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Cross-Examining the Two-House Teaching

sifting through the claims of the Two-House sub-movement,
what is Biblical, and what is not

Since the early 2000s, various parts of the broad Messianic community have been bombarded with an array of issues and teachings that have been anything but good. These things have challenged our collective understanding of who Messiah Yeshua is, the recorded history of the First Century, hermeneutics and how we are to understand the Bible, and indeed the very authority of the Scriptures themselves. Since such a wave of “teachings” has hit, and the consequent damage that they have caused, many of us have had to reevaluate and reconsider some things that we have picked up in our days in the Messianic movement. With some issues, we have had to return to previous beliefs and practices, discarding things that were passing themselves off as “true,” but we discovered were not. With other things, we have had to fine-tune our theology and make sure that it is in fuller alignment with Scripture, eliminate any unsound elements that may have been allowed to creep in, and pull the reins back a considerable bit.

While this has been especially true of some fringe teachings and beliefs that we may have all gotten wind of, one issue that needs to be truly cross-examined by many people is **the Two-House teaching**. I have always believed that we must approach the subject matter of the reunification of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel from the Biblical text and from what should be read as unfulfilled prophecies. One must not make unsubstantiated claims about the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom, nor can one ignore the Jewish expectations of Israel’s restoration. We have to understand that the message of Israel’s restoration is ultimately the message of God’s Kingdom coming to Earth—and Israel just happens to be the vehicle that God is going to use to accomplish it. *It is something that truly welcomes all human beings who look to Him for deliverance and salvation!*

It is necessary to cross-examine and revisit various elements of the Two-House teaching. There are some important Bible passages that advocates of the Two-House teaching have brought to the attention of today’s Messianic Believers. Yet, as

Israel in Future Prophecy

with many theological issues which have to be frequently fine-tuned, we will be examining some aspects of the Two-House teaching that are assumed to be true by many proponents and adherents of it, but Biblically and historically are overstated, or even unsustainable.

Contemplating Israel's Restoration

A major issue in theology today is determining what the purpose of the Messiah coming to Earth was, aside from being sacrificed for the sins of fallen humanity at Golgotha (Calvary) and providing permanent atonement and forgiveness to those who look to Him. Many are of the mistaken impression that Yeshua came to inaugurate a new program via the establishment of “the Church,” when in actuality this is not attested to in any of His teachings or in the testimony of the Apostles. Yeshua the Messiah came to bring about the restoration of Israel (Matthew 16:18; cf. Jeremiah 33:6-8).¹ This restoration was to involve both the tribes of Jacob and the nations at large (Isaiah 49:6). **The God of Israel has always had a global vision of saving all members of the human race who would recognize Him.** While Israel is His chosen nation, it is nevertheless to function as the vehicle for Him to communicate His truth to the entire world. When one recognizes the God of Israel as the One True God, that person then becomes a part of the community, or Kingdom realm, of Israel. The salvation of every person is innately connected to Israel, and its prophesied restoration.

The Apostle Paul recognized this global vision as he was specially commissioned to be the “apostle of the nations” (Romans 11:13, LITV). For his time in the First Century, Paul had the training of a Jewish rabbi and was a Roman citizen, so he could go out into the Mediterranean basin and ably testify to others about the God of Israel and His Son, Yeshua, to both Diaspora Jews and diverse groups of people. Paul plainly wrote non-Jewish Believers in Asia Minor that prior to their salvation experience they were separate from the Commonwealth of Israel, yet as a result of their faith they had been “brought near”:

“Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’ which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Messiah Yeshua you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Messiah” (Ephesians 2:11-13).

What does it mean to be “brought near”? The Torah testifies of Ancient Israel, “For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him?” (Deuteronomy 4:7). Psalm 148:14 exclaims, “And He

¹ For a further discussion of this issue, consult the author’s article “When Did ‘the Church’ Begin?” appearing in *Introduction to Things Messianic* as well the examination of Matthew 16:18-19 in his publication, *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

² Grk. *ethnōn apostolos* (ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος).

has lifted up a horn for His people, praise for all His godly ones; *even* for the sons of Israel, a people near to Him. Praise the LORD!" When those from the nations have recognized Israel's Messiah, it is clear that they have been made one with their Jewish brethren within the Commonwealth of Israel, *tēs politeias tou Israēl* (τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ). The Greek word *politeia* (πολιτεία), rendered as "commonwealth" or "citizenship" (NIV),³ means "**the right to be a member of a sociopolitical entity, citizenship**" (BDAG).⁴ Paul's further writing specifies how non-Jewish Believers are to be regarded as a part of the community of Israel:

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Yeshua Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit...the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Messiah Yeshua through the gospel" (Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:6).

The term *sumpolitēs* (συμπολίτης) means "**fellow-citizen/compatriot**" (BDAG).⁵ Paul definitely believed that non-Jews who recognize Israel's Messiah have been given citizenship in the Kingdom realm of Israel, even though they are not ethnically or culturally Jewish. Such persons certainly benefit from the rich root of Israel (cf. Romans 11:18), **but** they also have a definite responsibility to live appropriately as a part of this, in holiness, as well (cf. 1 Peter 2:9-10).

Many non-Jewish Believers who have entered into the Messianic community are of the strong conviction that they are a part of the polity of Israel, along with their fellow Jewish Believers, and that God's Torah is relevant instruction for them. There are many open-minded Messianic Jewish congregational leaders who have no problem with considering such people a part of Israel along with them, *provided* that there is an extreme level of respect and sensitivity realized for Jewish concerns (cf. Romans 11:21, 29). Paul himself, in telling the non-Jewish Believers in Rome that they had been grafted into Israel's olive tree, also warned how they could be broken off from it because of arrogance issued against the natural Jewish branches (Romans 11:17-18).

While aspects of the Messianic lifestyle and Torah observance tend to garner a great deal of attention (especially considering that they involve one's day-to-day activities), all of those who compose the Messianic movement and consider themselves as being a part of an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel—need to recognize that the prophecies detailing Israel's restoration somehow involve "them." But how they *specifically involve* "them" has been a question generating a variety of answers. Much confusion has been caused by errant teachings such as the pre-tribulation rapture, built upon a dispensational foundation of God having

³ "community" (REB/Lattimore); "citizens" (Common English Bible).

⁴ BDAG, 845.

⁵ Ibid., 959.

Israel in Future Prophecy

two groups of elect, Israel and “the Church.” Obviously, when such a presupposition is removed—and Bible readers can be more honest with what “after the tribulation of those days” means (cf. Matthew 24:29-31)⁶—then end-time prophecies which regard Israel’s restoration can be viewed as being far more applicable *and relevant* to all of those within today’s Messianic movement. Such prophecies, while including participation within Tribulation-period events, also involve a larger anticipated restoration of Israel *beyond* the rebirth of the State of Israel and a return of many Jewish people to the Holy Land—as important as these have undeniably been.

When we review the prophecies of Israel’s end-time restoration, a major, and frequently overlooked component of it, is the reunion the House of Judah and the exiled House of Israel, or Ephraim⁷—those of the Southern and Northern Kingdoms of Israel which divided following the death of King Solomon. Judah, of course, may be rightly considered to largely compose today’s Jewish people, who have been the principal torchbearers of Israel for over two-and-a-half millennia. Ephraim composes the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel that was taken corporately away into Assyrian exile and deported. Various pockets of people found in remote corners of Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Central Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean basin, have claimed, at one point or another, to be their descendants—and today can even be recognized as their descendants by various Jewish historians and/or religious authorities in modern Israel.

According to Biblical prophecy, the Lord is going to restore those of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel in the Last Days. God’s plan has always been that by restoring Israel the message of salvation may finally reach to the ends of the Earth (cf. Matthew 24:14). The challenge is with understanding who is to be reunited in the Last Days. **Do we leave much of this to our Sovereign Creator to determine when all is completed—or should we appropriate this role for ourselves?** What are some of the issues that have arisen?

The controversy which has arisen in the Messianic community, known as “the Two Houses of Israel,” has grown steadily since the mid-to-late 1990s. Many non-Jewish Believers, who have been led to embrace their Hebraic Roots, consider themselves to be a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13) or the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), grafted-in to the olive tree (Romans 11:17-18), along with their fellow Jewish Believers. But this is not just on a spiritual or citizenship/membership level, but also on a physical level. They (strongly) assert themselves to be “of Ephraim,” meaning that they are convinced that they must be descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel deported as captives by Assyria in 722-721 B.C.E. Suffice it to say, in many sectors this viewpoint is seen by Messianic Jews with some extreme skepticism, if not hostility.

⁶ For a detailed study, consult the author’s report *The Dangers of Pre-Tribulationism*.

⁷ Isaiah 11:12; Jeremiah 3:18; 30:3; 31:31; 33:7, 14; 50:4, 20; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Hosea 1:11; Zechariah 8:13; 9:13; Hebrews 8:8, et. al.

While there are doubtlessly problems which have been caused by many proponents and popular voices promoting the Two-House teaching, it is also true that there are claims being made from Biblical history and future prophecy which must be evaluated.

The Exile of the Northern Kingdom of Israel

The period of Ancient Israel's history that directly affects the subject matter commonly called or referenced as "the Two Houses of Israel," concerns the Divided Kingdom era which occurred following the reigns of Kings David and Solomon.⁸ Because of the intense idolatry and apostasy of King Solomon, God decreed that following his death, ten of the tribes would break away from the Kingdom of Israel, being given to his servant Jeroboam:

"So the LORD said to Solomon, 'Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, *but* I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, *but* I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen" (1 Kings 11:11-13).

Ancient Israel quantitatively experienced a split into two different Kingdoms or Houses: the Northern House or Kingdom of Israel, also known as Ephraim, and the Southern House or Kingdom of Judah. Judah primarily consisted of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and some Levites. Ephraim summarily entailed the remaining ten tribes: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, and Ephraim (the last two represent "Joseph"). The Divided Kingdom era (Tenth-Eighth Centuries B.C.E.) is a rather complicated period of Ancient Israelite history, largely having to do with how the Southern Kingdom of Judah continued to be ruled by the House of David, and the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim was ruled by a series of successive royal dynasties. The impression that one gets, from surveying the Books of Kings and Chronicles,⁹ is that corruption and idolatry were rampant all over Israel, although the Southern Kingdom was a bit more godly.

While problems with sin and infidelity to the LORD God were present in both the Southern and Northern Kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim had a particular problem with idolatry from the very beginning. This is best evidenced by its first king, Jeroboam, setting up temples for golden calf worship and proclaiming, "behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28). Jeroboam's justification for setting up high places in Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:29) was his concern that if the people of the newly established

⁸ For a summary of this time, consult C.F. Pfeiffer, "Israel, History of the People of: Divided Kingdom," in *ISBE*, 2:916-918; B.E. Kelle and B.A. Strawn, "History of Israel 5: Assyrian Period," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books*, pp 458-478.

⁹ Consult the summaries provided for the Books of Kings and Books of Chronicles in the author's workbook *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic*.

Israel in Future Prophecy

Northern Kingdom went to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, that they would insist on reunification with the Southern Kingdom (1 Kings 12:27).

The Divided Kingdom era existed for about two centuries, and during this time the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel had good relations, bad relations, they fought with one another—and they all committed sins together. Various groups of people from the tribes of the largely idolatrous Northern Kingdom, loyal to the God of Israel, did migrate to, and were integrated into, the Southern Kingdom. Eventually, the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim saw itself caught in the politics of the wider Ancient Near East. The Northern Kingdom found itself steadily encroached upon by the forces of the expanding Assyrian Empire, which was not only a brutal, militaristic state, but also was a widescale practitioner of transplanting conquered peoples to other parts of their realm. The *ISBE* entry by C.F. Pfeiffer offers us the following useful summary of what occurred to the Northern Kingdom:

“Israel’s prosperity under Jeroboam II [cf. 2 Kings 14:28] was short-lived. Assyrian power was on the increase, and the entire Syria-Palestine area was considered suitable prey. In the reign of Menahem [cf. 2 Kings 15:14-22], Israel became tributary to Assyria. Northern Israel, including Naphtali, was carried into captivity by Tiglath-pileser (733 B.C.). His son Shalmaneser V besieged Samaria, which fell to Shalmaneser’s successor, Sargon II (722 B.C.). Israel had placed confidence in Egypt for assistance against Samaria, but the days of Egyptian might were past.

“The Assyrian policy of transportation had an important effect upon subsequent history. Captive peoples were transported to new areas in an attempt to break up any possible national resistance. Israelites were taken to Halah and Gozan on the banks of the river Habor in northern Mesopotamia. Similarly, peoples from Babylonia, Syria, Elam, and elsewhere were settled in Samaria (2 K. 17:24). The subsequent intermarriage of these peoples with the Israelites who were left in the land produced the people known as the Samaritans (v. 29). It was precisely this policy of transportation that made impossible the return of the people of the northern kingdom in a way comparable to the return of the Judeans after the decree of Cyrus.”¹⁰

The *Jewish Study Bible* adds to this how “The Assyrian empire conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 and exiled its people. The Assyrians were well-known for their massive building projects and for their cruelty in war.”¹¹

Two prophecies regarding the punishment to be meted by God upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel, for their sins and widescale rejection of Him, need not be overlooked. Amos 9:9 first decreed, “For behold, I am commanding, and I will shake the house of Israel among all nations as *grain* is shaken in a sieve, but not a kernel will fall to the ground.” Israel would be shaken *b'kol-ha'goyim* (בְּכָל-הַגּוֹיִם). Hosea 8:8-9 follows this up with, “Israel is swallowed up; they are now among the

¹⁰ Pfeiffer, “Israel, History of the People of,” in *ISBE*, 2:917.

¹¹ *Jewish Study Bible*, 2124.

nations like a vessel in which no one delights. For they have gone up to Assyria, like a wild donkey all alone; Ephraim has hired lovers.” The verb *bala* (בָּלַע), appearing in the Nifal stem (simple action, passive voice), means “**be swallowed up**” (*CHALOT*).¹² The observation of a Jewish commentator like S.M. Lehrman, should be well taken here: “The prophecy has been literally fulfilled. The Ten Tribes have disappeared from the scene of Jewish history, and their identity is now only a subject for far-fetched conjecture.”¹³

Our job as Bible readers is to obviously stay, as best as we can, true to what the text communicates to us about what happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim. The testimony of 2 Kings 17:22-23, which serves as a kind of epithet for the Northern Kingdom, is, “The sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria **until this day.**” The key clause of interest is obviously *ad ha’yom ha’zeh* (עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה), extrapolated by the NIV as, “and they are still there.” The volume of Samuel-Kings is widely agreed by conservatives to have reached its final form after the Babylonian exile of the Southern Kingdom, which likely makes “until this day” in 2 Kings 17:23 an editorial remark from the Sixth-Fifth Centuries B.C.E. An additional testimony of what occurred is seen in 1 Chronicles 5:25-26:

“But they acted treacherously against the God of their fathers and played the harlot after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away into exile, namely the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara and to the river of Gozan, **to this day.**”

Some readers of 1 Chronicles 5:25-26,¹⁴ take its statements to mean that only those from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half-tribe of Manasseh, were those really taken away into Assyrian exile. This does not, though, stand up well to scrutiny.

The main issue, in 1 Chronicles 5:25-26, is how the Hebrew preposition *l* (ל) functions in the clause: *l’Reuveini v’l’Gadi v’l’chatzi sheivet Menashe* (לְרֵוּבֵינִי וְלְגָדִי וְלְחֵצֵי שֵׁבֶט מְנַשֶּׁה). The purpose of 1 Chronicles ch. 5 is to summarize a listing of the descendants of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, and how a great many of them were taken away into Assyrian captivity. The presence of these specific tribal names is not to detract from the many others in the Northern Kingdom of Israel who likewise went into exile; it is to instead draw the attention of the reader of these genealogies how these tribes were met with exile. The translation of the preposition

¹² *CHALOT*, 41.

¹³ Lehrman, “Hosea: Introduction and Commentary,” in *Soncino Books of the Bible: The Twelve Prophets*, 30.

¹⁴ Cf. David Rothstein, “First Chronicles,” in *Jewish Study Bible*, 1724.

Israel in Future Prophecy

ל (ל) as “namely” fits well, following what Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi consider “*Specification*,” which “calls to attention the object of the preposition.”¹⁵

Secondly, the statement of 1 Chronicles 5:25-26, as J.A. Thompson properly notes for us, “concerns the deportation of Transjordanian tribes in 734 B.C. (2 Kgs 15:29) in the days of Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.).”¹⁶ The chronicler intended to attach the exile of those widely from Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, to the main reason of why the Northern Kingdom was corporately dispersed with the fall of Samaria, a little more than a decade later, in 722-721 B.C.E., which took place during the reign of Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.E.; cf. 2 Kings 18:9). H.G.M. Williamson confirms, “Its effect is to transfer to the earlier deportation of the two and a half tribes the description and explanation of the later exile of the main part of the northern kingdom.”¹⁷ While 2 Kings 17:22-23 and 1 Chronicles 5:25-26 together speak of people being exiled “until this day”—a post-exilic scene—the group of 1 Chronicles 5:26-27 composing those from Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh was actually exiled *earlier* (2 Kings 15:29) than the main part of the Northern Kingdom that tends to garner most attention. 2 Chronicles 10:18-19 further clarifies, regarding the split of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms:

“Then King Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was over the forced labor, and the sons of Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam made haste to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David **to this day** [*ad ha’yom ha’zeh*].”

The Books of Chronicles or *Divrei HaYamim* (דברי הימים), actually called *Paraleipomenōn* (ΠΑΡΑΛΕΙΠΟΜΕΝΩΝ), meaning “things omitted” in the Greek Septuagint, often include various miscellaneous accounts from sources that were not included in the Books of Samuel-Kings. All expositors, conservative and liberal, agree that the Books of Chronicles reflect a post-exilic composition, at the earliest in the 400s B.C.E. The statement about the Northern Kingdom of Israel being in rebellion against the House of David, “to this day,” is a good indication that the chronicler continued to believe that there was a rift yet to be fixed. Jewish commentator I.W. Slotki views this to mean, “The split in the kingdom was never healed.”¹⁸

The fact that the Northern Kingdom was corporately deported, with many of the exiles scattered and assimilated into other nations, is evidenced by the fact that the Assyrian Empire would take conquered peoples and transplant them in the lands of other conquered peoples, forcing them to relocate among foreigners to decrease the possibility of rebellion. Biblical archaeologist Siegfried H. Horn summarizes,

¹⁵ Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi., *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 113.

¹⁶ J.A. Thompson, *New American Commentary: 1,2 Chronicles* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 82.

¹⁷ H.G.M. Williamson, *New Century Bible Commentary: 1 and 2 Chronicles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 67.

¹⁸ I.W. Slotki, *Soncino Books of the Bible: Chronicles* (London: Soncino Press, 1965), 209.

“Conquered peoples from the western portions of the empire were resettled in Assyria and in the eastern provinces, while captives from the eastern and southern regions were resettled in the West. Thus we are told in 2 Kings 17:24 that Sargon transported the captive Israelites to Assyria and in 2 Kings 17:24 that he repopulated the cities of Samaria with the peoples from Babylonia and Elam (southwestern Iran). More specifically, the Israelites were resettled in Halah (northeast of Nineveh), on the Habor (the Khabor River, a tributary that flows south into Euphrates from the highlands of southern Turkey and northeastern Syria), and in the highlands of the Medes (northwestern Iran).”¹⁹

Approximately 135 years later, between 597-587 B.C.E., the Southern Kingdom of Judah was widely deported to Babylon for also transgressing God’s commands and succumbing to idolatry. Those exiles from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, however, returned to the Land of Israel 70 years later (cf. 2 Chronicles 36:21), and in spite of terrible hardships since, they continue to exist until today as the Jewish people. But those from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, aside from various family lines and groups, were never corporately heard from again.

It is from this widescale silence in Biblical history that has come forth much speculation regarding the “Ten Lost Tribes” of Israel. While much of this speculation has not at all been healthy or good, when we consider the scholastic evidence of Assyria’s displacement of the Israelites, we can logically assume that many from the Northern Kingdom did become “lost” among foreign nations. Many either forgot their Israelite heritage via intermarriage and/or assimilation, or hid it from wide view, keeping it quiet as some kind of oral tradition passed down in a particular family line. The challenge for many, however, is in recognizing that our Eternal God is the One who ultimately scattered the Northern Kingdom (cf. Jeremiah 31:10). And, the exiles of the Northern Kingdom being deported and/or assimilated, is something that should be kept largely within the ancient sphere of influence of the ancient Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires—*not* Northwestern Europe and the British Isles or the South Seas and Polynesia.

Not all hope is lost for the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom, though. Hosea 1:10 tells us that “in the place where it is said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ it will be said to them, ‘*You are* the sons of the living God’” (cf. Romans 9:25-26; 1 Peter 2:10). **There will be a future restoration of the Southern and Northern Kingdoms.** There are *specific end-time prophecies* that detail their reunion that have yet to be accomplished. These prophecies have not been fulfilled, because if they truly were then Messiah Yeshua would be physically present in Jerusalem right now reigning over the Earth.

Key Prophecies of Israel’s Restoration—Repeated

The subject matter of a larger restoration of Israel is closely intertwined with end-time prophecy. My own approach, especially given some of the controversies associated with this issue, has always been based in what I read to be unfulfilled

¹⁹ Horn, “The Divided Monarchy,” in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Destruction of the Temple*, 174.

Israel in Future Prophecy

prophecies regarding Judah, Ephraim, and their many associated companions from the nations being gathered together as one, albeit, diverse people of God. Here is a selection of just four passages that need to be seriously considered by Bible readers:

“And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, and those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, and Judah will not harass Ephraim. They will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west; together they will plunder the sons of the east; they will possess Edom and Moab, and the sons of Ammon will be subject to them. And the LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt; and He will wave His hand over the River with His scorching wind; and He will strike it into seven streams and make *men* walk over dry-shod. And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant of His people who will be left, just as there was for Israel in the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt” (Isaiah 11:12-16).

“For there will be a day when watchmen on the hills of Ephraim call out, ‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.’ For thus says the LORD, ‘Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise and say, “O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel.” Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, and I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together; a great company, they will return here. With weeping they will come, and by supplication I will lead them; I will make them walk by streams of waters, on a straight path in which they will not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.’ Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare in the coastlands afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock’” (Jeremiah 31:6-10).

“Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God. My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will

Cross-Examining the Two-House Teaching

know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever” (Ezekiel 37:21-28).

“I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them back, because I have had compassion on them; and they will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them. Ephraim will be like a mighty man, and their heart will be glad as if *from* wine; indeed, their children will see *it* and be glad, their heart will rejoice in the LORD. I will whistle for them to gather them together, for I have redeemed them; and they will be as numerous as they were before. When I scatter them among the peoples, they will remember Me in far countries, and they with their children will live and come back. I will bring them back from the land of Egypt and gather them from Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon until no *room* can be found for them” (Zechariah 10:6-10).

How some of the prophecies regarding the manner in which both Judah and Ephraim will be reunited and return to the Land of Israel, are specifically unknown at this point in history. Affirming that these prophecies are unfulfilled, many of the circumstances surrounding their completion will undoubtedly become clearer as time moves forward and we get closer and closer to the return of Yeshua. There is much witnessed within these various prophetic words, that needs to be seriously factored into one’s end-time scenario(s). As things stand today, though, too many have not seriously considered the reunification of Judah and Ephraim as an end-time “event,” no different than the rise of the antimesiah/antichrist or the arrival of a mark of the beast economic system.

Ezekiel 37:15-28 is probably the most frequently referenced word concerning a greater restoration of Israel. Ezekiel 37:15-19 speaks of Judah, Ephraim, and associated companions from the nations coming together, as one in the hand of the Son of Man:

“The word of the LORD came again to me saying, ‘And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, “For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions”; then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.” Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. When the sons of your people speak to you saying, “Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?” say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.’”

We further see in the two-stick oracle how there will be an everlasting covenant of peace established (Ezekiel 37:26a), that God’s Sanctuary will be established (Ezekiel 37:26b), that His dwelling place will be in the midst of Israel (Ezekiel 37:27), and perhaps most importantly: “Then the nations shall know that I the LORD sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore²⁰”

²⁰ Heb. *b'heyot miqdashi b'tokam l'olam* (בהיות מקדשי בתוכם לעולם).

Israel in Future Prophecy

(Ezekiel 37:28, NRSV). **It is obvious that we have yet to reach such a point in human history.**

A big problem that has been caused, by many popular voices and leaders within the Two-House sub-movement, is not drawing the attention of Messianic Believers to the fact that according to prophecy, more is on the horizon in terms of Israel's restoration. Their challenge is in communicating that there are *three*, not two groups of people, who are to be brought together. The very fact that many of them would label themselves "Two-House," can give the distinct impression that all God is concerned with in His plan for the ages is *just* Judah and Ephraim. This is not true, as a third group—the *companions* (Ezekiel 37:16, 19)—the nations or the Gentiles of Planet Earth, are also included in the restoration process.²¹ The Lord has a global vision for all of humanity that extends well beyond the people of Israel themselves. *Israel is His tool by which the whole world may be saved.*

Much of the discussion and debate surrounding the Two-House teaching, within today's broad Messianic movement, has not been focused around prophecies like those listed above. Because of many abuses regarding the subject matter of the "Ten Lost Tribes" seen in history, many of today's Messianic leaders refuse to touch the subject matter—if for any other reason because they think it is just too controversial. Is this really a responsible approach, especially when Bible readers ask legitimate questions about an oracle witnessed in Scripture like Ezekiel 37:15-28? While there are specific details regarding the restoration of Israel, which can only be fully understood subsequent to the Second Coming of Yeshua, the observations of Peter C. Craigie on Ezekiel 37:15-28 have to be noted:

"It is difficult to know how to apply or interpret the oracle. The northern kingdom no longer existed, and many of its peoples had been scattered and long absorbed by other cultures. How could it be restored to the land? Recognising this mystery, several cults and sects in recent centuries have sought to identify themselves with the lost tribes of Israel, and thus find a place in prophecy. But it is safer to recognise the necessary element of mystery involved in any language addressing the future. **The main thrust of the prophecy is that all of God's people would somehow participate in the future restoration; how this could be is not known, yet it is the essence of the prophet's affirmation...**It is clear, with the benefit of hindsight, that the prophecy concerns a distant future. The preceding passage, concerning the dry bones [Ezekiel 37:1-14], could be interpreted simply in terms of exiles returning to their homeland. But this oracle moves out of the realm of history, as we commonly understand it, and anticipates a future time in which God will bring a new kind of reality into being. While the precise significance of each part of the prophecy may elude us, the broad thrust is clear: God had not forgotten his people and had determined their restoration" (emphasis mine).²²

²¹ This has just been discussed in Chapter 2, "What About 'the Gentiles'?"

²² Peter C. Craigie, *Daily Study Bible Series: Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), pp 263-264.

Craigie's approach should be the perspective of all of us, as God's sovereign plan for His people simply manifests as salvation history moves forward in time. Who one specifically is, as a person in the flesh, *ultimately does not matter*. The participants of the prophecy are stated to be Judah, Israel/Ephraim, and their many companions or associates. Much of what is to transpire is unknown to us at present, but as many interpreters of Ezekiel 37:15-28 have concluded, the two-stick oracle has a unique place within the Tanach, to convey a grand message of unity and camaraderie for all who look to the God of Israel for deliverance.²³

There Were Northern Kingdom Israelites Who Became "Jews"

There is often a great omission on the part of many people within today's Two-House sub-movement, recognizing the historical fact that a sizeable enough sector of people from the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim became integrated into the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and thus would be considered to be "Jews" until this day. A commentator like H.L. Ellison indicates for us how, "2 Ch[ronicles] 11:16;²⁴ 15:9;²⁵ 30:11,²⁶ 18;²⁷ 34:9²⁸ stress that a considerable number of northerners had joined Judah at various times."²⁹ A proper approach is needed regarding the fact that people from the Northern Kingdom, those loyal to the God of Israel and who rejected the idolatry established by Jeroboam (2 Chronicles 11:16; 15:9), did migrate to the Southern Kingdom, and were integrated into it.

A common claim made against a future reunion of people from the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel, is that people from all Twelve Tribes of Israel are represented among today's Jews, and there is apparently no need to anticipate any future restoration of Judah and Ephraim. But, does some level of representation, of persons from all Twelve Tribes of Israel within the Jewish community, constitute a complete, corporate reunion of Israel as anticipated by the Prophets? Let us engage with the relevant Biblical data that demonstrates how various Northern Kingdom Israelites became integrated into the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

1 Chronicles 9:3, for example, states how "Some of the sons of Judah, of the sons of Benjamin and of the sons of Ephraim and Manasseh lived in Jerusalem." This needs to be kept in view of how after the end of the Southern Kingdom's

²³ For a further, and much more detailed investigation, consult Chapter 6, "Ezekiel 37:15-28: Have the Two Sticks Been Reunited?"

²⁴ "Those from all the tribes of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the LORD God of Israel followed them to Jerusalem, to sacrifice to the LORD God of their fathers" (2 Chronicles 11:16).

²⁵ "He gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who resided with them, for many defected to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him" (2 Chronicles 15:9).

²⁶ "Nevertheless some men of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 30:11).

²⁷ "For a multitude of the people, *even* many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed" (2 Chronicles 30:18).

²⁸ "They came to Hilkiah the high priest and delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the doorkeepers, had collected from Manasseh and Ephraim, and from all the remnant of Israel, and from all Judah and Benjamin and the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 34:9).

²⁹ H.L. Ellison, "1 and 2 Chronicles," in *NBCR*, pp 375-376.

Israel in Future Prophecy

Babylonian exile, the people started returning to where they had previously lived (1 Chronicles 9:2). Why would those from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, which were clearly a part of the Northern Kingdom, return and live in Jerusalem? Would it not make sense for them to reclaim their holdings in the northern regions of the Land of Israel? One of the factors that can elude Bible readers, is precisely how these people from Ephraim and Manasseh, were not those who had been taken into Assyrian exile, and then somehow joined the Jewish community in its Babylonian exile. Rather, these people—whose ancestors had clearly been a part of the Northern Kingdom at one point—*never went* into Assyrian exile. They were integrated into the Southern Kingdom before the Northern Kingdom’s downfall, they settled in the capital of Jerusalem, they went into Babylonian captivity, and then they returned. Noting the genealogical list of 1 Chronicles ch. 9, the *ArtScroll Tanach* indicates how “This chapter explains why only some of the tribal genealogies were given at length in the preceding chapters. They were the ones who lived among the people of Judah, and returned with them from the Babylonian exile.”³⁰

In the Tanach, the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim is regarded as being corporately exiled by Assyria (2 Kings 17:23), but it is clear from any objective reading of the Historical Books that not all of the people from the Northern Kingdom were taken away. The Passover commemoration of King Hezekiah of Judah (715-690 B.C.E.; 2 Chronicles 30:6-15), definitely did include people from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, specified to be “those of you who escaped *and* are left from the hand of the kings of Assyria³¹” (2 Chronicles 30:6), as they had avoided capture and exile.³² While many of those left from the fallen Northern Kingdom mocked the idea of remembering Passover (2 Chronicles 30:10), some of them did accept Hezekiah’s invitation (2 Chronicles 30:11), including “many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun” (2 Chronicles 30:18).

Later, during the reign of King Josiah of Judah (649–609 B.C.E.), the Temple in Jerusalem was repaired, and it is recorded how “the doorkeepers, had collected

³⁰ Scherman and Zlotowitz, *ArtScroll Tanach*, pp 1894-1895.

³¹ Heb. *v'yashov el-ha'peleitah ha'nisheret l'khem m'kaf malkei' Ashur* (הַנְּשָׂאֲרָת לָכֶם מִכַּף מַלְכֵי אַשּׁוּר); “and he will return again the remnant of you, who have escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assur” (Jerusalem Bible-Koren); “and He will return to the remnant of you still left from the hands of the kings of Assyria” (Keter Crown Bible).

Note to be overlooked here is the clause *ha'peleitah ha'nisheret*, “those of you who escaped *and* are left” (NASU), meaning those of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim who avoided exile by the Assyrians. Appearing in the Nifal stem (simple action, passive voice), the verb *sha'ar* (שָׂאֵר) means, “**be left, over, remain**” (*CHALOT*, 357). This is “the remnant of you that still remains from the hands of the kings of Assyria” (ATS).

A less than literal rendering would appear in a version like the RSV, which says, “that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria.” Interestingly enough, though, a less-than-literal CJB has the much more preferred, “Then he will return to those of you who remain, who escaped capture by the kings of Ashur.”

³² “[2 Chronicles] 30:6, like the rest of the section, implies that the Northern Kingdom had fallen to the Assyrians, who are pictured as leaving behind only a ‘remnant’” (Richard J. Coggins, “1 and 2 Chronicles,” in James D.G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, eds., *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 308).

[money] from Manasseh and Ephraim, and from all the remnant of Israel, and from all Judah and Benjamin and the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (2 Chronicles 34:9). These people are labeled as *sh'eirit Yisrael* (שְׂאִרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל). It is obvious that they are not all of the Northern Kingdom corporate, but instead those who escaped captivity and exile, constituting a remnant.

The resettlement of outsiders from the east, by the Assyrians, to the former holdings of the Northern Kingdom, and their intermarriage with those who remained, needs to also be kept in mind. This produced the people which became known as the Samaritans, who had a hybrid religion of worshipping the God of Israel *along with* various pagan customs (2 Kings 17:24-41). The Samaritans continued to exist at the time of Yeshua, being treated with a great deal of disgust and contempt by much of the First Century Jewish community. The Samaritans did constitute, however, one of the well-known segments of people who were descended from the tribes of the fallen Northern Kingdom.

In terms of the Assyrian exile of those from the Northern Kingdom, there are indications that not all of those taken away were culturally and religiously assimilated, forgetting who they were as Israelites. In the Apocrypha, we see the account of the family a Northern Kingdom exile, Tobit, who remained faithful to the God of Israel while in Nineveh. Tobit specifies that he was of the tribe of Naphtali:

“I, Tobit, walked in the ways of truth and righteousness all the days of my life, and I performed many acts of charity to my brethren and countrymen who went with me into the land of the Assyrians, to Nineveh. Now when I was in my own country, in the land of Israel, while I was still a young man, the whole tribe of Naphtali my forefather deserted the house of Jerusalem. This was the place which had been chosen from among all the tribes of Israel, where all the tribes should sacrifice and where the temple of the dwelling of the Most High was consecrated and established for all generations for ever” (Tobit 1:3-4).³³

Obviously, the account of Tobit details the early period of the Northern Kingdom exiles' displacement to Assyria. The example of such a person like Tobit, though, may be the exception. Assuming that (enough of) his family remained faithful to the God of Israel while in Assyrian exile, they may have integrated themselves into the larger Jewish world exiled to Babylon, especially as all exiles were emancipated by the Persian Empire when it finally became dominant. A standard view present, among some readers and interpreters, is that when Babylon was engulfed by Persia, a major part of the exiles made their way back to the Land

³³ For readers of the Book of Tobit, it needs to be noted that there is a significant textual variant in Tobit 11:17, which reads either *pasi tois en Nineue adelphois autou* (πάσι τοῖς ἐν Νινευῆ ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ), “all his brethren in Nineveh” (RSV; cf. LXE, ESV), or *pasin tois Ioudaiois tois ousin en Nineue* (πᾶσιν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Νινευῆ), “all the Jews who were in Nineveh” (NRSV; cf. NEB, REB). The former is what would be historically correct.

Cf. Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), 1030; Alexander A. Di Lella, “Tobit,” in Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp 472-473.

Israel in Future Prophecy

of Israel—including the so-called “Lost Tribes.” To an extent this is true. Many of the Northern Kingdom exiles did not forget their Israelite heritage and integrated themselves into the Jewish groups returning to the Land of Israel from Babylon.

In the First Century, at the dedication of Yeshua the Messiah at the Temple, we see a reference to “Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher” (Luke 2:36). No detailed backstory is given regarding Anna’s family, meaning that all we can safely conclude is that her original ancestors were a part of the Northern Kingdom. Anna’s ancestors could have been like Tobit, and remained somewhat faithful to the Lord when in Assyrian exile. Or, Anna’s ancestors could have migrated to the Southern Kingdom during the Divided Kingdom era, only to have been taken into Babylonian captivity, and then returned when Persia became the dominant Ancient Near Eastern power. The thought of David H. Stern, in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, regarding Anna of the tribe of Asher, is that “individual families could preserve their identities and transmit their genealogies.”³⁴

There were enough Northern Kingdom Israelites, who had integrated themselves into the Southern Kingdom of Judah—either by migrating south during the Divided Kingdom period, or with some returning with those exiled to Babylon—that by the First Century there were indeed “Northern Kingdom Jews.” But does the presence of people descended from all Twelve Tribes, present within the Jewish community up until today, qualify as “fulfillment” of the prophecies detailing a grand restoration of Judah and Ephraim? Some—especially in much of Messianic Judaism—say yes, but they do not tend to substantiate why they think so. We should be much more cautious, and not think that a representation here or there of various Jews in history, having a descent from one of the ten tribes of the old Northern Kingdom, justifies a complete restoration of Israel.

Remarking on 2 Kings 17:23—“So the Israelites were deported from their land to Assyria, as is still the case” (NJPS)—Terrence E. Fretheim gives us some important direction:

“The Israelites remain exiled to the time of the narrator (v. 23). We know that they became so thoroughly integrated into these foreign populations that they ceased to exist as a people (hence ‘the ten lost tribes’); yet many fled to the south and were preserved within that grouping of the people of God (see also 2 Chron. 30:6-11).”³⁵

To this, we can add the observations of Hebrew Christian scholar Alfred Edersheim, who in his classic work *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, said, “there is reason to believe that part of them [the Northern Kingdom], at least, had coalesced with their brethren of the later exile.”³⁶ He references a Talmudic statement for this, “**Ten castes came up from Babylonia**” (b.*Kiddushin* 69b).³⁷ Yet,

³⁴ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 110.

³⁵ Terrence E. Fretheim, *Westminster Bible Companion: First and Second Kings* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 193.

³⁶ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 11.

³⁷ *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*.

Edersheim goes on to notably conclude, “Still the great mass of the ten tribes was in the days of Christ, as in our own, lost to the Hebrew nation.”³⁸

Are there members of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim found among today’s Jewish people? Yes. Are there descendants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim “out there” in the nations today as well? Yes, even though their descendants have been customarily sought for within the spheres of influence of both Ancient Israel and the ancient Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires (namely Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Central Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean basin). **There can admittedly be a tension** between the fact that there were Northern Kingdom Israelites who somehow became a part of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and are to be reckoned as “Jews” today—versus the eschatological reality that there is a larger restoration of Israel prophesied in the Tanach, which surely did not occur after the conclusion of the Babylonian exile.

Were the Lost Tribes really lost? How many were really deported to Assyria?

A Bible teacher, or a Bible reader, has to have a great deal of courage and fortitude when approaching the subject matter of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel, because of the great number of abuses which have stigmatized the issue of the Ten Lost Tribes over the centuries. In a relatively conservative resource like the *Archaeological Study Bible*, for example, one finds the following remark issued on 2 Kings 17:3-6:

“Much mythology has been developed around the theme of the so-called ten lost tribes of Israel. A close examination of Assyrian records reveals that the deportations approximated only a limited percentage of the population...”³⁹

No one can deny the fact that throughout history since the downfall of the Northern Kingdom, various sectarian associations have arisen—which to some degree or another have claimed that *they are* the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. **Their views need to be significantly avoided.** The liberal *JPS Guide: The Jewish Bible* is a bit fairer, though, in how it states “After the Assyrian conquest, the scattered northern tribes become known as the Ten Lost Tribes. They never return to Canaan, giving birth to numerous tales and legends about their history and whereabouts.”⁴⁰

But what do we actually classify as “mythology” as it pertains to the Northern Kingdom of Israel? Claiming that this tribe “went here,” and that tribe “went there,” with no documentation or proof of substance? Or, affirming from the prophecies of Holy Scripture, that a larger restoration of Israel is to be anticipated *and* actually occur immediately prior to the return of the Messiah?

³⁸ Edersheim, 11.

³⁹ Duane A. Garrett, ed., et. al., *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 555.

⁴⁰ *JPS Guide: The Jewish Bible*, 182.

Israel in Future Prophecy

About as “mythological” as any of us should be allowed to get, is perhaps seen in John Milton’s 1671 work *Paradise Regained*, where it is asserted that the exiles of the Northern Kingdom will come back when the Messiah reigns over the world:

In David’s royal seat, his true successor,
Deliverance of thy brethren, those ten tribes
Whose offspring in his territory yet serve
In Habor, and among the Medes dispersed,
Ten sons of Jacob, two of Joseph lost
Thus long from Israel; serving as of old
Their fathers in the land of Egypt served,
This offer sets before thee to deliver.
These if from servitude thou shalt restore
To their inheritance, then, nor till then,
Thou on the throne of David in full glory,
From Egypt to Euphrates and beyond
Shalt reign, and Rome or Caesar need not fear.
To whom our savior answered thus unmoved.⁴¹

All Milton did was to paraphrase a selection of Tanach verses and prophecies on the matter.

A wide number of the contemporary evangelical Christian materials, which in some form or another mention what happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, tend to be concerned with refuting the abuses of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British-Israelism, and figures like Herbert W. Armstrong, more than anything else.⁴² This material, while brief, tends to completely sidestep or ignore Bible prophecies which indicate that a larger restoration of Israel—including the return of the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom—is yet to occur. Author William Varner of the book *Jacob’s Dozen*, which is frequently encountered in many sectors of today’s Messianic community, is one of these people. He makes some statements about the numbers of people taken away by the Assyrians, concluding that there were actually no ten tribes of Israel ever taken into exile:

“Excavations have revealed that the population of Judah rapidly increased after the fall of the northern kingdom as a result of the many refugees mentioned in 2 Chronicles 11:14-16. Furthermore, archaeologists have uncovered the annals of the Assyrian Sargon, in which he tells that he carried away only 27,290 people and 50 chariots (*Biblical Archaeologist*, VI, 1943, p. 58). Since estimates of the population of the northern kingdom at that time range from 400,000 to 500,000, clearly less than one-twentieth of the population was deported, primarily the leaders from the area around Samaria. The ten tribes, therefore, were never *lost* because they were never deported! Their kingdom was destroyed and ceased to exist, but most of them stayed...”⁴³

⁴¹ John Milton, *The Major Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 652.

⁴² Cf. William Varner, *Jacob’s Dozen: A Prophetic Look at the Tribes of Israel* (Bellmawr, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1987), pp 94-95.

⁴³ Varner, pp 96-97.

Is Varner at all correct with what he says here, especially given how God Himself said in Jeremiah 7:15, “I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brothers, all the offspring of Ephraim⁴⁴”? In the previous section, we have already noted how people from the Northern Kingdom became integrated into the Southern Kingdom. Varner’s claim is that there were really no people from the Northern Kingdom quantitatively taken into Assyrian captivity—“The ten tribes...were never *lost* because they were never deported,”⁴⁵ as he says—other than just 27,290 people. These statements from a fundamentalist Christian are notably contrary to my relatively liberal Hebrew civilization professor at the University of Oklahoma (2001), Dr. Daniel C. Snell, who believed in JEDP Pentateuchal source criticism and held to a rather low view of the reliability of the Tanach’s Historical Books. In his book *Life in the Ancient Near East*, he just asserts “...the northern kingdom succumbed earlier to Assyrian exile...”⁴⁶

Most of the attention, regarding the exile of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, is understandably given to the final fall of its capital, Samaria, as summarized by 2 Kings 17:3-6:

“Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute. But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, who had sent messengers to So king of Egypt and had offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as *he had done* year by year; so the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, *on* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.”

Following this, it is asserted in the narrative of the history, that by the time of the final composition of Samuel-Kings, these people taken into exile were still there (2 Kings 17:23). As Bible readers, this is where our ultimate loyalty must be found, as according to Scripture, those Northern Kingdom Israelites taken captive by Assyria from Samaria, did not return back home to the Land of Israel. But does this mean that only a small number of people were exiled by Assyria, thus implying that there were no Ten Lost Tribes of Israel? The number of 27,290 taken away, is frequently referenced in a wide array of study Bibles accessible to the normal layperson.⁴⁷ This number itself is a part of ancient, extant archaeological finds, which have been collected and translated into English by Ancient Near Eastern

⁴⁴ Heb. *et-kol-achei'khem et kol-zera Efraim* (את-כל-אחיכם את כל-זרע אפרים).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁶ Daniel C. Snell, *Life in the Ancient Near East* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 133.

⁴⁷ These include, but are not limited to: Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible With the Apocrypha*, RSV (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 478; Kenneth L. Barker, ed., et. al., *NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), pp 555-556; Claude F. Mariottini, “2 Kings,” in Walter J. Harrelson, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter's Study Bible*, NRSV (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 553; *Archaeological Study Bible*, 554.

Israel in Future Prophecy

specialists. “The Fall of Samaria” from the reign of Sargon II (721-705 B.C.E.), paralleling 2 Kings 17:4ff, details,

“I besieged and conquered Samaria (*Sa-me-ri-na*), led away as booty 27,290 inhabitants of it. I formed from among them a contingent of 50 chariots and made remaining (inhabitants) assume their (social) positions. I installed over them an officer of mine and imposed upon them the tribute of the former king.”⁴⁸

Many people just stop examining the issue of how many people were taken away from the Northern Kingdom by Assyria, but there is actually more Biblical data to be reckoned with. There was a previous assault recorded of how during the reign of King Pekah (737-732 B.C.E.) of the Northern Kingdom, Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria (745-727 B.C.E) carried a significant number away from the northern territories of Israel/Ephraim. In *A Biblical History of Israel* by Ian Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, it is summarized how “During the reign of Pekahiah’s successor Pekah...we read in both Kings and Chronicles of the Assyrian annexation of much of Israel’s northern and eastern territory, and the deportation to Assyria of a significant percentage of her population (2 Kgs. 15:29-31; 1 Chr 5:26).”⁴⁹ Also to be considered is how during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah (715-690 B.C.E.), Sennacherib of Assyria (704-681 B.C.E) launched an attack on the Southern Kingdom and on Jerusalem:

Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria: “In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria. And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck him and put him to death and became king in his place, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. Now the rest of the acts of Pekah and all that he did, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel” (2 Kings 15:29-31).

Sennacherib of Assyria: “Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them. Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, ‘I have done wrong. Withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear.’ So the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold” (2 Kings 18:13-14; cf. Isaiah 36:1ff).

When these Biblical accounts are taken into consideration, as well as the extant Assyrian historical records that confirm them—one finds that there were far more

⁴⁸ A. Leo Oppenheim, trans., “Assyrian and Babylonian Historical Texts,” in James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East Volume I: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958), 195.

⁴⁹ Ian Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 270.

Cross-Examining the Two-House Teaching

than just 27,290 people taken into Assyrian exile. K.A. Kitchen is compiler of the massive work *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), a definite powerhouse in conservative Biblical scholarship. This resource has put together a great deal of external data from Ancient Near Eastern civilizations contemporary to Ancient Israel, confirming the veracity of the Hebrew Tanach. This is what Kitchen has to say about those who were taken captive by the Assyrian Empire, factoring in the Biblical information seen in 2 Kings 15:29-31; 17:1-23; and 18:13-14:

“Tiglath-pileser III removed people from Galilee and environs in the 730s; Shalmaneser V and Sargon II between them sent away many Israelites to eastern lands in 722-720; and Sennacherib did this to Judah in 701. Tiglath-pileser III took 13,520 people (totalled from lesser amounts—226, 400 + x, 656, and [lost]). Then Sargon II boasts of having removed 27,290 (var. 27,280) people from Samaria. And in 701 Sennacherib claimed to have reduced forty-six of Hezekiah’s walled towns and to have taken 200,150 people from them. Such measures did not necessarily depopulate a region entirely, and some Assyrian kings brought in new populations from elsewhere (Sargon II and 2 Kings 17; contrast Tiglath-pileser III). But ‘the Assyrian exile’ of both Israelites and Judeans was considerable—and in the former case, permanent.”⁵⁰

According to Kitchen and his sources, some 13,520 people were taken away by the Assyrians in the exile of 2 Kings 15:29-31 (cf. 1 Chronicles 5:26). Following this were the 27,290 people taken away after the fall of Samaria in 2 Kings 17:1-23. Unlike what William Varner has done in his book *Jacob’s Dozen*, K.A. Kitchen has referenced not only 13,520 more from the Northern Kingdom of Israel taken away into Assyrian exile—but he has perhaps most shockingly referenced that in the siege upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah seen in 2 Kings 18:13-14, some 200,150 people were taken away! “The Siege of Jerusalem” from the reign of Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.E.), details,

“As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered (them) by means of well-stamped (earth-)ramps, and battering-rams brought (thus) near (to the walls) (combined with) the attack by foot soldiers, (using) mines, breeches as well as sapper work. I drove out (of them) 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting, and considered (them) booty.”⁵¹

If we were to only go by the numbers from extant Assyrian records—more people were presumably taken into exile from the Southern Kingdom of Judah than the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim—in the course of Assyria’s expansion into the region. Recognizing how there were people from the Northern

⁵⁰ Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 65.

⁵¹ *The Ancient Near East Volume I*, 200.

This is actually noted in the *Archaeological Study Bible*, 558 in its notes on 2 Kings 18:13-14.

Israel in Future Prophecy

Kingdom who had migrated into the Southern Kingdom, since the time of the division, it would seem likely that among the 200,150 taken by Sennacherib were a large number not only of Southern Kingdom Israelites, but Northern Kingdom Israelites who had relocated south. Could there have been more taken away, than those just seen in the Assyrian records? Yes. But the ANE data currently available confirms that there was a substantial number taken away into Assyrian captivity, a wide number of whom then probably assimilated away and forgot its Israelite heritage after a few generations.

That a significant judgment would be issued by God upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel, especially for the opulence and oppression caused by the wealthy, is certain. Amos 4:1-3 decreed, "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring now, that we may drink!' The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness, 'Behold, the days are coming upon you when they will take you away with meat hooks, and the last of you with fish hooks. You will go out *through* breaches *in the walls*, each one straight before her, and you will be cast to Harmon,' declares the LORD." Amos 5:3 follows this up with a very sobering word: "For thus says the Lord GOD, 'The city which goes forth a thousand *strong* will have a hundred left, and the one which goes forth a hundred *strong* will have ten left to the house of Israel.'" What does this declaration imply regarding the Assyrian siege upon the Northern Kingdom? Amos 9:10 further states, "All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, those who say, 'The calamity will not overtake or confront us.'"

During the Assyrian encroachment upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the subsequent battles that ensued, it is likely probable that a wide number of the civilian population became collateral damage, meeting the destiny of the sword.⁵² The impression that we get from Amos 5:3, for example, is that as high as ninety-percent of some of its towns' populations, or at least its fighting force, would be decimated by war. Of course in warfare, many civilians are able to escape as refugees—and surely many from the Northern Kingdom of Israel made it to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. It is also possible that other groups of civilians from the Northern Kingdom escaped elsewhere within the immediate Eastern Mediterranean. The word of Hosea 9:17, regarding those of Ephraim, is that "My God will cast them away because they have not listened to Him; and they will be wanderers among the nations [*b'goyim*, בְּגוֹיִם]." Thankfully, a major theme of the Prophets is that on a future day the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah will be formally reunited.

When someone in today's Messianic community, who asks questions about what happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim—and is then handed a

⁵² K.A. Kitchen, *The Bible In Its World: The Bible & Archaeology Today* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), pp 112-113 details how brutal some of this was:

"Tiglath-pileser III devastated northern Israel, including Hazor (2 Kings 15:29) where have been found eloquent traces of the ferocity of that destruction in a layer of ashes a metre thick over the ruined buildings."

copy of a publication like Varner's *Jacob's Dozen*—one should wonder why no attention is expelled at all to various prophetic words that speak of a reunion of Judah and Ephraim subsequent to the eschaton. It is inappropriate, both Biblically and historically, to act as though there was only a small number of people taken into exile by Assyria. It might be “easier” to ignore or disregard sections of Scripture that speak of the future destiny of the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel—given abuses that have transpired, per British-Israelism or Armstrongism. *But ignoring the implications of Tanach prophecies like Isaiah 11:12-16; Jeremiah 31:6-10; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Zechariah 10:6-10, would be irresponsible for any Bible teacher to do.* In fact, Christians ignoring Tanach prophecies that speak of a larger restoration of Israel, perhaps because others have abused them—is not too dissimilar from how many Jews in history have ignored the Messianic claims of Jesus of Nazareth, because of the unfortunate fact of Christian anti-Semitism.

Where some of today's conservative Christians do not want to consider the implications of what is to happen in the future, regarding the reunion of Judah and Ephraim—some liberal Bible scholars will stridently step in and correctly acknowledge that the Prophets indeed spoke of future activities of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel. Those who would disregard Tanach prophecies that speak of a larger restoration of Israel to come, **need to take serious notice** of how liberals have often approached them.

A liberal Jewish scholar like Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, in his book *The Ten Lost Tribes*, is one who is marked by his commitment to be an historical minimalist, meaning that he has a very low estimation for the Tanach's reliability. He is one who specifically believes that “the first book of Kings...is considered by biblical scholars to be almost entirely fictional,”⁵³ meaning that there really was no Kingdom of Israel ruled by a King David.⁵⁴ Ben-Dor Benite's view of 2 Kings is that there is much pseudo-history interspersed within the text, and that its “biblical depiction exaggerates the totality of the deportations as part of a specifically Israelite narrative of loss and promised redemption.”⁵⁵ In terms of the future, though, Ben-Dor Benite honestly recognizes that the Prophets anticipate a regathering of the exiled Northern Kingdom back to the fold of Israel.⁵⁶ But, unlike a conservative who would treat such oracles as being Divinely inspired by God Himself, Ben-Dor Benite's conclusion is that the Prophets were actually master manipulators. He summarizes his view as follows:

⁵³ Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 8.

The two books previously referenced in this chapter, *A Biblical History of Israel* and *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, both directly refute the presuppositions of minimalism.

⁵⁴ And of course, if this is true of King David, what of the other Biblical accounts preceding 1 Kings? Such minimalists deny that figures such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses ever existed, and that there was no Exodus or Conquest.

⁵⁵ Ben-Dor Benite, 35.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 53 references Amos 5:5, 27; Hosea 8:8; Isaiah 11:11-12.

Israel in Future Prophecy

“Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos illustrate how the lens of divine punishment transformed the deportations of the Israelites into the exile of an entire people. They were the first to put their oracles into writing; as such, they were hugely influential in turning the exile of Israel into a historical paradigm. They elaborated the notion of exile as it appears in 2 Kings and transformed the kernel of actual history, the patchy narrative of deportations, into an invented Israelite history of sin and all-encompassing divine punishment. The mundane history of several small-scale Assyrian deportations was transformed into a large-scale forced migration enacted by Isaiah’s ‘Rod of God.’ So it is that, while Assyrian kings deported some Israelites for military and political purposes, the Judahite authors of the biblical narrative ‘exiled’ the entire Israelite kingdom for their own theological and ideological reasons.”⁵⁷

Were the Prophets of the Tanach, at all promoting fantasy, in their depiction of a future restoration of Israel, involving the exiles of the Northern Kingdom? **A conservative Bible reader would be aghast at the suggestion that what the Prophets communicated was anything less than Divine inspiration from the Holy One.** Most of today’s Messianic Believers—especially those who affirm that the creation of the modern-day State of Israel was prophesied in Scripture (Isaiah 66:8)—would absolutely be horrified over the mere suggestion that the Tanach Scriptures are full of pseudo-histories and that the Prophets of Ancient Israel are *essentially liars and deceivers*. I, for one, certainly do not believe that the Prophets were just some sort of master manipulators.

Why have various conservative interpreters of the Bible ignored various prophecies about the reunion of Judah and Ephraim to come? Why are there various conservative interpreters, who actually cast their lot in with liberals, who claim that the idea of the Northern Kingdom being exiled is fallacious?

Is it really true that there are no Ten Lost Tribes of any kind “out there” in the world? Holding to a rigid “No!” is a position that some are realizing that they cannot take.

In his 1915 book *The History of the Ten “Lost” Tribes: Anglo-Israelism Examined*, Hebrew Christian David Baron—who while largely disregarding the idea that there were descendants from the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel “out there,” mostly in an effort to refute British-Israelism—had to at least be honest and admit that there could be people in remote regions of South Asia, descended from the Northern Kingdom exiles. Baron said, “It *may* be true that the Nestorians, and the Afghans, and some other Eastern tribes are descendants of the original Israelitish exiles in Assyria, but [have] more or less mixed themselves up by inter-marriage with the surrounding nations...”⁵⁸ Holding to a position of “no Lost Tribes in any

⁵⁷ Ibid., 50.

Tudor Parfitt, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth* (London: Phoenix, 2002), pp 4-5 referencing Ezekiel 37:16; Isaiah 11:11-12; and Jeremiah 31:7 is even more direct, as he states, “The fate of the ten tribes as an imagined mythical community started to assume great importance in the prophecies...where the final redemption of Israel was linked to the reunion of the Lost Tribes...”

⁵⁸ David Baron, *The History of the Ten “Lost” Tribes: Anglo-Israelism Examined* reprint (London: Morgan & Scott Ltd., 1915), pp 47-48.

form, anywhere," is steadily proving to be unsustainable. Even with all of Varner's protestations, he still had to reluctantly refer to Ethiopian Jews possibly composing the tribe of Dan, and the Pashtu of Afghanistan as composing members of the exiled Northern Kingdom.⁵⁹

The argument that there are no descendants of people, anywhere on Earth, from the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel *and* being separated from the Jewish community at large, is often found in teachings intended to refute British-Israelism, and its commonly associated anti-Semitism. In wanting to rightly affirm the legitimate place of the Jewish people, how God has blessed and preserved them in history, and how they are indeed true descendants of the Patriarchs—some Christians go too far, and they end up disregarding or nullifying Bible prophecies that speak of the return of scattered Israel/Ephraim. The same attitude, of wanting to associate *any discussion* on the exiled Northern Kingdom, with something like British-Israelism, is present in much of today's Messianic Judaism.

Not dealing with the issue of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, is something which has, thankfully, started to slowly change. A liberal resource like *JPS Guide: The Jewish Bible* (2008), at least offers the general summary:

"The 10 tribes of **Israel**...disappeared from Biblical accounts after the Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians in 722/1 B.C.E. The tribes lost their separate identity during their exile and captivity and are thought by some to have intermarried with the Assyrians. Throughout history, various groups around the world have claimed that they are descendants of the lost tribes, pointing to their ancient Hebraic customs and beliefs as proof. Perhaps the best known of these are the Falashas of Ethiopia and the **Samaritans** of Nablus."⁶⁰

For our own Messianic faith community, evangelist Jonathan Bernis of Jewish Voice Ministries, wrote a short article in 2005 called "The Scattering of the Tribes of Israel." He referenced 2 Kings 17:22-23 about the Northern Kingdom being taken into Assyria "until this day," and appealed to Jeremiah 31:35-37⁶¹ as evidence of future fulfillment regarding the return of the descendants of the Northern Kingdom. He was quite keen to assert how "Sadly exactly what happened to the 10 Northern Tribes is not known. There are many theories enough to fill a library. Some are bizarre and clearly false (like the British-Israel theory taught by one prominent American television Bible teacher until his death), while others are more feasible. In fact, where these descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob eventually ended up is so shrouded in mystery and intrigue that these ten Tribes have come to

⁵⁹ Varner, pp 91-92.

⁶⁰ *JPS Guide: The Jewish Bible*, 231.

⁶¹ "Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the LORD of hosts is His name: 'If this fixed order departs From before Me,' declares the LORD, 'Then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.' Thus says the LORD, 'If the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,' declares the LORD" (Jeremiah 31:35-37).

Israel in Future Prophecy

be known as the ‘Ten Lost Tribes of Israel!’”⁶² Bernis actually concludes, “While the rest of the world might have lost these scattered ‘outcasts of Israel’—God certainly has not! In fact, I am convinced that in these Last Days He is now uncovering the descendants of these Tribes and gathering them back to Himself in order to fulfill His Word.”⁶³

Similar sentiments are expressed by Sid Roth in his 2007 book *The Incomplete Church*, as he commented on the miracles that God has wrought in preserving the Jewish people throughout history. He observes, “The ancient rabbis believed that three things had to take place before the Messiah would appear. First, Israel had to be restored as a Jewish nation, which occurred in 1948. Second, the temple had to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. This could happen very quickly. And third, the ten lost tribes had to be restored to Israel (see Jer. 31:7-11). This seemed impossible—until now.”⁶⁴ Roth goes on to summarize,

“Filmmaker Simcha Jacobovici, a traditional Jew, read about the locations where the lost tribes were scattered in Isaiah 11:11. He set up an exploratory expedition to find and document the existence of these tribes. Not only did he find them exactly where God had scattered them, but he also discovered that they had not assimilated into their surrounding environments. {as seen in [Quest for the Lost Tribes](#) A&E, 1998, DVD 2006}

“For example, he found descendants from the tribe of Manasseh living in northeast India. They observe the Sabbath, the festivals, and the biblical Jewish laws. In 2000, the Israeli Ministry of the Interior granted citizenship to the first one hundred members of that tribe.

“All ten ‘lost’ tribes have been located. They say, ‘We are not lost!’ Many of the tribes practice an aberrant form of Judaism, but all have relics and customs proving their heritage. I agree with them and the Word of God—they are not lost.”⁶⁵

It is most unfortunate, given the current controversies which have ensued from various leaders and teachers in the Two-House sub-movement, that the sentiments of those such as Bernis or Roth have not been given a bit more publicity to facilitate more reasonable and constructive discussion (as opposed to the overstatements and religious politics and posturing of the 1999 white paper, “The Ephraimite Error,” produced by the International Messianic Jewish Alliance or IMJA). Roth was quite fair to acknowledge,

“Followers of the Two-House Theology love the Jewish people, but they take the spiritual truth of Jew and Gentile becoming One New Man [cf. Ephesians 2:15]

⁶² Jonathan Bernis (2005). *The Scattering of the Tribes of Israel*, March/April 2005. *Jewish Voice Today*. Retrieved 17 April, 2011 from <<http://www.jewishvoice.org>>.

⁶³ Ibid.

There are also some concurrent thoughts offered about this in Bernis’ book, *A Rabbi Looks at the Last Days: Surprising Insights on Israel, the End Times and Popular Misconceptions* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2013).

⁶⁴ Sid Roth, *The Incomplete Church: Bridging the Gap Between God’s Children* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2007), 17.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp 17-18.

too far. They are trying to *physically* become Israel, as though this would give them a special place in God's Kingdom. They are wrong. The special place in the Kingdom is being a child of God."⁶⁶

Isaiah 11:11 communicates, "Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea." Obviously, the first places which people must look for the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom should be within the sphere of influence of the old Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires: **the places where the original exiles were deported and/or immediately migrated.**

The customary places where the descendants, of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel, have been searched for, are often limited to remote and rural parts of the third world: in Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Central Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean basin. This would include various isolated groups, which to various degrees are monotheistic, who practice what appear to be some form of Jewish customs, and/or appear to have some odd oral traditions or customs which likely originate from Ancient Israel. *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism* has a fair summation:

"Today, legends of descent from the 'lost' ten tribes abound. Jewish communities of Kurdish, Bokharan, and Indian (the BENÉ ISRAEL) origin claim their forefathers were exiled from the Kingdom of Israel, while the Israel Chief Rabbinate has taken the position that the Jews of Ethiopia come from the tribe of Dan. In addition, a wide range of non-Jewish tribes and groups claim descent from the Israelites, ranging from sections of the Nigerian Yoruba tribe to the 'Manipur Jews' from northeast India, who claim to belong to the tribe of Manasseh. Fifteen million Pathans spread over Afghanistan and Pakistan (now Kashmir) are divided into sub-tribal groupings with names like Reubeni (Reuben), Efridar (Ephraim), and Ashuri (Asher), leading to the suggestion that they come from the lost tribes."⁶⁷

Tibor Krausz wrote an article in 1999 for *The Jerusalem Report*, in which he summarized some of the groups which claimed to have descent from the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel. The more legitimate groups to be considered, included:

- **Shinlung:** A group of tribes in northeastern India, Burma, Thailand and Bangladesh boast 1.5 million members and trace their ancestry to the biblical tribe of Menashe. They call their deity Y'wa, have their own Exodus story and feast days corresponding to the Jewish holidays, and many say they want to immigrate to Israel, in the footsteps of the few dozen who already have.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp 41-42.

⁶⁷ "Tribes, Ten Lost," in Geoffrey Wigoder, ed. et. al., *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Publishing House, 2002), 784.

Israel in Future Prophecy

- **Telugu:** Some 30 families of the Indian village of Kottareddipalem, who have converted to Judaism, believe that their ancestors belonged to the lost tribe of Ephraim.
- **Iddao Ishaak:** This small tribe, which claims to be of Jewish origin, lives in Nigeria's Asakrei Valley.
- **Kaifeng:** Distant descendants of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng, they still mark "Jew" as their ethnic identity in the government census. Some believe their ancestors were descendants of a lost tribe of Israel that settled between Tibet and Szechuan.
- **Pathans:** The 15 million Pathans, Sunni Muslims, comprise about 40 percent of Afghans and also live in Pakistan. Some call themselves "Bani Israel" and consider themselves descendants of the Israelites who found a home in ancient Hindustan.⁶⁸

Another group to be added to Krausz' list can be the Lemba people, a small group of people living in Zimbabwe and South Africa. A BBC article from 2010 details,

"The Lemba people of Zimbabwe and South Africa may look like their compatriots, but they follow a very different set of customs and traditions.

"They do not eat pork, they practise male circumcision, they ritually slaughter their animals, some of their men wear skull caps and they put the Star of David on their gravestones.

"Their oral traditions claim that their ancestors were Jews who fled the Holy Land about 2,500 years ago.

"It may sound like another myth of a lost tribe of Israel, but British scientists have carried out DNA tests which have confirmed their Semitic origin."⁶⁹

These are the sorts of small groups of people, who practice what appear to be some kind of Jewish customs, and who have an oral tradition tracing their origins back to Ancient Israel, who are likely to be true descendants of the Lost Tribes. In some cases, they might even have some DNA evidence to back up their claims.

When I took Ancient Hebrew Civilization at the University of Oklahoma in 2001, Dr. Daniel Snell told our class that he believed that the Lost Tribes of the Northern Kingdom were basically constrained to a belt of people in what is today Southern Turkey, Northern Iraq, Northern Iran, and into Afghanistan—and now they were all likely Muslim. Kitchen would confirm how Bible readers can at least be assured, "the exiled Hebrews were progressively assimilated into the Assyrian-Aramean amalgam of peoples inhabiting northern Mesopotamia."⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Tibor Krausz (1999). *Report Card*, 10 May, 1999. *The Jerusalem Report*. Retrieved 11 April, 2011 from <<http://jpost.com/JerusalemReport>>.

⁶⁹ Steve Vickers (2010). *Lost Jewish tribe 'found in Zimbabwe'*, 08 March, 2010. *BBC News*. Retrived 08 April, 2012 from <<http://news.bbc.co.uk>>.

⁷⁰ Kitchen, *The Bible In Its World*, 113.

Cross-Examining the Two-House Teaching

Another small group to consider could be how in 1 Maccabees 12:21, as the Jews were trying to elicit the support of allies against the Seleucid-Greeks, a letter was sent to the Spartans with the statement, “It has been found in writing concerning the Spartans and the Jews that they are brethren and are of the family of Abraham [*ek genous Abraam, εκ γένους Αβρααμ*].” Lee I. Levine, a professor of Jewish history and archaeology at Hebrew University, states, “According to 1 Maccabees (12:5-23)...a bond was forged between the citizens of Jerusalem and the people of Sparta, who saw themselves as descendants of Abraham and who sought to forge an alliance with Jerusalem.”⁷¹ Alas, though, Ancient Sparta, a part of the Greek Peloponnesus, sat within the sphere of influence of the old Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires—as opposed to tall tales like escapees from the Northern Kingdom migrating to the British Isles (or even the Americas!).

It is highly problematic, though, that when most people in today’s Two-House sub-movement have considered where the exiles of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were deported—that they tend to look entirely outside of the Ancient Near East, and the places actually listed by the Holy Scriptures themselves. This is a serious issue which has been rightly noted by Boaz Michael & Jacob Fronczak in their publication, *Twelve Gates*:

“Many of those who were deported from the Northern Kingdom did not return; those who lost their identity as Israelites would have assimilated into Assyrian society and culture. Their descendants would be found today among the Syrian people, many of whom are Christian and belong to various Oriental churches (the Assyrian Church of the East and the Syriac Orthodox Church among others) which split off from Catholicism after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE. This is one case in which a non-Jewish people group might have some claim to significant Israelite ancestry. Yet one rarely (if ever) hears Two-House proponents single the Syrian people out as potential ‘Ephraimites.’”⁷²

The great irony of the whole issue, of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, is that most of the controversy has been caused by searching for groups of descendants well outside of people groups native to the Ancient Near East and immediately surrounding areas. If one were to propose that a wide number of Assyrian, Lebanese, Iraqi, Iranian, or Armenian Christians, among others, for example, were descended from the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel, there would hardly be any problems, as these people groups largely sit within the confines of the Ancient Near East. It is when groups well outside what was legitimately feasible in ancient times, are posited, that problems ensue.

Many of today’s popular/populist Two-House proponents have essentially advocated that there are descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom represented in every ethnicity, country, and corner of Planet Earth, from far Northwestern

⁷¹ Lee I. Levine, “The Age of Hellenism,” in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Destruction of the Temple*, 233.

⁷² Boaz Michael, with Jacob Fronczak, *Twelve Gates: Where Do the Nations Enter?* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2012), 26.

Israel in Future Prophecy

Europe to the South Seas, and possibly also to the ancient Americas. The traditional areas where the Lost Tribes have been searched for—are actually *the last places* where Two-House people tend to look. While it is true that in the course of two-and-a-half millennia, people from the Ancient Near East have migrated across the Earth, a substantial amount of that migration has actually only taken place in the past two centuries with European colonialism and de-colonization following the end of World War II.

A non-Jewish Believer of Northwestern European ancestry, who has been led by the Lord into today's Messianic movement, is actually going to have a far better chance at finding a Jewish ancestor or two who assimilated into Christianity during the Middle Ages—than being a descendant of the deported Northern Kingdom, which was largely spread *eastward*.

The need for Bible readers to stay away from unwarranted speculation—and widely let God's Word and prophecy take care of themselves—**is quite imperative**. This is something that far too many people who make up the Two-House sub-movement have utterly failed to do. As the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* entry on the "Ten Lost Tribes" rightly directs, "Various theories, one more farfetched than the other, have been adduced, on the flimsiest of evidence, to identify different peoples with the ten lost tribes. There is hardly a people, from the Japanese to the British, and from the Red Indians to the Afghans, who have not been suggested, and hardly a place, among them Africa, India, China, Persia, Kurdistan, Caucasia, the U.S., and Great Britain."⁷³ More often than not, theories about where Tribe XYZ have gone have not proven useful.

Some Ancient Views on the Lost Tribes from Extra-Biblical Jewish Sources

Various interpreters one may encounter today—Jewish, Christian, or even Messianic Jewish—may tend to favor the position that the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were corporately reunited following the end of the Babylonian exile in the Sixth Century B.C.E. While the evidence from unfulfilled prophecy does not favor such a conclusion, it also has to be recognized that the widespread Jewish position from the broad First Century B.C.E.-C.E., attested in an array of extra-Biblical sources, favors the view that the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were still largely "out there," waiting to be restored in the future. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* entry on the "Ten Lost Tribes" notes that "The belief in the continued existence of the ten tribes was regarded as an incontrovertible fact during the whole period of the Second Temple and of the Talmud."⁷⁴ **It may be safely argued that the ancient Jewish expectation for Israel's complete restoration, is widely yet to be realized.** What is some of the relevant data that needs to be reckoned with? The *EJ* further informs us,

⁷³ Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, "Ten Lost Tribes," in *EJ*.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*.

Cross-Examining the Two-House Teaching

“The Kingdom of Israel, consisting of the ten tribes (the twelve tribes excluding Judah and Benjamin who constituted the southern Kingdom of Judah), which fell in 722 B.C.E. and its inhabitants were exiled to ‘Halah and Habor by the river Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes’ (II Kings 17:6 and 18:11; for details and conjectures as to their ultimate fate, see Assyrian Exile), but in general it can be said that they disappeared from the stage of history. However, the parallel passage in I Chronicles 5:26 to the effect that the ten tribes were there ‘unto this day’ and the prophecies of Isaiah (11:11), Jeremiah (31:8), and above all of Ezekiel (37:19–24) kept alive the belief that they had maintained a separate existence and that the time would come when they would be rejoined with their brethren, the descendants of the Exile of Judah to Babylon...

“The belief in the continued existence of the ten tribes was regarded as an incontrovertible fact during the whole period of the Second Temple and of the Talmud. Tobit, the hero of the apocryphal book of his name, was depicted as a member of the tribe of Naphtali; the Testament of the 12 Patriarchs takes their existence as a fact; and in his fifth vision, IV Ezra (13:34–45) saw a ‘peaceable multitude...these are the ten tribes which were carried away prisoners out of their own land.’ Josephus (Ant., 11:133) states as a fact ‘the ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude and not to be estimated in numbers.’ Paul (Acts 26:6) protests to Agrippa that he is accused ‘for the hope of the promise made unto our fathers, unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God, hope to come,’ while James addresses his epistle to ‘the twelve tribes which are scattered about’ (1:1). The only opposing voice to this otherwise universal view is found in the Mishnah. R. Eliezer expresses his view that they will eventually return and ‘after darkness is fallen upon the ten tribes light shall thereafter dwell upon them,’ but R. Akiva expresses his emphatic view that ‘the ten tribes shall not return again’ (Sanh. 10:3). In consonance with this view, though it is agreed that Leviticus 26:38 applies to the ten tribes, where R. Meir maintains that it merely refers to their exile, Akiva states that it refers to their complete disappearance (Sifra, Be-Hukkotai, 8:1).”⁷⁵

Having already summarized some of the Biblical evidence in favor of a larger restoration of Israel to come in the future, involving those of the Southern *and* Northern Kingdoms—it is appropriate that we see a summary of extra-Biblical opinions, which confirm that exiles from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, were indeed “out there” in the world. These opinions are surely varied in their approach and perspective, and some of the ancient Jews believed that those from the Northern Kingdom of Israel were permanently cut off from the rest of Israel, and even though deported and exiled, would never be restored. Yet when one surveys the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, the historian Josephus, the Mishnah, Tosefta, and the Talmud—the belief that there were exiles from the Northern Kingdom of Israel somewhere on Earth, separated from the known Jewish community—is detectable. This may be considered to be a relatively “safe” array of extra-Biblical literature to engage with, as these same resources are consulted by mainstream scholars today

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Israel in Future Prophecy

to evaluate an entire selection of theological topics as they concern the teachings and perspective of Yeshua and the Apostles.

So what were some ancient views on the Lost Tribes from extra-Biblical Jewish sources?

Apocrypha: “He will afflict us for our iniquities; and again he will show mercy, and will gather us from all the nations among whom you have been scattered. If you turn to him with all your heart and with all your soul, to do what is true before him, then he will turn to you and will not hide his face from you. But see what he will do with you; give thanks to him with your full voice. Praise the Lord of righteousness, and exalt the King of the ages. I give him thanks in the land of my captivity, and I show his power and majesty to a nation of sinners. Turn back, you sinners, and do right before him; who knows if he will accept you and have mercy on you?” (Tobit 13:5-6, RSV).

Apocrypha: “For we have hope in God that he will soon have mercy upon us and will gather us from everywhere under heaven into his holy place, for he has rescued us from great evils and has purified the place” (2 Maccabees 2:18, RSV).

Apocrypha: “[A]nd an innumerable multitude shall be gathered together, as you saw, desiring to come and conquer him. But he shall stand on the top of Mount Zion. And Zion will come and be made manifest to all people, prepared and built, as you saw the mountain carved out without hands. And he, my Son, will reprove the assembled nations for their ungodliness (this was symbolized by the storm), and will reproach them to their face with their evil thoughts and the torments with which they are to be tortured (which were symbolized by the flames), and will destroy them without effort by the law (which was symbolized by the fire). And as for your seeing him gather to himself another multitude that was peaceable, these are the ten tribes which were led away from their own land into captivity in the days of King Hoshea, whom Shalmaneser the king of the Assyrians led captive; he took them across the river, and they were taken into another land. But they formed this plan for themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the nations and go to a more distant region, where mankind had never lived, that there at least they might keep their statutes which they had not kept in their own land. And they went in by the narrow passages of the Euphrates river. For at that time the Most High performed signs for them, and stopped the channels of the river until they had passed over. Through that region there was a long way to go, a journey of a year and a half; and that country is called Arzareth” (4 Esdras 13:34-45, RSV).

Pseudepigrapha: “Nevertheless, I shall also write to your brothers in Babylon, as you have said to me, and I shall send it by means of men. Also I shall write to the nine and a half tribes, and send it by means of a bird. And it happened on the twenty-first day of the ninth month that I, Baruch, came and sat down under the oak in the shadow of the branches, and nobody was with me; I was alone. And I wrote two letters. One I sent by means of an eagle to the nine and a half tribes, and the other I sent by means of three men to those who were in Babylon. And I called an eagle and said to him these words: You have been created by the Most High that you should be higher than any other bird. But now go and do

not stay in any place, do not go into a nest, do not sit on any tree until you have flown over the breadth of the many waters of the river Euphrates and have come to the people that live there and cast down to them this letter. Remember that Noah at the time of the flood received the fruit of the olive tree from a dove when he sent it away from the ark. And also the ravens served Elijah when they brought food to him as they were commanded. Also Solomon, in the time of his kingship, commanded a bird whither he wanted to send a letter and in whatever he was in need of and it obeyed him as he commanded it. And do not be reluctant and do not deviate to the right nor to the left, but fly and go straight away that you may preserve the command of the Mighty One as I said to you" (2 Baruch 77:17-26).⁷⁶

Pseudepigrapha: "But in your allotted place will be the temple of God, and the latter temple will exceed the former in glory. The twelve tribes shall be gathered here and there and all the nations, until such time as the Most High shall send forth his salvation through the ministration of the unique prophet" (*Testament of Benjamin* 9:2).⁷⁷

Pseudepigrapha: "Then, considering themselves like a lioness in a dusty plain, hungry and parched, the two tribes will call upon the ten tribes, and shall declare loudly, 'Just and holy is the Lord. For just as you sinned, likewise we, with our little ones, have now been led out with you.' Then, hearing the reproachful words of the two tribes, the ten tribes will lament and will say, 'What shall we, with you, do, brothers? Has not this tribulation come upon the whole house of Israel?' Then all the tribes will lament, crying out to heaven and saying, 'God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, remember your covenant which you made with them, and the oath which you swore to them by yourself, that their seed would never fail from the land which you have given them. Then, in that day, they will remember me, saying from tribe to tribe, even each man to his neighbor, 'Is this not that which was made known to us in prophecies by Moses, who suffered many things in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years (when) he solemnly called heaven and earth as witnesses against us that we should not transgress God's commandments of which he had become the mediator for us? These things which have come upon us since that time are according to his admonition declared to us at that time. And (those words) have been confirmed even to our being led as captives in the land of the East.' And they will be as slaves for about seventy-seven years.

"Then one who is over them will come upon the scene, and he will stretch forth his hands, and bow his knees and pray for them, saying 'Lord of all, king on the lofty throne, you who rules the world, who has willed that this people be for you a chosen people, yea, who has willed to be called their God according to the covenant which you made with their fathers, yet they, with their wives and children, have gone as captives into a foreign land, surrounded by the gates of strangers where there is great majesty. Have regard for them, and have compassion for them, O heavenly Lord.' Then God will remember them because

⁷⁶ A.F.J. Klijn, trans., "2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 647.

⁷⁷ H.C. Kee, trans., "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *Ibid.*, 827.

Israel in Future Prophecy

of the covenant which he made with their fathers and he will openly show his compassion. And in those times he will inspire a king to have pity on them and send them home to their own land. Then some parts of the tribes will arise and come to their appointed place, and they will strongly build its walls. Now, the two tribes will remain steadfast in their former faith, sorrowful and sighing because they will not be able to offer sacrifices to the Lord of their fathers. But the ten tribes will grow and spread out among the nations during the time of their captivity" (*Testament of Moses* 3:4-4:9).⁷⁸

Pseudepigrapha: "Bring together the dispersed of Israel with mercy and goodness, for your faithfulness is with us" (*Psalms of Solomon* 8:28).⁷⁹

Josephus: "[T]herefore there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 11.133).⁸⁰

Mishnah: "The ten tribes are not destined to return, since it is said *And he cast them into another land, as on this day* (Dt. 29:28). Just as the day passes and does not return, so they have gone their way and will not return,' the words of R. Aqiba" (m.*Sanhedrin* 10:3).⁸¹

Tosefta: "The ten tribes have no portion in the world to come and will not live in the world to come, as it is said, *And the Lord drove them out of their land with anger and heat and great wrath* (Deut. 29:28)—in this world; *and cast them forth into another land* (Deut. 29:28)—in the world to come. R. Simeon b. Judah of Kefar Akkum says, 'Scripture said, *As at this day*—If their deeds remain as they are this day, they will [not] reach it, and if not, they will (not) reach it.' Rabbi says, 'Both these and those have a portion in the world to come, as it is said, *And it shall come to pass in that day that those who are perishing in the land of Assyria and those who are driven away into the Land of Egypt shall come and worship the Lord in the holy mountain, in Jerusalem* (Is. 27:13)" (t.*Sanhedrin* 13:12).⁸²

Talmud: "The ten tribes are not destined to return, since it is said, "And he cast them into another land, as on this day" (Deu. 29:28). Just as the day passes and does not return, so they have gone their way and will not return,' the words of R. Aqiba. R. Eliezer says, 'Just as this day is dark and then grows light, so the ten tribes for whom it now is dark — thus in the future it is destined to grow light for them.'

"Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority: 'The ten tribes have no portion in the world to come [T.: and will not live in the world to come], as it is said, "And the Lord drove them out of their land with anger and heat and great wrath" (Deu. 29: 8) — in this world; and cast them forth into another land' (Deu. 29:28) — in the world to come,' the words of R. Aqiba. R. Simeon

⁷⁸ J. Priest, trans., "Testament of Moses," in *Ibid.*, pp 928-929.

⁷⁹ R.B. Wright, trans., "Psalms of Solomon," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 660.

⁸⁰ *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 294.

⁸¹ Neusner, *Mishnah*, 605.

⁸² Neusner, *Tosefta*, 2:1191-1192.

b. Judah of Kefar Akkum says in the name of R. Simeon, ‘Scripture said, “As at this day” — if their deeds remains as they are this day, they will [not] reach it, and if not, they will (not) reach it.’ Rabbi says, ‘[Both these and those] have a portion in the world to come, as it is said, “And it shall come to pass in that day that the trumpet shall be blown [and those who are perishing in the land of Assyria and those who are driven away in to the Land of Egypt shall come and worship the Lord in the holy mountain, in Jerusalem]” (Isa. 27:13).’ [T. San. 13:12].” (b.Sanhedrin 110b).⁸³

Talmud: “Said R. Judah said R. Assi, ‘A gentile who betrothed an Israelite woman at this time — they take account of the possibility of the validity of the betrothal, since he might derive from the Ten Tribes.’ *But lo, whatever falls from a mixed lot is assumed to have fallen from the majority thereof! The statement speaks of places in which the ten tribes took up residence, for said R. Abba bar Kahana, “And he put them in Halah and in Habor, on the river of Gozan, and the cities of the Medes’ (2Ki. 18:11) — ‘Halah’ — this is Halwan; ‘Habor’ — this is Adiabene; ‘the river of Gozan’ — this is in Ginzaq; ‘the cities of the Medes’ — these are Hamdan and the neighboring towns.’ Others say, ‘Nihar and its neighboring towns’” (b.Yevamot 16b).*⁸⁴

There is certainly a variance of perspectives witnessed in an array of selections from mainline, extra-Biblical Jewish literature, on what was or is to happen, regarding the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel, and even whether or not ancient Jews would encounter them. Some of the details seen in this wide array of quotes obviously seem more plausible than others. At least when 4 Esdras 13:45 says that the ten tribes went to Arzaeth, this basically just means that they went to “Another Land,”⁸⁵ and that the while the author reflects on the anticipation of their descendants returning, the material does contain speculation. *Testament of Moses* 4:9 actually remains fairly true to the Biblical and prophetic picture, not adding speculative statements, other than the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom multiplying in their captivity. And perhaps quite intriguing is the statement seen in b.Yevamot 16b about a non-Jew marrying a Jewish woman being permitted, because he just might be a descendant of the exiled Northern Kingdom, and as such would ultimately be an Israelite too—although this was notably limited to a few specific towns to the East in Media-Persia, where the deportees of the Northern Kingdom were legitimately transported and/or migrated.

To the list seen above can probably be added the thoughts of a Fourth-Fifth Century Christian leader from Gaul, Sulpitius Severus, who said,

“...[T]he ten which had previously been carried away being scattered among the Parthians, Medes, Indians, and Ethiopians never returned to their native

⁸³ *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *New Oxford Annotated Bible, Apocrypha* p 55.

Israel in Future Prophecy

country, and are to this day held under the sway of barbarous nations" (*Sacred History* 11).⁸⁶

A variety of academic resources, knowing that the discussion about the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel, was a subject of interest and speculation within the Jewish world prior to and immediately after, the time of Yeshua and the Apostles, has offered some useful summaries that today's Messianic Believers need to be familiar with:

Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period: "In 1 Kings 11-12, the prophet Ahijah gives the new king, Jeroboam, ten of the twelve pieces into which he had torn a new garment; these symbolized the tribes (other than Judah and apparently Benjamin) over which he was to rule. This realm existed until 722-721 B.C.E., when the Assyrians killed or deported thousands (see 2 Kings 15-17). The fact that these tribes are not mentioned again in the Hebrew Bible has given rise to the idea of the ten lost tribes. They do, however, play a part in some extrabiblical texts. The Testament of Moses 3-4 predicts that the other two tribes, when exiled, will summon the ten to repent. They do so, but eventually they grow and spread out among the nations. In 2 Baruch (c. 100 C.E.), the remaining two tribes are said to have done more evil than the ten who were deported; 4 Ezra 13:39-50 looks to a return of the ten tribes in the last days."⁸⁷

Anchor Bible Dictionary: "The 3rd century Christian Latin poet Commodian (in the *Carmen* and *Instructiones*) and author of the *Acts of St. Matthew* may preserve an otherwise lost Jewish apocalyptic and apocryphal work that apparently described the living conditions of the lost ten (or nine and a half) tribes which were taken into exile by the king of Assyria. According to early rabbinics Rabbi Akiba claimed these tribes would not return, but Rabbi Eliezer disagreed, arguing that they shall move from darkness to light (*m. Sanh.* 10.3). We cannot yet be certain that an early Jewish apocryphon existed; but it is clear that the legend was widely known and influential. Did a Jew, perhaps in the late 1st century compose an exegetical expansion based on OT passages, especially 2 Kgs 17:23 (cf. 1 Chr 5:26, Isa 11:1, Jer 31:8, and Eze 37:19-28)? Around 100 C.E. three Jewish works—namely 4 Ezra (13:34-51), 2 Baruch (77:17-26), and Josephus' *Antiquities* (11.5)—referred to this legend or document.

"If Commodian excerpts this apocryphon in his *Instructiones*, and if the passage that refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. is from this Jewish work, then the document must postdate 70, and was probably contemporaneous with 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and the *Antiquities*. The parallels with the *History of the Rechabites* are numerous and significant. M.R. James suggested that 'there evidently was a writing (presumably Jewish) which described the conditions under which the lost tribes lived.'"⁸⁸

⁸⁶ BibleWorks 8.0: Schaff, *Early Church Fathers*. MS Windows Vista/7 Release. Norfolk: BibleWorks, LLC, 2009-2010. DVD-ROM.

⁸⁷ "tribes, ten," in *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*, pp 648-649.

⁸⁸ James H. Charlesworth, "Lost Tribes, The," in *ABD*, 4:372.

Cross-Examining the Two-House Teaching

While there was undoubtedly talk and speculation within the Jewish world of Yeshua and the Apostles, about what actually happened to *and* what will happen concerning the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel, New Testament scholars have tended to stay away from the issue. What is usually witnessed, is that two specific references made to “the twelve tribes” (Acts 26:7; James 1:1) are taken to exclusively apply to the First Century Jewish community, and thus there is to be no future expectation of an ingathering to occur, with people “out there” in the nations, either in some isolated area, or assimilated descendants of, the exiled Northern Kingdom.

In Paul’s defense of believing in Yeshua the Messiah, before Agrippa, the Apostle stated, “And now I am standing trial for the hope {the resurrection} of the promise made by God to our fathers; *the promise* to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day” (Acts 26:6-7).⁸⁹ In the Acts commentaries of two very highly regarded theologians, F.F. Bruce and I. Howard Marshall, we find an immediate dismissal of anything having to do with an exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel—in spite of these two often being well-acquainted with Second Temple Judaism and its associated literature. Bruce asserts, “Neither Paul nor any other NT writer knows anything of the fiction of the ten ‘lost’ tribes,”⁹⁰ followed by Marshall who says, “The idea that only returned exiles from Judah and Benjamin (the southern part of the kingdom) composed the Jewish people in New Testament times is a myth that dies hard.”⁹¹

One would have expected better from these two, with more even-handed statements. However, we cannot totally blame either Bruce or Marshall from employing words like “fiction” or “myth” regarding Acts 26:6. In his commentary on Acts, Stanley D. Toussaint gives us a clue as to why various New Testament examiners are so insistent there is no one from the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim “out there” in the world: “Paul’s reference to the **12 tribes** of Israel shows the error of British-Israelism with its ‘10 lost tribes of Israel.’”⁹²

These three interpreters (Bruce, Marshall, Toussaint), unfortunately, have probably allowed a rightful rejection of British-Israelism (even though Bruce and Marshall do not mention it by name), to cause them to go too far so as to suggest that there is really no group of people from the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel “out there” in the world, separate from the known and recognizable Jewish community. We have to be able to see over-reactionary statements when we encounter them, and think critically.

⁸⁹ With the verb *latreuō* (λατρεύω) employed for “serve,” this is likely a reference to the offerings presented for the community of Israel in the Temple. Included within the First Century Temple worship would have been hymns and psalms issued for the redemption of Israel.

⁹⁰ F.F. Bruce, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 489 fn#13.

⁹¹ I. Howard Marshall, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 392.

⁹² Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 424.

Israel in Future Prophecy

So, when Paul said to Agrippa, "...to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve *God* night and day..." (Acts 26:7), did he deny that there was a future, larger restoration of Israel to come, involving various people descended from the Northern Kingdom of Israel? It is very true that there were individuals like Anna of the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36) who were a part of the First Century Jewish community, and that there were others in the ancient Jewish community who could trace their lineage to one of the twelve tribes (discussed previously). Still, reading a larger scope of Tanach prophecies, it is clear that the grand restoration of Israel—of both Judah and Ephraim—has not even occurred in our own day. So why would Paul testify to a leader like Agrippa, that "our twelve tribes hope"? Craig S. Keener offers us a useful perspective in *IVPBBC* that we need not overlook:

"Two of the most basic future hopes of most Jews were the resurrection of the bodies of the righteous and the restoration of the twelve tribes at the same time."⁹³

David G. Peterson also interjects a useful thought to keep in mind:

"Perhaps the reference to *our twelve tribes* (to *dōdekaphylon hēmōn* [τὸ δωδεκάφυλον ἡμῶν], 'out twelve-tribe unit') implies an ideal Israel, comprising all true Israelites across time and scattered among the nations. Ezekiel 37:15-28 certainly envisages a reunification of the tribes of Israel when the Lord resurrects his people and brings them under the eternal rule of his servant David."⁹⁴

It is difficult to refute the idea that the Apostles all recognized that they were living in a time when the restoration of Israel's Kingdom was something *in process* (cf. Acts 1:6). In some way or another, the gathering together of all of Israel—known and unknown—and the salvation of the nations at large who would acknowledge Israel's Messiah, King Yeshua, was taking place (cf. Isaiah 49:6; Acts 13:47). The Apostles ministered and served in an era when the final stages of Israel's restoration had begun.

James the Just's greeting in his epistle is, "To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad" (James 1:1). Many of those who want to completely disregard the subject matter of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, offer James 1:1 as a proof. While no intelligent reader of James doubts the fact that this letter was written to ancient Jewish Believers in the First Century C.E., a non-Jewish readership of James as well cannot at all be excluded. The Epistle of James has parallels to not only ancient Rabbinic literature, but *also* to classical literature as well (see esp. James 3:4-6).⁹⁵ But where various Two-House populists would likely step in, and claim that James wrote to the Lost Tribes, we should be much, much more tempered. First of all, if James intended any members of dispersed Northern Kingdom being among his audience, assimilated or not, it would have been within the immediate sphere of influence of the old Assyrian Empire, in the Eastern

⁹³ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 399.

⁹⁴ David G. Peterson, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 662.

⁹⁵ Cf. Pheme Perkins, "The Letter of James," in *New Interpreter's Study Bible*, 2176.

Mediterranean, in the vicinity of “Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch” (Acts 11:19).⁹⁶

Also to keep in mind, is how in his commentary on James, Dan G. McCartney directs our attention to how “twelve tribes” should be viewed not as the Jewish people exclusively, but rather a Kingdom of Israel in the process of restoration:

“The ‘twelve tribes in the Diaspora’ is, of course, a reference to Israel. Although many Jews had some knowledge of their tribal connections (e.g., Paul the Benjamite, Symeon the Levite), the twelve tribes as distinct and discernible units or clans within Judaism were a thing of the past, especially the ‘northern’ tribes (though the Samaritans probably were largely derived from northern Israelites). But the OT and later Jewish writings sometimes speak of the twelve tribes as an aspect of the restored Israel (Ezek. 47:13; T. Benj. 9.2)...”⁹⁷

(James the Just’s statements in James 1:1, regarding “the twelve tribes,” can by no means be separated from his expectations at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:15-18, regarding the salvation of the nations, where he quotes Amos 9:11-12.)

The attestations regarding the twelve tribes of Israel elsewhere in the Apostolic Scriptures (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30; Revelation 7:4-8; 21:12), depict them in an eschatological setting, often regarding the restored Kingdom of God. When seeing “twelve tribes” referred to in either Acts 26:7 or James 1:1, it is far better for readers to associate these verses not with the First Century Jewish people exclusively—but instead with a Kingdom of Israel in the process of being restored in the Messiah Yeshua. This would have surely included the Jewish people *and* those of the exiled Northern Kingdom, but would **not at all exclude** the nations at large, either. This is an audience of the people of God, which are to be especially noted by the twelve tribes of Israel brought together. Bible readers are on safe ground to recognize that places in the Apostolic Scriptures which refer to Israel’s “twelve tribes,” refer to the in-process restoration of Israel’s Kingdom brought about via the arrival of the Messiah. Such a restoration would, of course, also welcome in those of the nations who have recognized Israel’s God and Israel’s Messiah.⁹⁸

While today’s New Testament theologians, given various abuses about the Ten Lost Tribes witnessed via phenomenon like Nineteenth/Twentieth Century British-Israelism, tend to dismiss the entire subject matter, Christian Old Testament theologians tend to be far more honest about the issue. Referencing 2 Kings 15:29; 17:6; and 18:11 in his discussion, as well as the exile of the Southern Kingdom to Babylon, Kitchen reminds us how, “once the crash *had* come and the people were carried off into seeming despair, then both Jeremiah (30-31, etc.) and Ezekiel (36-37, etc.) had to proclaim that all was *not* finished, that in God’s plan for the ages there

⁹⁶ Cf. Donald W. Burdick, “James,” in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. et. al., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 12:162-163.

⁹⁷ Dan G. McCartney, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 79; cf. Douglas J. Moo, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp 49-50.

⁹⁸ Consult the author’s commentary *James for the Practical Messianic*, for an evaluation of this, and related issues.

Israel in Future Prophecy

was a future for his erring people.”⁹⁹ This would notably include the promise of the New Covenant, the promise of return, and the promise of a Greater David to reign over a restored Israel *and* Planet Earth itself.

While people—Jews, Christians, Messianic Jews, theologians, and laypersons alike—may want to find little reasons here or there, to dismiss the issue of a larger restoration of Israel, **God Himself has not dismissed the issue.** As Craigie observes on Ezekiel 37:15-28,

“Long since, [the Jews in Babylonian exile] had ceased to wonder whether or not there was a future for their relatives in the northern kingdom, which had been defeated in war in 722 B.C. But where human memory ceases, often through selfish lack of concern for others, the divine memory is still at work. All God’s people were important to him, whether from Joseph or Judah; all would eventually share in this salvation.”¹⁰⁰

It has only been in the era of critical Bible scholarship, which challenges the integrity and believability of Holy Writ, that much of the ancient Jewish hope of the exiled Northern Kingdom returning home, has been denied and derided. This has been coupled with the many abuses of phenomena like British-Israelism, and the less-than-reliable theological perspectives of Armstrongism, giving many evangelical Christians and Messianic Jews a convenient “excuse” to disregard the whole subject matter. Far too many in the Two-House sub-movement have also fallen prey to many tall tales and unwarranted speculation. However, if we are true to the Biblical text *and* to valuing the Bible in its world, as many ancient Jews did believe in people from the exiled Northern Kingdom “out there” among the nations—then we can have confidence that one day the dilemma that the Prophet Daniel prayed about will be over:

“Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries [בְּכָל-הָאֲרָצוֹת, *b'kol-ha'eratzot*] to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You” (Daniel 9:7).

How much did the Apostles emphasize the exiled Northern Kingdom?

It is commonly thought that the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament are largely silent about what happened to the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel. Are they? No objective Bible reader would conclude that the complete restoration of Israel’s Kingdom in the eschaton is a theme missing from the Apostolic Scriptures. From the Tanach, such a restoration would necessarily include the return of descendants from the exiled Northern Kingdom to not only the community of Israel, but also that many are to return to the Promised Land itself. Many of today’s

⁹⁹ Kitchen, *The Bible In Its World*, 121.

¹⁰⁰ Craigie, 264.

popular/populist Two-House teachers have claimed that there are scores of references to this in the Apostolic Scriptures, but such teachers can certainly be found to employ too much eisegesis, i.e., reading messages into the text that might not really be there.

In what is commonly called the Great Commission, Yeshua the Messiah bid His Disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations¹⁰¹...” (Matthew 28:19a). Not only is there no distinction here between descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, and the nations/Gentiles in general—“all the nations” also necessarily includes the Jewish people themselves, who need the Messiah every bit as much as well. A wide number of the Two-House advocates, which one will encounter today, claim that the good news going forth to the world is largely about finding “lost Israelites,” and not really about people at large simply receiving the message—so that *all unsaved human beings* might be redeemed by Israel’s Messiah. ***This goes unacceptably too far.***

What should not be disputed is that the non-Jewish Believers were considered a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (cf. Ephesians 2:11-13). We also need to each consider how the Apostle Paul noted how, “For not all Israelites truly belong to Israel” (Romans 9:6, NRSV),¹⁰² meaning that *in the end*, those who are considered or reckoned to be a part of “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16) by God, must have faith in Israel’s Messiah, Yeshua (and in the case of Romans 9:6 that there will be Jewish people removed from Israel’s polity).¹⁰³ If people do not have salvation in Yeshua—even if they are of physical Israel (physical descendants of either the known Jewish people or descendants of exiled Israel/Ephraim)—**they cannot ultimately be considered “Israel.”**

In the teachings of the Apostles in the Messianic Scriptures, we see references to the exiled Northern Kingdom, but they may not be as direct as various popular/populist Two-House advocates, who you are likely to encounter, would at all like them to be. It can certainly be recognized, though, that themes regarding the end-time restoration of Israel are applied to the salvation of the nations at large. It cannot be denied, with some rudimentary investigation into the text, that Tanach passages regarding the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel as a participant—are applied to the salvation of the nations by the Apostles. This does beg a few questions of how far certain elements of such a restoration can be pushed.

It would have been most odd and irregular—and perhaps even a bit sloppy on their part—if the Apostles associated restoration of Israel prophecies and terms, to the salvation of the nations, if they did not at least consider the nations to be some sort of participants in them. They surely recognized, that as the good news went forth, the God of Israel was in the process of restoring His Kingdom. Their job was to declare the good news and see that new Believers—whether they be Jewish or

¹⁰¹ Grk. *panta ta ethnē* (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη).

¹⁰² Grk. *hoi ex Israēl houtoi Israēl* (οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ); “for not all who are of Israel are these Israel” (YLT); “For not everyone from Isra’el is truly part of Isra’el” (CJB).

¹⁰³ Consult the discussion on Romans 9:3-6 in the author’s publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

Israel in Future Prophecy

those of the nations—were properly disciplined and set on the right path of maturity in the Messiah. Much of what would relate to the issue of exiled Northern Kingdom (cf. Hosea 8:8; Amos 9:9), obviously had to be left to the natural course of prophecy and the sovereign will and knowledge of God alone. The Apostles' primary mission was the same as any of us: seeing human individuals restored to their Creator via Yeshua's salvation, and seeing them develop in faith and holiness (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:9, 23-24).¹⁰⁴

It is useful that we review a series of important examples of where the Apostles allude to Israel's restoration, and where the redeemed from the nations are decisively included within it.

James the Just

At the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, James the Just, the half-brother of Yeshua, got up and explained how the Lord planned all along to receive from the nations a people for Himself. He says, "With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written" (Acts 15:15). James then proceeded to quote from Amos 9:11-12, which says in its entirety, "In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name," declares the LORD who does this." What is important to recognize is that in James' quotation of Amos, he actually said, "AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME" (Acts 15:16-17).

The difference between what actually James said in Acts 15:13-18 and the Hebrew text in Amos, is that James followed the Septuagint rendering which reads with *hoi kataloipoi tōn anthrōpōn* (οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων) for the Hebrew *sh'eirit Edom* (שְׁאִירֵי אֶדוֹם). The LXX translators understood *Edom* (אֶדוֹם) to be connected to *adam* (אָדָם), also the Hebrew word for "mankind, people" (*HALOT*),¹⁰⁵ and rendered it in Greek as "the remnant of men" (Apostle's Bible) or "those remaining of humans" (NETS), referring to God's faithful remnant that would come forth from humanity's masses.

James associated the nations coming to faith with the restoration of the Tabernacle of David, or Israel's Kingdom, by quoting Amos 9:11-12. Previously in Amos 9:9 is a declaration from the Lord of judgment on the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim: "I will shake the house of Israel among all nations [*b'kol-ha'goyim*, בְּכָל-הַגּוֹיִם] as *grain* is shaken in a sieve, but not a kernel will fall to the ground." The restoration of David's Tabernacle is to obviously bring resolution to this problem. Amos 9:14 further decrees, though, "I will restore [Heb. verb *shuv*, שׁוּב; Grk. LXX

¹⁰⁴ "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Yeshua the Messiah our Lord...[B]ut we preach Messiah crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Messiah the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:9, 23-24).

¹⁰⁵ *HALOT*, 1:14.

verb *epistrephō*] the captivity of My people Israel.” It cannot be avoided that in Acts 15:19, when James says, “wherefore I judge: not to trouble those who from the nations do turn back to God” (YLT), that the verb *epistrephō* has been employed to label the salvation of the non-Jewish Believers. The verb *epistrephō* was used in the Septuagint rendering of Amos 9:14, to essentially describe the restoration and return of the Northern Kingdom.

Whether a few of the early non-Jewish Believers coming to faith, from the Mediterranean basin, included assimilated descendants of exiled Israel/Ephraim in their ranks or not, was completely unknowable to the Jewish Apostles. *The main emphasis seen is on the nations’ salvation and redemption from sin, after all!* But what is knowable to Bible readers is how such new, non-Jewish Believers were attested to be participants in the restoration of Israel. Concurrent with the restoration of David’s Tabernacle, whether one follows the Hebrew MT or Greek LXX of Amos 9:11-12, is that Israel’s Kingdom realm is expanded beyond the Twelve Tribes. This does mean that although there will be people descended from the exiled Northern Kingdom return to the Promised Land one day, that when the Messiah finally returns, situated around the restored Twelve Tribes will be the righteous from the nations incorporated into Israel’s expanded polity. These people will not be ethnically or culturally Jewish, and they will maintain a high level of their own ethnic and cultural distinctiveness (obviously purged of sin)—but they will be observing God’s Torah (Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4).¹⁰⁶

The Apostle Peter

In his first epistle, the Apostle Peter directed his message to a broad geographical area in Asia Minor: “To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen” (1 Peter 1:1). Writing to a mixed group of ancient Believers, both Jewish and non-Jewish,¹⁰⁷ he applies Hosea’s word of exiled Israel to their salvation experience: “I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, and I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they will say, ‘You are my God!’” (Hosea 2:23). This was a prophecy that was given to the Northern Kingdom of Israel regarding their dispersion. Peter tells his audience, “for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF

¹⁰⁶ For a further evaluation, consult the author’s examination of Acts 15:15-18, in his publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

¹⁰⁷ That there was a non-Jewish audience of 1 Peter as well is easily seen by statements such as, “the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance” (1 Peter 1:14), which included “sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries” (1 Peter 4:3). The presence of pagan idolatry does not apply too well if the audience of 1 Peter is exclusively Jewish.

For a further review, consult the entry for the Epistle of 1 Peter in the author’s workbook *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*.

Also useful to consider should be the sentiments issued in the *Tree of Life—The New Covenant*, 413.

Israel in Future Prophecy

GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY” (1 Peter 2:10).¹⁰⁸

The Apostle Peter recognized that a larger restoration of Israel was at hand, as many of his own Jewish people—as well as many from the nations—were receiving the good news. But Peter’s quotation from Hosea 2:23, applied to non-Jewish readers of 1 Peter, is the furthest extent that Peter goes in addressing the subject. He does not at all identify any non-Jewish Believer with a particular tribe of the Northern Kingdom, but instead focuses on individuals’ spiritual well-being, their discipleship in the faith, and their proper conduct in holiness. This would fit well with his words proclaimed at *Shavuot*/Pentecost: “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, **as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself**” (Acts 2:39). Peter’s vision was a global vision, as he wanted “all whom the Lord our God will call” (NIV) to know Yeshua.¹⁰⁹

The Apostle Paul

The Apostle Paul, just like James and Peter, recognized that the restoration of God’s Kingdom was steadily at work in his assignments among the nations. He had no difficulty placing the salvation of the nations within the expectations of a larger restoration of Israel. As the message of the good news went forth to the world, God’s Kingdom was in the process of being restored. Paul did not at all attempt to prove the ancestry of anyone who was saved by the Lord and freed from the power of sin. He could not have humanly discerned if, per chance, a few of the ancient, non-Jewish people coming to faith in Yeshua, included assimilated descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom. Yet, prophecies and concepts regarding the exiled Northern Kingdom were applied to the salvation of the nations.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul applies prophecies from Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 to the salvation of the nations:

“And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, *even us*, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles [*ex ethnōn, ἐξ ἔθνων*]. As He says also in Hosea, ‘I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, ‘MY PEOPLE,’ AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, ‘BELOVED’” [Hosea 2:23]. AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, ‘YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,’ THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD” [Hosea 1:10]” (Romans 9:23-26).

Paul has said that God has called people to Himself “not only out of Jews, but also out of nations” (Romans 9:24, YLT). In Paul’s application of Hosea 2:23 and 1:10, why would he quote a passage with the Northern Kingdom of Israel intended

¹⁰⁸ A wider array of Tanach passages describing Israel, to this mixed audience of ancient Believers, is witnessed in 1 Peter 2:9-10, including: Deuteronomy 7:6; 10:15; Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6; 43:21; Deuteronomy 4:20; 14:2; and Hosea 2:23.

Cf. Aland, *GNT*, pp 788-789.

¹⁰⁹ For a further evaluation, consult the author’s examination of 1 Peter 2:9-11, in his publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

as the main subject, and apply it to the nations' reception of the good news? If Paul were trying to speak of just the salvation of the nations, generically, there were other Tanach prophecies which he could have referred to—that the Jewish Believers in Rome would have taken notice of and understood. You will notice that in Romans 9:23-26 Paul **does not at all** call the non-Jewish Believers “Ephraim,” here, as many Two-House people automatically would. Yet, in applying a prophetic word regarding the restoration of Israel to the nations, Paul surely believed the non-Jews he ministered to were participants in Israel's restoration. Such a restoration of Israel's Kingdom, having started in the First Century C.E., necessarily had a few details that only God Himself could know.

In his comments to the Corinthians, Paul summarizes quite well what we need to all be emphasizing today in the Messianic community. He writes, “For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Messiah” (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). Paul did recognize both the Jewish and non-Jewish Corinthian Believers as partaking of the same spiritual heritage in Ancient Israel. Paul emphasizes, “brothers and sisters...our ancestors were all¹¹⁰ under the cloud, and all passed through the sea” (NRSV). Paul wanted all of the Corinthians to understand that all Believers are part of the same community of faith, and that they all partake of the same spiritual heritage. This is true if one is a physical descendant of the Patriarchs or not. **In the Messiah Yeshua, all are a part of the community of Israel**—and all need to learn from the mistakes of the Ancient Israelites in the wilderness! I do not think any of us would argue, by extension, that there are serious mistakes that we all have to take instruction and warnings from, as they concern the Divided Kingdom era in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, as well.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he communicates to his readers that “if you belong to Christ, you are the ‘issue’ of Abraham and heirs by virtue of the promise” (Galatians 3:29, REB). Various Two-House advocates have overstated Paul's words “you are Abraham's seed” (NIV; Grk. *sperma*, σπέρμα) to the point that only physical descendants or “sperm” of Abraham can really be those who are saved,¹¹¹ which is of course *doctrinal heresy*.¹¹² Paul's statement immediately preceding is most frequently hailed as the quintessential egalitarian credo: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua” (Galatians 3:28; contra. *t.Berachot* 6:18). **All human beings are welcome into the people of God**, and are to be regarded as “one” in the Messiah. The Apostle Paul wanted the good news of salvation **to go to all people**. And, much to the chagrin of quite a few Messianics today (*including* many Two-

¹¹⁰ Grk. *hoi pateres hēmōn pantes* (οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν πάντες); the TNIV follows with, “our ancestors were all.”

¹¹¹ This is at least partially implied by Wootten, *Restoring Israel's Kingdom*, 79.

¹¹² It can be, of course, legitimate to render the Greek *sperma* as “sperm,” but the best, most neutral rendering is probably “seed” (American Standard Version, LITV, NIV).

Israel in Future Prophecy

House advocates), not only did Paul advocate the equality of Jewish and Greek Believers in the Body of Messiah, but most imperatively male and female Believers as well!¹¹³

Born again Believers are to be regarded as the seed of Abraham certainly through their union with the Messiah; they are the seed of Abraham if they live like Abraham; they are the seed of Abraham if they partake of Abraham's covenant promises. And, many people who are the seed of Abraham are his physical descendants. *Paul's intention in Galatians 3:29 was to surely draw his readers' attention to the multi-faceted theological aspects of sperma.*¹¹⁴

Keep in mind how Paul appeals to how even Abraham had the good news proclaimed to him: "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, 'ALL THE NATIONS¹¹⁵ WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU'" (Galatians 3:8; cf. Genesis 12:2-3). This good news has obviously come to its fullest manifestation in the work of the Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus), in being sacrificed for all sinners. If we forget that by restoring Israel, God will bring salvation to the whole world, then we forget the mission that God has for Israel to make Israel a light to all of humankind (cf. Isaiah 49:6). While Paul considered the redeemed from the nations to be a part of "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16), along with the redeemed from the Jewish people—*nowhere* does he consider membership in such an Israel to be limited to only the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.¹¹⁶

The Author of Hebrews

Interestingly enough, one of the most direct statements in the Apostolic Scriptures regarding the reunion of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel is in the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews. Its author quotes directly from Jeremiah 31:31-34 (in its Septuagint translation), concluding that the New Covenant has now been brought to fruition via the priestly work of Yeshua the Messiah. While Hebrews' audience was primarily First Century Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora, likely in Rome, we cannot disclude or discount non-Jewish Believers from also reading or encountering it. The author of Hebrews writes about the Levitical priesthood, about to fall via the impending destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., which was to naturally give way to the priesthood of Melchizedek served by Yeshua in Heaven. This priesthood has been inaugurated

¹¹³ For a further examination, consult the author's exegesis paper on Galatians 3:28, "Biblical Equality and Today's Messianic Movement." Also consult the FAQ, "Women in Ministry."

See also the useful resource, Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

¹¹⁴ Heb. equiv. *zera* (זרע).

Cf. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 549.

¹¹⁵ Grk. *panta ta ethnē* (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη), which also appears in Matthew 28:19.

¹¹⁶ For a further evaluation of some significant Pauline passages regarding non-Jewish inclusion in the community/Commonwealth of Israel (Romans 2:28-29; 9:3-6, 23-29; 11:16-24, 25-29; 16:4; 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, 18; Galatians 2:7-10; 6:15-16; Ephesians 2:11-13; 3:6; Titus 2:13-14), consult the author's publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

by the work of the Messiah, and with it has come the reality of the New Covenant with its promises of permanent atonement, forgiveness from sin, and a supernatural transcription of the Torah onto the hearts and minds of the redeemed. What the author of Hebrews writes is very important for us as Messianic Believers to understand:

“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first [*tabernacle/priesthood/service*]¹¹⁷ had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, ‘BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH; NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD. FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, ‘KNOW THE LORD,’ FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM. FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE’” (Hebrews 8:6-12).

The New Covenant was promised to a people of Israel, Judah and Israel, in the process of restoration (cf. Ezekiel 36:25-27). However, it is also true that the Holy Spirit was to be poured out upon *kol-basar* (כָּל-בָּשָׂר) or “all flesh” (Joel 2:28, RSV; cf. Acts 2:17). All men and women who place their trust in Israel’s Messiah, are to receive the benefits of the New Covenant inaugurated by Yeshua (Luke 22:20)—whether they be of Judah or Israel *or* the nations—and are to have Moses’ Teaching supernaturally inscribed upon their psyche (cf. Romans 8:1-4). Only those who are members of Israel’s Kingdom realm, which would by necessity include those of the nations redeemed by grace as well, can benefit from the New Covenant’s promise of a permanent sacrifice and atonement, and permanent forgiveness, available for transgressions and sins.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ The NASU is unique, in that it has “For if that first *covenant* had been faultless,” with “*covenant*” appearing in *italics*, which is not often present in other versions like the RSV/NRSV/ESV or NIV. All the Greek has is *Ei gar hē prōtē ekeinē* (Εἰ γὰρ ἡ πρώτη ἐκεῖνη), with no specific noun attached to *prōtē* or “first.”

While the feminine term *diathēkē* (διαθήκη) or “covenant” could be referred to, given what is witnessed in the surrounding context (Hebrews 7:22; 8:6, 9, 10; 9:4, 16, 17, 20), so also could *skēnē* (σκηνή) or “tabernacle” (Hebrews 8:2, 5; 9:2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 21), *hierōsunē* (ιερωσύνη) or “priesthood” (Hebrews 7:11, 12, 24), or even *leitourgia* (leitourgia) or “ministry/service” (Hebrews 8:6; 9:21). The latter three would be used as referents to the Levitical sacrificial system, which the author of Hebrews affirms is surpassed in effectiveness by the Melchizedekian priesthood of Yeshua.

¹¹⁸ This subject is examined in more detail in the author’s article “What Is the New Covenant?” appearing in his book *The New Testament Validates Torah*.

Also be sure to consult the entry for the Epistle to the Hebrews in the author’s workbook *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic* and the commentary *Hebrews for the Practical Messianic*.

Israel in Future Prophecy

The Apostle John

In the Book of Revelation, we see twelve tribes of Israel mentioned. When the 144,000 sealed witnesses are commissioned by the Lord to perform their work, John records that 12,000 are sealed from each tribe:

“And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand *were* sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand *were* sealed” (Revelation 7:4-8).

These individuals are going to be physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. While tribal delineation has widely been lost due to the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles, those who are sealed know what tribe of Israel they are from, because God Himself is the One who performs the sealing—and it is likely that many of them are not all from the Holy Land, with various persons in the Diaspora. John records that 12,000 from every tribe are sealed. Notably missing is the Tribe of Dan, because for whatever reason, Dan is incapable of performing the functions that God would assign to it. Instead, it is replaced with “Joseph,” and Levi or the priestly tribe is also included on the list. Undoubtedly included among these people will be various descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was corporately taken captive by Assyria in a series of dispersions in the Eighth Century B.C.E., and whose return to the Holy Land will be a sign of the end-times.¹¹⁹

It is witnessed that there are references to a larger restoration of Israel detectable in the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament, involving the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom, but they are given in the context of the spread of the good news among the nations. Some of today’s well-known Messianic teachers have taken note of how Tanach verses like Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 are quoted in Romans 9:6 and 1 Peter 2:10, and applied to the early non-Jewish Believers. They conclude that some kind of typological or allegorical application, regarding the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, is present.¹²⁰ Yet, they widely leave the question of *why* a figure like Peter or Paul would apply words regarding the those of the exiled Northern Kingdom to the nations unanswered or

¹¹⁹ For a further evaluation consult Chapter 8 of the author’s book *When Will the Messiah Return?*, “The Gospel of the Kingdom: Who Are the 144,000?”

Also consult the examination of Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6 in the author’s publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

¹²⁰ D. Thomas Lancaster, *The Mystery of the Gospel* (Littleton, CO: First Fruits of Zion, 2003), pp 82-83, 140 en#30; Tim Hegg, *Paul’s Epistle to the Romans Volume 2: Chapters 9-16* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2007), pp 298-300.

unaddressed, if indeed those from the nations brought to Messiah faith in the First Century C.E. did not include some small level of descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom among them in the Mediterranean basin.

On the flip side of this, though, there are Two-House populists who will without hesitation claim that the non-Jewish Believers referred to in Romans 9:6 and 1 Peter 2:10 were all pretty much “Ephraimites,”¹²¹ and that they were all some sort of lost Israelites in dispersion. This goes much too far in the other direction, and may be tantamount to putting words in the Apostles’ mouths. (And, it is something that has been further embellished, often rather dangerously, by many of such teachers’ ardent followers.)

Any kind of spiritualized or typological application of restoration of Israel passages to the nations does not do enough. Isaiah 49:6 is clear to explain, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” The salvation of the nations, generally, is a part of the grand restoration of Israel. Isaiah 49:6 is appealed to, for certain, concerning the nations’ redemption (Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47; 26:23). But why also apply words and terms regarding the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim to the nations’ redemption?

Any assumption that all, or even most, of the non-Jewish Believers in Yeshua from the First Century were “Ephraimites,” draws a conclusion that not only the Apostles themselves did not make—it is something that the Apostles could not have humanly known, if there were a few descendants of the Northern Kingdom “swallowed up” (Hosea 8:8) and assimilated within small parts of their First Century world in the Mediterranean basin. The term “Ephraimite” does not appear anywhere in the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament.

The safe approach—**that the nations are participants in a larger restoration of Israel**—does the Biblical text its proper justice, focuses on what is most important, and is by far the most inclusive regarding the people of God. Those in passages like Romans 9:26 and 1 Peter 2:10 should be regarded as people genuinely of the nations at large, and at best only included a few assimilated descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel here or there (cf. Deuteronomy 28:62). Yet, if the Lord can demonstrate mercy and grace to the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom—whose ancestors once lived in the Promised Land, saw the Temple of Solomon and God’s presence within it, and then fell into gross idolatry—would He not also be compelled to save those of the nations, who were just turned over to sin and their lusts (cf. Romans 1), welcoming them as participants in Israel’s restoration?

None of the Apostles labeled the non-Jews coming to faith in the First Century as “Ephraimites,” a common term used throughout the Two-House sub-movement today that has become anachronistic and has been significantly abused.¹²² The

¹²¹ Cf. Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, enlarged edition, pp 43-44.

¹²² Cf. Wootten, *Redeemed Israel—Restored and Reunited*, 153.

Israel in Future Prophecy

Apostles never identify a particular nationality with Tribe XYZ, nor do they ever identify non-Jewish Believers as “Ephraim.”

The Apostles *do apply* prophetic passages regarding the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim to the nations (notably, in the First Century Mediterranean basin). The Apostles *do affirm* that by receiving the gospel message and salvation in Messiah Yeshua, a non-Jewish person partakes of the spiritual heritage of Israel, and that figures like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are to be regarded as their “ancestors” too (1 Corinthians 10:1, NRSV). The Apostles *do recognize* that a non-Jewish Believer is every bit a contributing member of the community/Commonwealth of Israel as a Jewish person. If a very small few of the non-Jewish Believers in the First Century world of the Apostles were indeed descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim—then not unlike the true identity of the Unknown Soldier, such knowledge would have only been known to God. **The Apostles were more concerned about the salvation of a human being from sin and eternal punishment, something which heredity of any kind does not guarantee.**

A considerable challenge in the Two-House sub-movement is that too many of its teachers and leaders have been caught overemphasizing the return of descendants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim *at the expense of the universal availability of the gospel for all of humanity!* Just like many evangelical Christians understand the fact that God’s Kingdom is to be restored on Earth via the return of Jesus, and that as Believers we are to work toward this goal via the proclamation of the good news—many of the same forget that God’s Kingdom happens to be the Kingdom of Israel. Many Messianics have made the reverse mistake of forgetting that the Kingdom of Israel being restored is the Kingdom of God being brought to Earth, which is to welcome in all people from the masses of humankind who acknowledge Him as the Eternal One.

The only way God’s Kingdom can be restored is by the restoration of individuals to their Creator, by knowing Yeshua the Messiah as their Personal Savior, and then having them properly disciplined in their relationship with Him. If this does not happen, it does not matter if one is of Judah, Ephraim, or the nations.

Yeshua the Messiah and “the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel”

One of the most difficult sayings of Yeshua the Messiah to reckon with, for many people within today’s broad Messianic movement, is where He declares, **“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”** (Matthew 15:24; cf. 10:6). Many of today’s Messianic Jews and Two-House proponents have been found to use “lost sheep of the house of Israel,” as a convenient and significant sound bite, to promote various activities or positions. Many of those involved in Jewish evangelism have used “lost sheep of the house of Israel,” as a way to promote their ministries. Many teachers and leaders within the Two-House sub-movement have been caught using, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” as

implying that salvation is only intended for the Jewish people and/or those of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, with the nations at large a distant afterthought in the intention of God (that is, if God is even interested in the nations at all). *What do we do with Yeshua's words about the "lost sheep"?* A much better handle on what "lost sheep of the house of Israel" actually means, in the verses where it appears, is surely needed by **all Messianic people**.

There are some legitimate questions to be asked when one sees Yeshua's instruction to His Disciples, "Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6).¹²³ It should be quite apparent from this, that these directions from the Messiah are bound by some kind of a timestamp or set time period. The idea that Yeshua *completely prohibited* His Disciples from ever going to the nations, or to the Samaritans, runs into a significant continuity problem when we see later instructions from the Lord—to actually go to all the nations and into Samaria (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8). The Book of Acts easily attests to how the gospel spread among the Samaritans and the nations at large. The word that the Disciples were to only go "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" had to regard various ministry assignments and tasks which were to take place during Yeshua's specific, personal time with His Disciples. Once the Messiah ascended into Heaven, any limitation on working with those who were outside of the classification of "lost sheep of the house of Israel" was lifted by His own instruction to them.

For many Two-House advocates, there is some confusion regarding the terms witnessed, because many automatically assume that the Ten Lost Tribes of the Northern Kingdom are referred to when "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"¹²⁴ are spoken of. This is an easy conclusion to pass along, because the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim is frequently called the House of Israel in the Tanach, and they may be regarded as generally lost among the nations. Yet, when we read the various passages in the Gospels that mention "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30), the idea that this is in reference to the Ten Lost Tribes runs into a few problems.

Most interpreters have rightly associated Yeshua's references to "lost sheep," with His Messianic role as the Good Shepherd. D.H. Johnson points out how "The OT language behind the saying about sheep without a shepherd is clear (Num 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17 par. 2 Chron 18:16; Eze 34:5)."¹²⁵ The tenor of Jeremiah 50:6 is, "My people have become lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray. They

¹²³ It is interesting to suggest that the Greek term *hodos* (ὁδός), "way" (NASU) or "road" (HCSB), could be viewed in the sense of "a way or manner" (LS, 543), as does Wootten, *Restoring Israel's Kingdom*, pp 99-101. So, it might be said that the Disciples were prohibited from acting in the "ways of the nations," or their behavior. This is a tenuously difficult view to hold here, though, as *hodos* has to be kept in view of *polis* (πόλις), which is a town or a city. A locational orientation for both *hodos* and *polis* is required for Matthew 10:5.

¹²⁴ Grk. *ta probata ta apololota oikou Israēl* (τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραήλ); Delitzch Heb. NT *ha'tzon ha'ovdot asher l'Beit-Yisrael* (הַצֹּאֵן הָאוֹדוֹת אֲשֶׁר לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל).

¹²⁵ D.H. Johnson, "Shepherd, Sheep," in Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 751.

Israel in Future Prophecy

have made them turn aside *on* the mountains; they have gone along from mountain to hill and have forgotten their resting place.” The main issue is Yeshua’s ministry to those of Israel who have gone astray and are perishing in their trespasses and sins, in need of a return to a proper path that pleases the Holy One.

So, who are the specific “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” referred to, and in focus, in the Gospels? Are they the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim? A careful view of Yeshua’s encounter with the Syrophenician, or Canaanite woman, is in order:

“Yeshua got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know *of it*; yet He could not escape notice. But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And He was saying to her, ‘Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.’ But she answered and said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, *but* even the dogs under the table feed on the children’s crumbs.’ And He said to her, ‘Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter.’ And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left” (Mark 7:24-30).

“Yeshua went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and *began* to cry out, saying, ‘Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.’ But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, ‘Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us.’ But He answered and said, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ But she came and *began* to bow down before Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’ And He answered and said, ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.’ But she said, ‘Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.’ Then Yeshua said to her, ‘O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish.’ And her daughter was healed at once” (Matthew 15:21-28).

Any idea that “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” means that the good news of salvation is to be constrained only to a particular group of people on Planet Earth—is easily refuted when one witnesses how the Syrophenician or Canaanite woman’s request is answered by Yeshua. *Her daughter is released from the demon, and Yeshua lauds her great faith.* To use Yeshua’s statement, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” to promote some kind of racially-based salvation plan or preference—as it can be seen among a wide number of Two-House people—has no basis from either Mark 7:24-30 or Matthew 15:21-28. If some Messianic Jews claim that “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” means that Yeshua was sent exclusively to see the Jewish people redeemed, this conclusion, as well, has no basis in either Mark 7:24-30 or Matthew 15:21-28—and even more so given Yeshua’s emphasis on the good news to be declared to all nations (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20). The statement, “I was sent only to

the lost sheep of the house of Israel” is instead to highlight who the first recipients of the gospel were.¹²⁶

So who are, specifically, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel”? Apparently, such persons do not include the Syrophoenician or Canaanite woman. Likewise, such “lost sheep of the house of Israel” would have excluded the Samaritans (Matthew 10:5-6). If by “lost sheep of the house of Israel” are intended, as many Two-House proponents think, a reference to the good news going out to the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes—why would the Samaritans then be excluded? The Samaritans, if “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” spoken of by Yeshua were intended to be the Ten Lost Tribes, should have been some of the *first candidates* to receive the good news, after all. 2 Kings 17:24-41 records how the Assyrians relocated foreigners to what was left of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and they intermarried with many of the remaining Northern Kingdom Israelites, producing the Samaritan people.

Viewing “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” as a reference to the gospel message, only going to those people descended from the exiled Northern Kingdom, runs into some observable challenges. What about the gospel going to those descended from the Southern Kingdom? For that same matter, Yeshua’s prohibition of Matthew 10:5, “Don’t take the road leading to other nations, and don’t enter any Samaritan town” (HCSB), could be taken as meaning that the Disciples were not to go into the Mediterranean basin, where a large number of the Diaspora Jewish population itself resided!

A static reading of passages like Matthew 10:5-6; 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30, with its prohibitions of the Disciples only going “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” is problematic. These instructions had to have been temporal, to the scope of time during the ministry of Yeshua, as they are constrained to a limited geographical area. At a later point in time, the Disciples certainly went to the nations at large, and even to the Samaritans.

So who are “**the lost sheep of the house of Israel**” in Matthew 10:5-6; 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30? These lost sheep are not only Yeshua’s own fellow Jews, but they are specifically the Jewish people who Yeshua reached out to in Jerusalem, Judea, and Galilee. The “house of Israel” Yeshua has been sent to, as specified in these verses, excludes not only those people descended from the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, but could be taken to exclude those of the Diaspora Jewish community. Yet on the day of *Shavuot*/Pentecost, as witnessed in Acts ch. 2, many scores of Diaspora Jews would come to faith in Him.

Because of how the terminology “lost sheep of the house of Israel” has been used in the vast majority of the Two-House sub-movement, as applied to the exiled Northern Kingdom, it is difficult for some to see the fact that such “lost sheep of the house of Israel” are classified as Yeshua’s own Jewish people. As Bible readers who have to be honest with the text and Biblical history, the Northern Kingdom

¹²⁶ Craig S. Keener, *IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Matthew* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 202.

Israel in Future Prophecy

would quantitatively become “not My people” (Hosea 1:9-10) and be removed from Israel. With the downfall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria, the Southern Kingdom inherited all of the titles and rights and honors of being “Israel” as the legitimate successor state (cf. Ezra 6:17). The Samaritans in Matthew 10:5-6, while perhaps having physical descent from the tribes of the Northern Kingdom, are notably excluded from being classified as the House of Israel.

The House of Israel that Yeshua refers to in Matthew 10:5-6; 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30, is actually intended to be those who recognize the God of Israel as Supreme Deity, the ones who He came to first minister to. This would not be the Samaritans with their hybrid religion, nor would it be the nations at large. For the purposes of these passages, the Jewish people within Jerusalem, Judea, and Galilee are the House of Israel. D. Thomas Lancaster’s observations, in his book *The Mystery of the Gospel* (2003), are somewhat useful:

“Who are the lost sheep of Israel that Yeshua sought? They are clearly not Gentiles or even to be found among the Gentiles. They are not the Ten Lost Tribes. They are the sinners and the tax collectors, the backsliders and the irreligious of the Master’s countrymen. They are the Jewish people.”¹²⁷

Of course, no Bible reader can rightly argue that the good news was intended exclusively and only for First Century Jewish people in the Holy Land who had spiritually gone astray. The instructions of Matthew 10:5-6; 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30 were temporal for the period of Yeshua’s ministry, and draw the attention of how the good news was first declared to those Jews in Jerusalem, Judea, and Galilee.

One can see how “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” within the Gospels, does refer to Yeshua’s own Jewish people who are spiritually perishing. But does the subject matter of the exiled Northern Kingdom “out there” among the nations, get totally nullified from the House of Israel being the Jews? It might come as a surprise to some Bible readers, but in the Book of Ezekiel itself—where the two-stick oracle of Ezekiel 37:15-28, detailing a futuristic reunification of Judah and Ephraim, appears—the House of Israel can often be used as terminology to refer to the Southern Kingdom of Judah! Steven Tuell informs us of how,

“Typically in Ezekiel, ‘Israel’ is used for *all* Israel, or even for Judah alone since, with the loss of the northern tribes, Judah is all of Israel that remains...[W]hen Ezekiel is certainly referring to the northern kingdom, he does not usually use the term Israel (see 23:4, where the wicked sister Oholah is Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom, and 37:16, where the northern kingdom is designated Ephraim).”¹²⁸

The House of Judah actually being referred to as the House of Israel *does not mean* that there are not people from the exiled Northern Kingdom “out there” among the nations; it does mean that by all rights and privileges the Jewish people are the inheritors of the title “Israel.” When Yeshua the Messiah refers to His fellow Jews as “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” it was certainly with this in mind.

¹²⁷ Lancaster, *The Mystery of the Gospel*, 111.

¹²⁸ Steven Tuell, *New International Biblical Commentary: Ezekiel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 26.

However, prophecy is clear that there will be a regathering together of a larger and fuller flock of Israel. As it concerns the community of Ancient Israel, of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms as the flock of the Lord, it is useful for us to take serious note of Jeremiah 50:17:

“Israel is a scattered flock, the lions have driven *them* away. The first one *who* devoured him was the king of Assyria, and this last one *who* has broken his bones is Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.”

Israel here is obviously a reference to both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, how they have been scattered,¹²⁹ and how they have been hurt by both the Assyrians and Babylonians. The Northern Kingdom, though, may be regarded as having been devoured or eaten¹³⁰—whereabouts largely unknown. The Southern Kingdom, though, may be regarded as having its bones broken.¹³¹ The Northern Kingdom was not only scattered, but devoured; the Southern Kingdom was scattered, but only broken. The expectation from God is, “‘And I will bring Israel back to his pasture and he will graze on Carmel and Bashan, and his desire will be satisfied in the hill country of Ephraim and Gilead. In those days and at that time,’ declares the LORD, ‘search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found; for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant’” (Jeremiah 50:19-20). There will be a reunification of the greater flock of Israel, obviously including those from the exiled Northern Kingdom.

Keener astutely indicates, on Matthew 10:1-4, how “Most Jewish people expected an eschatological restoration of the lost tribes (e.g., Tob 13:6; 2 Macc 2:18; Ps. Sol. 8:28; Test. Benj. 9:2; Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup. 5:3; Gen. Rab. 98:9...)...though some dissent seems to have arisen (m. Sanh. 10:5; t. Sanh. 13:12).”¹³² We have previously discussed how speculation on what happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was present within the Jewish world of Yeshua and the Apostles. An end-time restoration of the descendants of these people is talked about in ancient Jewish literature. Simply because the Jewish people of the First Century were the House of Israel (cf. Acts 2:36)—especially because the widely exiled and scattered Northern Kingdom of Israel was no longer to be regarded as God’s people (Hosea 1:9-10)—does not mean that there were not people from the Northern Kingdom “out there” among the nations. The Samaritans themselves, who were descended from some of the Northern Kingdom survivors, were not even regarded as the House of Israel.

Yeshua’s word of “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” is akin to how Paul would later say, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). The Jewish people of the First Century were to surely be

¹²⁹ Heb. verb *pazar* (פָּזַר).

¹³⁰ Heb. verb *akal* (אָכַל).

¹³¹ Heb. verb *atzam* (אָצַם); “gnawed” (RSV).

¹³² Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 310 fn#2.

Israel in Future Prophecy

recognized as the House of Israel, those who were loyal to the God of Israel, but who were perishing without the Good Shepherd. The Jewish people being such a House of Israel, does not at all, though, rule out various pockets of people in the nations being descended from the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim.

The condition of anyone from the nations, without knowledge of Israel's God, is a removal from Israel—meaning that they are not a part of the House of Israel. Paul told those in Asia Minor, after all, “you were at that time separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). Whether a small few non-Jewish Believers among them had a lineage from the exiled Northern Kingdom, or not, **before faith in Yeshua they were not a part of the community of Israel.** They were outside of the realm where the promises and blessings of God—especially the Messianic promise—could be legitimately realized.

Yeshua the Messiah Himself spoke of how, “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd” (John 10:16). Commentators on the Gospel of John are in general agreement that the “other sheep”¹³³ is an anticipatory remark made by the Lord, about the missions the Apostles would go on among the nations declaring of His salvation.¹³⁴ Yeshua the Messiah did envision His followers composing a larger flock of sheep, than just those whom He classified as “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” in Jerusalem, Judea, and Galilee. There were also “the children of God who are scattered abroad” (John 11:52) which were to hear of Him as well. Sheep from the Jewish Diaspora outside of the Land of Israel, and from the nations generally, would need to come to a knowledge of Him as Savior. The “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16) as rightly manifested via the Messiah's work, is to be regarded as something rather large and inclusive—composed of all who recognize Him as Redeemer. When Yeshua says, “there will be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16, CJB), any idea of this being a flock of people with subdivisions rigidly emphasized, should be disregarded when kept in view of how the unity His followers are to have is like the unity He has with the Father (John 17:21-23).

Today's Messianic Believers need to be quite cautious when using the terminology “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” It was used by Yeshua to describe His fellow Jews in the vicinity of Jerusalem, Judea, and Galilee. The good news of His salvation, in fact, was to go out to the Diaspora Jewish community, the Samaritans, *and* the whole world, and as a result would have certainly expanded the spiritual borders of Israel's commonwealth (cf. Ephesians 2:11-13). It would be

¹³³ Grk. *alla probata* (ἄλλα πρόβατα).

¹³⁴ Cf. Leon Morris, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 512; F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp 227-228; George R. Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, Vol 36 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 171; D.A. Carson, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 388; Colin G. Kruse, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 237.

advised for today that one *really not use* “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” to describe the current Jewish people who need Yeshua, and especially not those of the exiled Northern Kingdom. For Jewish evangelism, quoting Romans 1:16, “to the Jew first,” is a far better option. And, simply referring to “the exiled/scattered Northern Kingdom” would be what is historically accurate and the least controversial.¹³⁵

Recognizing the Variant Uses of “Israel”

Far too frequently, not only among your average Christians—but also among many Messianic Jews—when they encounter usages of “Israel,” in the Bible, it is automatically assumed that only the Jewish people are being referred to. Does this at all properly align with what we see in Biblical history? Is there not some variance of how the term “Israel” is used? Those who are more historically conscious in their Bible reading, do recognize that it is inappropriate to simply equate all uses of “Israel” as being synonymous with “the Jewish people.” This is especially true the further and further back you go in Biblical history.

In the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* or *ISBE*, which is often considered to be a general conservative resource, the entry “Israel, History of the People of” by C.F. Pfeieffer (2:908-924), includes references to ten different periods of time in Biblical history which “Israel,” in some form or another, is featured as a player. These include:

1. Pre-Mosaic Israel
2. Moses and the Exodus
3. Conquest of Canaan
4. Period of the Judges
5. United Kingdom
6. Divided Kingdom
7. Babylonian Exile
8. Return from Exile and Restoration
9. The Jews under Alexander and His Successors
10. The Jews under the Romans¹³⁶

The main periods where there is confusion, regarding how the term “Israel” appears in Biblical history, occur from the Divided Kingdom period to Second Temple Judaism. The Northern Kingdom that broke off from the Southern Kingdom was known as “Israel,” and this is borne out in prophetic texts like Hosea and Amos, where the “Israel” being referred to is principally a Northern Kingdom audience.¹³⁷ This can be confusing for many Bible readers, who may not make

¹³⁵ For a further evaluation, consult the author’s examination of John 10:14-18, in his publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

¹³⁶ The outline in C.F. Pfeieffer, “Israel, History of the People of,” in *ISBE*, 2:908-909.

¹³⁷ Cf. R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), pp 860, 869 (Hosea); pp 884-885, 887 (Amos); Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp 354-356 (Hosea); pp 375-376 (Amos).

Israel in Future Prophecy

enough of an effort to place such prophetic books within their original setting. Further confusion ensues later in a text like Ezekiel, where following the fall of the Northern Kingdom, when “Israel” is used it can be as a reference to the Southern Kingdom, as the legitimate successor state to the title and the whole of the rights of “Israel.” In the Apostolic Scriptures, “Israel” does largely represent the Jewish community, but that does not mean that non-Jews were excluded from being a part of Israel’s Kingdom realm, as their Messiah faith certainly gave them citizenship (Ephesians 2:11-13; 3:6; cf. Galatians 6:16), being grafted-in to the olive tree (Romans 11:16-18).

There is a significant amount of debate among Romans interpreters, as to how many different variances regarding “Israel” are present in the Apostle Paul’s discussion of Romans chs. 9-11. Generally speaking, at least two different views of “Israel” are believed to be present: the First Century Jewish community that had largely rejected the Messiah, and the restored eschatological Kingdom of Israel. Within Paul’s salvation-historical perspective of “Israel” in Romans chs. 9-11—which is intended to direct the reader to the point of “all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:25-26)—it may even be that there are as high as five different detectable variances in which “Israel” is used:

- the historical ancient community (Romans 9:4-5¹³⁸; 10:19-21¹³⁹; 11:7-10¹⁴⁰)
- God’s corporate elect, and/or an eschatological, restored Kingdom of Israel composed of righteous people (Romans 9:6¹⁴¹; 11:25-27¹⁴²)
- Paul’s First Century Jewish countrymen (Romans 9:4¹⁴³; 11:1¹⁴⁴, 11-15¹⁴⁵, 28¹⁴⁶)

¹³⁸ “[W]ho are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Messiah according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen” (Romans 9:4-5).

¹³⁹ “But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, ‘I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU’ [Deuteronomy 32:21]. And Isaiah is very bold and says, ‘I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME’ [Isaiah 65:1]. But as for Israel He says, ‘ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE’ [Isaiah 65:2]” (Romans 10:19-21).

¹⁴⁰ “What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; just as it is written, ‘GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY’ [Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah 29:10]. And David says, ‘LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER’ [Psalm 69:22-23; 35:8]” (Romans 11:7-10).

¹⁴¹ “But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel” (Romans 9:6).

¹⁴² “For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, ‘THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS’ [Isaiah 59:20-21; 27:9; Jeremiah 31:33-34]” (Romans 11:25-27).

¹⁴³ “[W]ho are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises” (Romans 9:4).

Cross-Examining the Two-House Teaching

- the Jewish people of largely the Second Temple era (Romans 9:31¹⁴⁷)
- the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Romans 11:2-4¹⁴⁸; cf. 1 Kings 19:10, 14)

One of the key points in this section of Paul's letter to the Romans is not to exclude the nations from being grafted-in to the community of Israel (Romans 11:17-21), but to instead speak more against widescale Greek and Roman arrogance, toward the Jewish people who have largely rejected the Messiah. Such people are to still certainly be regarded and treated as "Israel," as God alone is the final arbiter of any person, as He is the One who has broken off natural branches (Romans 11:17). The non-Jewish Believers in Rome were carefully instructed, "because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy" (Romans 11:31). If some Jewish branches have been broken off of Israel's olive tree, non-Jewish Believers who have received Israel's Messiah have the profound responsibility to be vessels of mercy and grace to such people—**and not be arrogant or disrespectful**—so that such Jewish people might be shown Messiah Yeshua.

It might be easier or more convenient for some people in today's Messianic Judaism to simply assume that when "Israel" is spoken of in the Bible, it is *just* the ancestors of today's Jewish people. A more careful survey of the Bible, across multiple centuries, reveals that more specificity is indeed involved. Ultimately, we are reminded that in the post-resurrection era, knowing Israel's Messiah Yeshua is required for one to ultimately be considered a part of the Kingdom (cf. Romans 9:6). There are sadly going to be some Jewish people, who because of their rejection of Yeshua, will be excluded from being considered as "Israel" in the end. Because of arrogance and disrespect of the Jewish people, there will probably also be many non-Jews who thought they were a part of the Commonwealth of Israel via their faith in Yeshua, but in the end are excluded precisely because they did not have a true heart change and were never moved to be vessels of mercy and grace toward Yeshua's own physical Jewish brethren.

¹⁴⁴ "I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Romans 11:1).

¹⁴⁵ "I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the dead?" (Romans 11:11-15).

¹⁴⁶ "From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of *God's* choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers" (Romans 11:28).

¹⁴⁷ "[B]ut Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law" (Romans 9:31).

¹⁴⁸ "God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the *passage about* Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? Lord, 'THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE' [1 Kings 19:10]. But what is the divine response to him? 'I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL' [1 Kings 19:14]" (Romans 11:2-4).

What is “the Synagogue of Satan”?

It is not uncommon for various people in the Two-House sub-movement, to actually be told by some Messianic Jews, that they are actually a part of the “synagogue of Satan” mentioned in the Book of Revelation. While it is true that there are many people, teachers, and leaders within the Two-House sub-movement who have some significant and most serious, spiritual and theological problems, to work through—is there any basis to this? What is the synagogue of Satan, really?

Any interpretation over what “the synagogue of Satan” is, as it appears in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9, is going to be controversial. In order to fairly evaluate what “the synagogue of Satan” actually is, one needs to carefully recognize some of the ancient historical issues, which did involve some conflicts the ancient Believers had with some parts of the local Jewish community. At the same time, any conclusion about what “the synagogue of Satan” is, also needs to steadfastly recognize that there is nothing that requires the Greek term *sunagōgē* (συναγωγή) or “synagogue” to always represent an assembly of Jews.

There is nothing particularly special about the Greek word *sunagōgē* (συναγωγή), often translated “synagogue.” The term *sunagōgē* is derived from the verb *sunageirō* (συναγείρω), meaning “to gather together, come together, assemble” (LS).¹⁴⁹ Although *sunagōgē* is the root word for our modern term “synagogue,” usually associated with a Jewish place of worship, it could just as well mean an assemblage or a gathering of something. There is a pre-Jewish usage of the term *sunagōgē*, attested by the *Liddell-Scott* lexicon, which is primarily interested in classical Greek meanings. For its entry on the term *sunagōgē*, it lists the possible meanings:

- a gathering in of harvest, Polyb.
- a drawing together, contracting, ζ. στρατιᾶς [s. *stratias*] a forming an army in column, Plat.; ζ. τοῦ προσώπου [s. *tou prosōpou*] a pursing up or wrinkling of the face, Isocr.
- a collection of writings, Arist.
- a conclusion, inference, Id.¹⁵⁰

A general meaning of the Greek term *sunagōgē* (συναγωγή) is simply “gathering,” as *BDAG* notes, “Orig. in act. sense ‘a bringing together, assembling.’”¹⁵¹ With this in mind, if we can refer to “the synagogue of Satan” via the more neutral “the gathering of Satan,” then it should be clear to anyone that such a gathering or group of people is composed of *all of those* who are accomplishing Satan’s tasks and assignments—the foremost of which is keeping people away from the truth of the gospel and the saving power of Yeshua (Jesus). “The gathering of Satan” engulfs all of Satan’s forces. Such people are a part of what we might call a “macro-synagogue of Satan,” involving members of false

¹⁴⁹ LS, 766.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ *BDAG*, 963.

religions who actively blaspheme the Lord, and atheists who want people to deny the existence of God and His intelligent design. At the same time, there is also what we might call a “**micro-synagogue of Satan**,” composing some Jewish people, who are actually out there accomplishing the enemy’s tasks. It should not be hard for any good Messianic Believer to classify Jewish anti-missionaries, for example—those who are actively out there trying to get people, particularly Jewish people, to deny Yeshua as the Messiah—as being among the Adversary’s forces.

The terminology *sunagōgē tou Satana* (συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανᾶ) appears twice in the Book of Revelation:

“I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan [*sunagōgē tou Satana*, συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανᾶ]” (Revelation 2:9).

“Behold, I will cause *those* of the synagogue of Satan [*tēs sunagōgēs tou Satana*, τῆς συναγωγῆς τοῦ σατανᾶ], who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and *make them* know that I have loved you” (Revelation 3:9).

Approaching the term *sunagōgē* (συναγωγή) more as “**gathering**” is appropriate, because Revelation 2:9 notably lacks the definite article. Those who are criticized are labeled as “**a** synagogue of Satan,” and as previously described, are only one part of *all* of the Adversary’s forces.

Various interpretations of what “the synagogue of Satan” is, or was, throughout history, have been used at times to defame Judaism and all Jewish people. In extreme cases it has been used as theological justification by anti-Semites to persecute Jews.¹⁵² A widespread evangelical Christian interpretation of the “synagogue of Satan” is that it represents the First Century Judaizers, possibly being those of the nations who converted to Judaism as proselytes, and then received the gospel message. It is thought that these Judaizers held a hard disdain toward non-Jewish Believers who did not have to “convert” as they did, and they demanded a legalistic Torah observance from them.

Some of the challenges to this view is that in early Christian history, in Smyrna at least (Revelation 2:8-11), there was a sector of the Jewish community that had a serious problem with the Believers. “The Martyrdom of Polycarp...records that Jews brought wood for his pyre even though it was a sabbath” (*ISBE*).¹⁵³ G.R. Beasley-Murray is right to indicate, though, “Naturally this is not to be generalized, as though John believed that the whole Jewish nation had become the people of Satan. His description applies to a {specific} synagogue which implacably opposed the people of Christ.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Cf. Craig S. Keener, *NIV Application Commentary: Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 118.

¹⁵³ R. North, “Smyrna,” in *ISBE*, 4:556.

¹⁵⁴ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *New Century Bible Commentary: Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974),

Israel in Future Prophecy

It is true that there are some “who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars” (Revelation 3:9, NIV). One needs to properly weigh the words of the Apostle Paul, who when directing specific instruction to the Jews among the assembly at Rome, wrote some very stringent words on what it means to truly be a “Jew”:

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God” (Romans 2:28-29).

Here, writing some specific words to the Jewish Believers in Rome, he says that being a “Jew” is ultimately something that is determined by the heart. This indicates that from the Apostle’s perspective, even though some people could be born Jewish, in the end because of rejecting the good news of Messiah Yeshua, they may not be considered as such by God.¹⁵⁵ In the case of Revelation 2:9 and 3:9, it would seem that the work of the Believers in Smyrna and Philadelphia was opposed by a sector of Jews who were determined to stop them. As far as Yeshua the Messiah was concerned, they will not be considered Jews in the end, if they remain unrepentant. They are to be counted as **“the gathering of the Adversary.”**

To say that all Jews in history since have been part of such a “gathering of the Adversary” goes too far, and is unjustifiable. The terminology “the synagogue of Satan” concerns a certain sector of Jewish people who opposed the Messiah as associated with the ancient congregations at Smyrna and Philadelphia, and by extension whatever those two congregations might represent for various sectors of the Body of Messiah subsequent to Yeshua’s return.

From what angle is it claimed that those who may affirm the prophecies of a larger restoration of Israel, involving the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel, are actually “the synagogue of Satan”? This point of view has found some ancillary support in Stern’s remarks on Revelation 2:9, in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*:

“Should it nevertheless be thought improbable that Gentiles would call themselves Jews, Hebrews or Israelites, consider the following modern examples. The ‘British Israelites’ regard the British as the Ten Lost Tribes. The Mormons not only consider themselves to be the Ten Lost Tribes but regard themselves as Jews and everyone else (real Jews included) as Gentiles! A sect of mostly American-born blacks consider themselves the true Hebrews; several thousand of them are living in Israel. All of these are outside the pale of Christianity. In addition, scattered about are well-meaning Gentile Christians whose strong identification with and love for the Jewish people has made them believe—without a shred of evidence—that they are actually Jewish themselves.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ For a further evaluation, consult the author’s examinations of Romans 2:28-29 and 9:3-6, in his publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

¹⁵⁶ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 796.

Stern is right to direct our attention to how there have always been those groups who have always claimed that they are the “true Israel” or “new Israel,” be it through replacement theology or phenomena such as British-Israelism. There are also various non-Jews, who are a part of the contemporary Messianic Jewish movement, who think via some sort of supposed dream or vision, that they are distant descendants of the Jewish people via some sort of Medieval European assimilation. These groups can often disclude the historical Jewish people—those who are legitimate descendants of the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—claiming that only they are the “true Jews.” Such groups are, without a doubt, accomplishing the Adversary’s tasks and purposes.

Can it be concluded with any degree of accuracy that those who affirm—from a series of prophecies in the Tanach (Isaiah 11:12-16; Jeremiah 31:6-10; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Zechariah 10:6-10)—that a greater restoration of Israel is to be anticipated, that such specific persons are somehow of “the synagogue of Satan”? Given the possibility that some Messianic Jews might rebukingly say that those who believe in a futuristic fulfillment of these prophecies are of “the synagogue of Satan,” a larger reunion of Israel still to occur needs to be placed *well within* the Jewish eschatological expectation (as well as in line with a basic, evangelical Christian pre-millennial model). Concurrent with this, there needs to be great respect and honor issued for the Jewish people, Judaism, and Jewish tradition and culture. A great number of leaders and teachers in the Two-House sub-movement **have been entirely impotent to see this accomplished.**

British-Israel Dangers and Concerns

When the Two-House teaching began to grow in adherence in various Messianic sectors in the late 1990s to 2000s, many leaders and teachers within Messianic Judaism were understandably very disturbed. They were disturbed because it appeared that many of the components of the Two-House teaching were not only disrespectful and unfair to Judaism and evangelical Christianity, but that various concepts and ideas had been appropriated, somehow, from Nineteenth/Twentieth Century British-Israelism.¹⁵⁷ Perhaps some adherents and proponents did not know that various points of view or interpretations of some Tanach passages were quite similar to those of British-Israel advocates. Others, however, in promoting a dispersion of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel into Northwestern Europe and the British Isles, strongly believed that British-Israel proposals had various, if not many, components of presumed “truth.”

British-Israelism gained a wide degree of adherence during the Victorian Era of the Nineteenth Century, when the British Empire was at its zenith, and when, as can be historically recognized, “The sun never sat on the British Empire.” Many in Britain and its colonies felt that the Empire was some kind of new manifestation of

¹⁵⁷ British-Israel doctrine is particularly marked by a work like J.H. Allen, *Judah’s Sceptre and Joseph’s Birthright* (Merrimac, MA: Destiny Publishers, 1902), many of whose ideas have filtered down into the popular literature of certain leaders within the Two-House sub-movement.

Israel in Future Prophecy

the Kingdom of Israel on Earth, with the British monarchy in actuality being the throne of King David. Heraldic symbols such as the lion of England, the unicorn of Scotland, and the harp of Ireland—quickly got associated with representing the lion of Judah, a unicorn of Ephraim or Manasseh, and the preferred musical instrument of King David. British-Israel doctrine later influenced the Twentieth Century work of Herbert W. Armstrong’s Worldwide Church of God (WWCOG).

Being a Law- and festival-keeping, Sabbatarian group, many from the former WWCOG were left without a home following Armstrong’s death in 1986 and his organization’s subsequent collapse. Many of these people have gone on to other religious pursuits, but many have found a new home within not only the Two-House sub-movement, but even within Messianic Judaism itself. For many former members of the WWCOG, entering into the Messianic movement has been a positive experience, and they have been able to jettison some of Armstrong’s problematic theological views about the nature of the Messiah and human destiny, among others. At the same time, other former members of the WWCOG have entered into Messianic congregations, and have brought their problematic doctrines with them. Within the Two-House sub-movement and its pseudo-denominations, these kinds of people (who may have even thought Armstrong to be a kind of “prophet” or “apostle”), have been allowed to have a voice of, at least semi-major influence.

British-Israel doctrine is very easy to poke fun at. Most of us just get a good laugh out of thinking that King Edward VIII, who abdicated the throne for Wallis Simpson in 1936 *and* who was actually called “David” by his family,¹⁵⁸ could honestly be a legitimate royal heir to the rather godly King David. British-Israel doctrine attempts to make many connections between the symbols of Great Britain and things witnessed in the Bible, which are also present in other European countries, and most importantly originate from the Middle Ages. But these things are not at all the result of Ancient Israelite migration; they are the result of people adapting Biblical imagery for themselves, their families, and their leaders. (The two keys on the Vatican flag, for example, are most likely based on the words of Revelation 1:18.)¹⁵⁹ When one visits the city of London and goes to have a pint at the George Inn, the sign depicts St. George slaying a dragon, which is a known legend going back to the Crusades. What kind of Biblical imagery is this? It is Medieval lore, even if we might be respectful of it in a *somewhat* less-than-serious way.

This is not why British-Israel doctrine is so much of a problem. There are many offshoots of the WWCOG, and associated Christian Identity groups, who think that deportees from the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel migrated into Northwestern Europe, and that white people or Caucasians are the only “true Israelites” on Planet Earth today. It is these groups who largely deny that the Jewish people are

¹⁵⁸ The full name of King Edward VIII was Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David.

¹⁵⁹ “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.’” (Revelation 1:17-18).

Cross-Examining the Two-House Teaching

legitimate Israelites, have a right to the Holy Land of *Eretz Yisrael*, and they are extremely anti-Semitic. These are the kinds of people who would actually think that the known forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, is real history, and that there is a secret Jewish conspiracy of some kind of “Satan worshippers” to control the world and its banking system. British-Israelism has often been closely linked to the Christian Identity movement, many of whose members are opposed to the American government, with some of them actually having participated in domestic terrorism. Bruce Hoffman summarizes the following in his book *Inside Terrorism* (which was among the course materials I had to read for Prof. Stephen Sloan’s Study of Terrorism class at the University of Oklahoma in 2003):

The connecting thread in this seemingly diverse and disparate collection of citizens’ militias, tax resisters, anti-federalists, bigots and racists is the white supremacist religious dogma espoused by the Christian Identity movement, itself based on the ‘Anglo-Israelism’ movement that emerged in Britain during the mid-nineteenth century. The core belief of Anglo-Israelism was that the ten lost tribes of ancient Israel were composed of Anglo-Saxons, not Jews. However, in marked contrast to the present-day Christian Identity movement in the United States, nineteenth-century Anglo-Israelism embraced an entirely pacifist doctrine. The basic tenants of the contemporary American version of the Identity movement include the beliefs that:

- Jesus Christ was not a Semite; but an Aryan;
- the lost tribes of Israel are not composed of Jews, but of ‘blue eyed Aryans’;
- white Anglo-Saxons and not Jews are the true ‘Chosen People’;
- the United States is the ‘Promised Land’.

In this context, Jews are viewed as imposters and Children of Satan who must be exterminated.

Identity theology, combined with militant tax resistance and a form of regressive populism, figures prominently in Christian Patriotism doctrine subscribed to by the ‘marching’ militia groups today. The ideological hermit to the Posse Comitatus with its hard-line anti-federalist principles, Christian Patriotism goes one step further by embracing a salient theological component that combines Identity interpretation of scripture with the myth of the Illuminati—the global conspiracy theory, first promulgated in the late eighteenth century in respect of Freemasons and later adapted to include Jews, worldwide banking interests and other dark, mystical forces. According to its modern-day American interpretation, the so-called ‘two seed’ theory embraced by Christian Patriotism, there are two races on earth: one godly and one satanic—the former comprised of white, Anglo-Saxon Christians and the latter of Jews and all non-whites...¹⁶⁰

The kinds of statements made above should make anyone who approaches the subject matter of the prophesied reunion of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel, be very conscientious about the connections that some people will make between hearing about Judah and Ephraim, British-Israel, Christian Identity, and

¹⁶⁰ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 112.

Israel in Future Prophecy

then Christian Patriotism with its anti-government and anti-Semitic viewpoints. The only way that anyone can quantitatively break out any false connections that people might make, is by non-Jewish Believers who examine this subject matter **closely cooperating with Jewish Believers, supporting the State of Israel, and being respectful to mainline Jewish customs.** The message needs to be kept *well within* the confines of the Jewish theological expectation of the restoration of Israel, and highly regard and value mainline Jewish traditions (i.e., Matthew 23:2-3, Grk.; Romans 3:2; 11:29).

Does any teaching on the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel to be reunited in the future, actually mimic those who believe that the British Crown has some supernatural connection to the throne of David, and that the British Empire and Commonwealth is really the Kingdom of Israel? When you encounter various teachers and people within the Two-House sub-movement, who were a part of Armstrong's WWCOG, then you may be very likely to hear things such as English, Scottish, and/or Irish royal heraldry being "Israelite" to some degree, or that the Empire had a destiny to play in history far beyond that recognized by fair-minded and secular historians (i.e., opposing Nazi Germany long before the United States did).

One of the major points that is made by British-Israel proponents, is the widespread claim that the term **British** is actually a Hebrew word. In actuality, the national designation British is derived from the Roman name for what is modern-day England and Wales: Britannia (modern-day Scotland was actually called Caledonia by the Romans; Great Britain is considered to be the whole island). British-Israel proponents actually claim that the term "British" is a combination of the Hebrew words *b'rit* (בְּרִית) or "covenant," and *ish* (אִישׁ) meaning "man," likely implying that God's covenant is with those of British ancestry. In his book *The "Lost" Ten Tribes of Israel...Found!*, Steven M. Collins confirms for us their view: "The ancient Hebrew word for 'covenant' still forms the root word for the modern English word 'British.' Since 'ish' is also a Hebrew word meaning 'man,' the word 'Brit-ish' is also Hebrew for 'covenant-man.'"¹⁶¹ Collins' publication is one which has most lamentably had an influence on a wide number of people within the Two-House sub-movement.

Quite contrary to the claim that the word "British" is somehow of Semitic origin, Walter Martin appropriately details in his classic work *Kingdom of the Cults*,

"It is sufficient to point out...that the Hebrew words *berith* [בְּרִית] and *ish* [אִישׁ] literally mean 'covenant and man,' not, 'men of the covenant,' as Armstrong and Anglo-Israelites maintain. When to this is added the unbiased and impeccably researched conclusions of the venerable *Oxford English Dictionary* and every other major English work on etymology, there is absolutely no connection between the Anglo-Saxon tongue and the Hebrew language."¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Steven M. Collins, *The "Lost" Ten Tribes of Israel...Found!* (Boring, OR: CPA Books, 1995), 392.

¹⁶² Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985), 309.

It is worth noting, perhaps in response to Martin's comments that English and Hebrew are completely unrelated, that a resource released by a Jewish teacher named Isaac E. Mozeson, *The Word: The Dictionary That Reveals The Hebrew Source Of English*—which does float around a variety of Messianic groups—proposes there are connections between English via Greek and Latin to Hebrew. In Mozeson's view, "Greek and Latin are merely grandfathers, while Hebrew is the patriarch."¹⁶³ Whether or not Mozeson's work is at all credible can be vigorously debated. Yet, it is important that *nowhere* in Mozeson's book does he make a connection between the English term "British" and the Hebrew words *b'rit* (בְּרִית) and *ish* (אִישׁ). I personally would not put too much stock in Mozeson's *The Word* or his theories,¹⁶⁴ but it is quite poignant that he does not claim that "British" is a Semitic word. The modern Hebrew term for "British" is actually *Briti* (בְּרִיטִי; breetee),¹⁶⁵ which is hardly what one would expect if "British" were indeed a Hebrew word.

British-Israel proponents, as should be expected, propose that various other nationalistic terms also originate from Biblical Hebrew, when in actuality they do not. I am in full agreement with William Varner, who notes the following in his book *Jacob's Dozen*:

"British-Israelism maintains that the *lost* tribes left landmarks on their trek across Europe. Thus, the Dan and Danube Rivers, as well as the city of Danzig and country of Denmark are clear indications to them of the tribe of Dan! The term 'Saxons' is supposedly a contradiction of 'Isaac's Sons'...These linguistic arguments have been rejected by every reputable Hebrew scholar as absolutely groundless."¹⁶⁶

Toward a More Biblically Rooted Approach of a Larger Restoration of Israel

It is easily observed that throughout the past few centuries, that when the subject matter of what happened to the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, or the "Ten Lost Tribes," has been examined—**that there has been a significant risk or gamble evident**. Some Bible teachers refuse to even touch the issue, because of various associations that can be made from past dealings, most frequently the historical errors of British-Israelism and theological abuses of Armstrongism. Even when a Bible teacher is intent to largely stay focused on Scripture, a safe window of extra-Biblical literature and respected Jewish and Christian scholarship, and be very cautious about the conclusions drawn—too many laypersons are likely to go off and explore things on their own,

¹⁶³ Isaac E. Mozeson, *The Word: The Dictionary That Reveals The Hebrew Source Of English* (New York: SPI Books, 2000), 5.

¹⁶⁴ Concurrent with this, I would also frown extensively on so-called Hebrew letter pictures, which are affluent through the broad Messianic world, including much of "safe" Messianic Judaism. Consult the FAQ, "Hebrew, Letter Pictures."

¹⁶⁵ Hayim Baltan, *Webster's NewWorld Hebrew Dictionary* (Cleveland: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 1992), 497.

¹⁶⁶ Varner, 94; cf. Martin, 308.

Israel in Future Prophecy

and go into places where they have no business going. Too many people are simply not disciplined or mature enough to keep themselves within the world of the Biblical text and let the prophecies of those of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel naturally take care of themselves, and they cannot resist the temptation to speculate.

For a variety of complicated reasons, when one surveys the Two-House sub-movement, it is not difficult to detect how much of it is a rather fertile field for a wide and broad number of urban legends that are present within the broad Messianic movement.¹⁶⁷ *Why this is specifically the case we may never know.* But, it is easily discerned from what is witnessed in the writings, recordings, and conference events of various popular/populist teachers and leaders, that they have gone beyond the Biblical expectations of the restoration of Israel's Kingdom, and have (significantly) added their own baggage to the issue.

The approach, of a ministry like Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics, has always been to view the reunification of Judah and Israel/Ephraim, **and the significant majority of companions from the nations at large**—as a larger restoration of Israel, and/or expansion of Israel's Kingdom realm, that has been prophesied in Holy Writ. If one approaches this issue as end-time prophecy or eschatology—with God Himself knowing all of the finer details—then the issue largely becomes one of interpretation regarding future events. Many of the popular voices which you will hear who promote teaching about this issue, have made things a bit too simplistic, under-developed, and have cut corners. They have not put enough time into seeing the issue of a larger restoration of Israel refined and defined further from the Biblical text, and have rightly opened themselves up to some legitimate criticism.

Only future examinations of the Historical Books and Prophetic literature of the Tanach will bring many of the answers which we all need—but acquiring such specific answers will take time, which far too many are unwilling to commit, on this—and, *for a fact*, many other issues of hundreds of times more importance.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ It cannot be at all be overlooked, that one publication with a great deal of exaggeration and non-credible history (which even promotes some presumed Ancient Israelite settlement in North America, referencing discredited people like E. Raymond Capt), Victor Schlatter, *Genetically Modified Prophecies: Whatever Happened to all the Sand and Stars God Promised to Abraham?* (Mobile: Evergreen Press, 2012), is actually advertised for sale on p 8 of the 2012-2013 *Messianic Jewish Resources Catalog* published by Lederer <messianicjewish.net/docs/MJRCatalog2012.pdf >.

Lost Tribes speculation, even while opposed by various Messianic Jewish leaders, is alive and well beyond the Two-House sub-movement. Schlatter's book actually received an endorsement from Frank Lowinger, who is listed as a former president of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA).

¹⁶⁸ It is advised that you generally consult the author's workbooks *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic* and *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*, for some preliminary, conservative approaches to the books of the Bible, from an inclusivist Messianic perspective.

As the author of this publication, I dare say that there are many unanswered, yet critical issues, regarding the material of Genesis chs. 1-11, which most of today's Messianic leaders and/or people at large, while knowing that they need to examine in greater detail per various astronomical and cosmological issues, will likely never really bother to consider. So, for some further consideration, consult the useful books J.P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds, eds., *Three Views on Creation and Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999) representing a general perspective of the positions; and Hugh Ross, *The Genesis Question*:

Cross-Examining the Two-House Teaching

And as this is conducted, there will need to be a significant amount of *reigning in* of various over-statements and exaggerations—to what can actually be proven—Biblically and historically—which a great number of Two-House adherents likely have no intention of doing at present...

Scientific Advances and the Accuracy of Genesis, second expanded edition (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001); *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004) representing an Old Earth Creationist perspective.

Also consult the FAQ, “Creationism” and “6,000 Year Teaching,” which generally represent an emerging Messianic, Old Earth Creationist position.

Another useful resource for consideration is C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006).