

“For R. Hanina said, ‘Everything is in the hands of Heaven except for the fear of Heaven, as it is said, “And now Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you but to fear” (Deu. 10:12)” (b.Niddah 16b).<sup>55</sup>

The classic Jewish position, on the issues of predetermination, foreknowledge, and human free will, is seen in the Mishnah: “Everything is foreseen, and free choice is given” (m.*Avot* 3:15).<sup>56</sup> That God has hardened people would have been seen in the widespread, and most unfortunate, common Jewish rejection of Yeshua. But perhaps like the Pharaoh of Egypt, is this a hardening that is entirely by God, or something that is also the result of people choosing to dismiss God’s good purpose, because of their own stumbling (vs. 32-33)? A reader or interpreter needs to perhaps exhibit some caution in approaching v. 18, weighing in some additional factors.

**19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?” 20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? 21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? 22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? 23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,**

**9:19** From vs. 19-23, things do shift a bit more individually, as the Apostle Paul anticipates some responses to his explanation of the corporate election of and mercy toward Israel (vs. 6-16), and God’s raising up of the Pharaoh for His purposes (vs. 17-18). Some are going to say, “So why does he still blame people? Who can stand against his purpose?” (Kingdom New Testament). *Would it not be true that God’s foreordained will for people cannot be stopped?* And this is where some very complicated aspects about the nature of God, His involvement with His human creations, and those human creations’ involvement with Him—get to be probed. Especially important to remember, given frequent debates over God’s sovereignty present in these passages, **is that Paul is reasoning through a widescale First Century Jewish rejection of Yeshua, lamenting it,** and explaining much of it to his audience. Are these people, who are probably going to be condemned, without any choice in the matter? Many Reformed Christians of the past have concluded so, but there are some useful reasons for us to pause, and not draw such a quick conclusion.

**9:20-21** While many in Paul’s audience would have presumably wondered whether or not there was any ability for people to resist the intention or purpose of God—objecting to it as though God were unmerciful toward those who would be condemned—Paul directs them along the lines of viewing God as a potter, and human beings as clay. He states, “But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’” (v. 20, NRSV). There are multiple references seen in Isaiah and Jeremiah, in the Tanach, regarding people as clay, and God as the molder:

“You turn *things* around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, that what is made would say to its maker, ‘He did not make me’; or what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘He has no understanding?’” (Isaiah 29:16).

<sup>55</sup> *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary.*

<sup>56</sup> Neusner, *Mishnah*, 680.

“Woe to *the one* who quarrels with his Maker—an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’ Or the thing you are making say, ‘He has no hands?’ Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What are you begetting?’ Or to a woman, ‘To what are you giving birth?’” (Isaiah 45:9-10).

“There is no one who calls on Your name, who arouses himself to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us and have delivered us into the power of our iniquities. But now, O LORD, You are our Father, we are the clay, and You our potter; and all of us are the work of Your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD, nor remember iniquity forever; behold, look now, all of us are Your people” (Isaiah 64:7-9).

“Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter *does?*” declares the LORD. ‘Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel’” (Jeremiah 18:6).

Here, we see various examples of God having His way with the people of Israel. It is not the right or entitlement of people to question the purposes of God in history. While the analogy should not be pressed too hard, Paul does inquire, “Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?” (v. 21, ESV). God as Creator is going to oversee that from a lump of clay, be that lump of clay the people of Israel or humanity in general, that there are some who are redeemed and others who are condemned—and with some being condemned, this necessarily highlights the high value of redemption (v. 23). Debates ensue as to whether or not the condemned had any volition or choice of their own associated with their condemnation.

**9:22-23** Paul actually emphasizes the longsuffering of the Lord to His audience, in His dealings with those set for condemnation: “What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction...?” (v. 23, ESV). Here, the verb *pherō* (φέρω) is to be noted, as it involves “**to hold out in the face of difficulty, bear patiently, endure, put up with**” (BDAG).<sup>57</sup> It has been translated with: “endured with much longsuffering” (NKJV), “bore with great patience” (NIV), “tolerated most patiently” (Moffat New Testament), and “has shown great patience” (Goodspeed New Testament). Those in view are labeled as *katērtismena eis apōleian* (κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν), “having been prepared for destruction” (Brown and Comfort),<sup>58</sup> with *katērtismena* a perfect passive participle. **The Lord is greatly patient with those on the path to eternal condemnation.** Among interpreters who would be inclined to probably think that God has predestined some to salvation, and others to damnation—per the Reformed theological tradition—there is a pause demonstrated with v. 22, noting that the emphasis is His endurance or bearing up with those on the way to condemnation. Everett F. Harrison observes,

“God’s patience in bearing with the objects of his wrath suggests a readiness to receive such on condition of repentance (cf. 2:3, 4; 2 Peter 3:9). So ‘prepared for destruction’ designates a ripeness of sinfulness that points to judgment unless there is a turning to God, yet God is not made responsible for the sinful condition. The preparation for destruction is the work of man, who allows himself to deteriorate in spite of knowledge and conscience.”<sup>59</sup>

Cranfield also describes,

“[Paul] here used the verb *καταρτίζειν* [*katertizein*], not *προκαταρτίζειν* [*prokatatizein*] (a word he employs in 2 Cor 9.5), and also uses the perfect passive participle. While it is, of course, true that in the

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<sup>57</sup> BDAG, 1052.

<sup>58</sup> Brown and Comfort, 557.

<sup>59</sup> Harrison, in *EXP*, 10:107.

NT a passive often contains the thought of divine action, it seems probable that Paul wishes here to direct attention simply to the vessels' condition of readiness, ripeness, for destruction and not to any act, whether or God or of themselves, by which the condition was brought about. That they are worthy of destruction is clearly implied, but not that they will necessarily be destroyed."<sup>60</sup>

More to the point, reflecting a Wesleyan-Arminian perspective, which would emphasize the free will of human beings choosing the Lord, within the salvation process, is Witherington, who expresses the view, "It is difficult to imagine Paul saying that God endured the vessels of wrath *because* he wanted to show forth his wrath...God's endurance of the vessels of wrath shows his patience and mercy, giving time for amendment of life."<sup>61</sup> While Paul himself acknowledges how there are those who are *skeuē orgēs* (σκεύη ὀργῆς), "vessels of wrath," it is notable, how in Ephesians 2:3, that he states regarding the previous life of condemnation, "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath [*tekna phusei orgēs*, τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς], even as the rest." Born again Believers were once "vessels of wrath" at one point, but because of the Lord's longsuffering, they are not to be regarded permanently as vessels intended for utter ruin. A Calvinistically-leaning commentator like Kruse, who believes that God has, albeit passively, chosen some for wrath, still has to rightly acknowledge,

"Paul recognizes that God shows 'great patience' toward those who attract his wrath. Back in 2:4 Paul asked his hypothetically morally superior dialogue partner, 'Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?' And in 1 Timothy 1:13 he refers to the great patience shown to him personally when he was, prior to his conversion, a 'blasphemer and a persecutor, and a violent man'. He says: 'I was shown mercy, so that in me, the worst of sinners, Jesus Christ might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in and receive eternal life' (1 Tim 1:16). Guided by these texts, we may say that God's patience towards the objects of his wrath is intended to bring them to repentance (cf. 2 Pet 3:9: 'He is patient...not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance')."<sup>62</sup>

V. 23 is a place where there can be major differences between Calvinists and Arminians, and the perspectives of predestination and foreknowledge. One concludes that the Lord has chosen some for damnation, whereas another concludes that the Lord in His omniscience knows the decisions that people are going to make on their own. The presence of God's forbearance toward the vessels of destruction—**which all Believers were at one point**—should guide us in the direction of v. 23 emphasizing the Lord's patience and mercy toward all people, as a vessel intended for wrath can be transformed into a vessel for glory. The thrust of v. 23 is that God's forbearance toward vessels of wrath, is precisely so that those who receive the salvation He provides in Yeshua, can more greatly appreciate His goodness: "What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy [*skeuē eleous*, σκεύη ἐλέους], whom he prepared in advance for glory?" (NIV). As Paul will proceed to describe, the calling of those vessels of mercy into His Kingdom has occurred equally among both his fellow Jews, and those of the nations (v. 24).

<sup>60</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pp 495-496.

<sup>61</sup> Witherington, pp 257-258.

<sup>62</sup> Kruse, 387.

**24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. 25 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]. 26 “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].**

9:24 Thusfar in Paul’s immediate discussion, his objective has been to emphasize that the corporate election of Israel for His purposes in history stands, and that in spite of a widescale First Century Jewish rejection of Yeshua, God’s fidelity to a people of Israel that has widely not deserved it, needs to be recognized for what it is. The Lord has ways and intentions which are not to be questioned by mortals, as they simply recognize His forbearance and longsuffering in dealing with His human creations, offering them many opportunities for repentance! And so at this point, Paul interjects how the calling, of those as the stewards of His Kingdom, is not only something that involves his fellow Jewish people, but also those of the nations. Paul asserts, “Even us He called—not only from the Jewish people, but also from the Gentiles” (TLV), *ex ethnōn* (ἐξ ἔθνων) more neutrally being “out of nations” (LITV).

Given how the previously appearing, “vessels of wrath” and “vessels of mercy” (vs. 23-24), has more of an individualistic quality to it, one can conclude that being called (*ekalesen*, ἐκάλεσεν) involves an individual calling by God into His salvation. Yet it will also be asserted, later in 11:29, that “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable,” which involves a corporate calling to His mission and purpose, which can never be taken away from the Jewish people, in spite of any of their actions. The issue of being “called” in v. 24, especially given the Tanach intertextuality that follows, likely involves elements of both individual calling into God’s salvation via Yeshua—which is highly *inclusive*—and with this a recognition that those of the nations are called too, **to participate in the restoration of Israel’s Kingdom no less!** Note here that the issue is God’s dealing with groups of people for His purpose. That those from the Jewish people and the nations could equally share such a footing in His plan, ran contrary to the sort of sentiment seen in 4 Ezra 6:55-56 in the Apocrypha:

“All this I have spoken before thee, O Lord, because thou hast said that it was for us that thou didst create this world. As for the other nations which have descended from Adam, thou hast said that they are nothing, and that they are like spittle, and thou hast compared their abundance to a drop from a bucket.”

The Apostle Paul’s statements that follow in vs. 25-29, but most especially vs. 25-26, are important to follow—both for ancient times, and even until today.

9:25-26 There should be little doubting the fact, that even with a salvation historical motif present for Romans chs. 9-11, and the Apostle Paul surveying a history of Ancient Israel and his First Century Jewish people—that Romans 9:23-29, vs. 24-26 in particular, stands out as being a little strange. There are surely controversies present in the intertextual references of Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 and the salvation of the nations, followed by Isaiah 10:22-23. What are these things supposed to mean? Debates have particularly been piqued in our day, regarding Messianic ecclesiology, and whether or not non-Jewish Believers are part of a separate entity called “the Church,” or whether they are a part of an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel. When reading Romans 9:23-29, it is not difficult to recognize how Paul has two groups of people, those being brought to saving faith in Yeshua from among the nations, and his own Jewish people, in view. The question is how the two are to relate to one another, as either two widely separate groups, or as the two groups from which God is calling His people for His salvation and purposes.

The first set of quotations, where Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 are quoted in Romans 9:25-26, can really catch some readers off guard. Here, the Apostle Paul has claimed, “he called us, not only from Jews, but

also from Gentiles” (Brown and Comfort),<sup>63</sup> *ekalesen hēmas ou monon ex loudaiōn alla kai ex ethnōn* (ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς οὐ μόνον ἐξ Ἰουδαίων ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ἐθνῶν). In asserting that God has called people *ex ethnōn* or “from the nations,” as well, Paul is speaking here in terms of how these people are called to salvation. Yet, rather than quoting a general passage, such as Isaiah 49:6, which emphasizes both the restoration of Israel’s tribes and salvation going out to the whole world—a specific prophecy regarding Israel’s restoration is associated with the salvation of the nations:

HOSEA 2:23; 1:10	ROMANS 9:24-26
<p>“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).</p> <p>“Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and 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’” (Hosea 1:10).</p>	<p>Even us He called—not only from the Jewish people, but also <b>from the Gentiles</b>—as He says also in Hosea, “I will call those who were not My people, ‘My people,’ and her who was not loved, ‘Beloved.’ 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” (TLV).</p>

There are, to be sure, various Christian examiners of vs. 24-26, who have had to note some important background features of Hosea 2:23 and 1:10, which can prove to be a bit inconvenient for many of today’s Messianic Jewish leaders and teachers, but which must be reckoned with. At the same time, various Christian examiners, in acknowledging that a prophecy of Israel’s restoration is applied to the salvation of the nations, have taken it in the direction of a new “Church” entity replacing corporate Israel and the Jewish people in God’s plan.

Cranfield first informs us how, “The original reference of the Hosea verses was to the northern kingdom of Israel: Paul applies them to the Gentiles (cf. 1 Pet 2:10). The ten tribes were indeed thrust out into the dark realm of the heathen, so that there is real justification for regarding them as a type of rejection. But their restoration was promised in Hosea’s prophecy, and Paul takes this promise as a proof of God’s purpose to include the Gentiles in His salvation.”<sup>64</sup> Apparently, it was not just enough for the Apostle Paul to apply a general word regarding the redemption of the nations to his audience in Rome; Paul takes a word that specifically involved the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim. This is not irregular to the Apostolic Scriptures, as Peter also, in communicating to Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in the Mediterranean basin, applies the same passage: “for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY [Hosea 2:23]” (1 Peter 2:10). In the view of a commentator like Kruse,

“Paul sees in these texts a typological pattern revealing the way God deals with people—something he applies to the inclusion of the Gentiles. They had never been ‘my people’, and were therefore, like the disowned northern kingdom, ‘not my people’. Just as she was to be reinstated to become God’s people, so too Gentiles who were previously ‘not my people’ have now become ‘my people’, called by God through the gospel.”<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Brown and Comfort, 557.

<sup>64</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pp 499-500.

<sup>65</sup> Kruse, 388.

What does Paul's application of Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 mean regarding the entry of the redeemed from the nations into the Kingdom of God? Edwards offers the general conclusion, "In applying the Hosea prophecy to the Gentiles...Paul affirms that they too are heirs of the promises of Israel."<sup>66</sup> Douglas J. Moo, however, adopts a supersessionist or replacement theology method here, asserting, "we must conclude that this text reflects a hermeneutical supposition for which we find elsewhere in Paul and in the NT: that OT predictions of a renewed Israel find their fulfillment in the church."<sup>67</sup> What we witness in such a view, is that the restored Messianic Kingdom of Israel is in actuality replaced by the institution of the Christian Church. But, the Apostle Paul himself considers non-Jewish Believers in Israel's Messiah to be a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13) or Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), with James the Just envisioning the nations' inclusion in terms of an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel, predicated on the time when King David's rule reached beyond the twelve tribes of Israel proper (Acts 15:15-18; Amos 9:11-12).

Much of Paul's discussion has been focused around how God has been faithful to incorporate Israel, in spite of their common rebellion against Him (vs. 14-15)—and now, because of this, any of the Jewish Believers in Rome who might be negative toward non-Jewish inclusion in the Kingdom of God, need not question this any more than a piece of clay questioning its potter (vs. 20-22). That non-Jewish Believers could participate in Israel's restoration, along with Jewish Believers, would have been a significant assertion for Paul to make, that would have hit hard against many ancient Jewish prejudices of the nations.

Within today's Messianic movement, there are questions to be answered from Romans 9:24-26, particularly surrounding whether non-Jewish Believers truly have been made a part of Israel's Kingdom via the salvation of Yeshua, or whether they are a part of some other outside entity. Stern recognizes in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary* that Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 are quoted in Romans 9:24-26, and draws the conclusion that Paul had to have been speaking midrashically—obviously via some kind of allegory—when it came to applying a prophecy regarding Israel's restoration to those from the nations:

"Sha'ul uses these texts from **Hoshea** midrashically. Hosea was not referring to Gentiles but to Israel itself; he meant that one day Israel, in rebellion when he wrote, would be called God's people. Sha'ul's meaning, which does not conflict with what Hosea wrote but is not a necessary inference from it, is that 'God's people' now includes some Gentiles."<sup>68</sup>

Stern appears to admit, a bit reluctantly, that those to be regarded "My people," as stated in Hosea 1:10, may include non-Jewish Believers.

Hegg has also addressed the issue of Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 in his Romans commentary (2007), and a bit more thoroughly. He goes into more detail as to how literal Paul intended his words to be taken here, and how connected Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 are to Isaiah 10:22; 1:9 following:

"The question that comes to us first is whether or not Paul has given the quotes from Hosea their historical, literal meaning, or if he is using them as illustrative of the point he wishes to make, more on the basis of *peshet* or *midrash* rather than strict interpretation. In attempting to answer this question we must also consider the next quote, at least generally. In vv. 27-29 Paul links together quotes from Isaiah 10:22 and 1:9, which are linked to the quotes from Hosea with the connective 'and' (καί [kai]). The structure of the quotes is such that we must understand him to be using both Hosea and Isaiah to prove the same point. Most importantly, the quotes from Isaiah

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<sup>66</sup> Edwards, 242.

<sup>67</sup> Moo, 613.

<sup>68</sup> Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 392.

return the theme of the 'remnant' to Paul's argument. That is to say, Isaiah clearly teaches that the remnant are those who are called and those who are actually saved. Israel may be like the sand of the sea (a phrase that links the two sets of quotes), but only the remnant is saved."<sup>69</sup>

Hegg has a worthwhile perspective about an emphasis being placed on the "remnant" which will be saved by God. Following this in an excursus labeled "The Ephraimite Theory,"<sup>70</sup> as the Two-House sub-movement tends to go to extremes with claiming that most non-Jewish Messianic people are descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim. Romans 9:24-26 and its appeal to Hosea 1:10 and 2:23, is often cited as a text of importance by Two-House advocates. Whether or not those from the nations, *ex ethnōn*, in Romans 9:24-26, may be regarded as distant descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom or not, must be viewed as making some assumptions—assumptions which require empirical evidence not often provided by Two-House people.

An interpreter like Hegg takes issue with Two-House views, instead drawing the conclusion that if God has to show mercy to His own people once regarded as "not a people," then He should also show mercy to those of the nations, pagans in rebellion to their Creator, who were definitely "not a people" to Him:

"...Paul does not interpret Hosea's prophecy as speaking of the ingathering of Gentiles nor of those who just 'think they're Gentiles but really aren't.' Hosea prophesies the return of wayward Israel, God's chosen nation, exiled to the lands of her enemies because of her sin, but returned to God through the power of His great compassion. Paul understood the historical, gramatical sense of Hosea's text and uses this to bolster his message at this point in the epistle. Here is Paul's main point: do not try to use externals as a measure of God's election. He can bring even the most unlikely candidates into His covenant, and therefore under His arms of blessing. This is proven by the fact that even those of His own nation, Israel, whom He severely disciplines, He will bring back. If He is willing to bring back those who have disregarded His covenant (and in doing so were reckoned as 'not My people'), He is just as able to draw to Himself those who are strangers to His covenant (i.e. Gentiles, who are also 'not My people')."<sup>71</sup>

While there should be no doubting the fact that the God of Israel is a loving and gracious Heavenly Father, who desires to show mercy toward all of His human creations—some questions of logic are necessarily raised when looking at Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 and Romans 9:24-26.

I do not take issue with people in the Two-House sub-movement who believe that there are a series of Tanach prophecies involving the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, which are unfulfilled at present, and involve their reunion with the Southern Kingdom of Judah (i.e., Isaiah 11:12-16; Jeremiah 31:6-10; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Zechariah 10:6-10). These are prophecies which need to be considered in relation to the Second Coming of Yeshua and the Messianic Age. *But who are these descendants, mainly?* There are pockets of people in remote corners of places like Southeast Asia, Southern Asia, the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean basin, and the environs of Central Africa, who claim to be descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom via some kind of oral tradition, and/or what can appear to be Jewish-style customs—and *most probably are*. (Sometimes this has been enjoined with some credible DNA analysis, confirming distant Semitic descent.) These are the areas which generally fall within the sphere of influence of the old Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires, and where the exiles of the Northern Kingdom could have been legitimately deported,

<sup>69</sup> Hegg, *Romans 9-16*, 297.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 298-300.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 300

scattered, and/or assimilated (cf. Jeremiah 31:10; Hosea 8:8-9; Amos 9:8-9).<sup>72</sup> **The problem is that many Two-House advocates assume that the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom are in every corner of Planet Earth today**, and they really do not take into consideration the steadfast Torah word: “Then you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, because you did not obey the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 28:62).

Any assumption that all, or even most, of the non-Jewish Believers in Yeshua from the First Century were some sort of “Ephraimites” (as various Two-House people may think) draws a conclusion that not only an Apostle like Paul did not make—it is something that someone like him could not have humanly known, in the event 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. If very 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 an Eternal God.

It is safe to conclude that those in passages like Romans 9:24-26 were genuinely people of the nations at large. At the same time, it can be said that a kind of entirely spiritualized or typological application of restoration of Israel passages to the nations, such as Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 quoted in Romans 9:24-26, does not do enough. A general word like 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). If Paul wanted to emphasize to his mixed Roman audience that God was just calling people to salvation from both his own Jewish people and the nations, this is the kind of passage that one would expect to see quoted.

When all is considered, the safe—and most provable approach—is **that the nations are participants in a larger restoration of Israel**.<sup>73</sup> Whatever main substance is represented by Hosea 1:10 and 2:23, is something that the redeemed from the nations are beneficiaries of as well. Obviously, this would regard those non-Jewish Believers in Paul’s day, mainly Greeks and Romans, who had acknowledged Israel’s Messiah, and were surely to be reckoned among God’s people along with Jewish Believers who had likewise recognized Israel’s Messiah. Surely, 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 at large, who were just flat turned over to sin and their lusts (cf. Romans 1), welcoming them as participants in Israel’s restoration?

It is witnessed in Romans 9:24-26 that prophetic passages regarding Israel’s restoration are applied to the nations—with non-Jewish Believers from the nations participating in Israel’s restoration.

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<sup>72</sup> I.e., as would be particularly seen in a work like *Quest for the Lost Tribes* A&E, 1998, DVD 2006, hosted by Simcha Jacobovici, and the concurrent comments witnessed in Jonathan Bernis (2005), *The Scattering of the Tribes of Israel*, March/April 2005. *Jewish Voice Today*. Available via <<http://www.jewishvoice.org>> and Sid Roth, *The Incomplete Church: Bridging the Gap Between God’s Children* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2007), pp 17-18.

<sup>73</sup> Most examination of the two-stick oracle of Ezekiel 37:15-28, as witnessed in the Two-House sub-movement, quantitatively fails to mention the fact that it is not just Judah and Israel/Ephraim who are united together, but that a third group of companions—seemingly the righteous from the nations at large—are also involved.

For a further discussion, consult the author’s exegesis paper on Ezekiel 37:15-28, “Have the Two Sticks Been Reunited?”, appearing in his book *Israel in Future Prophecy*.

With concepts such as Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 applied to non-Jewish Believers and their salvation—**such people are hardly part of some separate “Church” entity.**<sup>74</sup>

**27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED; 28 FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY”** [Isaiah 10:22-23; Hosea 1:10]. **29 And just as Isaiah foretold, “UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOth HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH”** [Isaiah 1:9].

9:27-29 As painful as it is for Paul to recognize that many of his fellow Jews have rejected Yeshua, and hence are going to be cut off from Israel (v. 6), it is not as though there is no Biblical precedent for this. The stark word of Isaiah 10:22 is, “For, although your people, Isra’el, are like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return” (CJB).

ISAIAH 10:22-23	ROMANS 9:27-29
<p>“For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, <i>only</i> a remnant within them will return; a destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord GOD of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.”</p>	<p>Isaiah cries out <b>concerning Israel</b>, “Though the number of <i>B’nei-Israel</i> be as the sand of the sea, only the remnant shall be saved. For <i>ADONAI</i> will carry out His word upon the earth, bringing it to an end and finishing quickly.” And just as Isaiah foretold, “Unless <i>ADONAI-Tzva’ot</i> had left us seed, we should have become like Sodom and resembled Gomorrah” (TLV).</p>

While in this case, along with the themes of Isaiah ch. 11 following, a return from the exile and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom are foretold for physical people—Paul is looking at things principally from a spiritual vantage point, as presumably only redeemed persons, represented by this remnant, get to really enter into the Messianic Age, hence participating in Israel’s restoration and its culmination.

A spiritual dynamic is afforded to him by how the Hebrew *sh’ar yashuv* (שָׁרַיִשׁוּב) was rendered by the Greek LXX, as *to kataleimma autōn sōthēsetai* (τὸ κατάλειμμα αὐτῶν σωθήσεται). The verb *shuv* (שׁוּב), appearing in the Qal stem (simple action, active voice), “turn back, return” (BDB),<sup>75</sup> was actually translated with *sōzō* (σώζω), “to save or preserve from transcendent danger or destruction” (BDAG),<sup>76</sup> relating to either physical salvation or spiritual salvation. Here, the latter is what is more emphasized by Paul—because even with a sizeable enough number of physical Israelites, only a small amount will be saved/rescued and return as is anticipated by the Prophets.

<sup>74</sup> For a further discussion and evaluation of this, and related issues, consult the author’s publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

<sup>75</sup> BDB, 996.

<sup>76</sup> BDAG, 982.

**30** What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; **31** but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law. **32** Why? Because *they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,* **33** just as it is written, “BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED” [Isaiah 28:16].

**9:30-31** Having just described how God’s corporate election of Israel remains true, entirely because of His mercy (vs. 7-15), how the inclusion of the nations within His Kingdom is valid (vs. 24-26), and how there has been a remnant always saved from corporate Israel (vs. 27-29)—Paul’s discussion significantly shifts to addressing why much of the widescale, First Century Jewish rejection has taken place. Much of this involves properly understanding the role of the Torah, within the lives of people (9:30-10:5).

Speaking corporately as to what has happened to too many of his fellow Jews in the First Century, but obviously not all because Paul and many other Jews did individually receive Yeshua, the Apostle observes, “What then shall we say? That the nations not following after righteousness have taken on righteousness, but a righteousness of faith; but Israel following after a Law of righteousness did not arrive at a Law of righteousness?” (LITV). People from the nations at large, not naturally possessing specific knowledge and an appreciation of God’s Torah, have actually reached a point of having *dikaioṣunēn...tēn ek pisteōs* (δικαιοσύνην...τὴν ἐκ πίστεως), “a righteousness grounded in trusting” (CJB). Quite contrary to this, Paul’s First Century Jewish people or Israel proper, correctly identified as possessing *nomon dikaiosunēs* (νόμον δικαιοσύνης), “a Torah of righteousness” (TLV), which comes from God, *eis nomon ouk ephthasen* (εἰς νόμον οὐκ ἔφθασεν), “to[at] that law did not arrive” (Brown and Comfort)<sup>77</sup> or “did not reach the Torah” (TLV), meaning they have failed to reach the point that the Torah has been pointing to: the Messiah (10:4).

**9:32-33** Not approaching or using the Torah properly is the reason why Paul says that many of His fellow Jews have missed the Messiah. He says, “Why? Because they pursued it not by faith, but as if it were from works” (TLV). Far be it from approaching the Torah with the promised Redeemer in view, instead the Torah was approached *ex ergōn* (ἐξ ἔργων). But are these “works” to be viewed broadly as “doing something” (Common English Bible) or general human action? Or, are these “works” to be viewed in light of the *ergōn nomou* or “works of law” mentioned previously (3:20, 28; cf. 4QMMT), which would involve various *halachot* and sectarian rules? A Messianic interpreter like Hegg<sup>78</sup> thinks that the latter is indeed in view. At the same time, human works or (misguided) activities, without such specification, would certainly suffice, given the fact that God endures or bears up with vessels of wrath for quite some time (v. 22). The more difficult reality, to be sure, is the fact that many of Paul’s fellow Jews truly have helped to fulfill Tanach prophecy (v. 33), in stumbling over Yeshua as the stone of stumbling, detailed in Isaiah 28:16:

“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone *for* the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes *in it* will not be disturbed.’”

Lest we think that stumbling over the stone of Yeshua is only a Jewish problem, the Apostle Peter would apply Isaiah 28:16 more generally to those of the fallen world:

“And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Yeshua the Messiah. For *this* is

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<sup>77</sup> Brown and Comfort, 558.

<sup>78</sup> Hegg, *Romans 9-16*, pp 304-306.

contained in Scripture: 'BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER *stone*, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED' [Isaiah 28:16]. This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*' [Psalm 118:11], and, 'A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE' [Isaiah 8:14]; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed" (1 Peter 2:4-8).