

## The Myth of the Twelve Tribes of Israel

*The Myth of the Twelve Tribes of Israel* is the first book to explore the traditions of peoples all around the world who have claimed an Israelite identity as part of a continuous history of Israelite identity construction from biblical times to the present. By treating the Hebrew Bible's accounts of Israel as one of many efforts to create an Israelite history, rather than the source material for later legends, Andrew Tobolowsky brings a long-term comparative approach to biblical and nonbiblical "Israels". In the process, he sheds new light on how the structure of the twelve tribes tradition enables the creation of so many different visions of Israel, and generates new questions: How can we explain the enduring power of the myth of the twelve tribes of Israel? How does "becoming Israel" work, why has it proven so popular, and how did it change over time? Finally, what can the changing shape of Israel itself reveal about those who claimed it?

ANDREW TOBOLOWSKY is an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the College of William and Mary. An acknowledged expert on the twelve tribes tradition and on Israelite history, he is the author of *The Sons of Jacob and the Sons of Herakles* (2017), and numerous articles on both topics, as well as on the value of thinking through cross-cultural comparisons.

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*New Identities Across Time and Space*

ANDREW TOBOLOWSKY

*College of William and Mary, Virginia*



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