

ISRAEL IN FUTURE PROPHECY

Is There a Larger Restoration of the Kingdom to Israel?

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of the Kingdom to Israel?**

J.K. McKee



Israel in Future Prophecy

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Abbreviation Chart and Special Terms

The following is a chart of abbreviations for reference works and special terms that are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

Special terms that may be used have been provided in this chart:

ABD: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	Heb: Hebrew
Ara: Aramaic	HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)	ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	IVPBB: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)</i>
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	KJV: King James Version
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore</i> (1996)
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	LXX: Septuagint
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	m. Mishnah
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	MT: Masoretic Text
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text	NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	NBCR: <i>New Bible Commentary: Revised</i>
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	NEB: New English Bible (1970)
exegesis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own	Nelson: <i>Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words</i>
EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>	NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
Ger: German	NIB: <i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
GNT: Greek New Testament	NIGTC: <i>New International Greek Testament Commentary</i>
Grk: Greek	NICNT: <i>New International Commentary on the New Testament</i>
	NIDB: <i>New International Dictionary of the Bible</i>

NIV: New International Version (1984)
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
NT: New Testament
orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world
OT: Old Testament
PreachC: *The Preacher's Commentary*
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*

TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TEV: Today's English Version (1976)
TLV: Tree of Life Messianic Family Bible—New Covenant (2011)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
TNTC: *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
WBC: *Word Biblical Commentary*
Yid: Yiddish
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

Introduction

As a teacher, researcher, and apologist, it is my responsibility to address all manner of subjects and issues which are presented or inquired of me, from the Holy Scriptures, providing answers for the people of God. Many of these issues regard the essentials of faith, and how we, as a contemporary but yet still-emerging and developing Messianic movement, should approach them. My writings to date bear witness to the fact that I have had to address a whole host of topics, many of them relating to the challenges and controversies which our broad Messianic community is facing today. A variety of these issues are those upon which we all express a great deal of camaraderie and unity, as they concern the nature of Yeshua and His salvation. Some issues, however, are those which tend to get groups of people significantly divided and/or upset at one another, and which tend to make us rather uncomfortable. In far too many cases, issues which do get people divided or upset are not often approached with a great deal of objectivity, reason, innovation, or patience. *And the love of the Messiah, which we are to demonstrate one to another, can often just be thrown out the proverbial window...*ⁱ

There are three broad groups, which for better or worse, tend to make up the contemporary Messianic movement: Messianic Judaism, the One Law/One Torah sub-movement, and the Two-House sub-movement. **Messianic Judaism** as a modern movement, emerged in the late 1960s from the older Hebrew Christian movement, as a group of Jewish Believers wanting to acknowledge and worship Yeshua as the Messiah, in a widely Jewish cultural and religious context. As Messianic Judaism grew in the 1980s and 1990s, congregations and fellowships were established all throughout places such as North America, Europe, Israel, and the West in general. While many Jewish people rejoicingly came to a saving knowledge of Yeshua as the Messiah of Israel, a major unforeseen side-effect also took place: scores of non-Jewish Believers, evangelical Christians, entered into Messianic Judaism, and sincerely desired to not only learn more about the Jewish Jesus, but also live more like Him, embracing their Hebraic Roots in obedience to the Torah or Law of Moses.

As non-Jewish Believers have begun to utterly swell the Messianic community—indeed becoming the majority of it—many questions and answers to such questions have been proposed. For many of today’s Messianic Jewish leaders, non-Jewish Believers entering into the Messianic movement is only the result of the Lord calling specific persons and families to assist in Jewish ministry and the redemption of their people, and for them to be in a unique, close communion with Jewish Believers. Others have thought that non-Jewish Believers entering into the Messianic community, embracing a life of submission and obedience to God’s

ⁱ Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; cf. Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8.

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Torah, is a result of prophecies like Micah 4:1-3 or Isaiah 2:2-4 or Zechariah 8:23 taking place, and a more decisive understanding of the New Covenant being realized (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:15-17). Such non-Jewish Believers may be likened unto the *ger* (גֵר) or sojourner in the Torah who entered into the community of Ancient Israel, who was widely anticipated to follow the Torah, in many ways not too different from the native Israelite. The **One Law/One Torah** sub-movement, is quite prone to emphasize, “You shall have one law for him who does *anything* unintentionally, for him who is native among the sons of Israel and for the alien who sojourns among them” (Numbers 15:29), and other passages. The One Law/One Torah sub-movement is riddled with a great deal of legalism and judgmentalism, though, and should be kept at a distance.ⁱⁱ

Obviously in the realm of contemporary theological discussion, proposing that today’s Messiah followers need to be taking regular instruction from the Torah or Law of Moses—including the importance of things like the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, the appointed times of Leviticus 23, or eating kosher—is most controversial. And, such convictions certainly require a great deal of analysis and reflection from various passages in the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament, which may seem to say otherwise—including the general validity and relevance of the Torah for Messiah followers.ⁱⁱⁱ Yet in the scope of Messianic discussion, no proposals can be more provocative and divisive, at times, than those often made by people composing the **Two-House** sub-movement.

In the scope of the history of Ancient Israel, following the death of King Solomon, no one can deny the fact that Israel’s realm split into the Northern Kingdom of Israel, also called Ephraim, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. In the course of Biblical history, as recorded within the Books of Kings and Chronicles, a mass from the Northern Kingdom of Israel was corporately taken into exile by the Assyrian Empire. Later in the course of Biblical history, the bulk of the Southern Kingdom of Judah was taken into exile by the Babylonian Empire, many of whom returned to the Holy Land following the conquering of the Babylonians by the much more tolerant and accepting Persian Empire. A huge mystery has ensued regarding the destiny of the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel—and their widescale non-return to the Holy Land—giving rise to all manner of interesting theories, speculations, and in far too many cases, outright myth and fantasy about the “Ten Lost Tribes.”

A majority of people in today’s Two-House sub-movement, while rightly raising the attention of Bible readers to the issue of the exiled Northern Kingdom in Scriptural history, have simply assumed that most of today’s non-Jewish Believers

ⁱⁱ Other passages of note include: Exodus 12:48-49; Leviticus 7:7; 24:22; Numbers 9:14; 15:15-16, 29-30.

For a further discussion, consult the author’s article “Approaching One Law Controversies: Sorting Through the Legalism.” Some important related discussions are also found in the author’s publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

ⁱⁱⁱ Consult the author’s books *The New Testament Validates Torah: Does the New Testament Really Do Away With the Law?*, *Torah In the Balance, Volume I* (and forthcoming *Volume II*), and the relevant volumes of the *Messianic Helper Series* by Messianic Apologetics.

are descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim. This is likely due to the inappropriate thought that those who are physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob somehow *must be* closer to God and His will than people of the nations generally. And not only this, but these non-Jewish individuals tend to call themselves “Ephraimites,” although they lack any documentation or substantial proof for it, other than some sort of unobjective feeling or instinct (and they will frequently eschew the option of a DNA ancestry test available for a minimal cost). Suffice it to say, this is a huge debate—and one where reason, careful attention to detail, and a Thomas-level of skepticism (cf. John 20:25-27)—have not often been allowed to prevail. Yet, those Messianic people who identify themselves as being “Two-House,” do make up a large and most noticeable sub-movement of the larger Messianic community, with which the ministry of Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics does interact with also. If any of us intend to be fair as God’s people, the main Biblical passages which they consider to be of importance must be analyzed, and in such a way which does appropriate justice to the text, removed from any of the bad behavior, problems, or semi-racism which may be endemic of various Two-House adherents.

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

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of Israel was divided following the reign of Solomon and will be reunited during the end times.”^{iv} 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 eschaology.^v 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 welcome 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).^{vi}

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; Jeremiah 31:6-10; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Zechariah 10:6-10). 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).

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

^v 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.

^{vi} 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.

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 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.” **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.” 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

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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 Zechariah 8:23, 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).^{vii} 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.^{viii} 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.

Today's Messianic community needs some preliminary resolution to the whole "Two-House" controversy, one which is not dismissive as it concerns unfulfilled prophetic words from the Tanach involving the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel (Isaiah 11:12-16; Jeremiah 31:6-10; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Zechariah 10:6-10), but one which is far more engaged with the Biblical text and contemporary scholarship than the populism which tends to utterly plague the Two-House sub-movement,^{ix} and much of the religious posturing and/or total dismissal which can be seen against it.^x *Israel in Future Prophecy: Is There a Larger*

^{vii} Consult the author's exegesis paper on Galatians 3:28, "Biblical Equality and Today's Messianic Movement."

^{viii} Consult the relevant sections of the author's book, *Confronting Critical Issues: An Analysis of Subjects that Affects the Growth and Stability of the Emerging Messianic Movement*.

^{ix} The writings representing this perspective include, but are not limited to:

Batya Ruth Wootten, *Who Is Israel? And Why You Need to Know* (St. Cloud, FL: Key of David, 1998); *Who Is Israel?*, enlarged edition (St. Cloud, FL: Key of David, 2000); *Redeemed Israel—Restored and Reunited* (St. Cloud, FL: Key of David, 2006); *Israel's Feasts and their Fullness*, expanded edition (St. Cloud, FL: Key of David Publishing, 2008); *Who Is Israel? Redeemed Israel—A Primer* (St. Cloud, FL: Key of David, 2011); Angus Wootten, *Restoring Israel's Kingdom* (St. Cloud, FL: Key of David, 2000); Eddie Chumney, *Restoring the Two Houses of Israel* (Hagerstown, MD, Serenity Books, 1999); Moshe Koniuchowsky, *The Truth About All Israel: A Refutation of the I.M.J.A. Position Paper on the Two Houses of Israel* (Miami Beach: Your Arms to Israel, 2000); Sandy Bloomfield, *The Errors of "The Ephraimite Error": Disposing of the Lies and Hatred* (Lebanon, TN: Messianic Israel Alliance, 2008).

^x The writings representing this perspective include, but are not limited to:

Kay Silberling (1999). *The Ephraimite Error: A Position Paper Submitted to the International Messianic Jewish Alliance*. Available online via <<http://umjc.org>>; (1999). *A Short Summary of "The Ephraimite Error."* Available online via <<http://umjc.org>>; Rich Robinson (2001). *The Two-House (Messianic Israel) Theory that Ephraim is the Church. Jews for Jesus*. Available online via <<http://www.jfjonline.org>>; Tim Hegg (2002). *The Two House Theory: Three Fatal Flaws. Torah Resource*. Available online via <<http://torahresource.com>>; Boaz Michael (2004). *Encounters with an Ephraimite: Identity through a Lost Heritage. First Fruits of Zion*. Available online via <<http://ffoz.org>>; Perry Trotter (2003). *A Brief Assessment of Two House Theology*, 07 January, 2003.

Restoration of the Kingdom to Israel? can hopefully provide some of the answers which are needed in the current season of Messianic development, and we would hope, Lord willing, also maturation. If any of you can understand what it means for a “third solution” to be offered to a theological controversy—then this is a publication which I believe is going to help you greatly!

J.K. McKee
Editor, *Messianic Apologetics*

Christian Witness Ministries. Available online via <<http://www.christian-witness.org>>; Boaz Michael, with Jacob Fronczak, *Twelve Gates: Where Do the Nations Enter?* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2012); Toby Janicki, *God-Fearers: Gentiles and the God of Israel* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2012).

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Approaching Two-House Controversies

In our day, a wide number of non-Jewish Believers, in significant numbers, have chosen to address what many throughout religious history have called, “the Ten Lost Tribes” of Israel issue. This has often taken place because of a strong interest by many Christians in the Hebraic Roots of our faith, and a renewed interest in Israel and their faith heritage in Judaism. A loose sub-movement, commonly known by the descriptions “Judah and Ephraim” or “Two-House” or “Messianic Israel,” has gained wide adherence in various sectors of the broad, modern Messianic movement. *There is no doubting the fact that it has caused controversy, consternation, and even division among many Believers...*

Appearing along with the article “Decoding the Priesthood” by Peter Hirschberg,¹ from the 10 May, 1999 edition of *The Jerusalem Report*, the adjunct “Report Card” by Tibor Krausz stated how, “An evolving doctrine in Christian Zionism and Messianic Judaism, based on a new interpretation of scripture, holds that most true Christians are descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel.”² This is certainly interesting, coming from a mainstream Jewish publication. What is going on, exactly? What might these sentiments mean? How do we properly approach the issues at hand, and what are at least, some thought-provoking statements issued? How can we know what is fact, and what is fiction?

What is the “Two-House teaching,” which has gained a great deal of attention and controversy throughout the Messianic world since the late 1990s? What is it all about and what is its purpose? Does it actually advocate that all non-Jewish Believers are physical Israel? Or, could it be that there are elements of Israel’s restoration which have been overlooked by Bible readers, requiring further analysis and contemplation? What questions are being asked today about “Israel” that we must take note of, and attempt to reasonably answer? What are some of the

¹ This article largely summarizes an ongoing project of trying to test various groups within the Jewish community, as well as those in some remote locations of South Asia, Southeastern Asia, and Central Africa, for particular DNA strands, trying to conclude who might be descended from the priestly class within Ancient Israel.

² Tibor Krausz (1999). *Report Card*, 10 May, 1999. *The Jerusalem Report*. Retrieved 11 April, 2011 from <<http://jpost.com/JerusalemReport>>.

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over-statements and under-statements that we have to all sort through, from both the pro- and con- sides of this discussion? *How much data and noise have to actually be sifted through?*

Each of us needs to take to serious heart the words of Ezekiel 37:28. God says that “the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever,” *b’heyot miqdashi b’tokam l’olam* (בְּהוֹיֹת מִקְדָּשִׁי בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְעוֹלָם). Notice that our Heavenly Father does not say He sanctifies a separate group of elect called “the Church,” and also notice that He does speak of a day coming when Israel is restored and His presence will be in the world forever. **We have obviously not reached this anticipated point in human history.**

We begin our discussions by examining some of the important questions concerning the subject matter commonly known by the label of “the Two-House teaching.” We will consider the historical division and prophesied reunification of Israel from the Tanach or Old Testament. We will examine some of the objections that people commonly have associated with a larger restoration of Israel to come, involving those of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. What are some things in the Bible concerning Israel and the Kingdom of God that readers may have overlooked or under-emphasized that can no longer be avoided? Is there a legitimate, larger restoration of Israel to take place before the return of the Messiah? If so, how many things have contemporary advocates of the “Two-House teaching” embellished and over-exaggerated, which need to be avoided?

The Commonwealth of Israel

In the Apostle Paul’s letter to a largely non-Jewish audience in Asia Minor,³ he makes a very intriguing statement. In Ephesians 2:11-13, he admonishes the non-Jewish Believers, “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.*” The statement that Paul makes is that prior to their salvation in Yeshua the Messiah, these people were “alienated⁴ from the commonwealth of

³ Be aware of how “in Ephesus” (*en Ephesō, ἐν Ἐφέσῳ*) does not appear in the oldest manuscripts of Ephesians 1:1 (cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1975], 601), and that in all likelihood the Epistle of Ephesians was originally a circular letter written by the Apostle Paul to assemblies within Asia Minor, eventually making its way to Ephesus. The RSV notably rendered Ephesians 1:1 with: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus.”

For a further discussion, consult C.E. Arnold, “Ephesians, Letter to the: Destination,” in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), pp 243-245, and the author’s entry for the Epistle of Ephesians in *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*.

⁴ Grk. *apallotriō* (ἀπαλλοτριῶ), “to estrange, alienate” (H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994], 87).

Israel" (RSV). Now, having come to faith, they have been "brought near by the blood of Messiah." In the view of Walter C. Kaiser, in his book *The Promise-Plan of God*,

"All Gentiles were Christless, stateless, promiseless, hopeless, and Godless (2:12)...But now in Christ's salvation, the Gentiles 'have been brought near' (2:13b), just as Israel had been described as being 'near' to God in Deuteronomy 4:7 and Psalm 148:14."⁵

When we review what Ephesians 2:11-12 communicates, what is Paul really saying? Is he saying that these non-Jewish Believers have become a part of "the Church," something separate from Israel? No. This is the last thing on his mind, especially if non-Jewish Believers are "joint heirs, [part of] a joint body and joint sharers with the Jews" (Ephesians 3:6, CJB). Paul communicates to those in Asia Minor that they have become part of the community of Israel by their salvation in Israel's Messiah—obviously a realm which has been expanded and enlarged, because of His work and the inclusive nature of the gospel. This is witnessed by the Greek word *politeia* (πολιτεία), often rendered as "commonwealth,"⁶ which means "the right to be a member of a sociopolitical entity, citizenship" (BDAG).⁷ Nowhere in Yeshua the Messiah's mission did He ever come to establish "the Church" as a second group of elect. On the contrary, He came to restore and rebuild Israel (Jeremiah 33:7; cf. Matthew 16:18).⁸

All of the negative conditions of once being unredeemed were reversed for Ephesians' non-Jewish audience. Being "brought near" to Israel is not just a kind of closeness; it is a statement of being integrated into the community of Israel, no different than how Ancient Israel in the wilderness was considered the people of God. The question of Deuteronomy 4:7 is, "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?" Psalm 148:14

⁵ Walter C. Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 294.

⁶ "citizenship" (NIV); "community" (REB/Lattimore); "citizens" (Common English Bible).

⁷ Frederick William Danker, ed., et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, third edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 845.

In some branches of today's Messianic Judaism, notably those that advocate what they call a "bilateral ecclesiology," non-Jewish Believers being a part of the Commonwealth of Israel is not quantitatively different from them being a part of a separate "Church" per dispensationalism. Such a Commonwealth of Israel is simply thought to compose two groups: the Jewish people and the Church. The Greek term *politeia* is approached from the perspective of it being "commonwealth" like the British Commonwealth of Nations, as Yeshua is King over the Jewish people and the Church much like Queen Elizabeth II is monarch of independent countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc.

The classical Greek meaning of *politeia* does not imply a kind of citizenship where a single monarch rules over a collection of separate states, but rather of either a single government or a way of conduct within a society (sometimes set within the context of a city). Cf. *LS*, 654; Plato *Republic* 10.619c; Aristotle *Politics* 3.6.1278b; 3.7.1279a; 2 Maccabees 8:17.

For a further discussion, consult the relevant sections of the author's commentary *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic*.

⁸ Consult the author's article "When Did 'the Church' Begin?", for a further examination of how God has always had only *one* assembly of elect. Also consult the material in the author's publication, *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

Israel in Future Prophecy

further details, “And He 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!” Paul is certain to say, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household,” the assessment being, “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; 3:6). While by no means replacing the Jewish people in God’s salvation-historical plan, non-Jewish Believers do get to partake of the blessings and responsibilities of being a part of Israel’s Kingdom along with them. A non-Jewish Believer is to be regarded as *sumpolitēs* (συμπολίτης), a “**fellow-citizen/compatriot**” (BDAG)⁹ within the community of Israel. In fact, the reconciliation of Jewish people and those from the nations, together, is to be a testament to the greater reconciliation to come to the cosmos (Ephesians 3:10).

If we are to understand that non-Jewish Believers are a part of the community of Israel, an enlarged Kingdom realm, along with their fellow Jewish Believers, then questions will naturally be asked about what the Hebrew Scriptures or the Tanach tell us about Israel. Ultimately, it is safe to say that being a part of “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16), or being grafted into the olive tree (cf. Romans 11:17-18), is incumbent upon possessing faith in Israel’s Messiah. Very sadly, there will be Jewish people who are physical descendants of the Patriarchs, who will in the end be considered “cut off” (Romans 11:17, 20). (Yet, this is something that *only* a Creator God and Final Judge is responsible for determining, and *not* any of us as limited and biased human beings.)¹⁰ And, as Paul had to remind many of his non-Jewish readers in Rome, “Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either” (Romans 11:20b-21). Whenever the topic of who is, and who is not, a part of Israel comes up—each of us has to proceed very cautiously.

Focusing on Israel in Future Prophecy

The relatively young Two-House sub-movement today is broad, and as such it needs to be recognized how there are a wide array of proponents who teach about the subject matter. It is to be fairly observed, though, that after a decade or more of growth, expansion, and popular conference events from the late 1990s to early 2010s, that a significant number of Two-House proponents believe that the majority of non-Jewish Believers in today’s Messianic movement are descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, and as such, they feel it is appropriate to refer to themselves as some sort of “Ephraimites.” While it has been important that they have raised the awareness level of various Biblical passages, which may have otherwise gone unaddressed or ignored by many Messianic people—the things that they have done with those Biblical passages have not always been good.

⁹ BDAG, 959; “possessing the same citizenship with others, a fellow-citizen” (Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003], 597).

¹⁰ For some further thoughts, consult the author’s exegesis paper on Romans 1:18-25, “Is Salvation Only Available for those who Profess Faith in Yeshua?”