerian tribes who settled in those regions?

Recent archeological evidence points to Kimmerians moving in a westerly direction up through the Balkan peninsula. This supports Strabo’s identification with the Treres. He merely misplaced the direction of their movements. They were known as the Thraco-Kimmerians. They —

... moved westward into Europe, spreading along the Danube into Bulgaria and reaching as far west as the Great Hungarian Plain, where their burials, with echoes of their Pontic origins, have recently been recognized. It is possible that the appearance of these foreigners, bringing with them finely bred horses, may in some way have influenced the emerging aristocracy of the west^{CW}.

Yes, indeed, they influenced the emerging aristocracy of the west. They were of noble, aristocratic blood. They were sifting their biological heritage among the nations.

Further confirmation of their movements is found in names which show up in the western extremities of Europe.

According to classical authors the Kimbri lived in the northern regions of ancient Germany near to or on the isthmus of Jutland, modern Denmark. Their identity is not exactly known. According to Strabo and Plutarch their armor and customs were

very unlike the Teutons; therefore, they are believed to be Kelts^{AE}.

They were a powerful people. They appear in central Europe late in the second century BC. About 120 BC they are attested in Teutoburgium, between the Sava and Drava rivers in northern Yugoslavia, exactly where archeological traces of the migrating Kimmeri from Asia Minor were found. In 113 BC they defeated a Roman army in Noricum in the Austrian Alps. The Romans sent two other armies to subdue them but both were defeated. The Kimbri then marched into Gaul. Two new armies were dispatched to stop them but they also were defeated with the loss of 80,000 men. The Kimbri then passed over the Pyrenees into Spain where they were repulsed by the Celtiberians. As these invasions neared Italy they created the so-called Kimbrian Panic at Rome. Finally they stormed into Italy but Gaius Marius, who had spent three years preparing for their attack, routed them at Vercellae in the Po valley in 101 BC.

The Cymbri, who also dwelt in the same corner of Germany, adjoining the Ocean, had dwindled into a small tribe, though still retaining the fame of their ancient glorious exploits^{HAG}.

The powerful attacks of the European Kimbri certainly show parallel to the power of the Kimmeri in Asia Minor in earlier centuries. Although Roman historians imply that the Kimbri originated in Jutland their appearance on the Hungarian Plain corresponds to the earlier appearance of the Kimmeri in the same geographical locale. These facts bring into question the true sequence of events with the Kimmeri/Kimbri/Kimri, their movements, and their origins. Rather than marching from Jutland to Teutoburgium, branches of those tribes may have migrated from the Hungarian Plain to Jutland. Other branches may have migrated into England. In the face of the meager historical and archeological evidence we cannot be sure.

As stated by Cunliffe^{CW}:

The overall situation in Gaul in the last decade of the second century BC was confused. The movement of the Kimbri and Teutones had caused widespread disruption among the Celtic tribes. Indeed it may have been at this time that groups of settlers crossed the Channel into southeastern Britain. But to present the situation as a German-inspired invasion (as the later Roman writers were inclined to do) is a gross oversimplification. Whatever the origins of the Kimbri, the majority of the tribes on the move were probably Celtic from the northern fringes of the Celtic world. Pressure from the north would make the neighboring tribes of the south so vulnerable that a single, and possibly quite small-scale, event like the migration of a few Kimbri could cause sudden and widespread dislocations.

This statement demonstrates the major influence a relatively small group of people can have on a culture if the social environment is amenable. Such has been the history of the Ibri/Kimri people.

The Kimri/Kimry name is found not only in a town in Russia; it is the name by which the people of Wales know themselves to this day. They are believed to be a branch of the Keltic family which succeeded the Gaels in a great westward migration of Kelts. According to this view they drove the Gaels west into Ireland and north into Scotland while they occupied the southern regions of England, where they were known as *Britons*. In the fifth century of this era they, in turn, were driven into the hill country of Wales, Cornwall and northwest England by the invading Anglo-Saxons. A part of them may have reverse crossed the English channel and settled in Brittany^{AE}. The movement of the Kymry (Kimri) is detected by variations of the Kymric/Kymric dialect known as Cornish in Cornwall and American in parts of Brittany. The Welsh name *Kymru* is the plural of the name *Kymro*. Linguists believe the name derives from an ancient Celtic word, *combrox* = “compatriot,” or “fellow-countryman.” They suggest this origin of the Kymru/Kymri name from a parallel with *Allobrox* = “men of another country^{OED}.” However, the parallels with the Hebrew words are striking: Kimri/Kymry and Kimru/Kymru are one-for-one in pronunciation. Also, we cannot be sure of reverse origins, that *combrox* comes out of *Kimri*, not vice versa.

Other evidence suggests that migrations took place from the time the Kimmeri fade from Asia Minor until the appearance of Kymry/Kimbri tribes farther west in Europe. An “m-to-mb” phonetic variation is common with the Kimri name. The Romans knew ancient Wales as *Cambria*, a variation on Kimri^{AE}. Many scholars in the past referred to the Welsh as the *Cambrians*. This name form is shown in the *Cambrian* Mountains of Wales. Many persons believe that the Grampian Mountains of Scotland also derived their name from the Kimri, but they are so far from known residence of those people the association is questioned. Eilert Ekwall lists many English and Welsh place names with the *Camb-* or *Cumbr-* form^{CODEPN}. *Cumberland* is the “land of the *Cumbrians*,” the ancient Britons. This name is very popular in English speaking countries and is found many places, including in the United States. Other ancient English and Welsh names are *Cumberworth* from *Cumbras Worth*, *Cummersdale* from “The valley of the *Cumbrians*,” and *Comberback*, *Combermere*, *Comberford*, *Comberton*, and so on, all from the ancient British *Cumbra*. Such names as *Combrook*, *Cumrew*, *Cumwhiton* are thought to not derive from Kymry/Cumbra but rather from *cumb*, the ancient Britonic word for deep hollow or valley. However, this word also may have the same origins. *Cumrew* is identical in pronunciation to the Hebrew *Kumru*.

The name *Cambridge* is still another of Kimri origins^{CODEPN}.

The Iberian and Kimmerian evidence shows that the migration of groups of people, from the eighth century BC, down to historical times, is a complex web which cannot be easily untangled. The mixture of Kelts and Iberians in Spain to form the Celtiberians, the migration of Iberians to Ireland to form part of the Keltic stock of that land, the blending of Kimmerians with Kelts in the Hungarian Plain to confuse the separation of the two groups, and the influence of these groups to form an aristocracy — all demonstrate the profound sifting which was taking place among the nations.

But other evidence speaks to this great sifting among the nations.