

# Two-House Teaching

## Where does your ministry currently stand in regard to the Two-House teaching?

Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics **should not at all** be considered a “Two-House” ministry, given the wide and diverse array of Biblical and theological topics we address, germane to the broad Messianic community. Our ministry serves people in Messianic Judaism, as well as in the One Law/One Torah sub-movement and in the Two-House sub-movement—as we consider and analyze a wide series of issues and subjects which are thought to be of importance to people in all of those different sub-communities. If our ministry choice is to at all be honored by others in the Messianic world of ideas, we would consider ourselves **an egalitarian Messianic ministry**, sitting above these three different Messianic groupings. We are a ministry which regards both Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in Messiah Yeshua to be a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13, 19; 3:6), and which advocates a mutual submission ideology (Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:3-4). We fully affirm that all Messianic Believers, Jewish and non-Jewish, male and female—are complete equals in the eyes of the Lord (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 2:11)—and should be encouraged to develop all of their gifts, talents, and skills as is proper in Him. We also believe that the Messianic movement’s shared spiritual and theological heritage in the Jewish Synagogue and Christian Church, must be steadfastly honored.

As it concerns the specific issue of the Two-House teaching, Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics disavow the popular/populist variety of the Two-House teaching which has been promulgated since the 1990s, via a number of pseudo-denominations, sensationalistic groups, and dominant and/or presumed-prophetic personalities—which has not allowed itself to be often subject to constructive criticism and/or further theological refinement and engagement with conservative Biblical scholarship. Yet, in 2008, at least, one Messianic Jewish ministry actually allowed the following statement to be featured on its website: “The Two-House doctrine, in its most basic terms, simply maintains that the nation of Israel was divided following the reign of Solomon and will be reunited during the end times.”<sup>1</sup> This would be the basic or generic approach taken by our ministry to the issue of what happened to the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, in concert with the sentiments of pre-millennial eschatology.<sup>2</sup> We would affirm a larger restoration of Israel, involving those from the exiled Northern Kingdom as a participant, yet to occur in Biblical prophecy.

We would acknowledge a greater, end-time restoration of Israel to come that is prophesied, going beyond the rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948, as important as this has surely been. Such a larger restoration of Israel definitely involves the Jewish people, as well as descendants from the exiled Northern Kingdom, but also many welcomed and valued scores of companions from the nations themselves. 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, scattered, and/or assimilated (cf. Jeremiah 31:10; Hosea 8:8-9; Amos 9:8-9).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (2008). *Two-House Doctrine Debate*. The Messianic Center. Retrieved 14 August, 2011 from <<http://www.themessianiccenter.com>>.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching the Last Things: Old Testament Eschatology for the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), pp 37-38, 47-49.

<sup>3</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

We believe that the Lord will bring together, as one people in Him: the Jewish people, such aforementioned descendants of exiled Israel/Ephraim, and their many associated companions from all nations as one broad and inclusive community of people in Messiah Yeshua, before His return, in fulfillment of end-time prophecy (i.e., Isaiah 11:12-16<sup>4</sup>; Jeremiah 31:6-10<sup>5</sup>; Ezekiel 37:15-28<sup>6</sup>; Zechariah 10:6-10<sup>7</sup>). We **do not at all encourage** non-Jewish Believers (particularly those of Western European ancestry) who are a part of today's Messianic movement, and who recognize themselves as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13; 3:6) or the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), grafted into Israel by faith in Israel's Messiah (Romans 11:17-18), to identify themselves as some sort of "Ephraimites." We especially do not encourage such non-Jewish people to make any kind of permanent pilgrimage or "*aliyah*" to the Holy Land, as there is no indication that all Messiah followers will, in total, ever live in the Land of Israel, even in the Messiah's Millennial Kingdom (cf. Isaiah 19:23-24; Zechariah 14:16-19).

An eschatology-based approach toward addressing this subject, with obviously various details needing to be left to an Eternal and Sovereign God, is frequently not the approach which one encounters in much of the well-known literature surrounding the subject matter. It can be said that there is a distinct difference between a populist Two-House teaching, which essentially advocates that the majority of non-Jewish Believers are distant descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom (with various connections to be likely made with Nineteenth Century British-Israelism), versus a more Biblical approach to the issue that focuses on the specific prophecies of a larger restoration of Israel. While we would affirm a wide number of Tanach prophecies involving the exiled Northern Kingdom as a participant, as being unfulfilled at the present time, our ministry would not at all be considered a part of a Two-House sub-movement which practices a great deal of theological eisegesis, where many Biblical references to "two" are applied to Judah and Ephraim, and whose Hebrew and Greek examination is often limited to *Strong's Concordance* (among other things).

When this subject matter has been raised, we have definitely strived as a ministry—as best as we humanly can—to focus the attention of today's Messianic people on a larger scope of expectations regarding the restoration of Israel, with the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim as a noticeable participant. *How does this affect our view of the end-times, and what is to transpire regarding the restoration of Israel before the Messiah's return?* Unlike the populist Two-House teaching that has garnered the most attention since the late 1990s, our ministry has made

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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>4</sup> "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 dryshod. 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, NASU).

<sup>5</sup> "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, NASU).

<sup>6</sup> "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 know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever'" (Ezekiel 37:21-28, NASU).

<sup>7</sup> "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, NASU).

it clear that non-Jewish Messianic Believers thinking that they are mostly descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom, is not at all a useful or profitable endeavor. Jeremiah 31:10 certainly directs Bible readers, “He who scattered Israel will gather him” (NASU). **Many of the finer details of such a larger restoration of Israel to be anticipated are only known by our Eternal and Omnipresent Creator.** And, not at all to be ignored, is the steadfast Torah word of Deuteronomy 28:62, “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” (NASU). Much of the popular/populist Two-House literature has actually posited that the physical numbers of descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are in the hundreds of millions, if not billions, whereas the tenor of the Pentateuch itself does not at all convey this. Not only does this seem like a significant over-exaggeration, it makes the known Jewish population seem absolutely miniscule—especially in light of the 6 million Jews who were slaughtered in the Holocaust!

Perhaps most overlooked (and dismissed) in the whole discussion (and debate), is that there will be many associated companions/associates from the nations themselves involved in the restoration process (Ezekiel 37:16-19; Isaiah 49:6; cf. Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47), most definitely being the significant majority of those who participate, in what is mainly *not* the reunion of the Two Houses of Israel as has been popularly communicated—but in actuality, instead, what is **a larger restoration/expansion of Israel’s Kingdom.** Such a restoration would involve a resolution to the issue of the exiled Northern Kingdom for sure, but would also incorporate the righteous from the nations, into an expanded realm of Israel’s Kingdom (cf. Amos 9:11-12; Acts 15:15-18). Most of the non-Jewish Believers one is likely to encounter, forcibly identifying themselves as some sort of “Ephraimites,” are not, and they have no Semitic genealogy of any kind. Yet, these people have been Divinely led by the Lord into the Messianic movement, certainly in fulfillment of prophecies like Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-3, and should be considered welcome and valued members of the community of Israel. They are most certainly the equals of Jewish Believers in Messiah Yeshua (cf. Galatians 3:28).<sup>8</sup> They are, without question, human beings made in God’s image (Genesis 1:27), who are valued and loved by Him as the Eternal Creator!

Our ministry has a consistent track record of speaking out against many of the anti-Christian and anti-Jewish sentiments, which are often witnessed in the Two-House sub-movement and much of its popular literature. If there is genuinely a larger restoration of Israel to occur, which effectively involves all who acknowledge the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—*via the emergence of the modern Messianic movement*—then today’s Messianic people must certainly show proper respect and honor to their Jewish and Christian forbearers, employing their great virtues to accomplish His mission and purpose for the final hour.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Consult the author’s exegesis paper on Galatians 3:28, “Biblical Equality and Today’s Messianic Movement” (appearing in *Confronting Critical Issues*).

<sup>9</sup> Some preliminary resolution to the complicated issue of the popular/populist Two-House teaching in the broad Messianic movement, and the issue of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim in Biblical history and eschatology, is provided in the author’s book *Israel in Future Prophecy: Is There a Larger Restoration of the Kingdom to Israel?*