



PO Box 700217 Saint Cloud, FL 34770

www.mim.net

December 22, 2004

Dear Tim:

I would like to briefly explain a few of the things we believe, and then, because we feel you have included us in your paper entitled, "The Two-House Theory: Three Fatal Flaws," I would like to respectfully comment on it.

Please know that I come to you in all humility seeking quiet reconciliation among brethren. I believe the Body of Messiah is dismayed and hurting over the abundance of division and strife they see in Messianic circles. If I could write the script, I would have us come to a mutually acceptable place of agreement that has no further need of airing differences in opposing papers.

When brethren of "position" argue about doctrine, it wounds and discourages the entire Body of Messiah. Therefore, I beg you to please join me in seeking the bond of peace.

I am not asking you to compromise your faith, but to truly consider ours, for we believe that we are rightly dividing the Word of truth and following the leading of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore, we ask you to please contemplate with us ways that we can join together and thus help bring a measure of healing to a wounded and beleaguered Israel.

If I may, I would first like to outline a few points that are addressed in my rebuttal.

We are "Messianic Israel"

As we explained to Boaz Michael, we do not call ourselves an "Ephraimite" or "Two-House" movement. We feel these titles focus on Israel's division rather than its necessary unity. It was Dan Juster of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) who labeled us with "The Ephraimite movement." However, for more than a dozen years we have called ourselves "Messianic Israel." We feel it is an inclusive title that speaks of both the houses of Israel and of our unity in the Messiah.

Moshe Koniuchowsky began to use the "Two House" title after he left our Messianic Israel Alliance (in 2000) to form his own organization, through which he now teaches his version of what he learned from us about Ephraim and Judah. In addition, there are others who teach about the two houses of Israel, and the number grows by the day.

We Do Not Believe That What We Teach is "Fatally Flawed"

We are born-again, blood-washed and bought, disciples of the Messiah of Israel. We believe in the validity of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, and we truly seek to abide by that Holy Writ. If we can be shown that we are in error, we will freely and openly repent. However, we ask that correction be made using actual quotes of what we teach, taken in context, and then compared to Scripture. We do not believe this has been done, and thus cannot accept this general condemnation of what we teach.

Genealogy is Generally Unprovable—for Jew and non-Jew Alike

Christianity, Judaism, and Messianic Judaism all define Israel based on their ideas about "physical descent" from the Patriarchs. However, we believe that genealogy is generally unprovable, and that this standard holds true for both the houses of Israel: Ephraim and Judah. Most can only assume Patriarchal heritage to be true. We realize that inroads are being made in the fields of DNA testing and that the Kohanim are finding a certain biological relationship. Nonetheless, we do not encourage anyone to research their biological heritage for the purpose of "being accepted." Neither do we exclude anyone who feels they do not descend from Israel. Moreover, we do not believe that you have to be a physical heir of the Patriarchs to be "saved" or included in the commonwealth of Israel. Period.

Messianic Judaism and its Errant Teachings

Most in Messianic Judaism teach that they alone are the physical heirs of Israel, that non-Jewish Believers in the Messiah are not Israel, and that the Church is separate from Israel. These points are likewise believed by many in the Church. We do not agree with these beliefs.

Responding to Errors

We believe that our God is the God of Israel and that we too are part of His “chosen people” (1 Peter 2:9-10), yet some deny us that rightful place. For these reasons, we address the above claims about the identity of “Israel.” We feel we are only responding to exclusionary and errant claims. Moreover, we feel it is important to understand Israel, because our God is the God of Israel, and how can we play the game if we do not even know who the players are?

The Heirs of the Early Jewish Church

We believe that a goodly portion of the First Century Jewish population followed the Messiah (Matthew 19:2; John 11:48). We also believe the descendants of these Early Jewish Believers probably remained in the Church, and that their heirs can be found among us in our day. Even if we do not know exactly who they are, and even if they cannot prove their heritage, we believe the Holy One does know who they are (Hosea 5:3). Moreover, we do not believe these biological heirs were cut off from being part of Israel because they chose to follow the prophesied Messiah, rather than to follow a developing Judaism that denied Him (Deuteronomy 18:18-19).

Heirs are Heirs are Heirs...

We do not believe that a descendant of someone of Jewish faith is any more of a biological descendant of the Patriarchs than is an actual descendant who does not know, or cannot prove, that they are a descendant of the Patriarchs. Restated, our grandfathers are forever our actual grandfathers. In other words, there is nothing a human being can believe or not believe that will change the facts of his biological heritage. A scattered Israelite may not know that he is one, but that would not change the facts of his ancestry.

Heritage is Based on One's Fathers

In Scripture heritage and tribal inheritance is always based on the fathers. We believe such heritage comes down in an unbroken line, and again, that line is known for certain only by the Holy One of Israel.

Myriads of Physical Heirs

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were promised physical descendants that would be as the stars in the sky and the sands of the sea. We believe that promise to be literal, yet feel it is unprovable beyond the statements of Scripture. (We respectfully ask: "Do the identifiable Jews on the face of the earth fulfill this great number? No, they do not.)

Teaching Truths—Ephraim and Judah and the Eternality of Torah

We have focused on teaching these truths, yet have sought to maintain balance and a firm foothold in the Messiah as our Savior. We do not lift this, or any other truth, above being born from above and being in the Messiah. However, when one feels called to teach a particular truth, that truth will naturally be mentioned more often than others, even as “Torah” is mentioned on the cover of FellowHeirs four times, while the “Messiah” is mentioned only once.

Again Tim, I come to you in humility, and ask you to please consider the truth of what we teach, that we might seek a level of peace and unity in the Messiah.

For the record, I have attached my proposed, but as yet not finalized, response to your critique of our work.

Respectfully,
Batya Ruth Wootten

Addendum May 2013:

Nothing further was added to this text.

The document was sent as is to Tim Hegg.

Batya Ruth Wootten

“Both the Houses of Israel” (Isaiah 8:14)

by Batya Ruth Wootten

A Commentary on “The Two House Theory: Three Fatal Flaws by Tim Hegg

Since Tim Hegg’s paper appears to include those of the Messianic Israel Alliance, I would like to comment on it and to say that my husband, Angus, and I have been teaching this truth since 1983, and writing books about the subject since 1988. We began hosting conferences on the subject in 1990, and we founded the Messianic Israel Alliance in 1998.

(Books: see <http://www.mim.net/Store/Books/Books.shtml> Alliance: see <http://www.mim.net/MIA/AboutMIA.shtml> Publishing: see http://www.mim.net/Key_of_David/KeyOfDavid.shtml).

For these reasons and more we feel we have had a part to play, plus a vested interest in, the foundational teachings on this matter. However, even as the Messianic Jewish movement has grown beyond the fields of its founders, so has our movement.

Many voices now claim to speak for “Messianic Judaism.” And thus, it can be painted as a movement that teaches people about the “Jewish” (or more correctly “Hebraic”) foundations of our faith, or it can be labeled as a movement that is at least in part, responsible for having more than a quarter of a million “former Christians” deny the Messiah and convert to Judaism.

So who speaks for Messianic Judaism?

No one and every one. Good and bad alike play a part, and also affect its reputation.

The same is true for Messianic Israel. No one person can conclusively say what “Messianic Israel” believes anymore, because the many who are involved give different impressions.

As for our personal beliefs, we stand solidly with the Messianic Israel Alliance, its Shepherd and Advisory Councils. We feel honored to be known as the MIA Founders, blessed to know that the MIA has grown up and now stands on its own with fine men of character at the helm. Moreover, “The Hope of Messianic Israel” is a document that represents our foundation beliefs (you need all of Scripture to list all of them).

This document was penned long before most of the people who now teach about the subject ever understood it, or put anything about the matter into print. It represents our personal “hope” for the Body of Messiah, and it now fairly represents what the MIA continues to be about (see it at: <http://www.mim.net/Beliefs.shtml>).

Although we were there from the beginning, many now affect this burgeoning movement. Furthermore, even as it would not be fair to paint all of Messianic Judaism or any other faith with one brush stroke, so it is not fair for anyone to try to paint all of Messianic Israel with one color. Each one must be judged on his own merits, for each will fall based on his own iniquity, or stand based on his own faith (Jeremiah 31:30).

With this point in mind, and in hopes of bringing greater clarification as to what we and the Messianic Israel Alliance believe, I would now like to comment on a paper that we feel does not fairly judge, or even mistakenly represents, what we teach.

I will begin with an overview of his paper and essentially state our position, then follow that with detailed comments and Scriptural rebuttal made in the body of his text. Tim’s article can be found, in its entirety, in a reformatted state, at the end of this document.

Again, my purpose is to bring clarification, and hopefully, greater unity. As siblings in Israel, we seek reunion with all of our brothers, but feel we cannot do so at the expense of denying the truth of who we are as part of Am Yisrael.

Know that our heartfelt prayer is that there might be peace among the brethren.

Hinei ma tov uma na'im shevet achim gam yachad.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together... in unity."

Overview:

Hegg's paper seems to agree with the false reports put forth by some in Messianic Judaism about us and the faith of Messianic Israel. Similarly, when Paul was in Rome, the synagogue leaders said his "sect...[was] spoken against everywhere" (Acts 28:22). That happened because some in Israel falsely accused Paul and spread their vicious rumors abroad (Acts 6:13). In the same way, some have put forth false accusations about what we believe. As an early author in this movement, they have slandered me in particular. But a report that is based on lies spread by others is no report at all.

Hegg's paper is not an accurate report of what we teach.

We readily acknowledge that there are some who teach about Ephraim and Judah who taint it with their behavior, but the same is true in the various worlds of Judaism and Christianity. Specifically, Messianic Judaism stands guilty of being the reason for multiplied thousands denying faith in the Messiah and converting to Judaism. (Messianic Israel Herald, "The Other Side of Evangelism" by Ronda Robinson, reprinted from the Jerusalem Report Magazine:

<http://www.mim.net/Heralds/Heralds/MIHMs/MIHM0301S.pdf>

As for what we believe, we have always taught that "genealogy is unprovable, for both houses." That fact alone should remove us from under Hegg's umbrella of assertions.

Nonetheless, Hegg makes erroneous claims about our attitude toward the truth about "both the houses of Israel" (Isaiah 8:14)—while the truth is that we simply want it to be a part of our foundational faith—part of the goal toward which we are working.

Granted that we are among the primary teachers about this truth, but if mention of a truth proves that we elevate it above our faith in the Messiah, then Hegg and his publisher, First Fruits of Zion, similarly stand guilty for elevating "Torah" above the Messiah.

For example, the back cover of Hegg's book, *Fellow Heirs*, mentions the word "Torah" four times while the "Messiah" is mentioned only once. Does that mean Hegg is four times more interested in Torah than he is in the Messiah?

Probably not. It most likely means that he and First Fruits both feel called to teach about how Believers are to relate to "Torah."

We similarly feel called to teach a particular truth. We have focused on that truth because we believe it is "our part" to bring that teaching to the Body. However, we well know that no teaching stands above the foundational truth that is our Messiah. His is still "The Greatest Story Ever Told."

People who teach about faith, or healing, likewise tend to mention those words more often than the Messiah, but only because they are teaching about a particular subject. It would be spurious to argue that they cared more about their subjects than they do about the Messiah. And it is spurious to accuse us of an unnecessary focus on our given subject. Moreover, when it is a well established truth in the earth, we will find another job to do in the Kingdom.

Hegg also implies that we are so foolish as to think that telling someone something will make it true. We would be fools if we thought that to be the case, but we do not.

The question actually raised by what we teach is: Is it true that an unknown number of biological Israelites and Jews are to be found in the Church as well as scattered among the Nations?

We believe everyone who gives serious thought to the matter would have to agree that the answer is "Yes."

Moreover, who dares to say that an all-knowing God might not be revealing that very fact to many Believers at this time in history? And if so, why fight it? Why deny them the right to enjoy their heritage, even as does the Jew?

Boaz Michael (First Fruits of Zion), Hegg, and much of Messianic Judaism seem to think that descendants of Judah have a greater right to be acknowledged as heirs because most of them know about Torah and their heritage. Conversely, they believe those who feel they are heirs of brother Joseph are not to be regarded in the same way because their heritage is "unprovable." It is essentially argued that they have not obeyed Torah and have not kept the feasts, and thus are disqualified.

However, Judah was hardened to the truth of the Messiah, and Torah commands Israel to follow Him (Deuteronomy 18:18-19). He is the very reason why we celebrate the feasts.

The heirs of Judah were hardened to the Messiah, and the heirs of brother Joseph to the truth of their heritage (Isaiah 8:14; Romans 11:25). Thus we ask: Does anyone dare say that a biological heir of the people of Judah is more of an heir because they were hardened to the truth of the Messiah, but not to the truth about their heritage? Does anyone dare claim that the heirs of Judah's brother, Joseph, who were hardened to the truth of their heritage, but not to the truth of the Messiah, are any less true heirs? Furthermore, does anyone dare disqualify the heirs of the Early Jewish Believers because they chose to follow the Prophet likened unto Moses, and thus were thrown out of the synagogues? Do we dare claim that those who refused to follow Messiah Yeshua, and instead chose to follow their own interpretation of Torah (Judaism), are greater heirs than are those who did not deny Him?

Such questions are nonsense. The fact is, there is nothing on earth that anyone can believe or not believe that would change the facts about their biological grandfathers. Your grandfathers are forever your grandfathers, regardless.

Whether we know who the scattered Israelites are or not is not the point. The point is: What does our God know about them? And He says, "I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me" (Hosea 5:3).

Although it cannot presently be proven that the non-Jewish Believers are actually heirs of these once "hidden ones" of the former Northern Kingdom, conversely, no one can prove that they are not. Detractors cannot prove from whom these people of the "Nations" actually descend. Neither can they prove how many Believers there are who do not descend from the Patriarchs. Such opinions can only be based on conjecture.

Yet Hegg condemns us for believing that our God has been fulfilling His promise to greatly multiply the biological seed of Abraham. However, Scripture gives overwhelming evidence to corroborate that the Patriarchs were to have countless numbers of biological descendants. Abraham was promised an abundance of physical heirs "from his own loins." This same promise was passed down to Isaac, then to Jacob, and its multitudinous essence was finally bestowed on Joseph's son, Ephraim—whose heirs were to become a "melo hagoyim," a "fullness of the Gentiles" (Genesis 12:3; 15:5; 17:4; 26:4; 24:24,60; 28:3,14; 32:12; 48:4,16,19; Romans 4:19-20; 11:25). We further read of these great men of faith: "All these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:39-40).

When we rebut inappropriate teachings about Abraham's heirs with these facts, some claim that we are trying to "prove" that we are Jews, or Israelites. However, we are only responding to claims that the Jewish people alone are of Israel, and that we are not part of Israel.

Such mistaken claims force us to scripturally address the "Israel" question—and a study of Scripture shows that until all Israel is reunited in the Land, in the Messiah, and in sinlessness, the Lord continues to deal with both Judah and Ephraim (Ezekiel 37:15-28; Isaiah 8:14).

Hegg claims that "the Scriptures teach that the union of Israel and Judah is an event that is "distinct from the salvation of the nations." We disagree. Many in the nations already know "Salvation," or Messiah Yeshua. Moreover, they know Him based on hundreds of years of effort on the part of non-Jewish Believers, those whom we collectively call "Ephraim Israel." However, we do believe that in this last day, as Ephraim and Judah unite in greater numbers, and as the eternal principles of "Law and Grace" are taught together, Believers everywhere both will, and even now are, begin to better understand "Salvation."

Hegg seems at times to misappropriate "the spirit of adoption" as it is outlined in Scripture. Also, he denies that the Jewish people at large, as well as many rabbis, realize that most of Ephraim/Israel was scattered among the nations, and thus lost to their identity.

We agree with the rabbis and preponderance of Scripture: Ephraim/Israel was indeed scattered among the nations and lost their identity.

On one hand, Hegg argues against the idea that Israel and Judah are now being reunited, but on the other hand agrees that they will eventually be reunited: but only when Yeshua returns—or perhaps sometime in the Millennium..

The truth is that their reunion is beginning in this hour, in our day. It is that very awakening that has led to his paper.

Nonetheless, even if it were as he postulates, that Israel's reunion is to be part of our glorious future, why spurn a move in that direction at this time in history? Why not seek, to the best of our ability, to enter into every good thing that is promised to us in Israel's eternal Kingdom?

Why not? We have found that many "Christians" want to be separate from the Jew and Israel. They prefer the idea of a rapture that takes them away from difficulty. Similarly, we find that some Messianic Jews do not want the non-Jew to be equal heirs with them; they want Jewish and "Gentile" Believers to remain in separate camps; that they might have the title of "chosen Israel" to themselves. Nonetheless, they will need each other when persecution begins...

To separate the two people groups is a "politically correct" statement in many Christian and Messianic Jewish circles. Nonetheless, we maintain that non-Jewish Believers are "former" Gentiles, and that regardless of actual heritage, once they come to faith, they are part of the commonwealth of Israel. They are part of the Israel of God.

Hegg does not differentiate between unbelieving heathen/Gentiles who do battle against Israel and are defeated by them, from Ephraimites who once were, and even now are, "among the Nations." These Ephraimites, for all outward appearances, appear to be Gentiles, but in truth are not. They are instead misguided children of Israel whom the Father has been gathering through the Son, the Shepherd God of all Israel (Ezekiel 34).

But again, even if the non-Jewish Believers are not actual Israelites, once they come to faith in the Messiah, they are part of the New Covenant commonwealth of Israel.

Like the word "Gentile(s)" (goy/goyim), the name "Israel" also can have different meanings. It is used to speak of Jacob, the Twelve Tribes, the Northern Kingdom, and of a piece of real estate. Israel is even called a goy and the Twelve Tribes are called "goyim" (Genesis 12:2; Exodus 33:13; Joshua 3:17; 4:1; 5:8). Like Israel, when it comes to mention of the Nations/Gentiles, we need to seek the Author's actual meaning. We need to inquire of the Almighty.

In summation, we believe that Hegg is judging us without the benefit of actually hearing us. The following comments are therefore made in the text of his paper with the hope that they might serve to open better lines of communication between brethren.

Hegg's uninterrupted article is posted at the end of this document.

The Two-House Theory: Three Fatal Flaws

by Tim Hegg

@2002 All rights reserved. www.torahresource.com . thegg@bigplanet.com

A General Description

A phenomenon is occurring in our times that has been labeled the Two-House Movement, sometimes also called the Ephraimite Movement.

Batya:

The "Two-House" title is largely used by Moshe Koniuchowsky and not by the Messianic Israel Alliance. "The Ephraimite movement" was coined by Dan Juster, former President of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC). He spoke of our "new movement" in a paper entitled, *Is the Church Ephraim?*, and was previously available at <http://www.umjc.org>

We and many others refuted his objections in a 167 page bound Report titled, *Is the Church Ephraim: A Requested Response*. Published in 1994, this document is available in photo-copied notebook form at <http://www.mim.net/Store/Books/IsTheChurchEphraim.asp>

We coined the name "Messianic Israel" in 1992 and published "The Hope of Messianic Israel" to help clarify our foundational understandings about all Israel: Ephraim and Judah. Having this foundational document posted in each of our Newsletters allowed us to move beyond the basics and to be able to teach about the subject in more depth.

We feel the title "Ephraimite movement" is a misnomer because we have Believers from both houses, Judah and Ephraim, in our ranks, and, "Israel" is a name that was sometimes used to represent all of the tribes, but that is not so of "Judah" or "Judaism."

Similarly, we feel the "Two-House" name puts unnecessary focus on our division (which we wish to eliminate), whereas Messianic Israel is a title that focuses on our unity, on representing the whole house of Israel.

Speaking of misnomers, Messianic Judaism has more of what we would call "Ephraimites" in their ranks than they do Judahites. So why not join together and become one big happy family of "Israel," even as the Word declares that we ultimately will have to do. (While I offer this in good humor, the people of Messianic Israel truly do welcome the people of Judah with open arms. We just ask that you be happy about our "prodigal" return and come in and join the party.)

It is based upon the theory that essentially claims the following to be true:

1. The Northern Kingdom called Israel, comprised of Ten Tribes, lost their identity because of their exile to foreign lands at the hands of the Assyrians in the 8th Century BCE.
2. From the foreign lands of their exile they were dispersed to other nations, where their self-identity as Israel (Northern Tribes) was lost, and they saw themselves individually as natives of the foreign lands to which they had been dispersed (i.e., Gentiles).
3. Those who retained their identity as Jews were from the Southern Tribes of Judah and Benjamin. This group primarily makes up the Jewish communities of our modern times, and except for a small remnant, have rejected Yeshua (Jesus) as the true Messiah.

Batya:

We believe there is probably a minor representation of all twelve tribes to be found in both the houses of Israel. Moreover, we do not believe that it was a "small remnant" of Jews who followed the Messiah, but a goodly representation of the population (see Matthew 19:2; John 11:48). We believe descendants of these Early Jewish Believers can be found in the Church, and that even if we do not know who are their biological fathers, the Holy One does know. We do not believe they were cut off from being part of Israel because they chose to follow the prophesied Messiah of Israel, rather than follow a developing Judaism that denied Him (Deuteronomy 18:18-19).

4. The rise of Messianic Judaism (especially since the 1960's) has seen an influx of "Gentiles" who love Torah, take on a "Jewish" life-style, and worship in the context of ancient Israel, keeping the Sabbath, the yearly feasts, and adhere

(to one degree or another) to Torah principles. The Two-House Movement has taught that these Gentiles, unknown to themselves, are actually the descendents of the "Lost Ten Tribes."

Batya:

We believe that genealogy is unprovable, for both houses, and no one can know for certain that they are an heir of the Patriarchs. However, we do not deny those who feel they might be a biological descendant of Israel, and we even offer an abundance of Scriptures that affirm this as yet unprovable, but very probable claim.

We do not seek to follow "Jewish traditions," but to follow the truths of Scripture as given to all Israel, not just to Judah. The truths of Torah predate the traditions of Judaism. Judaism is a religion that was founded after the destruction of the Temple. Besides, we find that there is error in Judaism even as there is error in the Church.

The reason that they are so inwardly drawn to Torah and to a Torah life-style is because they actually have the soul of an Israelite—they are the descendents of the Northern Tribes of Israel. It is therefore imperative that the truth of their identity be received, and they began to live and act as the people they actually are: the descendants of physical Israel.

Batya:

This may well be the reason they are being drawn, even if it cannot be proven, for Yeshua does say that His Israelite sheep "hear His voice." Nonetheless, we suggest that even those who feel they are not biologically descended from the Patriarchs, yet follow the Messiah of Israel, would do well to begin to embrace the wisdom of Torah. Moreover, the Word declares that they have been brought nigh to the New Covenant commonwealth of Israel and share citizenship in it (Ephesians 2:11-22). Therefore, we encourage them to give due honor to the Laws that were once given to the people of that ancient commonwealth.

5. Since Ephraim was the largest of the Northern Tribes, and since prophets like Isaiah used the name Ephraim to designate the nation of the Northern Tribes after the division of the United Kingdom, the movement has also been designated as the Ephraimite Movement.

Batya:

Some outsiders do this but we do not. We do sometimes use the title "Ephraimites" to designate the non-Jewish Believers (or to speak of all the "unknown Israelites" who are not of Judah), but we do not refer to our movement by this name.

6. The Two-House Movement believes that the recognition that Gentiles within the Torah movement are not Gentiles at all, but the actual descendants of the Northern Tribes, is the beginnings of the prophetic fulfillment that Ephraim and Judah ("Judah" designates the Southern Tribes of Judah and Benjamin) would one day be united as a single nation again.

Batya:

Ephraim was destined to become a "melo hagoyim," or "fullness of the Gentiles" (Genesis 48:19), but no one can know the exact number of his heirs. The ArtScroll Tanach Series says melo means a "fullness" and, "Connotes abundance...meaning: His seed will become the abundance of the nations....They will have to inhabit lands of other nations" (Genesis, Vol. 6, Mesorah, 1982, p 2121). Melo also is used in Psalm 24:1: "The earth is the LORD'S, and the [melo] fulness thereof, (KJV), or "all it contains" (NASB). Strong's Concordance defines melo (# 4393) as "fulness," and goy/goyim (#1471) as "Gentile, heathen, nation, people."

Besides, Jeremiah does speak of Ephraim repenting and coming to "know himself" (vs 31:1819). And apparently, once Ephraim comes to understand his own Israelite heritage, he ceases to be "jealous" of Judah. He even begins to behave in a way that causes Judah to quit "vexing" him (Isaiah 11:13).

7. Since the Northern Tribes are being regathered under the banner of Yeshua within the return to Torah in these Messianic congregations, the "stick" of Ephraim is being recognized once again, and thus the first step of fulfillment of the two sticks becoming one is becoming possible in our day (the parable of the two sticks is found in Ezekiel 37:16-17). But it is only when those who think they are Gentiles come to recognize their real identity as actual, physical Israelites that the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy may be realized.

Batya:

When the people feel that they too are "part" of Israel, they are far more inclined to behave like

Israelites. When they think they are part of an “unrelated” Church, they have no real interest in Israel beyond viewing her as a “prophetic time bomb” that gives evidence of the proximity of the “Rapture.” Or they think Jewish people are a chosen lot whom God Himself will have to deal with. They do not realize that they too are part of the chosen people, that Judah is their brother, and that they have a sovereign to provoke him to jealousy (1 Peter 1:1; 2:9-10; Romans 11).

We include those who feel they are “unrelated Gentiles” in our ranks, even as “companions” are included in the joining of Ezekiel’s two sticks. We believe that they too are part of Israel, and that understanding their “Israelite brotherhood,” whether biological or not, encourages a more mature brotherhood and greater sense of purpose.

8. As a result, those who hold to this belief have formed their own congregations and fellowships (or denominations). They believe that only those congregations or communities who affirm this belief are furthering God’s plans to unite Israel and Judah into the one nation of Israel in the last days.

Batya:

Because they believe that Torah is for the non-Jew, First Fruits of Zion, and even Tim Hegg, have likewise formed “their own congregations.” So why condemn us for doing the same thing? Everyone does this because they want to be around people who believe as they do. They want to be free to discuss their faith. It should not be insinuated that those who believe in the truth about Ephraim and Judah are being unnecessarily “cultish.” If so, then everyone in Messianic Judaism likewise stands guilty, because they too once broke away from other Believers and formed their own congregations.

For the record, we think there are many Believers who are doing good works that are furthering the Kingdom and they don’t have a clue about what we teach!

Fatal Flaws in This Perspective

At first, to many, this explanation rings true in their own experience. Many Gentiles have wondered why they are so drawn to the Torah, to a love for Israel, and to all things “Jewish.” They wonder why, in light of the fact that the mainline Church continues to reject Torah, they are drawn to Torah, and are so willing to be rejected for their love of Torah. Given the explanation that they are actually Israel and have Israelite blood gives a reason for their inward love of Torah and the draw to take on a Torah life-style. After all, the Torah embodies the covenant of which they are actually members through bloodline, or so they are told.

Batya:

It rings true because it probably is true. However, merely telling someone something will not make it true. The question is: Is it true that an unknown number of biological Israelites and Jews are to be found in the Church as well as scattered among the Nations? If so, why fight that fact? Why deny Israelites the right to enjoy their heritage, just as the Jew does?

Are we to argue, bite and devour one another over their unprovable numbers?

Why not accept the fact that Scripture gives overwhelming evidence that the Patriarchs were to have countless numbers of biological descendants. Abraham was promised physical heirs from his loins that would be like the stars of the sky for number. This same promise of “myriads” of descendants was passed down to Isaac, then to Jacob, with its essence finally being bestowed on Joseph’s son, Ephraim, who was to become a “melo hagoyim,” a “fullness of the Gentiles” (Genesis 12:3; 15:5; 17:4; 26:4; 24:24,60; 28:3,14; 32:12; 48:4,16,19).

YHVH said to Isaac, “To you and to your seed...I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham” (Genesis 26:3).

Isaac then passed the blessing to his son Jacob when he said, “May He [YHVH] also give you the blessing of Abraham” (Genesis 28:4).

The Chronicler later reiterated the promise: “The covenant which He [God] made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, He also confirmed to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant” (1 Chronicles 16:16-17).

The New Covenant (Brit Chadashah) reveals that Abraham “lived as an alien in the land of promise... with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise” (Hebrews 11:9).

But there are fatal flaws in this perspective because the Bible does not support it. In fact, the Bible teaches a

much different reality.

1. The Two House theory is built upon the presupposition that the Northern Tribes were lost among the nations and have forgotten their true identity. In general, biblical and historical data show conclusively that the Northern Tribes were never lost.

Batya:

We disagree. Much of Christianity teaches that Believers are unrelated Gentiles, however, Scripture and Jewish history both teach that the Ten Tribes of Israel were scattered among the nations, there to lose their identity.

The warning of their impending dispersion begins in Torah itself, saying the disobedient ones of Israel will be scattered among the Gentiles: "YHVH will scatter you among the peoples.... There you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone...." However, it also promises the heirs of these scattered ones: "But from there you will seek YHVH your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to YHVH your God and listen to His voice" (Deuteronomy 4:27-30).

This speaks of Israelite idol worshipers who come to a place of repentance in the last days. This does not describe Judah, but it well describes the Ephraimite phenomenon we now see before our eyes. (See also Leviticus 26:3; Deuteronomy 30:3).

The Book of Hosea further tells of Ephraim's dispersion among the nations, saying they would become "LoAmmi," or "Not-My- People." Their punishment would be that they would, for a season, lose their identity, but ultimately would "respond" to the Holy One and thus become "Sons of the Living God" (Hosea 1-2).

Although Ephraim was "swallowed up...among the nations," YHVH nonetheless said of them: "I will shake the house of Israel among all nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, but not a kernel will fall to the ground" (Hosea 8:8; Amos 9:9).

Although they were scattered among all peoples and would become idolaters serving and bowing down to gods unknown to their fathers, still, the God of Israel would have mercy on the house of Israel. Not even a kernel of their scattered seed would be lost to Him: "I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me," says the Almighty One (Hosea 5:3).

As for Judaism's opinion of the Lost Tribes, it is generally acknowledged in the Jewish community, and by most rabbis, that the children of Ephraim were scattered among the nations and thus were lost to their identity.

I quote the Encyclopaedia Judaica, which says of the Ephraimites once exiled to Assyria: "It is evident that as a rule they did not possess the status of slaves or of an oppressed population. The exiles were first settled in Mesopotamia as land tenants of the king...the craftsmen among them were employed in state enterprise. Eventually, some of the exiles achieved economic and social status and even occupied high ranking positions in the Assyrian administration...The striking of roots in Mesopotamian society by a large part of the descendants of the Israelite exiles resulted in their eventual absorption into the foreign milieu." (Encyclopaedia Judaica, Keter, 1972, Exile, Assyrian, p 1036.)

Over the years, many rabbis have taught that the two houses have not yet been reunited. For example, the ArtScroll Tanach Series says of the noted Rambam (Moshe Ben Nachman), in his comments on Ezra: "Rambam maintains that the Ten Tribes did not return to the Land...The Jewish settlers in Jerusalem consisted only of members of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and a few representatives of other tribes." [Ezra, Mesorah, 1984, p 151.]

"Belief in the continued existence of the ten tribes was regarded as an incontrovertible fact during the whole period of the Second Temple and of the Talmud." (Encyclopaedia Judaica, "Ten Lost Tribes.")

Many rabbis have long believed that great will be the day when the exiles of Israel are reassembled. They believe that The Ten Tribes shall return and have a share in the "World-to-Come" [See: Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Everyman's Talmud, New American Edition, Dutton, N.Y., 1949, p. 354; Rabbi Rafael Eisenberg, A Matter of Return, Feldheim, Jerusalem & New York, 1980, p 130; and House of David Herald, Restored Ephraim: Key To Israel's Victory, Vol 12, Book 3; Do The Rabbis Expect To See the Lost Tribes, John Hulley, Jerusalem, 2000.]

Numerous Jewish writings claim that those of Joseph/Ephraim were, and still are, lost in the Diaspora as "Gentiles." They believe Joseph is very much alive.

We find such quotes in the writings of Israeli scholar, Yair Davidy, who recites many Rabbinical commentators to prove his points about Ephraim's dispersion.

Davidy writes, "Taken at face value most [Jewish Commentators] easily lend themselves to a 'Lost Ten Tribes In Western Europe' interpretation." [Ephraim, chapter eight, Yair Davidy, Israel, 1995. Also see Lost Israelite Identity by Davidy, Jerusalem, 1996.]

In the ancient book, Second Esdras, we read, "The ten tribes which were led away from their own land into captivity in the days of King Hoshea"—"They were taken into a strange country. But then they resolved to leave the country populated by the Gentiles and go to a distant land never yet inhabited by man." "They have lived there ever since..." (vss 13:40-46). [The New English Bible With the Apocrypha, Oxford, 1970. The Apocrypha is an ancient writing that offers an early view of this matter.]

(Also see Who is Israel? Past, Present, and Future, pp 130-131. (Footnotes from that book were placed in the above section in brackets [] .)

The very core of the Two House theory is the presupposition that the Northern Tribes lost their identity and considered themselves as Gentiles. Does this notion match biblical and historical data?

Batya:

Yes it does.

A) Biblical Data:

- The Apostle Paul presupposes this truth as seen in Romans 9:25, where he likens the Gentiles to the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom by referencing Hosea (vss. 1:6-8).
- There are many prophecies in Scripture that only Ephraim could fulfill. His children are to be brought back as "mighty men" and be as "numerous as they were before" (Zechariah 10:7-9). Also, Jacob's blessings over his sons foretold their future and what would happen to them in the "last days" (Genesis 49:1). (See the Herald Newsletter, "Are The Lost Ten Tribes Really Lost?" by the late Phinehas Ben Zadok, Jewish Holocaust survivor: <http://www.mim.net/Heralds/Heralds/HODHs/0166/0166.html>).
- YHVH's people are described as "lost" sheep without a shepherd. Although they went astray, they are sought out by their Shepherd God (Psalm 119:176; Isaiah 53:6; 40:11; Ezekiel 34:4,16; Matthew 15:24; 18:11; Luke 15:4; 1 Peter 1:1; 2:25).
- They are lost to man, but not to YHVH (Deuteronomy 28:64; Hosea 5:3; 8:8; Amos 9:9).
- Messiah Yeshua came for the "lost sheep of the House of Israel" (Matthew 10:6).

B) Historical data:

Many Jewish rabbis and Jewish historians teach that the Northern Tribes were "lost."

- The Artscroll Chumash says the modern-day Jews are primarily descended from the Southern Kingdom, not the Northern Kingdom, which vital point is often overlooked.
- In Artscroll Bereishis, Volume 1(b) we read of Genesis 48:19 and Ephraim:
- "R. Munk explains: 'while it is true that the dispersion [of the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh] was caused by the unfaithfulness and sinfulness of Ephraim's descendants (Hos. 7:8ff), Jacob's blessing was not in vain for "they will return to [Elohim]" and will have their share in the world to come (Sanhedrin 110b).' And R. Eliezer adds: 'Even the darkness in which the Ten Tribes were lost will one day become as radiant as the day' (according to the version of Avos d'Rabbi Nosson 36).and their Messiah the Mashiach ben Yosef, Messiah son of Joseph (Succah 52a), also called Messiah son of Ephraim (Targum Yonasan on Exodus 40:11), will play an essential role in humanity's redemption, for he will be the precursor of the Mashiach ben David, Messiah Son of David. It is therefore not surprising to find that the prophet Jeremiah (3:12) speaks affectionately of Ephraim. In this light, Jacob's words, his offspring will fill the nations, assume the significance of blessing" (pp. 2121-2122).
- Artscroll Stone Edition Chumash and Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch: In regards to Deuteronomy 32:26, "I said, I would scatter them into the corners..."
- The Artscroll Stone Edition Chumash says, "This refers to the exile of the Ten Tribes, who were scattered to an unknown place where they have never been heard from again." It goes on to say that Israel will thrive and fulfill YHVH's intentions (pp. 1105-1106). Hirsch in his commentary on the Pentateuch on the same verse translates the phrase, "I would scatter them into the corners..." as, "I would relegate them into a corner.." and then says that the Hebrew refers to the "extreme end of a surface, the side or corner..." He, too, relates this fate to the Ten Tribes and says, "left entirely to themselves, they

could mature towards serious reflection and ultimate return to...." (p. 650).

- Encyclopedia Judaica, "Tribes, Lost Ten: (Written by: Executive Committee of the Editorial Board. Joseph Jacobs): "...If the Ten Tribes have disappeared, the literal fulfillment of the prophecies would be impossible....The numerous attempts at identification that have been made constitute some of the most remarkable curiosities of literature."
- In the Apocrypha's Fourth Book of Ezra (xiii. 39-45) it is declared that the Ten Tribes were carried by Hosea, king in the time of Shalmaneser, to the Euphrates, at the narrow passages of the river, whence they went on for a journey of a year and a half to a place called Arzareth.
- Jewish Literacy: the Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, its People, and its History by Joseph Telushkin: "No Jews have been able to trace their ancestry accurately to any tribe except for Judah and Levi.... It appears that most of the Ten Tribes' descendants assimilated into the societies in which they were exiled. And unlike the 'Marranos', many of whom maintained a secret tradition affirming their Jewishness, the assimilation of the Ten Tribes appears to have been total and irrevocable."
- Yair Davidy (<http://www.britam.org/index.html>), provides much historical evidence about Israel's dispersion.
- An Internet search on Google using the words, "Ten Lost Tribes Israel" produces 79 pages of reference, proving that many are writing about the subject.

These and many other Jewish sources, such as A Look at Jewish Concepts, by Phillip Birnbaum, agree with us, and with Scripture. The Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom were assimilated, swallowed up, among "all nations" (Deuteronomy 28:64; Hosea 8:8; Amos 9:9).

While it may be true that some individuals may have lost knowledge of their heritage after many generations of being dispersed among the nations, in general the dispersed tribes of Israel have maintained their identity in their dispersion among the nations. Granted, many rejected their covenant obligations (Sabbath, festivals, circumcision, etc.) and even wanted to be viewed as Gentiles, but try as they would, their identity as physical descendants of ancient Israel could not be erased.

Batya:

It was more than "some." It had to be the majority because that was their prophesied destiny. Moreover, their identity as physical Israelites cannot be erased from the mind of the Almighty. However, biological heritage could be readily be forgotten by an adulterous people.

How many Believers in our day can accurately recite the names of their forefathers going back a mere 150-200 years? Not many.

The Almighty decreed that Ephraim would be punished for a season by being "Not- My-People" (Hosea 1:9-10; 2:23; Romans 9:25-26). His people are "Israel." Thus the hallmark of the scattered ones would be that they would not be recognizable Israelites. They would even be idol worshipers, that is, until their punishment was up. Then the veil would begin to fall from their blinded eyes and they would realize the truth about their lost heritage. (To understand the timing of Ephraim's punishment, see the book, Restoring Israel's Kingdom by Angus Wootten: <http://www.mim.net/Store/Books/RestoringIsraelsKingdom.asp>.)

A similar veil is now falling from Judah's blinded eyes, and he is seeing the Messiah. For both houses were hardened, but in different ways. Thus, "both the houses of Israel...stumble over the Sanctuary [the Messiah]." They stumble because both have been "partially blinded/hardened." Both only see in part (Isaiah 8:14; John 2:19-22; Romans 11:25).

a. The prophets who spoke of the dispersion of Israel teach that even in her dispersion she remembers her true identity.

Batya:

Not so. Her "identity" calls for faithfulness to her husband. She is spiritually "lost" because she is unfaithful to Him. In her dispersion she loses sight of her set-apart and chosen call.

The prophet Hosea paints the picture of Israel as an unfaithful wife. In her unfaithfulness she leaves her marriage and plays the harlot with others, meaning that spiritually she worships false gods and claims false religions as her religion. She is "joined to another" and leaves her husband behind. In the prophetic metaphor, actually lived out in the

marriage of Hosea and his wife, Gomer, the prophet pursues his wayward wife and buys her back, bringing her back into his house.

Batya:

Similarly, for the past 1900 years, the Messiah has been pursuing, and even finding in great numbers, formerly wayward and lost Israelites.

But note carefully that even when Israel (portrayed as the prophet's wayward wife) is joined to her lovers in the role of a harlot, she knows who her real husband is.

Batya:

Any wife who messes around with another man has surely “forgotten” her husband on some level.

In fact, when she seeks help from her lovers (the false religions she has engaged in as she has been dispersed among the nations)

Batya:

Again, this describes the non-Jew more so than the Jew. While they have missed the Messiah, they have sought to be faithful to the God of Israel and have not been known for serving other gods. However, everyone must admit that Messianic Judaism has all but screamed at the nonJewish Believers about the “pagan roots of their faith.”

and they abandon her, she reasons this way:

"She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; And she will seek them, but will not find them. Batya: No, it is YHVH who is saying this of back-sliding Israel.

Then she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband, For it was better for me then than now!' (Hosea 2:7)

Batya:

After she has played the harlot, she repents, and wants to return to her husband. No time frame is established concerning this prophetic picture; and in this latter-day, we see many nonJewish Believers who want to return to their heritage, to enter into it in a more full and glorious way. They even want to move beyond the flaws of Jewish tradition. Messiah Yeshua has bought them with a price, and now, with all their heart, they want to return to Him, and to the truth of their renewed Israelite faith. It is happening. In these last days, a formerly wanton Israel is responding to the Messiah and seeking to take on His “yoke” (Hosea 10:11; Matthew 11:29-30).

Note carefully that she had not forgotten who her true husband was, nor had she forgotten that she was once married to the One true God of Israel. She knew who her first Husband was, and she knew that she was better off when she was married to Him. It clearly shows that she had not lost her former identity.

Batya:

Gomer certainly “forgot” Hosea while she was lying with her lovers. Moreover, the names of Joseph’s two sons foretell the fate of Joseph’s seed: Manasseh (causing to forget) Ephraim (Doubly Fruitful). Those of Joseph would for a season forget their heritage, but later would become doubly fruitful (Ephraim Frank, www.1st-born.com).

YHVH says of adulterous Ephraim, “Those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive, how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations” (Ezekiel 6:9). And, “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 YHVH. 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 10:7-10).

Natan Lawrence, Shepherd of Hoshana Rabbah Congregation in Portland, Oregon, says: "The relationship between Hosea and Gomer is antitypical. In Scripture there are many antitypes that prophetically prefigure a future type. Never does the antitype perfectly fit the future type. If that were so, everything about Gomer and Hosea would need to be replicated in the future type down to the color of her hair and the amount of money he bought her for. Yeshua, for example, bought us with his blood, not 15 shekels of silver. And we could go on. Of course, Gomer remembered Hosea. They were not separated for hundreds or thousands of years over many generations. YHVH and Israel were....Paul understands the point of the antitype and makes a leap when he equates the Gentiles with Gomer in Romans 9:25."

Furthermore, that fact the Hosea uses language like "Israel has forgotten his maker" (8:14) does mean that she no longer knows about God. The word "forgotten" is used in a covenant sense, meaning that Israel has willfully acted against the covenant.

Batya:

Zechariah and others speak of Ephraim Israel needing to "remember" their God (see above). And the supposed "Gentile Believers" have surely forgotten Israel's Torah, concluding that it is no more. How can we dispute that this describes the actions of non-Jewish "Believers" in Jesus? Moreover, the Father said of Ephraim, "Though I wrote for him ten thousand precepts of My law [Torah], they are regarded as a strange thing" (Hosea 8:12).and, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priests. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children" (Hosea 4:1,6).

Forgetting the wise precepts of the Torah describes Ephraim, not Judah.

For instance, at the reiteration of the covenant when Israel was about to enter the Land God says:

Deut. 8:19 "It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish.

Batya:

Yes, but He also says, "Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a delightful child? Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him, I certainly still remember him; therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him" (Jeremiah 31:20).

Surely many of our forefathers perished apart from a true faith and repentant return to in our God. However, in our day, in His infinite mercy, the Father is now allowing prodigal Ephraim to find the pathway of purity that leads back home to his Father's house (Jeremiah 31:21; Isaiah 27:9; Luke 15:11-32).

The same language is used during the time of the Judges:

Judg. 3:7 The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

It is also used during the united monarchy under King Saul:

1Sam. 12:9 "But they forgot the LORD their God, so He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the army of Hazar, and into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

The fact that the word "forget" (n~w) is used in a covenant sense is clear from the very text of Hosea, for God Himself "forgets" Israel. This cannot mean that He no longer is aware of their existence, but that He sets aside the blessings of the covenant as a result of her disobedience:

Hos. 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest.

Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Batya:

How much is "forgotten" in this mutual "forgetting" is conjecture. That people can claim to have a relationship with the "Creator," and yet in reality know little about Him, or of what He asks of them, is a given.

The Father speaks of forgetting Ephraim's "children," which speaks of subsequent generations. As stated above, Ephraim's children need to remember their God, they need to come to know Him in an even greater way. They need to enter into the fullness of the covenant once promised to the House of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

Thus, when Israel is said to have "forgotten her Maker," it does not mean that she no longer knows He exists, or knows that He is her God. It means she has acted unfaithfully to the covenant and neglected to live according to its precepts. She has denied the God Who owns her.

Batya:

They may "know" that there is a God, and that He is the "God of Israel," but they have clearly forgotten their "covenant call" to be part of that set-apart people who give true credence to "lion of Judah, the feasts of Israel, the Torah and its covenants. They "forgot" because their forefathers did not teach them the full truth, because they had been hardened to it due to sin.

Even before the Northern Tribes were exiled, in the prophecies of Isaiah warning her of the impending judgment if she did not return to covenant faithfulness, the prophet describes Israel as having "forgotten" her God:

Is. 17:10 For you have forgotten the God of your salvation And have not remembered the rock of your refuge. Therefore you plant delightful plants and set them with vine slips of a strange god.

Once again, "to forget" or to "not remember" means to act in unfaithfulness to the covenant. This prophesy was given while Israel was still in the Land. It is impossible, therefore, that "you have forgotten the God of your salvation" could mean "you have forgotten that you are the nation that has a covenant with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!"

Batya:

Again, this has to do with "their children" who were scattered among every nation, and those children have certainly forgotten that they were once part of a covenant nation.

b. Historical data, archaeological evidence, and other ancient documents point to the fact that even into the Common Era, the identity of the Northern Tribes was known and received.

Archaeological finds from the region of Kanna', a separate colony outside of Assyria, and dated to 650 and 606 BCE, show contracts containing distinct Hebrew names. These were Israelites deported by Sargon II from Samaria. Under the conquest of Assyria by Babylonia, they must have enjoyed group rights and privileges under the law of the land.

Batya:

That they were there is a fact of history. However, the Encyclopaedia Judaica says the exiled Ephraimites: "It is evident that as a rule they did not possess the status of slaves or of an oppressed population. The exiles were first settled in Mesopotamia as land tenants of the king...the craftsmen among them were employed in state enterprise. Eventually, some of the exiles achieved economic and social status and even occupied high ranking positions in the Assyrian administration...The striking of roots in Mesopotamian society by a large part of the descendants of the Israelite exiles resulted in their eventual absorption into the foreign milieu." (Keter, 1972, Exile, Assyrian, p 1036.)

Moreover, some 137 years after the Northern Tribes were taken into exile, Assyria was conquered by Babylon. Since evidence shows that the exiled Northern Tribes retained their identity as a separate people group with privileges and Hebrew names, it is beyond doubt that Israelites and exiles from Judah were reunited, having been exiled to the same regions.

Batya:

While this may have been the case for a limited number, it is not reasonable to make this assumption.

To understand what happened to the people of Ephraim, we must see that at the time they were taken captive:

- They had their own king and functioned as a separate kingdom (2 Kings 17:1-3).
- They were taken to cities that varied in distance from 250 to 350 miles north of Babylon, which is where Judah was taken.
- It was 135 years, or several generations later, before Judah was taken captive.
- Judah was settled "by the river Chebar" (Ezekiel 1:1), whereas Ephraim was scattered "beyond the Euphrates River" (1 Kings 14:15).

There were many miles and several generations between the deportation of Ephraim to Assyria and the later deportation of Judah to Babylon. Note also that these two peoples were openly hostile toward one

another when they occupied the Promised Land.

Despite these facts, many people do not see the differences between the two kingdoms. They do not realize that there were different deportations and times, as well as different prophecies and promises that apply to each group.

Where are the Ephraimites today?

The Encyclopaedia Judaica notes that Josephus, the first century historian, stated in his Antiquities: "The ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude not to be estimated in numbers." (Ten Lost Tribes, p 1004.)

Alfred Edersheim, the 19th century Jewish Believer and theologian, wrote in his respected work, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah: "The great mass of the ten tribes was in the days of Messiah, as in our own, lost to the Hebrew nation." (1973, Eerdmans, pp 15-16.) Edersheim also calls them: "Those wanderers of the ten tribes whose trackless footsteps seem as mysterious as their after-fate." (p 14.)

In his study of rabbinical thought regarding the lost tribes, Edersheim concludes:

"As regards the ten tribes there is this truth underlying...that, as their persistent apostasy from the God of Israel and His worship had cut them off from His people, so the fulfillment of the Divine promises to them in the latter days would imply, as it were a second birth to make them once more Israel." (p 15.) (See Who is Israel?..., pp 33-36.)

Furthermore, Ezekiel, the prophet of the exile, lived, preached, and worked in Babylon. Thus his words about Babylonian Israel should not be overlooked. Who could have known better than he the component elements of the Jewish community of the exile?

Batya:

Ezekiel surely knew what was going on with Israel and Judah. He knew very well that his prophecies spoke of the end-times. And that the "two sticks" that represented them would be fully reunited at that time.

Beyond this fact, the people of the Northern Kingdom did not consider themselves to be "of Judah." And, how many children of scattered Ephraim Israel lived and died during the Ephraimite diaspora that began some 135 years before Judah was even taken to Babylon? There were whole generations who would have essentially had no contact with a people with whom they had repeatedly gone to war. They did not like each other even when they were close neighbors. How much more would they be unconcerned with those who were out of sight and out of mind?

That their ancient enmity continued is even intimated in the Brit HaDoshah: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46; also see Luke 9:52-53; John 4:9; 8:48).

Moreover, 350 miles is a lot of distance to cover when all one has is a horse and buggy, and that only if you were fairly wealthy.

In the famous prophecy of the two sticks, we should note the words carefully:

Ezek 37:16 "And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, 'For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.'

Upon the first stick is written "For Judah and the for the sons of Israel, his companions." The "sons of Israel, his companions" must refer to Benjamin. Upon the second stick is written "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions." This must mean that the Northern Tribes as they existing in Ezekiel's time constituted a unified, identifiable entity who survived their deportation and settled in Assyria.

Batya:

Ezekiel is prophesying about the last days. He gives three hallmarks That prove the two houses have not been fully reunited to this day.

In Who is Israel? I quote several prophecies that have to do with a fully restored Israel: When the two houses of Israel unite, "The House of Jacob [Judah] shall be fire, and the House of Joseph [Ephraim] flame, and the House of Esau shall be straw." For YHVH has sworn, "I will bend Judah as My bow, I will fill the bow with Ephraim...and I will make you like a warrior's sword" (see Obadiah 1:18, TNKH; Zechariah 9:13; 1 Samuel 17:45; Isaiah 11:13-14).

"The sons of Israel will come, both they and the sons of Judah as well; they will go along weeping as they go, and it will be YHVH their God they will seek. They will ask for the way to Zion, turning their faces in its direction; they will come that they may join themselves to YHVH in an ever-lasting covenant..." "At that time...search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found" (Jeremiah 50:4-5,20).

Those once called "faithless Israel and treacherous Judah" will yet return to Zion:

"I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding. And...when you are multiplied in the Land ...they shall say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they miss it, nor shall it be made again. At that time they shall call Jerusalem, The Throne of YHVH...[and] will not walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north" (Jeremiah 3:14-18).

"Days are coming...when it will no longer be said, 'As YHVH lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' but, 'As YHVH lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them.' For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers" (Jeremiah 16:11-16).

The Holy One will save the house of Judah and the house of Israel from the east and the west. He will return to Zion, and thereafter Judah and Ephraim will call Zion "The City of Truth" (Zechariah 8:3,7,13). Ezekiel describes reunited Israel:

"Take one stick for Judah, then take another stick for Ephraim," for thus says the LORD God of Israel, "I will make them one stick in My hand. And, I will make them one nation in the land. One king will be king for all of them. They will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms. And they will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions...I will be their God and they shall be My people...and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in my ordinances...And they shall live on the land I gave to Jacob...forever...and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forever" (Ezekiel 37:22-26).

From these verses we can only conclude that Judah and Ephraim have not been reunited:

- After Judah's partial return from Babylon, they left the Land again. But once YHVH reunites the two, they will live on the Land forever. They will no longer give away portions of the Promised Land for peace.
- Scripture describes a reunited Israel that does not even remember the Ark. Instead, they remember their Deliverer in terms of a glorious Exodus yet to come. Until we see a people who exhibit those characteristics, Israel's reunion is not yet fully manifested.
- Ephraim and Judah have yet to experience the complete destruction of their enemies: the Philistines and Babylon.
- Once YHVH reunites Israel, they do not defile themselves with any of their transgressions. There is no iniquity in Israel, nor sin in Judah: "This will be the full price of the pardoning of [Jacob's] sin: When he makes all the altar stones like pulverized chalk stones; when Asherim and incense altars will not stand" (Isaiah 27:9). Neither Christianity nor Judaism is entirely pure in practice. In their present states, neither qualifies as Ezekiel's fully reunited house.
- When YHVH reunites all Israel, they will have one King. Since He is the last King the world will have, He is none other than the King of kings and LORD of lords—Yeshua—the Shepherd King of Israel.
- Never, since their scattering, have Judah and Ephraim fulfilled these Scriptures. Since their dispersion, the two houses have not been one nation in the land, with control over all their inheritance. Nor have they had a Davidic king over them. Nor have they become a people who do not defile themselves with any of their sins and transgressions.

(See Who is Israel? pp 128-130.)

Furthermore, Ezekiel details the distribution of the Land to the Ten Tribes (Ezek 45:8; 47:13, 21-23; 48:1,19, 23,29,,31) meaning that he considered them identifiable in his time.

Batya:

The Land is distributed after the two sticks are reunited in the last days, when there is no more sin among them, and they are no more plucked up from the Land, and have but one King over them, that

being Messiah Yeshua.

Ezekiel affirms that Israel is to use “just weights and measures” (vs 45:10). And if we allow for converts among the Jewish people, yet call them “Jews,” we must likewise use that standard for Ephraim. If all who sojourn with Judah are “Jews,” then all who sojourn with Ephraim are “Ephraimites.”

As for Land inheritance, the Father says, “You shall divide it by lot for an inheritance among yourselves and among the aliens who stay in your midst, who bring forth sons in your midst. And they shall be to you as the native-born among the sons of Israel; they shall be allotted an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And in the tribe with which the alien stays, there you shall give him his inheritance,” declares the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 47:22-23).

If this is our ultimate goal, why not embrace that eternal principle now? Why put it off? To do otherwise makes one appear to be holding oneself apart, aloft, and above the rest. Either that, or trying to avoid being counted with the Jewish people.

Jeremiah also identifies the House of Israel as a known entity well after their exile into Assyria (Gen 31:31ff). Zechariah, the latest of the prophets, likewise addresses his prophecy to the House of Israel, indicating that he knew of their existence as an identifiable entity (Zech 8:13).

Batya:

Many of the prophets addressed the scattered tribes, but that does not mean they were present at the time. It means the Almighty wanted to have messages recorded and ready for them when His appointed time came. Even so, we are reading them and being inspired by them in our day.

“In the last days,” and “At that time,” are phrases often used in Scripture. Again and again the prophets spoke of Israel’s future return and full restoration. “Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, ‘Return, faithless Israel,’ declares YHVH....” (Jeremiah 3:12).

Moreover, in Ezekiel 37:21 where the prophet speaks of taking the “children of Israel from among the nations where they have gone” ...he can only be referring to Assyria and Babylon, since at this time these are the only nations to which they had been exiled. Note carefully the perfect., “they have gone there” is not future-it does not read “where they will go.”

Batya:

Ephraim was initially taken to Assyria (2 Kings 17:6; 18:12; 1 Chronicles 5:26). However, countless books have been written about their continued diaspora. We see it in Second Esdras: “The ten tribes...were led away from their own land into captivity in the days of King Hoshea.... They were taken into a strange country. But then they resolved to leave the country populated by the Gentiles and go to a distant land never yet inhabited by man.” And, “They have lived there ever since...” (vss 13:40-46). (The New English Bible With the Apocrypha, Oxford, 1970).

The Artscroll Tanach Series, Bereishis, quotes Orthodox Jewish sage Ibn Ezra concerning Ephraim’s Genesis 48:19 blessing: “ Many nations will descend from him....[T]he word, fullness, melo, connotes abundance, the phrase meaning; and his seed will become the abundance of the nations (Neter; Karnei Or)” (p. 2121). According to Radak (Rabbi David Kimchi of the Middle Ages), “...the lands of others will be filled with his scattered descendants.”

Scattered Israel is ultimately gathered from the coastlands, or extreme recesses of the earth (Deuteronomy 32:26; Ezekiel 20:13; Jeremiah 31:1, compare vss. 5-11 and Matthew 24:31). Again, they were scattered among “all nations” (Deuteronomy 28:64; Hosea 8:8; Amos 9:9).

In the Book of Acts we see there were “Jews...from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). Judah was scattered among every nation, so why not Ephraim?

And that, in greater numbers, since he outnumbered Judah ten to one (1 Kings 11:31,36; 1 Samuel 11:8; Jeremiah 33:24; Zechariah 8:23).

To say Ephraim would only be found in those areas denies both Scripture and our self-evident nomadic nature. Anyone who has ever tried to maintain a current mailing list knows that people, especially in this day, tend to move around a lot. Remember the proverb, “Wandering Jew”?

For Ezekiel, the Northern Tribes are a known entity within the lands historically known as Assyria and Babylon. The Targum (dated between 2nd Century BCE and 2nd Century CE) emphasizes this fact by translating the phrase “where

they have gone" with the Aramaic...where they have been exiled."

In the introduction to The Book of Tobit (dated 275-125 BCE), we read:

The Book of the words of Tobit, the son of Tobiel, the son of Hananiel, the son of Aduel, the son of Gabael, the son of Raphael, of the seed of Asiel, of the tribe of Naphtali: who in the days of Shalmanezzer, King of the Assyrians, was carried away captive out of Thisbe.

Tribal identity is here clearly maintained 500 years after the exile of the Northern Tribes.

Batya:

True, some from the Northern Tribes maintained a record of their identity, however, the majority were punished with the punishment of becoming "Not-My-People," or "Lo-Ammi.,"

A 3rd Century CE Latin Poet Commodian (in the Carmen and Instructions) and the author of the Acts of St. Matthew may preserve an otherwise lost Jewish apocalyptic and apocryphal work that apparently described the living conditions of the Northern Tribes of Israel. While it is not certain that such a work actually existed, it is clear that the legend of its existence was widely circulated in the 1st Century CE. Around 100 CE three Jewish works, namely 4Ezra (13:34-51), 2Baruch (77:17-26), and Josephus' Antiquities (11.5) referred to this legend or document. Whether the document existed, there is clear evidence of 1st Century CE Jewish opinion that the Ten Tribes were identifiable and there was knowledge of their general geographical location.

Batya:

Knowing that the tribes "existed" and claiming that all of the scattered Israel joined the people of Judah are two entirely different matters.

Fitting this same pattern, James opens his epistle with these words: James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. There is no reason to presume an allegorical interpretation of his designation "twelve tribes." Apparently he not only reckoned their existence, but also knew of their identity and expected his epistle to reach them.

Batya:

James surely expected that his letter would reach Abba's chosen people. Moreover, it has reached us! Believers the world over have since read and believed his words.

That he addressed his letter in this way does not mean that he necessarily knew of a "setapart group" who identified themselves as formerly scattered Israelites, and that he was addressing them alone. James most likely realized that the tribes the Father had once scattered among the nations were being sovereignly drawn to the Gospel.

Similarly, Messiah Yeshua said He came "Only for the lost sheep of Israel." And that He had other sheep who were not of the present "Jewish" fold: "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd" (John 10:16; Matthew 15:24).

We must ask ourselves, for the past two thousand years, what group of people have been claiming to "hear His voice"? Is it not the non-Jewish Believers in the Messiah, those who are to be "the fullness of Gentiles" described in the Book of Romans?

The High Priest Caiaphas, likewise understood that our God had other children who had been "scattered abroad," and he knew that the Holy One wanted to "gather together into one the children of God" (John 11:49-52).

Peter implied that this was the case when he spoke of the "fallen house of David" that was being restored. For David ruled over the whole house of Israel, and that rule was to be restored in the Greater Son of David (Amos 9:11; Acts 15:16).

Peter also wrote "to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen." He said to them, "You are A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for god's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 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" (1 Peter 1:2; 2:9-1-).

Peter spoke of the chosen ones who were scattered among the nations. He addressed those of whom the Holy One once said He would not "have mercy," meaning He could no longer "overlook" their sin.

Instead, as a dutiful parent, He had to punish them. Their punishment would be that, for a season, they would be “vessels without mercy,” “Lo-Ammi,” Not-My People (Hosea 1-2). Yes, Peter was writing to those people, and we have heard him too, along with James.

In the same manner, Anna, the prophetess who rejoiced at seeing Yeshua as an eight-day old baby, is noted as being from the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36). Apparently she did not consider herself one of the “Lost Tribes.”

Batya:

That Anna knew her tribe and did not consider herself “lost” is self-evident. However, that does not disprove the fact that the majority of the people of the Northern Kingdom were assimilated among the nations. And, as shown above, both houses have not yet been fully reunited. Fulfillment of the above outlined prophecies about them demands there be no iniquity—no manifested sin—not in either house. These verses speak of a united, pure, righteous, holy Israel. They speak of a future time when Yeshua will reign as King over the City of Truth. Until that happens, the Father is still dealing with both Judah and Ephraim.

So the first fatal flaw in the Two House theory is that the very foundation upon which it is built is a vapor. The Northern Tribes were not lost. Wherever they have been dispersed, they remained marked as God's chosen people. European Jewry, even though many would have willingly been absorbed into the non-Jewish populations among which they lived, were singled out and slaughtered by Hitler and his demonically driven comrades. Far from losing their Israelite identity, the mark of the covenant was upon them and was evident to all. The whole hidden identity theory is nothing more than a house of cards.

Batya:

Our case is not flawed, but is built on the firm foundation of Scripture.

As for having Israelites among us, countless numbers of non-Jewish people have “found a Jewish ancestor” after being drawn to Messianic Judaism. This proves that many Jews assimilated, some into churches, there to “hide their identity” and to thus escape persecution. This is the case with my own husband. His Grandmother and her sisters “hid” in the Catholic Church, they even put their children in Catholic schools so as to hide them. This is not to mention the untold numbers of Ephraimites who have assimilated over the centuries, nor is it to mention Jewish people who genuinely accepted Jesus Christ and became “part of the Church.” Even in our day there are many Jewish people who are in churches as opposed to being part of the Messianic Jewish movement. How many Hispanic people did not, or even still do not, know that their fore-bearers were Maranos, Jews who were forced into conversion?

2. The Two House theory ends up having all or most believers in Yeshua being the descendents of the Northern Tribes of Israel. Yet God's plan of salvation is for all the nations, not just the descendents of Jacob.

Batya:

We do not believe that one has to be descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be saved and included in Israel. If that were so, there would be no place for Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah, to name but a few. However, some try to slander us by claiming that we do teach this.

A second fatal flaw in the Two House theory is the notion that the vast majority of people who come to faith in Yeshua (Jesus) are actually from the Northern Tribes of Israel,

Batya:

No one can prove that it is a majority, and no one can prove that it is not. However, we note that France is French because it is inhabited by a majority of Frenchmen. Similarly, it would seem reasonable that if we are the “people of Israel,” then a majority of us would be “Israelites.”

those who lost their identity and only regain it when they come to faith. While some proponents of the Two House theory would admit that people without a physical bloodline from Jacob may also be part of the saved people of God, the emphasis is placed upon reclaiming Ephraimite identity for all who are believers in Yeshua. The fact that more and more churches are willing to investigate Torah festivals and issues of “Jewish roots” is brought forward as proof of an awakening to this identity.

Batya:

As for “emphasis,” as stated earlier, using the word “Torah” four times on a book cover, and using “Messiah” only once could be construed as lifting the Torah above the Messiah. As for “Jewish roots,” we could claim that some Messianic Jews want to put people in bondage to them, even as Paul said was the case with some (Galatians 4:17). We could argue that they turn Believers away from the Messiah. But rather than focus on the errant “emphasis” of some, both groups should be more even-handed with the other. Surely every group has its “fringe” elements. And while we would like to see that be corrected, we should focus on the good works of each group: “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, what-ever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

But is this actually what the Scriptures teach about God's plan of salvation? Hardly! From the first revelation of the covenant God made with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), the culmination of the covenant is cast in these words: "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." This same phrase is reiterated four more times as the covenant is passed from Abraham to Isaac, and from Isaac to Jacob and his sons:

Gen. 18:18 since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?

Gen. 22:17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 'In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Gen. 26:4 "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed:

Gen. 28:14 "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Batya:

True that Abraham's seed was to be spread abroad. But how can we chastise the church for “spiritualizing” away the promises to the Jewish people and then deny the literal fulfillment of promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Why are the promises to Judah to be taken literally, but the promises to Abraham are not to be taken literally?

Abraham's seed was to be greatly multiplied, and in one particular Seed, the Messiah, all of Israel's families would be blessed (Galatians 3:16). And unrelated Gentile Believers could be added to this unknown but blessed number.

There is an interesting phenomenon that occurs in the listing of these covenant texts. First, regardless of the various orders in which the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are listed, in each case the final blessing is the one that encompasses all of the families or nations of the earth. This consistent, final position in the listing of the blessings puts the blessing of the families / nations as the culmination or zenith of the covenant. The point is simply that the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant is the blessing that will come upon all the nations of the earth.

Batya:

True, the zenith of that blessing is found in Messiah. “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise” (Galatians 3:29). Regardless of actual bloodline, Believers are no longer “excluded from the commonwealth of Israel.” “In Messiah Yeshua you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Messiah...So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household” (Ephesians 2:13-19). Moreover, “our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Messiah Yeshua” (Philippians 3:20). As such, we belong to “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16).

Secondly, it should be noted that the first (Genesis 12:3) and the last (Genesis 28:14) listing of the covenant blessings utilize the word "families" ...while those sandwiched between use the word "nations".... Thus the use of the term "families" acts as bookends to envelope the covenant blessings.

Why is this important? It is important because the reader of Genesis (if reading from the Hebrew) has already encountered the word "family" or "families" and has come to recognize its meaning as indicating distinct people groups based upon physical lineage.

Batya:

The Word says of Ephraim and Judah: “Have you not observed what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD chose, He has rejected them”? Thus they despise My people, no longer are they as a nation in their sight” (Jeremiah 33:24).

There were two “primary families” to be found in the “chosen nation of Israel.” Israel was divided into

two houses/families/nations. Thus, the promise of an eternal New Covenant taht will bring restoration is made to both "Israel and Judah." Ephraim Israel, being "fullness of the Gentiles" takes part in that covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Genesis 48:19; Romans 11:25).

Gen. 8:19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark.

Gen. 10:5 From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according: to their families. into their nations.

Gen. 10:18 and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad.

Gen. 10:20 These are the sons of Ham, according: to their families. according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations.

Gen. 10:31 These are the sons of Shem, according: to their families. according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations.

Gen. 10:32 These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.

Note carefully that the Hebrew text has linked together every possible means for showing the term "family" to be a term that identifies distinct bloodlines: they have distinct language, geographical location ("lands") and political characteristics ("nations").

Batya:

Again, Israel has two separate, yet chosen "families." They come from the same father and have the same bloodline. Even so, all human bloodlines lead back to Noah and ultimately to Adam. Beyond bloodlines is the fact that once we have been brought nigh by the blood of Messiah Yeshua, we are thereafter part of the eternal Kingdom of Israel.

Therefore the attentive reader is well informed about the meaning of the word "families" when he comes to the blessings of the covenant made with Abraham. "Families" identifies distinct people groups based upon distinct lineage or bloodline. And these families form the basis for distinct nations. When therefore God promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that in them all the families of the earth will be blessed, it is clear that the covenant envisions the blessings of the covenant coming upon the nations that are distinct from them-distinct from the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Batya:

Let us look to 1 Kings 10:1-13 to illustrate a point about the supposed "distinct lineage or bloodline."

We are told in these verses that the queen of Sheba "heard about the fame of Solomon," and came to Jerusalem to visit him. And "according to Ethiopian tradition, Sheba (called Makeda) married Solomon, and their son, Menelik I, founded the royal dynasty of Ethiopia" (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 29 Vol., 1985, Vol. 10, Sheba, p 714).

Assume for a moment that Sheba numbered among the hundreds of women who were Solomon's wives (1 Kings 11:3), and that a son was born of their union. Assume that when he was born he looked just like his dark-skinned Ethiopian mother.

Because of his father, this son would have been from the tribe of Judah, regardless of his looks. Taking this idea a step further, let us assume that he grew up and married an Ethiopian woman and that they had sons, all of whom grew up to marry Ethiopian women and have sons. On and on the process goes. While we are asleep at night, He Who has in the past both opened and closed wombs [Gen 20:18; 30:22] could have been turning all of Ethiopia into the tribe of Judah. Descendants of the twelve tribes could be anywhere. They could be everywhere. And we would never know.

We also note that "an east wind" was sent against Ephraim, and that east winds carry toward the west. Thus the Father says that in the last days, Ephraim "will come trembling from the west" (Hosea 13:15; 11:9-10). Thus we assume that Israel also could look like the "Ayrains of the "West."

We also can see many "ethnic colors" in Joseph's coat of many colors (Genesis 37:3). Colors, or *pas*, (פס), comes from a word that can mean palm of the hand or sole of the foot (Strong's # H 6446). Joseph's coat depicts the idea that he would father many shades of people. His descendants are likely found in every nation and are of every skin shade known to man.

Israelites and Judahites can be anywhere and can have every ethnic look known to man.

God's plan of salvation does not envision the redemption of a single nation (Israel) nor even primarily a single nation (mostly Israel with a few others). God's plan of salvation encompasses "all the families (distinct bloodlines) of the earth." Furthermore, John's description of the final picture of salvation in the book of Revelation shows that God's covenant promises are finally and ultimately realized:

Rev. 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Rev. 14:6 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;

Batya:

Using the above reasoning, we ask: "Are the Jewish people a 'single nation'?" Are the Chinese Jews and the Spanish Jews one with the German and Norwegian Jews? Are "Israeli" Jews to be separated from all of them? How about the "New York Jew"? In the Father's eyes all of them are "one people." Yet they are decidedly diverse.

In the same vein, Ephraim was scattered among the nations, there to come to a place of teshuvah, or repentance and return. For all outward appearances they appear to be "Gentiles." But humankind cannot know who among these regathered ones is "an unrelated Gentile" or who is "an assimilated Israelite." However, this we do know: Regardless of biological heritage, as Believers in the Messiah we are one new man, and as such, whenever possible, we are to seek to dwell in harmony with "all Israel," and we are to help build up the Kingdom of Israel.

So why condemn us if we think a majority of "Israel" might well be biological Israelites? Is France not "French" because it is primarily populated by Frenchman?

Is Spain not "Spanish" because it is primarily populated by Spanish people? Is Germany not "German" because it is populated by a majority of Germans?

Why would we not expect that our Father's chosen nation would be primarily populated by Israelites descended from Jacob/Israel?

Beyond this simple point, what is the problem with believing that the Father wanted great numbers of heirs to come from the loins of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Can we not see the majesty in His being able to quietly and mysteriously fulfill His ancient promise?

Why fight it? It is foretold time and time again in Scripture, and it a good and glorious promise that only adds to the majesty of the Almighty.

God chose Israel to be His servant to take the light of Messiah to the nations. We may use the illustration of a butler. A butler is a chosen, trusted individual whom the master of the house entrusts with his affairs.

The butler, dressed in his fine attire, brings the food to the family on a silver tray, in fine china and serves it with the utmost decorum. But the master does not expect that everyone should become his butler. You are not required to be a butler to enjoy the meal that is served. Rather, the butler is the servant to serve the family-the meal is prepared primarily for the family, not the butler. In this analogy, the master is God, the butler is Israel, the fine tray and china dishes is the Torah that always leads to Messiah, and the meal is the blessings of salvation in Yeshua or the Gospel. And the family being served are those called from the nations to become the Master's family. (Of course, the butler also eats the same meal!)

Somehow the Two House theory makes it appear that everyone is actually a butler-they just didn't know it. So everyone goes out and buys butler's clothes and seeks to carry the tray and fine china-a thousand butlers to serve an individual or two at the table. Something is definitely wrong with that picture!

Batya:

The problem with this scenario is that, although it may sound humble, with people who only want to be "butlers," the butlers nonetheless are an "exclusive group." And they want to tell everyone who can, and who cannot be, a butler. However, it would seem that the host of the party would decide who is to be a "butler" at his party.

But assuming the "butler's club" does make that decision, on what will they base it? Will their decision be based on biology? We have shown that to be unprovable.

Will it be based on “keeping Torah and the feasts”?

If so, how can Judah be regarded as having kept Torah better than the others since they denied the “Prophet likened unto Moses”? (Deuteronomy 18:18-19).

This is not to imply that the “butler wannabe’s” have done a better job; for they recognized the Prophet but did not listen well to His job description.

Since all have apparently fallen short, perhaps we would do well to allow any and all who feel called by the Host to serve, to be part of the “Special Butler’s Club.” So long as they know how to wait on and serve the people, they should be welcome among us.

We could adopt the conclusion of Israel’s Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion: “Who is a Jew?” he asked. “Anyone who wants to be a Jew, because only a Jew would want to be a Jew!” We ask the same concerning “Messianic Israelites,” because only someone who truly believed that they were of Israel would want to take the insults that go along with making the claim.

Surely, only a butler would want to be a butler...

Rather, the plan of salvation clearly portrayed in the Scriptures is that God chose Israel to be His servant in order to bring the good news of salvation to all of the families of the earth. As the families of the earth come to be blessed in this salvation, they are adopted into the family of the Master and eat at His table. The goal is to sit at His table and enjoy the benefits of the covenant (the meal), not to become the butler. Surely all who sit at His table receive the blessings and responsibilities of being part of the Master’s family. But they do this because they are adopted into His family, not because they have become the butler in His house.

Batya:

This scenario gives cause for the non-Jew to question his standing with the butlers, because it is a job that he can’t have, even if he wants it. That fact alone should cause thinking men to question the criteria for inclusion as a “butler.”

Servanthood is a concept that is part and parcel of Israel (Isaiah 41:8; 44:1,21; 45:4; 49:3-7; Malachi 4:4; Luke 1:54). If the non-Jews can’t be servant/butlers, are they really part of Israel? Isn’t servanthood the heart of Israel’s call?

Moreover, as for bringing the good news of salvation to all the families of the earth, where have all of the “Jewish butlers” been for the past 1900 years? Haven’t the “non-butlers” been working at serving the message of Salvation to the nations of the earth?

Yes, they have, because they too are “butlers” called to serve. For once you partake of the delicious dish of Salvation/Yeshua, you are thereafter called to get up and serve, until all of the invited guests have had opportunity to partake. All who serve the Messiah are called to be like Him, and to serve others (Matthew 20:26-28; Luke 10:45).

Finally, we note that the non-Jew is not the only one who has to be adopted into the Father’s family. And that the spirit of adoption is mentioned five times in Scripture:

- "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you received a Spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are ‘children of God’" (Romans 8:15,16).

- "We to whom the first fruits of the Spirit have been given as a foretaste of our coming inheritance—we groan within ourselves while we eagerly await our full adoption as sons, which is the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:23).

- Paul speaks of his brethren, "Who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the Glory and the Covenants and the giving of the Law and the Temple services and the promises" (Romans 9:4).

- "God sent His Son, who was born under Law, that He might redeem those who were under Law, that they might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:5).

- "To the saints at Ephesus," Paul declares, "He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Messiah Yeshua, in accordance with his pleasure and will" (Ephesians 1:5, NIV).

From these verses we see that the Father gives the spirit of adoption to free us from the fear of death and thus enable us to call Him Abba, or Father. As His sons, we await the fullness of our adoption, which is the redemption of our bodies. This spirit of adoption belongs to the sons of Israel: both houses. For the Father sent His Son to redeem those under the Law (Judah) as well as the saints (Ephraim). He

predestined both to adoption as His sons through Messiah Yeshua. We must all first receive the spirit of adoption through Messiah Yeshua before we can join Abba's family and become sons of God, for "all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God" (Romans 3:23). (See Who is Israel?)

So the second fatal flaw in the Two House theory is the failure to emphasize the nationally inclusive focus of God's salvation.

Batya:

Contraire. Unlike those who exclude Believers from "Jewish Israel," we emphasize the inclusiveness of our God's salvation. We believe you cannot exclude the non-Jew from being part of "Israel." Moreover, we can no longer fairly divide Israel based on assumed ideas about "biology." Neither can we use our former misunderstandings about "Torah observance" to define Israel, for that would mean that we must exclude those who do not properly follow the Prophet likened to Moses, or keep the "whole Law." And none of us can fully "keep the Law," because the sacrificial system has been eliminated.

The prophet Daniel said that in the last days, "knowledge will increase" (Daniel 12:4). So it is that we are growing in our Scriptural understanding about "both houses of Israel" (Isaiah 8:14). This in turn is causing us to outgrow the things we once believed about "Israel."

Our understanding does not exclude anyone. We simply see that our Father promised to literally multiply the physical seed of Abraham, scatter them among the nations, and then to regather them and their companions through the Messiah.

We also see that we cannot define Israel without her Messiah. He must be lifted up above all, because Israel without her Messiah is not Israel at all. Therefore, we feel it is time for a new and more in-depth understanding of "both the houses of Israel"—time to reevaluate what we have been taught about the people once chosen by the Holy One (1 Peter 1:1; 2:9-10).

The Two House theory ends up with primarily a single nation enjoying the benefits of the covenant—the single nation of Israel. Unwittingly, the Two House theory brings into question the faithfulness of God, for He did not promise to bless only the family of Jacob, but to bless all the families of the earth, meaning families of the earth which are distinct from the family of Jacob. Until such blessings come to all the families of the earth, God has not kept His promise.

Batya:

Yes we do end up with a single nation. We rightly accept all whom the Shepherd brings into His sheepfold. We do not offer anyone second-class citizenship, but we do try to explain that the Shepherd wants "first-class-behavior" from each of us. We freely include unrelated Gentiles among us, even as "companions" are included in the joining of Ezekiel's two sticks.

By no means does inclusion in eternal Israel question the faithfulness of our God.

We must realize that the "family of Jacob" is no longer "biologically distinct" to human eyes. The truth about that physical family is seen by the eyes of the Almighty alone.

On the other hand, if we try to determine membership in that family based on adherence to the Laws of Moses, we must acknowledge that neither chosen family has done a perfect job. They are much like the imperfect sons once described by Messiah Yeshua. The first one refused to work in his father's vineyard, but later regretted his attitude and went to work. The other said he would go, but in the end, he did not. Neither son did well. Neither did a perfect job (Matthew 21:28-32). And neither has Judaism or Christianity done a perfect job for our Heavenly Father. But it is not too late for us to repent...

As for our God "keeping His promise," we believe that until He makes the biological seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as numerous as "the sand of the seashore and the dust of the earth," He has not kept His word. And since we believe that He does keep His promises, we look for many heirs and not just a "chosen few."

We look especially for lost Israelites who now want to "respond to Jezreel" (Hosea 2:22). We look for seed that has died to self, and now is coming forth in a newer, more beautiful form. Seeds, when scattered, respond to that scattering/planting and ultimately are harvested. And such was the decreed fate of the Ephraimites. They would one day come forth as "Sons of the Living God" (Hosea 1:10; Romans 9:26).

To argue that only those who are believers in Yeshua and who also pursue the Torah constitute Ephraimite Israel is also flawed. Does this mean that Christians who come to love Torah are therefore proving their actual identity as

Israel? (This is actually what has happened among the vast majority of people who identify themselves within the Two House Movement.)

Batya:

We do not make this claim, although there is an element of logic to be found in it. It does appear to be a case of “deep calling unto deep.” However, we believe that Torah is replete with wisdom, and that the whole world would do well to follow that wisdom. In the end, all will follow the Father’s decrees, or they will be no more.

If so, the same problem exists because in the end, all the nations come to follow Torah! Zechariah describes the time when the nations will celebrate Sukkot and come up to Jerusalem to worship. Indeed, the fact that Isaiah prophesies the Torah going forth from Zion would indicate that in the Millennial reign, all who bow before Yeshua as God’s Messiah will be living in obedience to Torah. If it is argued that the followers of Yeshua who live by Torah are really the regathered Israel, then once again salvation is finally and ultimately enjoyed by Israel, not the nations as the Scriptures promise. [footnotes: Is. 43:5; 56:8; Jer. 23:3; 29:14; 31:8,10; 32:37; Ezek. 11:17; 20:34,41; 28:25; 34:13; 36:24; 37:21; 39:27; Mic. 2:12; Zeph. 3:19-20; Zech. 10:10.]

Batya:

We agree that in the end, all nations will come to accept Torah. When they do, our God will have one obedient people, and regardless of actual bloodlines, that chosen people will continue to be called “Israel.”

Torah is explicit in that, if a foreigner is circumcised, observes Passover, and sojourns, or lives in harmony with the people of Israel, he is thereafter to be regarded “as a native of the Land.” Moreover, this is a “permanent ordinance” in Israel. We are forbidden to make a difference between ourselves and the former foreigner who sojourns among us.

Even if the former “Gentile” Believers are not of Israel, once they accept the Messiah and His ways, they are of Israel.

Knowing First Fruits of Zion’s interest in “mysteries,” I quote from my book, Who is Israel? pages 92-93:

Messiah Yeshua often spoke in parables, lest those of “calloused heart” should hear and misuse the hidden truths of the kingdom (Matthew 13:11,13-15).

Similarly, Paul often spoke of truths that had been “kept secret for long ages past,” but in his day were being “manifested to the saints.”

Among these mysteries: “Messiah in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:26-27). [Mysteries: See Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 2:7; Rev 10:7; 2 Cor 12:4.]

Concerning the mysterious partial hardening that happened to Israel, Paul says it will last “until...” But until when? When will the veil be lifted? When will Israel’s shrouded eyes be opened to the secret that has so long been hidden?

Not “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”

A partial hardening, a hiding of certain of the Father’s truths, was imposed on Israel. This hardening would last until a fullness of Gentiles had come into Israel’s fold (Romans 11:25).

What is this fullness of Gentiles? Is it a specific number of Gentiles who will join Israel? Surely that cannot be the full meaning, because to have Gentiles join Israel does not qualify as a musterion.

Gentiles have always been allowed to join Israel. Three Requirements—One People

“If a stranger who dwells with you would offer the passover to the YHVH, all his males must be circumcised; then he shall be admitted to offer it; he shall then be as a citizen of the country” (Exodus 12:48, TNKH).

“If a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the YHVH, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land “ (Exodus 12:48, NASB).

One joined the people of Israel by observing circumcision, Passover, and sojourning. Once a person met these three requirements, he was thereafter considered a citizen, a native Israelite. It was so important to the Father to not make a distinction between native and sojourner that He re-affirmed the principle on more than twenty-five occasions. [The primary verses are: Exo 12:48-49; Lev 19:34; 24:22; Num 9:14; 15:15-16, 29; Eze 47:22. Also see Exo 12:19; 20:10; 22:21; 23:9,12; Lev 17:8,10,12; 18:26; 19:33; 20:2; 22:18; 24:16; 25:6; Num 15:30; 35:15; Josh 20:9; Psa 146:9; Mal 3:5.]

Moreover, He declared this rule to be a perpetual statute in Israel: “The community is to have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the alien shall be the same before the LORD. The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the alien living among you” (Numbers 15:15-16, NIV).

YHVH also instructed those who joined the people of Israel on how they were to regard themselves:

“Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to YHVH say, ‘YHVH will surely separate me from His people....The foreigners who bind themselves to YHVH...these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer....for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations.’ The

LORD God [YHVH Elohim], who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, ‘Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered’” (Isaiah 56:3,6-8). (End quote. Footnotes are in brackets [].) It goes without saying that, if it is as Hegg postulates in this paper—if, “in the end, all the nations come to follow Torah!”, then they will be ‘one with Israel.’ And if that is our ultimate destiny, why fight it now?

What is the real, yet unstated reason, for wanting to exclude the “former Gentile” Believers? This paper helps to prove that a mysterious “blindness in part” is over Israel.

3. The Two House Theory teaches that only when believers realize they actually are descendents of the Northern Tribes can the prophecies of the union between Judah and Israel be fulfilled.

Batya:

The above statement begs the question, “How can one effectively play the game if they do not even understand who are the players?”

The Father wants His people to have a vision, to understand what He is doing in the earth: “Surely the Lord GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). Without a vision the people perish, are unrestrained (Proverbs 29:18). Understanding the purposes of our God strengthens and encourages the people.

But the Scriptures teach that the union of Israel and Judah comes as an event distinct from the salvation of the nations.

Batya:

How can this be if the majority of the nations in existence have already heard, in some form, the Gospel? They have essentially heard that the Creator sent His Only Begotten Son, Who paid the price for our sins. And they have heard this message via Ephraim, and not Judah. NonJewish Israel has carried the message that Jesus is the Christ to almost every nation on earth. While it is true that everyone, including Jewish Believers, have the need to grow in that knowledge, the fact is that Ephraim has already been there. If one sees this as a “job for Judah,” then one would have to admit that Judah would be building on the work of another.

The Scriptures clearly teach the regathering of Israel (Northern Tribes) and Judah (the Southern Tribes) as one, unified nation in the end times. On that there can be no dispute!

Batya:

We are happy to have agreement on this point. If we can agree that no one knows how many actual “Gentiles” we have among us, and that we should welcome whomsoever the Ruach draws, then perhaps together we can move on to the actual works of reuniting the house.

But how and when are the dispersed people of Israel and Judah gathered to the Land and united under the rule of One Shepherd?

Batya:

This point is surely open to discussion.

The first thing that is noticed in reading the Scriptures regarding the regathering of Israel is that there are three distinct groups: Judah, Israel, and the nations:

Is. 11:12 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 comers of the earth.

Here in the parallel lines of this Hebrew poetry three groups are mentioned: “the nations,” “banished” ones of Israel,” and dispersed of Judah. Even as “Israel” and “Judah” are clearly references to the Northern and Southern

tribes respectively, so “nations” is a separate entity in Isaiah's prophecy.

Batya:

YHVH lifted up that Standard (Messiah Yeshua) among the nations, and out of those nations was begun a re-gathering of Ephraim Israel, and in turn, a regathering of the dispersed of Judah.

This is not to say that this is the only way this verse is fulfilled, but to say that it surely tells the scenario of proven history.

Jer. 36:2 "Take a scroll and write on it all the words which I have spoken to you concerning Israel and concerning Judah, and concerning all the nations, from the day I first spoke to you, from the days of Josiah, even to this day.

Once again, in the prophetic language of Jeremiah, three distinct entities are listed: Israel, Judah, and the nations. Like Isaiah, Jeremiah does not consider “Israel” to be synonymous with the “nations” but a distinct entity dispersed among the nations.

Batya:

This speaks of the “unbelieving and hostile nations” that surrounded both Israel and Judah.

Zech. 8:13 'It will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, o house of Judah and house of Israel so I will save you that you may become a blessing. Do not fear; let your hands be strong.' Here, in language directly reminiscent of the promise made to Abraham that “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed,” the prophet Zechariah gives the word of Adonai promising the salvation of the house of Judah and the house of Israel from the nations by whom they have been cursed.

Batya:

We agree. Again, Ephraim comes out of the nations, bringing with him a “mixed multitude” as was done in the Exodus, these become one with Judah and “their companions, and together, Israel fights against the heathen who oppose the rule of the Almighty.

In the end, you either agree with Him and His plan, or you are eliminated.

It is by the promised salvation that they, Israel and Judah, become a blessing to the nations. Note carefully that “Israel” and the “nations” are separate entities. Israel is not synonymous with “nations,” as though “lost” Israel is the same as the nations, that is, that Israel has lost her identity and thinks she is the nations.

Batya:

In Scripture there are both good goyim and bad goyim. Ephraim was hidden among the nations, and there are heathen who oppose Israel right up until the end.

We need to realize that these two houses were given different punishments and promises. They served two different purposes, and now, in this last hour, the Almighty would put them back together again.

Furthermore, Judah and Israel are cursed among the nations. In the course of history, beginning with the rise of the Christian Church in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries CE, the Church (under whatever label she went) persecuted the descendants of Jacob. She was not herself persecuted, at least not in the broad sense.

Batya:

Foxe's Book of Martyrs indicates otherwise. First Century Judaism and Rome both persecuted Believers in the Messiah. Similarly, over the years an imposter “Church” has persecuted Believers who sought to point out sin and to bring forth greater truth. Both houses have been persecuted, however, everyone must agree that there has been nothing quite like the Holocaust...

The anti-semitism of the Christian Church throughout the middle ages, in the time of the Renaissance, and into the modern era is well documented. It was not the Christian Church that was being persecuted. It was the other way around: the Church was cursing Israel.

Batya:

That the Church has persecuted the Jew is a given. It is a sin for which they must repent. However, up until 1948, when returning Judah named their new state “Israel,” the Church saw themselves as “New Israel,” and in that name, they suffered persecution for their faith. In our day and in many places, including the Islamic world, both Christians (New Covenant Israel) and Jews run the risk of being beheaded for their faith.

Zechariah, prophesying about the end times with a view to the millennial reign of the Messiah, speaks of the salvation of Judah and Israel as the means for becoming a blessing. From whom are they saved? They are saved from the nations among whom they were a curse. This would indicate quite clearly that both Judah and Israel maintain an identity as they are dispersed among the nations. It is impossible to curse something that is not identified. Israel is a curse among the nations in which she is scattered precisely because the nations see her as Israel.

Batya:

Zechariah 8:13 speak of Judah and Israel being saved from the heathen who would destroy them. In turn, they become a blessing to the Father by coming together and affirming His Word—Genesis to Revelation; by bringing together the eternal truths of Law and Grace, by joining together as one people. Therein lies their coming power.

Ezekiel notes the same thing. He teaches that Israel, while in dispersion, is profaning the Name of God because the nations know that she should be in her own Land instead of being exiled in theirs:

Ezek. 36:20 "When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land.' 21 "But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

Batya:

New Covenant Israel has likewise profaned the Father's Name in that they deny the eternal truths of Torah, and thus misrepresent His Messiah to the world.

If Israel had lost her identity and was not a distinct people group within the nations to which she had been exiled, how could the nations have said this about her?

Batya:

These words have been used against Judah, but they were probably also used against the Israelites who were humiliated and scattered among the cities of Assyria, their conqueror.

Moreover, the Father said, "My servants will be called by another name" (Isaiah 65:15). Could this possibly refer to the disciples being called "Christians" (Acts 11:26). Was this title not used against them in the beginning days of their faith?

Finally, Paul's understanding of the identity of Israel is clear: he identifies with Israel as his brethren "according to the flesh:"

Romans. 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Messiah for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

Lest it be construed that Paul was referring only to Judah and not to the Northern Tribes, one should notice carefully how he uses the word "Israel" to refer to the whole nation upon whom the salvation of God comes in the end times. Even though "Israel" has been hardened for a season, in the end "all Israel will be saved."

Batya:

This cannot mean that "all Israel" who are alive in the end-times will be saved. Earlier in his letter to the Romans, Paul says, "They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "through Isaac your descendants will be named. That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants" (Romans 9:6-8). Restated, "Without faith it is impossible to please...God" (Hebrews 11:6).

In his olive tree discourse, Paul is explaining the plan of salvation for all of Israel that will be saved. That plan is that the "wild olive branch" is to walk in a way that makes Judah want what they have. I quote from Who is Israel?:

In Scripture, the first use of a word or theme sets the standard for further interpretation. And Jeremiah was the first to use an olive tree to symbolically describe the people of Israel. He said of them: "They have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors who refused to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers" (Jeremiah 11:10).

Jeremiah said this to both "the house of Israel and the house of Judah." He also said of them, "YHVH called your name, 'A green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form;' with the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are worthless" (Jeremiah 11:16).

YHVH called both Ephraim and Judah "a green olive tree," meaning they were to be one,

they were to be a singular olive tree, because it was, and still is, His plan to have one people. They also were to be a green tree, as in full of life, fruitful.

However, division came to Israel, and with it came two branches in the tree.Both “chosen families” were branches in the olive tree, but because the Ephraimites had a penchant for paganism and served the gods of the heathen, they were the first to be broken off the tree (Jeremiah 33:23-26; 11:10,16; 2:18,21). This happened because they had become roa, or worthless, their condition below par (Jeremiah 11:16). [TWOT, Vol. 1, Moody, 1981, word # 2191; BDBL word # H5237.]

So Father scattered them in Assyria.

Ephraim was sent to Assyria, Judah to Babylon. First the olive tree was stripped of most of its Ephraimite branches, later it was stripped of most of its Judahite branches.

When Jeremiah uses horticultural analogy to speak of those “on the road to Assyria,” he speaks of Ephraim. And of those wanderers, YHWH asks:

“I planted you a choice vine, a completely faithful seed. How then have you turned yourself before Me into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?” (Jeremiah 2:18,21).

To become degenerate is to turn aside. Foreign, or nokri, means to be a stranger, as in foreign to Israel’s God. (In modern Hebrew, Nokri means Gentile.) [TWOT, Vol. 1, Moody, 1981, pp 620-621,580; also see Judges 19:12; 1 K 8:41, and the House of David Herald, The Notzrim, Vol 9, Book 6.]

With trees, to become degenerate is to become wild...

The Ephraimites became wild because they delighted in debauchery. They were therefore scattered among the nations—there to languish “like a vessel in which no one delights” (Hosea 8:8; 2:23; Romans 9:21-22).

The Ephraimites left their native homeland, the Land of the Cultivator, and they became foreign. They stumbled down an Assyrian road—because they did not revere their “Vinedresser.” While in His Land, they did not allow His Word to “break up their fallow ground.” So the Father pruned and scattered them, in hopes that one day they might bear fruit (Hosea 10:12; John 15:1-7).

...that tree was pruned. First...of the Ephraimite branches, then of the Judahite branches, and finally...a few branches from Judah were returned from Babylon.

When we examine these stages in the life of this tree, with the final stage, we will see Israel’s olive tree as it was at the time the apostle Paul wrote about it. (End quote. Footnotes are in brackets [].)

Rom. 11:7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

Rom. 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and so all Israel will be saved;

Batya:

To understand the “mystery” of which Paul speaks, we must first recognize that it is a mystery, meaning something heretofore hidden from view, and that when Paul explains it, he says the “hardening” that happened to Israel would last “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” That means, the mystery stands until this approximate time. Again, I quote from Who is Israel?:

In his metaphor, Paul was not grafting pears into a peach tree, but “wild olive branches” back into an “olive tree.”

- Between the “wild olive branches” and “natural olive branches” the common denominator is that both are “olive branches.”
- If we search the Scriptures, and allow them to interpret themselves, we see that in the First (Old) Covenant (which sets the standard), “Gentiles” were never once called an “olive tree.” But Israel certainly was.
- Paul spoke of olive into olive—Israel back into Israel.
- In speaking of “wild olive branches,” Paul cryptically spoke of Ephraim—of fruit of the same species. The Mystery...

The New Revised Standard Version translates Romans 11:25: “So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.”

After telling us about the Father’s plan for His natural and wild olive branches, Paul tells us:

- He is addressing a mystery
- A hardening, or blindness in part has occurred
- That blindness happened to Israel
- It would last until...
- Israel was destined to enter into a certain fullness

As previously stated, there is no mystery in having those from the nations join the people of Israel. So there must be something more to the story.

Both Houses Are Blinded—Both Stumble

The King James translates this important verse, “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Romans 11:25, KJV).

As prophesied, all twelve tribes of Israel were given “a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not” (Romans 11:8; Deuteronomy 29:4).

Paul spoke of a “partial hardening,” a stupidity, or callousness in part [Strong’s words # G4457, 4456, 3313], that happened to both Ephraim and Judah. He spoke of a mystery that would not be understood until a certain point in time.

Until then, a certain blinding would cause both Judah and Ephraim to be tripped up, to “stumble” over the Messiah (Romans 11:11). Both would misunderstand Him.

That both houses of Israel would stumble was foretold by Isaiah: “It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy,” he said.

The LORD of hosts is YHVH Tsavaot, and Isaiah said of Him: “He shall be your fear and He shall be your dread. Then He shall become a sanctuary; but to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over...” (Isaiah 8:13-14).

Scripture foretold that the LORD of hosts would become a Sanctuary, and thereafter, “both the houses of Israel” would stumble over Him.

When some asked Yeshua for a sign, He said, “Destroy this temple [sanctuary], and in three days I will raise it up.” (He was speaking of the temple of His body.) And, “when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture” (John 2:18-22).

The Scripture the disciples remembered and believed was Isaiah 8:14—the verse that spoke of the LORD of hosts becoming a sanctuary over whom both the houses of Israel would then begin to stumble.

The people of Israel did not realize that through His son, YHVH wanted to build a temple made with living stones. [1 Pet 2:5; 1 Cor 6:19; Eph 2:21.] And in different ways, both houses began to trip over Yeshua. To this day, both stumble over Him—because both were partially blinded. YHVH poured out a veil over their eyes, so both see darkly, as if looking in a faded, faulty mirror (1 Corinthians 13:12). Blinded in Different Ways

Ephraim and Judah were blinded in different ways: Ephraim can see Messiah, but not

his Israelite roots. Judah can see his roots, but cannot see the Divine Messiah... (End quote. Footnotes in brackets [].)

Paul makes a clear distinction between "Gentiles" and "Israel" in this passage.

Batya:

Scripture tells us that Abba is grafting “olive branches” back into an “olive tree,” and based on Scripture, Israel, both houses make up the “olive tree” (Jeremiah 11:10,16). Moreover, I understand that an olive tree will not accept a graft from another species. So somehow, those who are in the tree must be regarded by the Almighty as being “of Israel.”

Any reading that confuses this distinction is hopelessly lost in finding a consistent hermeneutic for Paul's words. Paul is well aware that the gospel is summed up in the Abrahamic promise that "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Galatians 3:8).

Batya:

The Father promised to bless Abraham and to multiply his seed. The primary blessing being the Seed that is the Messiah (Galatians 3:16). We are eternally blessed when we are in Him.

The blessing to Abraham's heirs is, "For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways" (Acts 3:26).

The fact that we are offered salvation in Messiah is our blessing. In turn, we seek to be a blessing to others by sharing the Good News. To assume that we are the "blessing" is to miss the true "Blessing." It is to take away the focus on the Messiah. We, the people of Israel, are not the source of blessing, but are a blessed people who get to tell others about that blessing.

And he gives a chronological order: first the Gentiles (another way of saying "nations") are brought to salvation, and then all of Israel. The two events are not simultaneous.

Batya:

Not every "Jew" will be saved. See above.

Yet the Two House theory would have us believe that as the nations are being saved through faith in Yeshua, Israel is actually being saved, since the saved "Gentiles" are actually the "lost" tribes of Israel.

Batya:

The Gospel was taken to the nations because that is where Ephraim (and many of Judah) were scattered. This fact does not deny salvation to any unrelated peoples. That Yeshua has unrelated sheep in the fold is not an issue for us. Instead, the issue is that prodigal Ephraim needs to be welcomed as he returns home. He does not need to meet an angry brother who is jealous over his return. Neither does he need a brother who says, "Go far from the LORD; this land has been given us as a possession" (Ezekiel 11:15).

It is time for Judah to instead welcome Ephraim.

If one adopts a consistent hermeneutic, one simply cannot accept the Two House theory.

Batya:

If adopting a consistent hermeneutic is the standard, then we must do the same when "Israel" is mentioned in Scripture. But shall we decide that it always means Jacob, since he was the first to be so named? Does it always mean the twelve tribes—or those of the Northern Kingdom? And if we do decide that it is one of these, can we rightly use it speak of the modern State by that name?

Nonsense. The name "Israel" is used in many ways and we just need to figure out who is being addressed. Ditto for goy/goyim/nations/heathen. It is part of the "mystery," if you will.

But Paul's message is very consistent. God has made a promise to Abraham, and that promise envisions all of the families of the earth. Israel was chosen to bring the grand message of the Gospel to all of the nations, but she refused to obey her God and has been dispersed as a result.

Batya:

Jewish Israel refused to take forth the Gospel message, but non-Jewish Israel did not refuse. While they distorted certain aspects of the truth about the Messiah, and therefore need to repent of any wrong actions on their part, nonetheless, for the past two thousand years they have sought to take the message of salvation to every continent.

God's sovereign plan, however, is that Israel's disobedience would not thwart His intentions to bless the nations. The nations will be blessed, and blessed in such a way that they will act as a catalyst to bring Israel herself back to obedience to the covenant as she humbly receives Yeshua as her true Messiah.

Batya:

It would appear that it is Judah who is brought back to Israel, even as they are to be "grafted back in again" to the olive tree (Romans 11:23). Moses says of Judah, "Hear, O LORD, the voice of Judah, and

bring him to his people. With his hands he contended for them, and may You be a help against his adversaries" (Deuteronomy 33:7). Also, in Micah we read, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. Therefore He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel" (Micah 5:2-3).

As for "God's plan, He already has blessed untold millions among the nations with a blessed faith in the Messiah. They lived and died, in Him, before we ever came on the scene.

The third fatal flaw, then, is a misinterpretation of Scripture through a faulty hermeneutic. Where the Scriptures clearly differentiate between Judah, Israel, and the nations, the Two House theory tries to meld "Israel" (who has lost her identity) and the nations together as one. But if the Scriptures are interpreted consistently, the Two House theory simply cannot stand.

Batya:

Again, each verse must be examined in context.

Conclusion

The Two House theory has three fatal flaws that render it unacceptable. First, the historical and biblical data show that the Northern Tribes were never lost. From the time of their dispersion and throughout the ensuing history of the world, the Northern Tribes or Israel has carried an identification as the nation God chose and redeemed from Egypt.

Batya:

We have briefly shown that this is not the case. For more proof, see the book, Who is Israel?

Secondly, the story of salvation as unfolded in the Bible envisions the blessing of the nations as people groups distinct from Judah and Israel.

Batya:

Zechariah speaks of those who celebrate Tabernacles after they came against Israel to do battle. They are defeated enemies. We are not enemies. We are brothers making teshuvah. We are prodigals who are tired of hanging out with the pigs and are on our way home.

To identify a majority of believers in Yeshua as descendants of the Northern Tribes of Israel negates this promise of blessing upon the nations.

Batya:

No, it does not. But even if so, what's wrong with that scenario? Why be unhappy if the majority of the people of Israel happen to be biological brothers? Certainly it is accepted that the seed of Judah has been scattered into every land. We have Chinese Jews, Spanish Jews, Indian Jews, English Jews, Norwegian Jews, etc. Does it somehow detract from these nations that Jewish people can be found among them? Are the Jewish people "racists" because they have members from every nation on earth in their ranks?

We think not, and we believe the same has happened with Judah's eleven brothers.

The fact is that the Holy One of Israel did not make a New Covenant with Gentiles. He made it with the house of Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:8-13). Messiah Yeshua made His New Covenant with the Israelites who were seated around His Passover table (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25). Former Gentiles are part of that covenant people, and they are not to say, "The LORD will surely separate me from His people" (Isaiah 56:3).

Thirdly, the Scriptures make it clear that in the end times three groups, not two, are gathered to faith in the One true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Batya:

The nations who are left are the ones who have come against Israel to do battle. Once they come into order, they too will be "part of the commonwealth." We cannot deny those who now choose to be part of Israel their rightful place, simply because, to the end, there will be heathen peoples who will fight against the God of Israel and His people.

There are those of the nations who arise against the Holy One at the end of the millennium. Does

that mean that Israel is to be held above and aloft until that time?

These three groups are Judah, Israel, and the nations. When Judah and Israel are united once again and become Israel as she was before the division of the kingdoms, then all the nations who are gathered into Israel and adopted into the family of God will join as one people under the kingship of Messiah Yeshua.

Batya:

We are supposed to be made one in Him now. Moreover, we are all, Jew and non-Jew alike, "adopted" into the Father's family (see above).

This is the biblical story of redemption.

Batya:

This is standard Christian interpretation and not the true Gospel of the Kingdom of Israel.

The fact that presently, in the body of Messiah, Jew and Gentile are constituted as "one new man" (Ephesians 2:15) constitutes the "first fruits" or a foretaste of the ultimate harvest when the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) will be fulfilled.

Batya:

Why postpone our reunion? Why have one people group who wants to rule over the others? That is "Gentile talk," and Messiah Yeshua spoke against it. He said "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28).

Prologue

In writing the brief comments above, I am not unaware of what seems to me an obvious reason that the Two House theory has been so readily received by many people. As the return to Torah and the beauty of Torah life has been experienced in numerous groups, many who have no Jewish lineage feel like secondclass citizens in the community of the faith. Believing that those with Jewish names and heritage are the "real thing" while the Gentiles are only "wannabes," it is only natural to search for a way to be "on the inside" rather than "outside looking in." To discover in the Bible a way of interpreting the Scriptures so as to actually claim physical descendancy from Israel solves the problem. Suddenly those who always thought they had no real attachment to Israel can "legitimately" claim that they are, in fact, Israel! They are finally "in."

Batya:

This is a slap in the face to every person who sees the truth of the two houses of Israel in Scripture. It insinuates that they are blind and misguided fools who are willing to accept a lie if it makes them feel good.

This "identity crisis" rests upon a failure to teach and understand the glory of God's way of salvation. Surely God chose Israel and gave her specific and glorious promises. But He chose her for the purpose of being a light to the nations, not as an end in itself. Israel is not the final glory-the untold number of the nations is the shining finale of redemption's symphony.

My wife and I have had the profound privilege of adopting two wonderful daughters from Liberia, West Africa. When we received the decree of adoption, the language was stunning. It said that our daughters were to be considered as though they had actually been birthed from our own bodies! They are our daughters and we are their parents. Our love for our two natural sons is no different than the love we have for our two daughters. Nor are the requirements, rules, privileges, and expectations. Our two daughters have our name and live in every way as though they were natural born children in our home.

Batya:

We personally know the same experiences of adoption in our home, and all of our children are loved and appreciated the same, and for who they are. However, the fact is that all adopted children have a "different biological family tree." While it is right to love them without partiality, to deny this fact is to deny the truth of who they are; it is to cut off part of their actual heritage. Moreover, this example does not fit the scriptural "spirit of adoption," because, all, Jew and nonJew alike, must receive the spirit of adoption. All must be born anew from above by the Father's Spirit. In this way we become sons who have

the promise of eternal life. Jews are not exempt.

We must likewise see ourselves, whether Jew or non-Jew, as equal members in the household of God, for we all are adopted into His family. Our decree of adoption is written with the precious blood of a Lamb, Who is without blemish or spot. It is in Him and in Him alone we find our way to the Father, whether Jew or non-Jew. And His smile of grace, and His loving teaching of Torah, is equally enjoyed by all who are His children. There is no need to find some other means by which we think we may have a closer or more legitimate relationship with our Father. He has taken us upon His knee and called us His own. His words, confirmed in the loving work of His Son, is enough for us. We may rest assured that we are His children and that He is our Father. We find our identity in His promises, illustrated and confirmed in His Son, and written on our hearts by His Spirit. That is who were are-children of the Eternal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Batya:

The previous remarks in this paper about adoption speak of “different” children being treated the same. If the idea is, “Although we are all adopted, there continues to be a ‘different’ nation that is Israel,” and that, “‘Gentile’ Believers who feel that they too descend from Israel are not part of that particular group within a group,” then we are not in agreement here.

Again, Jewish assertions about biological heritage cannot be proven. The one who thinks he is a Jew may in fact be the offspring of a heathen, and also be denying a child of an apostle.

In Scripture, heritage is based on one’s father, as is so among the Levites of today. For many generations, the Jewish people have been improperly assessing their genealogy. They deny Jewishness based on one’s male forefather’s, and instead base Jewishness on one’s mothers. But if that is to be the standard, then who was the first Jew? Leah??

The thrust of this paper is that those who are “Jewish” are of Israel, but those who believe they are Ephraimites are deluded and not part of Israel.

This is the same Messianic Jewish stand that now has lots of fruit on its tree, and some of it is very rotten. That rot has caused hundreds of thousands to deny faith in the Messiah and to convert to Judaism.

False claims about the identity of Israel are dangerous. They fly in the face of Scripture and only serve to postpone the glorious return and restoration of all Israel.

It is time for us to move on, to leave such muddled doctrines behind, and to instead pursue the true purposes of the God of Israel.

In summation, we believe that Mr. Hegg’s assessment of a movement that we have worked hard to found does not represent what we believe and teach. His paper seems to be based on his misunderstanding of the situation, or on the errant teachings of others. And a report that is

based on misrepresentation is not a report at all.

Hegg does not quote us and then correct us with Scripture, as should be done, but lifts up his own ideas and then proceeds to knock them down.

We therefore conclude that this Commentary is seriously flawed.

We could write a similar paper blaming everyone who lifts up “Jewish roots and Torah” for the hemorrhage of converts to Judaism that we are presently experiencing. Again we note that, according to Jewish sources, some 200,000 plus “Christians” have lately converted to Judaism, and that because of the way Judaism and Torah are being exalted up by Messianic Judaism.

Should we categorically include Hegg and his publisher, First Fruits of Zion, among the guilty parties for this conversion travesty?

No. Each man is to stand or fall based on his own actions.

We therefore ask that we be judged based on what we write and teach.

Sincerely,

Batya Wootten
December
2004

Copyright 2004, Batya Ruth Wootten, PO Box 700217, Saint Cloud, FL 34770 www.mim.net No portion of this response by Batya Wootten may be reproduced in any form without her written permission. Her response may be reproduced for distribution, free of charge, and in its entirety only. For more information about Ephraim and Judah, see the books:
Who is Israel? Past, Present, and Future, by Batya Ruth Wootten, 280 pages, #14.05, ISBN 1-886987-17-3 Ephraim and Judah:
Israel Revealed, by Batya Ruth Wootten, 88 pages, \$3.95, ISBN 1-886987-11-4 Available through Messianic Israel Marketplace:
www.mim.net 1 800.829.8777

The Two-House Theory: Three Fatal Flaws

by Tim Hegg

@2002 All rights reserved • www.torahresource.com • thegg@bigplanet.com

A General Description

A phenomenon is occurring in our times that has been labeled the Two-House Movement, sometimes also called the Ephraimite Movement. It is based upon the theory that essentially claims the following to be true:

1. The Northern Kingdom called Israel, comprised of Ten Tribes, lost their identity because of their exile to foreign lands at the hands of the Assyrians in the 8th Century BCE.
2. From the foreign lands of their exile they were dispersed to other nations, where their self-identity as Israel (Northern Tribes) was lost, and they saw themselves individually as natives of the foreign lands to which they had been dispersed (i.e., Gentiles).
3. Those who retained their identity as Jews were from the Southern Tribes of Judah and Benjamin. This group primarily makes up the Jewish communities of our modern times, and except for a small remnant, have rejected Yeshua (Jesus) as the true Messiah.
4. The rise of Messianic Judaism (especially since the 1960's) has seen an influx of "Gentiles" who love Torah, take on a "Jewish" life-style, and worship in the context of ancient Israel, keeping the Sabbath, the yearly feasts, and adhere (to one degree or another) to Torah principles. The Two-House Movement has taught that these Gentiles, unknown to themselves, are actually the descendents of the "Lost Ten Tribes." The reason that they are so inwardly drawn to Torah and to a Torah life-style is because they actually have the soul of an Israelite—they are the descendents of the Northern Tribes of Israel. It is therefore imperative that the truth of their identity be received, and they began to live and act as the people they actually are: the descendants of physical Israel.
5. Since Ephraim was the largest of the Northern Tribes, and since prophets like Isaiah used the name Ephraim to designate the nation of the Northern Tribes after the division of the United Kingdom, the movement has also been designated as the Ephraimite Movement.
6. The Two-House Movement believes that the recognition that Gentiles within the Torah movement are not Gentiles at all, but the actual descendants of the Northern Tribes, is the beginnings of the prophetic fulfillment that Ephraim and Judah ("Judah" designates the Southern Tribes of Judah and Benjamin) would one day be united as a single nation again.
7. Since the Northern Tribes are being regathered under the banner of Yeshua within the return to Torah in these Messianic congregations, the "stick" of Ephraim is being recognized once again, and thus the first step of fulfillment of the two sticks becoming one is becoming possible in our day (the parable of the two sticks is found in Ezekiel 37:16-17). But it is only when those who think they are Gentiles come to recognize their real identity as actual, physical Israelites that the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy may be realized.
8. As a result, those who hold to this belief have formed their own congregations and fellowships (or denominations). They believe that only those congregations or communities who affirm this belief are furthering God's plans to unite Israel and Judah into the one nation of Israel in the last days.

Fatal Flaws in This Perspective

At first, to many, this explanation rings true in their own experience. Many Gentiles have wondered why they are so drawn to the Torah, to a love for Israel, and to all things "Jewish." They wonder why, in light of the fact that the mainline Church continues to reject Torah, they are drawn to Torah, and are so willing to be rejected for their love of Torah. Given the explanation that they are actually Israel and have Israelite blood gives a reason for their inward love of Torah and the draw to take on a Torah life-style. After all, the Torah embodies the covenant of which they are actually members through bloodline, or so they are told.

But there are fatal flaws in this perspective because the Bible does not support it. In fact, the Bible teaches a much different reality.

The Two House theory is built upon the presupposition that the Northern Tribes were lost among the 1. nations and have forgotten their true identity. In general, biblical and historical data show conclusively that the Northern Tribes were never lost.

The very core of the Two House theory is the presupposition that the Northern Tribes lost their identity and considered themselves as Gentiles. Does this notion match biblical and historical data?

While it may be true that some individuals may have lost knowledge of their heritage after many generations of being dispersed among the nations, in general the dispersed tribes of Israel have maintained their identity in their dispersion among the nations. Granted, many rejected their covenant obligations (Sabbath, festivals, circumcision, etc.) and even wanted to be viewed as Gentiles, but try as they would, their identity as physical descendants of ancient Israel could not be erased.

a. The prophets who spoke of the dispersion of Israel teach that even in her dispersion she remembers her true identity.

The prophet Hosea paints the picture of Israel as an unfaithful wife. In her unfaithfulness she leaves her marriage and plays the harlot with others, meaning that spiritually she worships false gods and claims false religions as her religion. She is "joined to another" and leaves her husband behind. In the prophetic metaphor, actually lived out in the marriage of Hosea and his wife, Gomer, the prophet pursues his wayward wife and buys her back, bringing her back into his house. But note carefully that even when Israel (portrayed as the prophet's wayward wife) is joined to her lovers in the role of a harlot, she knows who her real husband is. In fact, when she seeks help from her lovers (the false religions she has engaged in as she has been dispersed among the nations) and they abandon her, she reasons this way:

"She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; And she will seek them, but will not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband, For it was better for me then than now!'" (Hosea 2:7)

Note carefully that she had not forgotten who her true husband was, nor had she forgotten that she was once married to the One true God of Israel. She knew who her first Husband was, and she knew that she was better off when she was married to Him. It clearly shows that she had not lost her former identity.

Furthermore, that fact the Hosea uses language like "Israel has forgotten his maker" (8:14) does mean that she no longer knows about God. The word "forgotten" is used in a covenant sense, meaning that Israel has willfully acted against the covenant. For instance, at the reiteration of the covenant when Israel was about to enter the Land God says:

Deut. 8:19 "It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish.

The same language is used during the time of the Judges:

Judg. 3:7 The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

It is also used during the united monarchy under King Saul:

1Sam. 12:9 "But they forgot the LORD their God, so He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the army of Hazor; and into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

The fact that the word "forget" (שָׁכַח) is used in a covenant sense is clear from the very text of Hosea, for God Himself "forgets" Israel. This cannot mean that He no longer is aware of their existence, but that He sets aside the blessings of the covenant as a result of her disobedience:

Hos. 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Thus, when Israel is said to have "forgotten her Maker," it does not mean that she no longer knows He exists, or knows that He is her God. It means she has acted unfaithfully to the covenant and neglected to live according to its precepts. She has denied the God Who owns her.

Even before the Northern Tribes were exiled, in the prophecies of Isaiah warning her of the impending judgment if she did not return to covenant faithfulness, the prophet describes Israel as having "forgotten" her God:

Is. 17:10 For you have forgotten the God of your salvation And have not remembered the rock of your refuge. Therefore you plant delightful plants And set them with vine slips of a strange god.

Once again, "to forget" or "not remember" means to act in unfaithfulness to the covenant. This prophesy was given while Israel was still in the Land. It is impossible, therefore, that "you have forgotten the God of your salvation" could mean "you have forgotten that you are the nation that has a covenant with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"

b, Historical data, archaeological evidence, and other ancient documents point to the fact that even into the Common Era, the identity of the Northern Tribes was known and received.

Archaeological finds from the region of Kammu', a separate colony outside of Assyria, and dated to 650 and 606 BCE, show contracts containing distinct Hebrew names. These were Israelites deported by Sargon II from Samaria. Under the conquest of Assyria by Babylonia, they must have enjoyed group rights and privileges under the law of the land.¹ Moreover, some 137 years after the Northern Tribes were taken into exile, Assyria was conquered by Babylon. Since evidence shows that the exiled Northern Tribes retained their identity as a separate people group with privileges and Hebrew names, it is beyond doubt that Israelites and exiles from Judah were reunited, having been exiled to the same regions.

Furthermore, Ezekiel, the prophet of the exile, lived, preached, and worked in Babylon. Thus his words about Babylonian Israel should not be overlooked. Who could have known better than he the component elements of the Jewish community of the exile?

In the famous prophecy of the two sticks, we should note the words carefully:

Ezek 37:16 "And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, 'For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.'"

Upon the first stick is written "For Judah and the for the sons of Israel, his companions." The "sons of Israel, his companions" must refer to Benjamin. Upon the second stick is written "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions." This must mean that the Northern Tribes as they existing in Ezekiel's time constituted a unified, identifiable, entity who survived their deportation and settled in Assyria. Furthermore, Ezekiel details the distribution of the Land to the Ten Tribes (Ezek 45:8; 47:13, 21-23; 48:1, 19, 23, 29, 31) meaning that he considered them identifiable in his time. Jeremiah also identifies the House of Israel as a known entity well after their exile into Assyria (Jer 31:31ff). Zechariah, the latest of the prophets, likewise addresses his prophecy to the House of Israel, indicating that he knew of their existence as an identifiable entity (Zech 8:13). Moreover, in Ezekiel 37:21 where the prophet speaks of taking the "children of Israel from among the nations where they have gone" (לִקַּח אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבֵּין הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הִלְכוּ־שָׁם), he can only be

referring to Assyria and Babylon, since at this time these are the only nations to which they had been exiled. Note carefully the perfect (הִלְכוּ־שָׁם), "they have gone there" is not future—it does not read "where they will go." For Ezekiel, the Northern Tribes are a known entity within the lands historically known as Assyria and Babylon. The Targum (dated between 2nd Century BCE and 2nd Century CE) emphasizes this fact by translating the phrase "where they have gone" with the Aramaic (דִּאֲתַגְלִיאֵי לְתַמְנִי), "where they have been exiled."

In the introduction to The Book of Tobit (dated 275-125 BCE), we read:

The Book of the words of Tobit, the son of Tobiel, the son of Hananiel, the son of Aduel, the son of Gabael, the son of Raphael, of the seed of Asiel, of the tribe of Naphtali: who in the days of Shalmanezer; King of the Assyrians, was carried away captive out of Thisbe"

Tribal identity is here clearly maintained 500 years after the exile of the Northern Tribes.

A 3rd Century CE Latin Poet Commodian (in the *Carmen* and *Instructiones*) and the author of the Acts of St. Matthew may preserve an otherwise lost Jewish apocalyptic and apocryphal work that apparently described the living conditions of the Northern Tribes of Israel. While it is not certain that such a work actually existed, it is clear that the legend of its existence was widely circulated in the 1st Century CE. Around 100 CE three Jewish works, namely 4Ezra (13:34-51), 2Baruch (77:17-26), and Josephus' Antiquities. (11.5) referred to this legend or document. Whether the document existed, there is clear evidence of 1st Century CE Jewish opinion that the Ten Tribes were identifiable and there was knowledge of their general geographical location.

Fitting this same pattern, James opens his epistle with these words: "James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings." There is no reason to presume an allegorical interpretation of his designation "twelve tribes." Apparently he not only reckoned their existence, but also knew of their identity and expected his epistle to reach them. In the same manner, Anna, the prophetess who rejoiced at seeing Yeshua as an eight-day old baby, is noted as being from the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36). Apparently she did not consider herself one of the "Lost Tribes."

So the first fatal flaw in the Two House theory is that the very foundation upon which it is built is a vapor. The Northern Tribes were not lost. Wherever they have been dispersed, they remained marked as God's chosen people. The descendants of Jacob in Europe, even though many would have willingly been absorbed into the Gentile populations among which they lived, were singled out and slaughtered by Hitler and his demonically driven comrades. Far from losing their Israelite identity, the mark of the covenant was upon them and was evident to all. The whole hidden identity theory is nothing more than a house of cards.

The Two House theory ends up having all or most believers in Yeshua being the descendents of the 2. Northern Tribes of Israel. Yet God's plan of salvation is for all the nations, not just the descendents of Jacob.

A second fatal flaw in the Two House theory is the notion that the vast majority of people who come to faith in Yeshua (Jesus) are actually from the Northern Tribes of Israel, those who lost their identity and only regain it when they come to faith. While some proponents of the Two House theory would admit that people without a physical bloodline from Jacob may also be part of the saved people of God, the emphasis is placed upon reclaiming Ephraimite identity for all who are believers in Yeshua. The fact that more and more churches are willing to investigate Torah festivals and issues of "Jewish roots" is brought forward as proof of an awakening to this identity.

But is this actually what the Scriptures teach about God's plan of salvation? Hardly! From the first revelation of the covenant God made with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), the culmination of the covenant is cast in these words: "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." This same phrase is reiterated four more times as the covenant is passed from Abraham to Isaac, and from Isaac to Jacob and his sons:

Gen. 18:18 since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?

Gen. 22:17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have

obeyed My voice."

Gen. 26:4 "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;

Gen. 28:14 "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

There is an interesting phenomenon that occurs in the listing of these covenant texts. First, regardless of the various orders in which the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are listed, in each case the final blessing is the one that encompasses all of the families or nations of the earth. This consistent, final position in the listing of the blessings puts the blessing of the families/nations as the culmination or zenith of the covenant. The point is simply that the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant is the blessing that will come upon all the nations of the earth.

Secondly, it should be noted that the first (Genesis 12:3) and the last (Genesis 28:14) listing of the covenant blessings utilize the word "families" (משפחות) while those sandwiched between use the word "nations" (גוים). Thus the use of the term, "families" acts as bookends to envelope the covenant blessings.

Why is this important? It is important because the reader of Genesis (if reading from the Hebrew) has already encountered the word "family" or "families" and has come to recognize its meaning as indicating *distinct people groups based upon physical lineage*.

Gen. 8:19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark.

Gen. 10:5 From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

Gen. 10:18 and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad.

Gen. 10:20 These are the sons of Ham, according to their families according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations.

Gen. 10:31 These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations.

Gen. 10:32 These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.

Note carefully that the Hebrew text has linked together every possible means for showing the term "family" to be a term that identifies distinct bloodlines: they have distinct language, geographical location ("lands") and political characteristics ("nations").

Therefore the attentive reader is well informed about the meaning of the word "families" when he comes to the blessings of the covenant made with Abraham. "Families" identifies distinct people groups based upon distinct lineage or bloodline. And these families form the basis for distinct nations. When therefore God promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that in them all the families of the earth will be

blessed, it is clear that the covenant envisions the blessings of the covenant coming upon the nations that are distinct from them—distinct from the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God's plan of salvation does not envision the redemption of a single nation (Israel) nor even primarily a single nation (mostly Israel with a few others). God's plan of salvation encompasses "all the families (distinct bloodlines) of the earth." Furthermore, John's description of the final picture of salvation in the book of Revelation shows that God's covenant promises are finally and ultimately realized:

Rev. 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Rev. 14:6 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.

God chose Israel to be His servant to take the light of Messiah to the nations. We may use the illustration of a butler. A butler is a chosen, trusted individual whom the master of the house entrusts with his affairs. The butler, dressed in his fine attire, brings the food to the family on a silver tray, in fine china and serves it with the utmost decorum. But the master does not expect that everyone should become his butler. You are not required to be a butler to enjoy the meal that is served. Rather, the butler is the servant to serve the family—the meal is prepared primarily for the family, not the butler. In this analogy, the master is God, the butler is Israel, the fine tray and china dishes is the Torah that always leads to Messiah, and the meal is the blessings of salvation in Yeshua or the Gospel. And the family being served are those called from the nations to become the Master's family. (Of course, the butler also eats the same meal!)

Somehow the Two House theory makes it appear that everyone is actually a butler—they just didn't know it. So everyone goes out and buys butler's clothes and seeks to carry the tray and fine china—a thousand butlers to serve an individual or two at the table. Something is definitely wrong with that picture!

Rather, the plan of salvation clearly portrayed in the Scriptures is that God chose Israel to be His servant in order to bring the good news of salvation to all of the families of the earth. As the families of the earth come to be blessed in this salvation, they are adopted into the family of the Master and eat at His table. The goal is to sit at His table and enjoy the benefits of the covenant (the meal), not to become the butler. Surely all who sit at His table receive the blessings and responsibilities of being part of the Master's family. But they do this because they are adopted into His family, not because they have become the butler in His house.

So the second fatal flaw in the Two House theory is the failure to emphasize the nationally inclusive focus of God's salvation. The Two House theory ends up with primarily a single nation enjoying the benefits of the covenant—the single nation of Israel. Unwittingly, the Two House theory brings into question the faithfulness of God, for He did not promise to bless only the family of Jacob, but to bless all the families of the earth, meaning families of the earth which are distinct from the family of Jacob. Until such blessings come to all the families of the earth, God has not kept His promise.

To argue that only those who are believers in Yeshua and who also pursue the Torah constitute Ephraimite Israel is also flawed. Does this mean that Christians who come to love Torah are therefore proving their actual identity as Israel? (This is actually what has happened among the vast majority of people who identify themselves within the Two House Movement.) If so, the same problem exists because in the end, all the nations come to follow Torah! Zechariah describes the time when the nations will celebrate

Sukkot and come up to Jerusalem to worship. Indeed, the fact that Isaiah prophesies the Torah going forth from Zion would indicate that in the Millennial reign, all who bow before Yeshua as God's Messiah will be living in obedience to Torah. If it is argued that the followers of Yeshua who live by Torah are really the regathered Israel, then once again salvation is finally and ultimately enjoyed by Israel, not the nations as the Scriptures promise.

The Two House Theory teaches that only when believers realize they actually are descendents of the 3.

Northern Tribes can the prophecies of the union between Judah and Israel be fulfilled. But the Scriptures teach that the union of Israel and Judah comes as an event distinct from the salvation of the nations.

The Scriptures clearly teach the regathering of Israel (Northern Tribes) and Judah (the Southern Tribes) as one, unified nation in the end times. On that there can be no dispute.² But how and when are the dispersed people of Israel and Judah gathered to the Land and united under the rule of One Shepherd?

The first thing that is noticed in reading the Scriptures regarding the regathering of Israel is that there are three distinct groups: Judah, Israel, and the nations:

Is. 11:12 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.

Here in the parallel lines of this Hebrew poetry three groups are mentioned: "the nations," "banished ones of Israel," and "dispersed of Judah." Even as "Israel" and "Judah" are clearly references to the Northern and Southern tribes respectively, so "nations" is a separate entity in Isaiah's prophecy.

Jer. 36:2 "Take a scroll and write on it all the words which I have spoken to you concerning Israel and concerning Judah, and concerning all the nations, from the day I first spoke to you, from the days of Josiah, even to this day.

Once again, in the prophetic language of Jeremiah, three distinct entities are listed: Israel, Judah, and the nations. Like Isaiah, Jeremiah does not consider "Israel" to be synonymous with the "nations" but a distinct entity dispersed among the nations.

Zech. 8:13 'It will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you that you may become a blessing. Do not fear; let your hands be strong.'

Here, in language directly reminiscent of the promise made to Abraham that "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed," the prophet Zechariah gives the word of Adonai promising the salvation of the house of Judah and the house of Israel from the nations by whom they have been cursed. It is by the promised salvation that they, Israel and Judah, become a blessing to the nations. Note carefully that "Israel" and the "nations" are separate entities. Israel is not synonymous with "nations", as though "lost" Israel is the same as the nations, that is, that Israel has lost her identity and thinks she is the nations.

Furthermore, Judah and Israel are cursed among the nations. In the course of history, beginning with the rise of the Christian Church in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries CE, the Church (under whatever label she went) persecuted the descendents of Jacob. She was not herself persecuted, at least not in the broad sense. The anti-

semitism of the Christian Church throughout the middle ages, in the time of the Renaissance, and into the modern era is well documented. It was not the Christian Church that was being persecuted. It was the other way around: the Church was cursing Israel.

Zechariah, prophesying about the end times with a view to the millennial reign of the Messiah, speaks of the salvation of Judah and Israel as the means for becoming a blessing. From whom are they saved? They are saved from the nations among whom they were a curse. This would indicate quite clearly that both Judah and Israel maintain a identity as they are dispersed among the nations. It is impossible to curse something that is not identified. Israel is a curse among the nations in which she is scattered precisely because the nations see her as Israel.

Ezekiel notes the same thing. He teaches that Israel, while in dispersion, is profaning the Name of God because the nations know that she should be in her own Land instead of being exiled in theirs:

Ezek. 36:20 "When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land.' 21 "But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

If Israel had lost her identity and was not a distinct people group within the nations to which she had been exiled, how could the nations have said this about her?

Finally, Paul's understanding of the identity of Israel is clear: he identified with Israel as his brethren "according to the flesh:"

Rom. 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Messiah for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

Lest it be construed that Paul was referring only to Judah and not to the Northern Tribes, one should notice carefully how he uses the word "Israel" to refer to the whole nation upon whom the salvation of God comes in the end times. Even though "Israel" has been hardened for a season, in the end "all Israel will be saved."

Rom. 11:7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

Rom. 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and so all Israel will be saved;

Paul makes a clear distinction between "Gentiles" and "Israel" in this passage. Any reading that confuses this distinction is hopelessly lost in finding a consistent hermeneutic for Paul's words. Paul is well aware that the gospel is summed up in the Abrahamic promise that "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Galatians 3:8). And he gives a chronological order: first the Gentiles (another way of saying "nations") are brought to salvation, and then all of Israel. The two events are not simultaneous. Yet the Two House theory would have us believe that as the nations are being saved through faith in Yeshua, Israel is actually being saved, since the saved "Gentiles" are actually the "lost" tribes of Israel. If one adopts a consistent hermeneutic, one simply cannot accept the Two House theory.

But Paul's message is very consistent. God has made a promise to Abraham, and that promise envisions all of the families of the earth. Israel was chosen to bring the grand message of the Gospel to all of the

nations, but she refused to obey her God and has been dispersed as a result. God's sovereign plan, however, is that Israel's disobedience would not thwart His intentions to bless the nations. The nations will be blessed, and blessed in such a way that they will act as a catalyst to bring Israel herself back to obedience to the covenant as she humbly receives Yeshua as her true Messiah.

The third fatal flaw, then, is a misinterpretation of Scripture through a faulty hermeneutic. Where the Scriptures clearly differentiate between Judah, Israel, and the nations, the Two House theory tries to meld "Israel" (who has lost her identity) and the nations together as one. But if the Scriptures are interpreted consistently, the Two House theory simply cannot stand.

Conclusion

The Two House theory has three fatal flaws that render it unacceptable. First, the historical and biblical data show that the Northern Tribes were never lost. From the time of their dispersion and throughout the ensuing history of the world, the Northern Tribes or Israel has carried an identification as the nation God chose and redeemed from Egypt.

Secondly, the story of salvation as unfolded in the Bible envisions the blessing of the nations as people groups distinct from Judah and Israel. To identify a majority of believers in Yeshua as descendants of the Northern Tribes of Israel negates this promise of blessing upon the nations.

Thirdly, the Scriptures make it clear that in the end times three groups, not two, are gathered to faith in the One true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The three groups are Judah, Israel, and the nations. When Judah and Israel are united once again and become Israel as she was before the division of the kingdoms, then all the nations who are gathered into Israel and adopted into the family of God will join as one people under the kingship of Messiah Yeshua. This is the biblical story of redemption. The fact that presently, in the body of Messiah, Jew and Gentile are constituted as "one new man" (Ephesians 2:15) constitutes the "first fruits" or a foretaste of the ultimate harvest when the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) will be fulfilled.

Prologue

In writing the brief comments above, I am not unaware of what seems to me an obvious reason that the Two House theory has been so readily received by many people. As the return to Torah and the beauty of Torah life has been experienced in numerous groups, many who have no Jewish lineage feel like second-class citizens in the community of the faith. Believing that those with Jewish names and heritage are the "real thing" while the Gentiles are only "wannabes," it is only natural to search for a way to be "on the inside" rather than "outside looking in." To discover in the Bible a way of interpreting the Scriptures so as to actually claim physical descendency from Israel solves the problem. Suddenly those who always thought they had no real attachment to Israel can "legitimately" claim that they are, in fact, Israel! They are finally "in."

This "identity crisis" rests upon a failure to teach and understand the glory of God's way of salvation. Surely God chose Israel and gave her specific and glorious promises. But He chose her for the purpose of being a light to the nations, not as an end in itself. Israel is not the final glory—the untold number of the nations is the shining finale of redemption's symphony.

My wife and I have had the profound privilege of adopting two wonderful daughters from Liberia, West

Africa. When we received the decree of adoption, the language was stunning. It said that our daughters were to be considered as though they had actually been birthed from our own bodies! They are our daughters and we are their parents. Our love for our two natural sons is no different than the love we have for our two daughters. Nor are the requirements, rules, privileges, and expectations. Our two daughters have our name and live in every way as though they were natural born children in our home.

We must likewise see ourselves, whether Jew or non-Jew, as equal members in the household of God, for we all are adopted into His family. Our decree of adoption is written with the precious blood of a Lamb, Who is without blemish or spot. It is in Him and in Him alone we find our way to the Father, whether Jew or non-Jew. And His smile of grace, and His loving teaching of Torah, is equally enjoyed by all who are His children. There is no need to find some other means by which we think we may have a closer or more legitimate relationship with our Father. He has taken us upon His knee and called us His own. His words, confirmed in the loving work of His Son, is enough for us. We may rest assured that we are His children and that He is our Father. We find our identity in His promises, illustrated and confirmed in His Son, and written on our hearts by His Spirit. That is who we are—children of the Eternal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

¹See William Rosenau, "Ezekiel 37:15-28: What Happened to the Ten Tribes," in David Philipson, ed., *Hebrew Union College Jubilee Volume* (1875-1925), 79-88.

²Is.43:5; 56:8; Jer. 23:3; 29:14; 31:8,10; 32:37; Ezek.11:17; 20:34,41; 28:25; 34:13; 36:24; 37:21; 39:27; Mic. 2:12; Zeph. 3:19-20; Zech.10:10.