

The Two Houses of Israel in the End-Times

by J.K. McKee posted 01 April, 2005 www.tnnonline.net

In our day, the Messianic movement is growing in leaps and bounds.¹ Jewish people are acknowledging Yeshua as their Messiah and Savior in great numbers! The Holy Spirit is moving on the hearts of non-Jewish Believers, and convicting them to open up and examine their Bibles like never before, and letting them know that they need to be living Torah obedient lives like Messiah Yeshua. These people, in particular, are now keeping the Sabbath, celebrating the Biblical holidays, and eating kosher. Perhaps even more profound than these things, it is among these new Messianic Believers, mostly non-Jews from varied Christian backgrounds, who are now seeing themselves as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel, and not a separate “Church.” They feel some kind of kinship with the Jewish people. Specifically, they have seen the fact that Ancient Israel was divided in ancient times into the Two Houses of Judah and Ephraim, and in the Last Days prior to the Messiah’s return, all of Israel will be reunited.

But this is often where it stops. Most who believe in the Two Houses of Israel, affirm, as the Biblical record attests, that following the reign of King Solomon the United Kingdom of Israel was split into the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Northern Kingdom was corporately taken into Assyrian captivity, and its members largely dispersed into the nations or “Gentiles” of Planet Earth (Genesis 48:19; cf. Romans 11:25). The Southern Kingdom of Judah, while having experienced the Babylonian captivity, returned to the Land of Israel. While the Jewish people were dispersed again, by the Romans, and having lived by-and-large in exile until the founding of modern State of Israel in 1948, they have remained the prime torchbearer and recognizable remnant of Israel. It is thought that with the advent of the modern Messianic movement, and many Jewish people coming to faith in Messiah Yeshua and non-Jewish Believers embracing their Hebraic Roots, that the Lord must be reuniting all Israel: Judah, scattered Israel/Ephraim, and all of their companions.

The concept that all Believers in Yeshua are a part of the Commonwealth of Israel will greatly change one’s perspective of the Bible, because after all, the Scriptures that clearly apply to Israel apply not only to a Jewish Believer, but also to a non-Jewish Believer who sees himself or herself as being a part of Israel as well. Frequently emphasized is the need for all Believers—Jewish or non-Jewish—to study and follow God’s Torah, which makes up Israel’s “constitution,” and specifies how citizens of Israel are to live. This is where the bulk of most studies and theological discussions in the Two-House Messianic sub-movement are presently centered, as they relate to people’s lifestyles and how they function in society right now. Studies might not always be focused on the Torah itself, and oftentimes may be focused on the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament in order to understand how Torah-based it really is, but the Torah is, by-and-large, the focus of most in the Messianic community today. This is firmly in line with Moses’ prophecy in Deuteronomy 4:27-31:

“The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD drives you. There you will serve gods, the work of man’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. When you are in distress² and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice. For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.”

This is a commonly quoted prophecy in the Two-House sub-movement regarding the restoration of Israel, the fact that all Israel has been scattered into the world, and that in the end-times all Israel will seek diligently for the LORD God of Israel and find Him and obey Him. **But how many of us are consciously aware that we are reading an end-time prophecy here?** How many, while believing in the concept that there are Two Houses of Israel that are to be reunited, have ever really addressed it as an “end-time event”?

¹ This article has been reproduced from the paperback edition of *When Will the Messiah Return?*, pp 149-167.

² Heb. *b'tzar lekha* (בְּצָר לְךָ); Grk. *LXX en tē thlipsei sou* (ἐν τῇ θλίψει σου).

We as Messianic Believers have a witness of the Spirit that our Heavenly Father is doing something new and exciting in the world today through growth of the Messianic community and the presumed unification of the Two Houses of Judah and scattered Israel/Ephraim. Those of us who have been blessed with this understanding are part of a great move which will ultimately culminate in the physical return of the Messiah to Planet Earth to initiate His thousand-year Millennial reign from Jerusalem. Many of us have taken the understanding of all Israel being reunited, and have applied it to our lives as we seek to obey the Lord as part of the Commonwealth of Israel. But while we understand the broad concepts of this reunification, how many of us have truly sought out its specifics that relate to end-time prophecy and the Second Coming?

Eschatology, the study of end things, is an area that has not always been one of high emphasis in parts of today's Messianic movement. The reasons for this vary. Some believe that studying prophecy is too controversial, and they do not want to get into it. Others believe that the study of prophecy is peripheral, and they will just wait until the end-times are upon us to consider it. And still, others have studied prophecy, but have heard end-time predictions that have been proven false, thus many stay away from it lest they make erroneous predictions as well. However, any objective reading of the prophecies of the Two Houses of Israel brings with it the clear realization that the reunification of all Israel is indeed an *eschatological phenomenon*—as prominent as the Abomination of Desolation or the Battle of Armageddon, things that you are likely already familiar with.

It is our responsibility to seriously start developing our eschatology, and consider the reunification of Judah and scattered Israel/Ephraim as an end-time “event.”

Why We Cannot Ignore Prophecy

Some teachers in the Two-House sub-movement would no doubt prefer that prophecy remain consigned to the future, so that they do not have to deal with its controversies. This might be wishful thinking, though, because whether or not we fully realize it, those of us who believe in the reunification of Judah and Ephraim believe so on the basis of unfulfilled Bible prophecy. **Whether we like it or not, we have to deal with prophecy.** We believe that the Father is in the process of restoring all of Israel, because we believe that the prophecies which speak of Israel's restoration have yet to occur, and have not been fulfilled in the past. To divorce the Two-House teaching of Judah and Ephraim from eschatology is a grave error, and an error that many people have made without realizing it. The following are some critical end-time prophecies which relate to Israel being restored, and hopefully after reading through them you will see the need for us all to begin looking at some of these things in greater detail.

Isaiah 11:10-16

“Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious. Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, and those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, and Judah will not harass Ephraim. They will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west; together they will plunder the sons of the east; they will possess Edom and Moab, and the sons of Ammon will be subject to them. And the LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt; and He will wave His hand over the River with His scorching wind; and He will strike it into seven streams and make *men* walk over dry-shod. And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant of His people who will be left, just as there was for Israel in the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt.”

This prophecy details the end-time feathering of Judah and Ephraim and their coming into the Land of Israel. The Lord says that He will gather the Two Houses of Israel from all over the world. Specifically, the job is given to the Root of Jesse, who we know to be Messiah Yeshua. The reunification of all Israel is inextricably connected to His Second Coming. When all of Israel is gathered back into the Promised Land, they will perform mighty deeds, which if we relate to the present state of the Middle East, involve Israel's annexation of the Gaza Strip, "the slopes of the Philistines on the west"; the West Bank, "They will possess Edom and Moab"; and the country of Jordan, "the sons of Ammon will be subject to them."

How many teachers do you know factor this into their understanding of the Last Days? How many Two-House teachers do you know who look at this as an unfulfilled end-time prophecy, and consider the possibility of it happening sometime in the future as the condition of the Middle East becomes more and more unstable?

Jeremiah 3:18

"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 to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance."

You have probably seen this verse quoted before, as it is commonly used as a support text for the present Jewish immigration that is occurring into Israel from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. While this can be an appropriate application of this—and by all means we should support this—it cannot be a complete fulfillment because the House of Judah *and* the House of Israel/Ephraim *both* have not returned to the Land of Israel. Judah is not the only one who has to return from "the North," because the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim was taken into Assyrian captivity, which is north of the Land of Israel. In order for this prophecy to be entirely fulfilled, all of Israel must be gathered in from the north country to the Promised Land.

Again, how many teachers do you see who fully factor this into their understanding of the Last Days?

Jeremiah 30:3

"'For behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.' The LORD says, 'I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it.'"

This is a continuation of Jeremiah's earlier prophecy, telling us that *both* Judah and scattered Ephraim will return to the Land of Israel. An explanatory note in the Orthodox Jewish *ArtScroll Tanach* reads, "This is the reason for writing down the prophecies: They are intended for the future (see v. 24), when the ultimate redemption will take place (*Radak*)."³ Orthodox Judaism recognizes this as a future prophecy relating to the restoration of all Israel, and so must we. Jeremiah 30:24 tells us "The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has performed and until He has accomplished the intent of His heart; in the latter days⁴ you will understand this." Perhaps we have to wait until the end-times to truly understand this prophecy. But if we have to wait until the end-times—and many today believe we are or might be that final generation—then why are we not at the very least discussing this prophecy and what it might mean?

Jeremiah 31:31-34

"Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the LORD. 'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I

³ Nosson Sherman and Meir Zlotowitz, eds., *ArtScroll Tanach* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1996), 1140.

⁴ Heb. *b'acharit ha'yamim* (בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים).

will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the LORD, 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'"

This prophecy, perhaps greatly overlooked, speaks of the *b'rit chadashah* (בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה) that the Lord will make with His people, where He will write the Torah onto the hearts of His people.⁵ It is alluded to in Hebrews 8:1-12, where the author of Hebrews speaks of Messiah Yeshua as our High Priest in Heaven interceding for us. He relates this to His perfect sacrifice and how God will write His Torah or Law onto the hearts of the redeemed:

"Now the main point in what has been said is *this*: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this *high priest* also have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, 'SEE,' He says, 'THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN TO YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN' [Exodus 25:40]. But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first [*priesthood*] had been faultless,⁶ there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, 'BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH; NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD. FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,' FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM. FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE.'"

As you can see, this text includes a quotation from Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Septuagint). Surprisingly, many Christians will use these verses from Hebrews 8 to tell us that the Torah is no longer for today, when in fact the text says that when God fully institutes this covenant with His people, He says "I will put my *Torah* in their minds and write it on their hearts" (Hebrews 8:10, CJB; cf. Ezekiel 36:27). When this covenant is fully instituted we will all have God's Torah written on our hearts.

⁵ On a side note, it is inaccurate to call the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) the "*B'rit Chadashah*," as is too commonplace in the Messianic community, because the true *b'rit chadashah* is not a new selection of inspired writings, but rather is the promise of God to His people, specifically Judah and Ephraim, that He will write His Torah or Law onto their hearts via His Spirit.

Messianic author Tim Hegg summarizes in his book *The Letter Writer*, "It does no better to call the Apostolic Scriptures the 'Renewed Covenant' or '*B'rit Chadashah*' (בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה), as is so common in Messianic circles. The Apostolic Scriptures do not constitute a covenant in any sense. They are the divinely inspired words of Yeshua and His apostles, giving us the ongoing progressive revelation of God to His people. They are the application of Torah to the people of God in the last days as inaugurated by the coming of Messiah, and they constitute the divine *halachah* for the congregation of Jew and Gentile as envisioned in the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant. They in no way constitute a 'new' or 'different' or even 'renewed' covenant. They are simply the progressive revelation of the covenants which were given to the Fathers" (Littleton, CO: First Fruits of Zion, 2002, p 235, fn #503).

⁶ Note especially how all the Greek has is *Ei gar hē prōtē ekeinē en anemptos* (Εἰ γὰρ ἡ πρώτη ἐκεῖνη ἦν ἄμεμπτος), "for if that first were faultless" (YLT), a specific reference to the previous Levitical priesthood (Hebrews 8:1-5). Yeshua's Melchizedekian priesthood in Heaven for us is what has inaugurated the New Covenant.

This prophecy is in the process of being completely fulfilled in our day as all of Israel is being restored and brought together as one people in Messiah Yeshua, and Messianic Believers learn the Torah as He followed it. While this may not seem to be very much of an end-time prophecy, it nevertheless is. It does speak of the New Covenant that we partake of as Believers in Yeshua, but it also speaks of the Lord fully writing His Torah onto our hearts. In our day and age, as more and more Christians are investigating their Hebraic Roots and turning toward a life of Torah obedience, why are they doing this? This prophecy may explain it all. The restoration of all Israel will involve a return to God's Torah from more people than just Jewish Believers.

Jeremiah 33:7-9

"I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel and will rebuild them as they were at first. I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me. It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it."

This prophecy speaks of the restored Kingdom of Israel where Judah and Israel/Ephraim will be rebuilt and Messiah Yeshua will be ruling and reigning from Jerusalem. I believe it is directly alluded to in Matthew 16:18 where the Messiah says "upon this rock I will build My church." We know that the true *ekklēsia* (ἐκκλησία) or assembly/congregation is the people of Israel (Heb. *qahal*, קָהָל). And, the Greek verb *oikodomeō* (οἰκοδομέω), while often translated as "build" in most English Bibles, can mean "build up again, restore" (BDAG),⁷ hence "rebuild." The Hebrew verb *banah* (בָּנָה) rendered as "rebuild" (RSV/NASU/NIV) or "restore" (ESV) in Jeremiah 33:7-9, means both "to build" and "to rebuild" (HALOT).⁸ It is generally rendered as *oikodomeō* in the Greek Septuagint. The UBS 1991 modern Hebrew New Testament version, not surprisingly, renders *oikodomeō* with *banah*.⁹ In Matthew 16:18, the Messiah says that He will restore or rebuild His assembly, the congregation of Israel.

The Two Houses of Israel have not been brought together—because when they are, Israel will be a name of glory and praise in all of the Earth. Israel as a nation will have had its sins corporately forgiven by God, and all of the world will look at Israel in awesome dread—because of Israel's God. Has this occurred yet?

Jeremiah 50:4-7, 20

"In those days and at that time,' declares the LORD, '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 the LORD 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 the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten. My people have become lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray. They have made them turn aside on the mountains; they have gone along from mountain to hill and have forgotten their resting place. All who came upon them have devoured them; and their adversaries have said, 'We are not guilty, inasmuch as they have sinned against the LORD who is the habitation of righteousness, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers'...'In those days and at that time,' declares the LORD, 'search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found; for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.'"

This prophecy speaks of Judah and Israel/Ephraim desiring to return together to the Land of Israel, and their seeking to find the Holy One of Israel. The Hebrew verb *baqash* (בָּקַשׁ), used in the phrase "search will be made for the iniquity of Israel," appears in the Pual stem (intensive

⁷ BDAG, 696.

⁸ HALOT, 1:139.

⁹ Specifically it says, *ebeneh et qihalti* (אֶבְנֶה אֶת קִהְלֹתֵי).

action, passive voice), and specifically means “*be sought*” (BDB).¹⁰ Has this occurred yet? Have the Two Houses of Israel returned to Zion to seek the Lord, and has no sin been found in them? Do not both Judah and Ephraim have sin?

Many Jewish people are secularists and have no regard for God or the Bible. Many of scattered Ephraim when they return will have to repent of the idolatrous ways of their ancestors (as specifically seen in 1&2 Kings). Have the Two Houses of Israel sought and received corporate, national unification and redemption? Has all Israel appointed Messiah Yeshua, the sinless Lamb of God, as leader? Cannot sin still be found?

Ezekiel 37:15-28

“The word of the LORD came again to me saying, ‘And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, “For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions”; then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.” Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. When the sons of your people speak to you saying, “Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?” say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.’” The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes. ‘Say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God. My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.’””

Ezekiel 37:15-28 is probably the most critical Scripture passage concerning the Two Houses of Israel and their prophesied reunification under David, or the Greater David, who is Messiah Yeshua. If you read these verses carefully, then you should come to the conclusion that this prophecy has yet to occur and the Two Houses of Israel have yet to be reunited. The House of Judah and the House of Israel/Ephraim both have not returned to the Land of Israel—also along with significant numbers of companions. David, the Greater David or Messiah Yeshua, is not reigning over them from His throne in Jerusalem. The Messiah has yet to return to Earth, and Judah and Ephraim have yet to dwell securely in their own land. All of Israel is not observing the statutes and decrees of the Lord and obeying Him to their fullest extent.

We previously quoted Tim LaHaye, who writes in his *Prophecy Study Bible* concerning Ezekiel 37:15-23, “The Kingdom of David and Solomon split in 931 B.C., becoming Israel and Judah. In restored Israel, all tribes are represented and the nation will be united, as the sign of the fused stick reveals.”¹¹ John F. Walvoord observes in his *Every Prophecy of the Bible*, “The situation where these two kingdoms were divided will end, and as this and other prophecies predict, the two kingdoms will become one nation (cf. Jer. 3:18; 23:5-6; 30:3; Hosea 1:11; Amos 9:11). No

¹⁰ BDB, 135.

¹¹ LaHaye, *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*, 873.

fulfillment has ever been recorded in history, and the future regathering of Israel will occur in the Millennium.”¹² To the casual observer, from two dispensationalist pre-tribulational publications, this implies that the two kingdoms have yet to be reunited. Neither LaHaye nor Walvoord would be advocates of any kind of Two-House teaching, but these quotations certainly indicate what we believe: **the fact that all Israel is yet to be reunited!**

Hosea 1:10-11

“Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and in the place where it is said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ It will be said to them, ‘*You are* the sons of the living God.’ And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one leader, and they will go up from the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.”

This prophecy of Judah and Ephraim attests that their numbers will be great, “like the sand of the sea, which can neither be measured nor counted” (ATS), and that they will be “gathered together.” The Hebrew verb *qavatz* (קָבַץ) appears in the Nifal stem (simple action, passive voice), and specifically means “gather, collect” (BDB).¹³ This prophetic text specifically says that the Day of Jezreel, indicative of the valley in Northern Israel where the Battle of Armageddon is to occur (Revelation 16:16), is the day when Yeshua the Messiah returns to defeat His enemies and establishes His Millennial Kingdom. This is the time when the Two Houses of Israel will be fully reunited and appoint Messiah Yeshua as their Leader. The prophecy says that they will “ascend from the land” (ATS),¹⁴ meaning that just as Yeshua was taken up into the clouds, so will a restored Israel recognize Yeshua as its Leader, and be taken up to meet Him as the Great Tribulation ends.

How many prophecy teachers are aware of this? How many Two-House teachers are aware of this? (And, we cannot forget how Paul applies this word in Romans 9:24-26 to the salvation of the nations occurring in his day.)

Zechariah 9:13-16

“For I will bend Judah as My bow, I will fill the bow with Ephraim. And I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece; and I will make you like a warrior's sword. Then the LORD will appear over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning; and the Lord GOD will blow the trumpet, and will march in the storm winds of the south. The LORD of hosts will defend them. And they will devour and trample on the sling stones; and they will drink *and* be boisterous as with wine; and they will be filled like a *sacrificial* basin, *drenched* like the corners of the altar. And the LORD their God will save them in that day as the flock of His people; for *they are as* the stones of a crown, sparkling in His land.”

This end-time prophecy speaks of a future military conflict between the State of Israel and Greece. It is possible that this will occur during the future Tribulation period. Many, including myself, believe that the antimessiah/antichrist will arise out of the old Roman Empire or today's European Union. Greece is a member of the European Union, and as of right now (even in 2009) is geographically the most powerful E.U. member closest to Israel. Nevertheless, even though Greece may attempt to attack Israel in the future, the Scripture says that it will not succeed. How many of us have objectively examined this prophecy and factored it into our understanding of the Last Days?

These prophetic verses you have just seen about the Two Houses of Israel should provide you with a good framework of what we need to be looking at in relationship to the end-times. As

¹² Walvoord, *Every Prophecy of the Bible*, pp 186-187.

¹³ BDB, 867.

¹⁴ Heb. *alu min-ha'eretz* (עָלוּ מִן־הָאֶרֶץ).

you hopefully can tell, these are some very important end-time prophecies that involve both Judah and Ephraim, most of which have gone completely unaddressed by many Two-House teachers and advocates today—to say nothing of many of today’s Messianic Jews who completely disregard any kind of Two-House teaching. If anyone has addressed them, it is a safe bet to say that these Scriptures have not been examined objectively for what they mean in a long-term future context. Only by examining these prophecies, and other related Scriptures, in greater detail, will a legitimate, eschatologically-based Two-House teaching emerge. (As opposed to much of the populism we often encounter instead.)¹⁵

The Big Prophecy

Of all of the prophecies we have just examined, it is easy to say that the most significant of them is probably Ezekiel 37:15-28. This is the most commonly quoted of all of the passages which address the Two Houses of Israel, and is very clearly an end-time prophecy. They attest that the two sticks, representing Judah and Israel/Ephraim, will be reunited as one in the hand of the Son of Man, who is ultimately Yeshua. Vs. 24-28 end with the admonition,

“And they will be My people, and I will be their God. My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.”

What do we see occurring when this finally takes place?

1. David, representative of Messiah Yeshua, will be king over all of Israel
2. All of Israel will have One Shepherd, Messiah Yeshua
3. All of Israel will be keeping God’s statutes and ordinances, the Torah
4. All of Israel will living in the Land of Israel
5. All of Israel will have an eternal covenant of peace made with them by God
6. All of Israel will have the sanctuary of God within their midst
7. All of the world will know who the God of Israel is by the evidence of His Sanctuary being in the center of the world

Have these things taken place?

Any objective student of the Bible has to look at these things, and unless he or she chooses to allegorize or spiritualize them away, must conclude that none of these things have occurred. All of Israel has not been reunited because of the clear evidence that we are not living in the restored Kingdom of God on Planet Earth. We are still awaiting the return of the Messiah and the establishment of His reign. We are still awaiting the Sanctuary of God to be established on Earth, and an eternal covenant of peace to be made. Any claim that this prophecy has already been fulfilled in past history will be based on, at the very most, surface level evidence. The Conservative Jewish commentary *Etz Hayim* makes some important observations about Ezekiel 37:15-28 that cannot be ignored:

“[This text] focuses on settlement in the Land, and the new sanctuary. The elements of ingathering, monarchy, repurification, and Temple building constitute the main configuration of messianic hope for ancient Israel and for subsequent Jewish generations....[A] recurrent theme is

¹⁵ For a list of these and many more verses, and a brief summary, consult the author’s article “The Two Houses of Israel: Biblical Passages That Deserve Our Attention.”

This article will hopefully serve as the basis for future writings and exegetical papers, as the Two-House teaching is properly shored up and refined from the Scriptural text.

‘permanence,’ expressed as a permanent change from the past and as a vision of a permanent future.”¹⁶

This view of Haftarah *Va-Yiggash* (Genesis 44:18-47:27) lends support to the fact that the two sticks prophecy of Ezekiel 37:15-28 remains something to be accomplished in the future, being an integral part of the Jewish hope for Israel’s full redemption. V. 28 makes it very clear: *b’heyot miqdashi b’tokham l’olam* (בְּהַיּוֹת מִקְדָּשִׁי בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְעוֹלָם), “when my sanctuary is among them forevermore” (NRSV). Any objective Bible reader can see that this has yet to take place as God’s sanctuary is not yet present on Planet Earth. There has been no permanent restoration as is expected by this passage.

In spite of this, though, there are many Jews, and consequently many Messianic Jews, who believe that Ezekiel 37:15-28 has already been fulfilled and was a prophecy that only related to Ancient Israel in the past, and not Israel in the future. They say that this prophecy was only speaking of the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel following the Babylonian exile, Judah’s reunification with the scattered remnants of the Northern Kingdom who were not assimilated into the nations, and then the rebuilding of the Temple by Nehemiah and Ezra the Priest. But there are elements of this interpretation which are missing from what Ezekiel himself prophesied.¹⁷

Let it be clear: those of us who believe in the restoration of all Israel are believing it on the basis of these prophecies being unfulfilled. **We cannot ignore prophecy if there truly are Two Houses of Israel in Scripture that have yet to be reunited.**

But even if true, why does it seem that many people, especially in the Messianic movement, try to stay away from studying prophecy? Is it perhaps that when end-time prophecy has been addressed, it has been addressed improperly?

The End of History

When many people think about the Last Days and end-time prophecy, they tend to think about what is commonly termed “the end of history.” For many Bible Believers, this “end of the world” involves the Messiah’s return and His defeating His enemies at Armageddon and the initiation of His Millennial Kingdom and a profound era of godly peace and justice. But for secularists, it may involve a flash and a bomb and the true end of civilization, resulting in the extinction of humankind. And, whether or not consciously aware of it, many other Believers think that the end-times involve bombs and deaths on a massive scale, as opposed to anything positive or eternal.

Non-religious elements of these two opposing viewpoints are analyzed in two popular books that many college students of political science must read (including myself in 2001): *The End of History and the Last Man* by Francis Fukuyama, and *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* by Samuel P. Huntington. Both Fukuyama and Huntington are well known in the political science community for often having mutually exclusive views of world affairs.

Fukuyama’s book discusses his belief that society is getting better on the basis that the populations of all countries seek to better themselves and hence the world will one day be liberalized and democratic. He believes, “On both the communist Left and the authoritarian Right there has been a bankruptcy of serious ideas capable of sustaining the internal political cohesion of strong governments.”¹⁸ By saying this, he postulates that such regimes will one day inevitably fall, giving rise to ones consistent with Western liberalized democracies.

Huntington’s book, on the other hand, analyzes inherent world problems that have ensued since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of communism. He believes that the world is

¹⁶ Nahum M. Sarna, “Haftarah for Va-Yiggash,” in David L. Lieber, *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2001), 290.

¹⁷ For a further examination, consult the author’s paper on Ezekiel 37:15-28, “Have the Two Sticks Been Reunited?”

¹⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, Inc., 1992), 39.

much more dangerous than it was during the Cold War, and that future world conflicts will be on the basis of clashing socio-religious groups such as the Christian civilization versus the Muslim civilization versus the Hindu civilization versus the Chinese civilization and so forth. Huntington observes,

“Having achieved political independence, non-Western societies wish to free themselves from Western economic, military, and cultural domination....With the challenger civilizations, Islam and China, the West is likely to have consistently strained and often highly antagonistic relations. Its relations with Latin America and Africa, weaker civilizations which have in some measure been dependent on the West will involve much lower levels of conflict...The relations of Russia, Japan, and India to the West are likely to fall between those of the other two groups, involving elements of cooperation and conflict, as these three core states at times line up with the challenger civilizations and at times side with the West. They are the ‘swing’ civilizations.”¹⁹

These two distinct views cannot be reconciled because of the simple fact of human nature. We all might agree that Fukuyama’s idea that the entire world is getting better and developing toward democracy is idealistic, but it is simply unattainable. Although many totalitarian and communist countries are liberalizing and many totalitarian governments are falling, many democratic countries today are becoming more socialistic. Countries such as China are becoming more and more open to free trade, and others such as the United States will have ballooning government bureaucracies and will steadily be adopting more social controls.

Given what we know in Scripture about the Last Days, it is safe to say that Huntington’s view of the world today is more accurate. Yeshua prophesies in His Olivet Discourse, “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matthew 24:7). According to His words, we are headed toward an imminent *clash of civilizations*.

There is, however, a way we can seemingly “reconcile” Fukuyama’s and Huntington’s positions.

Huntington’s view of the world today and the “clash of civilizations” will result in the true “end” or *eschatos* (ἔσχατος) of humanity. This end might be global war. Fukuyama’s understanding of worldwide liberalization results in a *telos* (τέλος) or an “end to which all things relate” (Thayer).²⁰ These two distinct Greek words are used together in Revelation 22:13, where Yeshua says “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last [*eschatos*], the beginning and the end [*telos*].” However, what should be noted is that *eschatos* and *telos* have very distinct “end” connotations, *eschatos* being closer to “termination,” and *telos* perhaps meaning “consummation.” We know that Yeshua, who is the *Alpha* (Α) and the *Omega* (Ω), the “A and the Z” (CJB), or Hebraically the *Alef* (א) and the *Tav* (ת)—eternally is the First and the Last (*eschatos*), but is also the beginning and the *consummation* (*telos*) of our personal faith.

The only way these two views can be reconciled is through an understanding of pre-millennial eschatology. According to the prophecies of Scripture humanity is getting worse. We are going to return to the days of Noah, where “every intent of the thoughts of [man’s] heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).²¹ The end-time world conflict that is prophesied will be primarily on the basis of clashing socio-religious groups, as is consistent with Huntington. However, this will culminate in the literal return of Yeshua to Earth where the Messiah will rule from Jerusalem with justice, perhaps consistent with Fukuyama’s theory of “the world getting better.”

We should not wait for the “termination of civilization,” as are many who do not have Yeshua resident in their hearts. We await for the true restoration of the Kingdom to Israel and “the completion of the age” (Matthew 28:20, LITV).²² We await a better world where peace,

¹⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), pp 184-185.

²⁰ Thayer, 620.

²¹ Heb. *kol-yetzer machshevot l'bo raq ra* (כל־יֵצֵר מַחֲשֵׁבֵת לְבוֹ רָק רָע).

²² Grk. *tēs sunteleias tou aiōnos* (τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος).

justice, and order are manifest, and the Lord is physically present to dispense rewards to those loyal to Him, and penalties to those who disobey Him.

Uncharted Territory

Without question, the largest underdeveloped area of the Two-House teaching is eschatology or end-time prophecy. Part of this has to do with the reality that the Messianic community is still in its infancy, and as such it will take a great deal of time to formulate many other areas of our theology. The idea that there are Two Houses of Israel present in Bible prophecy, Judah and scattered Israel/Ephraim, that the Lord is going to reunite in the end-times, is a new concept for many people. *It is also controversial.* Living as a part of Israel in obedience to the Torah is also very new. But we have to come to grips with the fact that we actually believe all of Israel is going to be restored on the basis of unfulfilled Bible prophecy. Whether we like it or not, we have to address prophecy, and we have a great responsibility to do it properly.

How many people realize that when “Israel” is spoken of in many end-time prophecies, it is not only the Jewish people who are spoken of? Most end-time prophecy teachings, be they Christian or Messianic, come from the perspective that when Israel is talked about in end-time prophecy, that only the Jewish people are being spoken of. The idea that when “Israel” is spoken of in end-time prophecy, it might be all of Israel reunited or in the process of being reunited, is a new concept for many people. Events that include both Houses of Israel, both the Jewish people and scattered Ephraim, include the end-time exodus of Israelites to the Middle East and the Gog-Magog war.

We do not wish to say that eschatology has been purposefully overlooked by many in our ranks, nor that other areas of theology are unimportant, including Torah study. But, if our Heavenly Father is truly accomplishing “the restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21), surely this restoration includes a greater handling of end-time prophecy than presently exists in today’s Messianic movement. Many have entered into the Messianic movement because of the simple reason that Messianics study the Old Testament in greater detail than in evangelical Christianity, and there are (quite obviously) many prophecies in the Old Testament. But how many of us have really made any effort to study prophecy, and do so *objectively*? How many of us are aware that *both* Judah and scattered Israel/Ephraim have a role to play in end-time events?

The issue at hand for many Messianic Believers who affirm the promises of the restoration of all Israel—is that when Israel is usually talked about in prophecy teachings, it is automatically assumed to solely be only Judah, and those of scattered Ephraim are excluded. Therefore, it is believed that it is only the Jews who make the end-time exodus, it is only the Jews who fight Gog and Magog, and it is only the Jews who compose the 144,000. But those of us who have an understanding of the Two Houses of Israel from the Scriptures will find that this is only half true, and that scattered Ephraim, returning to the fold of Israel, will participate in these things as will Judah. But how will this happen? These are some of the issues that we will have to consider in our study of the end-times in the years ahead.

What about the rapture debate?

One of the most highly discussed and debated issues among Christians coming into the Messianic movement is the rapture. I myself entered into the Messianic movement in 1995 after engaging in some detailed personal study of end-time prophecy, specifically the rapture debate between pre- and post-tribulationism. As you probably are already aware, the majority view in evangelical Christianity is the belief that the Messiah can return at any moment to gather the saints to Heaven prior to the Tribulation period. While there are pre-tribulationists in the Messianic community, the numbers between pre- and post-tribulationists are more even handed. Any proper handling of end-time prophecy must begin with a discussion of the Second Coming, and a firm position on when the Messiah returns.

Most in the Two-House sub-movement are post-tribulationists, and believe that the Lord returns after the Tribulation period to gather His elect. Yeshua Himself tells us that He will

return “after the tribulation of those days” (Matthew 24:29), in concurrence with the Apostle Paul’s admonition in 1 Corinthians 15:52 where he tells us He comes “at the last trumpet.” At the seventh, or last trumpet, the Apostle John writes “The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Messiah; and He will reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15). This is not a complicated picture to see at all: *after* the Tribulation, the last trumpet, and at the seventh trumpet Planet Earth becomes personal property of the Lord.

Few realize this, but the pre-tribulation rapture teaching is actually based more on the presupposition that Israel and “the Church” are separate, than it is on any timing arguments from the Scriptures. Obviously, as the Two-House teaching of Judah and Ephraim advocates that God has only one group of elect, the community of Israel, we affirm that all Believers are a part of Israel and those prophecies which clearly apply to Israel apply to them. Some people choose to deny the clear declaration of our Lord in Matthew 24, primarily based on the reasoning that the “elect,” spoken of throughout Yeshua’s Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 is Israel, and therefore this message is not for “the Church.” But then, if Yeshua is only speaking “to Israel” here, where does He ever speak directly to “the Church”?

Even when we address the timing arguments of the Messiah’s return, and respond to the claims of pre-tribulationists, albeit very important, **we still must address the involvement of the Two Houses of Israel in the Last Days.** Learning to do this will be an intriguing phenomenon to witness.

The Two Houses of Israel: an Eschatological Phenomenon

How are we to understand the reunification of all Israel as an end-time occurrence, on the level of the rise of the antimessiah/antichrist, global government, the Abomination of Desolation, and the judgments of God that are to befall Planet Earth? These are things that most who examine prophecy already know about.

The primary verses which detail our belief in the Two Houses of Israel coming together are Ezekiel 37:15-28. These verses are an end-time prophecy, and they tell us that when the sticks representing the House of Judah and the House of Israel/Ephraim are reunited in the Master’s hand: “My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever” (Ezekiel 37:27-28). The same prophecy tells us “My servant David will be king over them” (Ezekiel 37:24), David of course being representative of Messiah Yeshua.

When viewed in its proper context, the prophecy of Ezekiel 37:15-28 has yet to be fulfilled and will only be completed when Yeshua returns and we enter into the Millennial Kingdom. At the same time, it is important we realize that Ezekiel 37 is followed by chs. 38 and 39. These chapters speak of the invasion of the Land of Israel by Gog and Magog, interpreted by many as being a Russian-Arab alliance. The future will determine if Gog and Magog do represent a Russian-Arab alliance, but even if they do not, how soon can this conflict take place? Some would say that a war between Israel and its Arab neighbors in the Middle East is imminent. But when dealing with end-time prophecy from distinctively a Two-House perspective, can “all Israel” truly engage in a war right now? *Any* conflict we see in the Middle East need *not* be one prophesied in Scripture.

Without question, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was a fulfillment of prophecy, as is the return of many Jewish people to the Promised Land. But we also know that many of scattered Ephraim too are to return to the Land of Israel, as Zechariah 10:10 tells us that God “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” (cf. Zechariah 10:7) or “there is not found for them *space*” (YLT). This prophecy has yet to occur.

It should be noted that following the Gog-Magog conflict, God says, “The nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity” (Ezekiel 39:23). When you read Ezekiel chs. 37-39, you see a series of paralleling prophecies. But most importantly, when the House of Israel is referred to, it is those of the Northern Kingdom having returned, as opposed to

just Judah or the Jewish people. *When viewed in its proper context from Ezekiel 37 through 38 and the end of 39, the House of Israel mentioned here are those of scattered Ephraim—not Judah.* Thus, as a prerequisite for the Gog-Magog war to occur, a significant number of scattered Ephraim must be present in the Land of Israel. This return has not yet occurred, and the Gog-Magog war presently cannot take place.

If this be the case concerning this one widely known aspect of Bible prophecy, what other areas must we reevaluate in light of a Two-House understanding? This is not to say that current pre-millennial interpretations of particular end-time prophecies are “wrong,” per se, but rather that they might be incomplete. While Ezekiel 38 and 39, for example, are very clearly speaking of a major war, who can we define as “Israel” in this war? It is clear that in our examination of end-time prophecy we must factor in an Israel composed of a reunited Judah and Ephraim, not just Judah.

Not Making the Mistakes of Others

For many, believing that the scattered House of Israel/Ephraim has a direct role to play in end-time events, every bit as much as the Jewish people, is very new—although it does not at all negate many of the other prophecies which we are familiar with, such as the rise of the antimessiah/antichrist or the coming mark of the beast. Some have chosen to focus so much on the prophecies of the Two-House reunion, that they have forgotten end-time prophecies many are already familiar with—things are just as valid as the prophecies of Israel's restoration. Some, believing in the Two Houses of Israel, have not considered Israel's reunion as an end-time event, and their interpretations of the end-times are devoid of some very important understanding.

The Scriptures tell us quite plainly that the man of lawlessness will cause a desolation on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14), and that he will require the world to receive his mark to conduct commerce (Revelation 13:16-17). But in order for these events, and others, to take place, we must also see the return of scattered Ephraim to the Land of Israel along with Judah.

There are many in our ranks who believe that the start of the Great Tribulation will be very soon, perhaps in the next year or the year thereafter. They will be disappointed because only *now* in our day is the Messianic movement growing in substantial numbers. This requires time for all of us to mature as Torah observance is adopted as a way of life, and as the Two-House teaching becomes more theologically stable and credible in the larger Christian-Messianic world, *which means it needs to be refined.* Only when this is completed can those masses of scattered Israel/Ephraim, wherever and whoever they are, return in such great numbers that “no *room* can be found for them” (Zechariah 10:10). **With this comes the real possibility for some that the Tribulation period may not begin for several decades.** The Messiah may not return to Earth in your lifetime.

What is the end result of the Tribulation?

Admittedly, we do not know how much time we have between now and the final years before the Lord's return. We have to take much on faith, and place ourselves entirely in His hands. But in order to properly and objectively understand prophecy, **we have to know what the end result of the end-times is really going to be.** Some believe that it is the total annihilation of humanity. At the very least, some believe that it is the Divine judgment of God dispensed on Planet Earth. Judgment is certainly going to come whether we like it or not, but how many look at prophecy *through a lens of fear*, as opposed to a lens of hope? How many teachers lead their audiences on by using fear, as opposed to a message of salvation? Too many of us have forgotten what the Book of Acts tells us:

“So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the

Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:6-8).

Before Yeshua’s ascension into Heaven, the Disciples asked Him if He was going to restore the Kingdom to Israel. Yeshua told them that the time was not yet, but for them to go and proclaim His message of salvation to the entire Earth. That was almost 2,000 years ago, and we are certainly closer to His return today than the Disciples were back then. Because we are the generation that has seen the establishment of the State of Israel, the retaking of the Old City of Jerusalem, and the development of globalization, many believe we may be the last generation (even though it is debated as to how long a “generation” is).²³ We might be some of those people who see the man of lawlessness commit the Abomination of Desolation, and see billions die. But in spite of these things, the question of the Disciples remains affluent: **When are you, Lord, going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?**

Too many people who examine prophecy do not look at the end result, which is the restoration of the Kingdom of God upon the Earth! The motivation of these people is to use fear to make predictions and prognostications of the Last Days and when events are to take place. They often do not look at these things objectively or realistically. **We cannot fall into this trap.**

The end result of the Tribulation period is the restoration of Israel’s Kingdom. It is not the end of the world, but rather is the beginning of an all new world with our King, the Messiah Yeshua, at the helm. The message of end-time prophecy, involving the reunion of the Two Houses of Israel, is not a message of doom and gloom—but it should be a message of hope! If we intend to ever address prophecy correctly, we must realize this and understand that the restoration of all Israel is primary to the other prophesied events that are supposed to take place.

God is more concerned with what is going on with His people than with what is going on with Satan and with the world. If we can understand this, and eventually be unified as the Messianic movement, then we will find the end-times accelerating and the return of the Messiah drawing closer **as the world reacts to us**—as opposed to us reacting to the world. As the Apostle Peter instructs, we ought to be men and women who possess “holy conduct and godliness,” and via such righteous behavior “hastening the coming of the day of God” (2 Peter 3:11, 12).

Truly, we have a big job ahead of us. Let us prove ourselves worthy of the task at hand!

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²³ Consult the FAQ on the TNN website “Final Generation.”