

Anti-Semitism in the Two-House Movement

by J.K. McKee posted 01 May, 2003 www.tnnonline.net

The teaching of the Two Houses of Israel, Judah and Ephraim, has brought change to many lives. The message has brought a desperately needed equality to many non-Jewish Believers in the Messianic movement who feel that they are proverbial “second-class citizens” to Jewish Believers. The Two-House message has brought the news that all Believers, be they of the House of Judah, the scattered House of Israel/Ephraim, or truly of the nations or Gentiles, are all a part of the Commonwealth people of Israel. This people of Israel is led by the King of Israel, Yeshua the Messiah.

Equality among all Believers is something that is notably lacking in much of today’s Messianic Judaism, that largely maintains a status-quo of “Jew and Gentile,” with Jewish Believers being superior, or at the very least in a higher status, to non-Jewish Believers. Aside from being shown that there are many unfulfilled Biblical prophecies involving the Two Houses of Israel,¹ the quest to seek equality among all Messianic Believers, be they Jewish or non-Jewish, is what draws many out of Messianic Judaism toward some kind of Two-House perspective.

Hopefully, among those seeking true equality and fairness for all of God’s people, *all* are allowed to be one Israel, and not two or three bickering parts of Israel. There are various fellowships, congregations, and ministries that endorse the Two-House message and emphasize true equality among all in today’s Messianic community. There are those who recognize that we all have something to offer the community of faith, but at the same time that we all have been blinded. The Jewish people have largely been blind to the Messiah, and Christians have largely been blind to the Torah. Both have been right and wrong—all at the same time. These are the groups whom we believe God will primarily use to bring restoration to all Israel.

In recent days, however, seemingly as a backlash to the inequality that largely exists in Messianic Judaism toward non-Jewish Believers, a “reverse inequality” toward Judaism has reared itself among many who claim to believe in the Two Houses of Israel. There are many groups today who espouse a belief in the Two Houses of Israel, Judah and Ephraim coming together, but sadly are nothing less than being “Ephraimite-only,” for lack of a better description. The Jewish people, and virtually anything Jewish, is being left out of the picture. Even more sadly, in many cases those who put our Jewish brethren in this position, and are Two-House advocates, are promoting a form of anti-Semitism *and do not even realize it*.

In this article, we address some of the controversial problems that currently exist with forms of anti-Semitism in the Two-House movement. We will analyze some of the issues that stand before us, and how the more balanced and fair-minded can counter this and emphasize that our Jewish brethren do indeed have a critical role to play in the restoration of all Israel.

Why Many Reject the Two-House Teaching

Before we discuss the subject matter at hand, it is imperative that we address a specific reason why many in Messianic Judaism, and many Christians for that same matter, presently reject the Two-House teaching and reunion of Judah and scattered Israel/Ephraim. Many of them reject it because they believe the message is anti-Semitic. Consider the following quotations.

This first one comes from a Messianic Jewish website’s Frequent Asked Questions page:

I read on another Messianic site that Believers are actually part of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Is this true?

Emphatically No! Although there have been some rather sophisticated arguments developed in support of this theory, it is false at it’s core, degrading to both Jew and Gentile, and insulting to G-d...²

¹ These prophecies include, but are not limited to: Isaiah 11:12-16; Jeremiah 10:6-10; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Zechariah 10:6-10.

² *Just the FAQ’s, Ma’am*. Retrieved 04 April, 2003 from <<http://www.psalmsinger.org/faq.htm>>.

This second quote comes from the book *How Close Are We?* by Christian author Dave Hunt:

[T]he theory of the “ten lost tribes” is an antisemitic myth. Space does not permit the detailed discussion which this subject perhaps deserves. However, a careful reading of the history of Israel in Scripture denies what must be considered a Satanic doctrine, for it destroys in theory (as others have sought to do in practice) the continuity of Israel. That continuity was repeatedly assured by God and is essential for the major prophecies of Scripture to be fulfilled in the last days.³

The first comment says that the Two-House teaching is “insulting to God.” The second comment says that a belief in the Ten Lost Tribes being spread abroad is “an antisemitic myth” or even “Satanic.” Why?

Sadly, in the past many of those who have addressed scattered Israel/Ephraim being present in the world advocated that today’s Jewish people are not true descendants of the Patriarchs and legitimate Israelites. We would most definitely agree that this is insulting to the Lord. Consistent with this strain of thought, it denies the position of the House of Judah or Jewish people in Biblical prophecy and denies that our Heavenly Father has guarded, protected, and preserved them through many hardships, difficulties, and tribulations—much of which has been at the hands of institutional Christianity. **Any attempt to degrade the position of the Jewish people in God’s eternal plan or deny that He has protected them is anti-Semitic and must be viewed as suspect.** It should indeed be treated as insulting to God.

But does this all of a sudden mean that many of us today, who feel a strong connection to the Jewish people, and quite possibly may be of returning scattered Israel, are promoting anti-Semitism? Are we, as insinuated, insulting God?

In Genesis 35:11, the Lord says, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you.” God says that from the descendants of Jacob would come a *goy u’qahal goyim* (גוי וקהל גוים), “a nation [and] a host of nations” (NEB). This is contrary to what He promises Ishmael, the estranged son of Abraham from whom would largely descend today’s Arabs: “As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation” (Genesis 17:20). The Lord promises that from Ishmael will descend a *goy gadol* (גוי גדול) or “great nation.”

Today, many in both Messianic Judaism and Christianity alike recognize that from Ishmael have descended hundreds of millions of Arabs—a *great nation*. But they will only recognize that 14-15 million Jews descend from Jacob/Israel, who was promised “a nation and congregation of nations” (ATS). Is believing that there are scattered Israelites out there that number beyond today’s Jewish people truly insulting to God? Or is it more insulting to the Lord not to believe that He has fulfilled His promises of physical multiplicity to Jacob?

The Patriarch Jacob blessed Joseph’s son Ephraim in Genesis 48:16: “The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.” ATS renders this promise as “may they proliferate abundantly like fish within the land.” The Hebrew verb rendered as “grow” is *dagah* (דגה), meaning “**multiply, increase**” (*TWOT*).⁴ It is related to the word *dag* (דג) or “fish.” The Rabbinical commentary on this from the Jewish Sage Rashi is very interesting: “May they be like fish, which are fruitful and multiply and which are not affected by the evil eye [since they live calmly, unseen by man] (*Berachos* 20a).”⁵ This is interesting because it

³ Dave Hunt, *How Close Are We?* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1993), 30.

⁴ Earl S. Kalland, “דגה,” in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:182.

⁵ Nosson Scherman, ed., *ArtScroll Chumash, Stone Edition* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 2000), 273.

suggests that the scattered descendants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim have multiplied like fish underneath water—unseen by human beings, but seen and known by God.

Is it more insulting to the Lord not to believe His promises of physical multiplication to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—or to believe them?

Of course, problems have arisen in recent days, where the Jewish people and Judaism are demeaned and made less than a legitimate part of Israel, when they have been the torchbearers of Israel for over 2,500 years. If the Two-House teaching is proclaimed without any understanding that the Jewish people have remained the faithful witnesses as being Israel, then it does become insulting to God. **If Judah is given second-class treatment in the Two-House community just as many non-Jews are in Messianic Judaism, then the Two-House teaching is indeed insulting to God.** And sadly, there are those who promote this, whether they know it or not. To an extent, I can understand why some people would reject the Two-House message.

What is being said?

What is specifically being said or disseminated to perhaps give the impression that the Two-House teaching is anti-Semitic? Of course, these statements are only made by a sector of adherents. This is certainly not what everyone believes. The statements can be very broad and deal with an entire host of issues, often pertaining to Jewish interpretations and traditions relating to the Torah. The most common statement that is made today goes along the lines of this:

You do not want to come out of the Church only to trade errant Christian tradition in for errant Jewish tradition.

This statement is true and accurate. There is non-Biblical Christian tradition and theology which needs to be dispensed. One coming to the message of all Israel being reunited and enters into the Messianic community should not trade Christian error for Jewish error. Judaism has its problems too, just like Christianity. However, Christianity does have its truths, just as Judaism has its truths. Both Christianity and Judaism have had it right, and they have had it wrong. But rather than having nothing to do with Jewish tradition, as is the preference of some, we must exhibit discernment and look for what is spiritually edifying. (Likewise, we must recognize what is spiritually edifying about Christianity.)

This statement is made with some honorable intentions by those who emphasize it. Some who have been convicted that the Torah is still valid today and realize that much of Christianity has an anti-Semitic past, have later denied Yeshua as the Messiah and converted to Judaism. These people have become enamored with Jewish tradition to such an extent where they become more concerned about extra-Biblical tradition and take their eyes off the Messiah. This is extremely problematic and anything that leads to apostasy from the faith must be prevented at all costs. However, what can also happen is by putting down Jewish tradition *carte blanche*, non-Jewish Messianics—thinking themselves to be “returning Ephraim”—can become anti-Jewish and actually *turn Jews off* to either the restoration of all Israel, the gospel message of Messiah Yeshua, or at worst **both**.

Unbalanced and Unfair Criticisms of Jewish Torah Interpretations

There are valid concerns issued in that non-Jewish Messianic Believers are not to become “Jewish” at the expense of their own cultural heritage. There are non-Biblical elements of Judaism just as there are non-Biblical elements of Christianity. However, at the same time, non-Jewish Messianics need not become hostile to Judaism. As they are acculturated into the Commonwealth of Israel, and rightfully seek to become Torah observant and live as Messiah Yeshua lived, some must remember that the Northern Kingdom was scattered into the nations precisely because of disobedience to the Torah and idolatry. The first thing that occurred after the Northern Kingdom seceded was that Jeroboam established false gods, counterfeit holidays, and a counterfeit priesthood against what the Lord established in the Torah:

“So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of

Egypt.' He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went *to worship* before the one as far as Dan. And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi. Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense" (1 Kings 12:28-33).

Almost everything that Jeroboam did was in direct opposition to what God had prescribed in the Torah. He first made two golden calves for the people to worship, claiming that these were in actuality Israel's gods. He built temples on the high places, one in the southern parts of the Northern Kingdom and the other in the northern parts of the Northern Kingdom for the "convenience" of the people, so they would not go to Jerusalem. He likewise instituted substitute festivals for the holidays that the Lord prescribed in the Torah, and he created a priesthood that was not of the line of Levi.

Of course, we know what came about as a result of these sins. The Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim was later conquered by the Assyrian Empire and corporately assimilated into the nations of this world, becoming the "fullness of the nations" (Genesis 48:19; cf. Romans 11:25). While many (but not all) of scattered Israel/Ephraim would later come to faith in Messiah Yeshua as Christianity spread worldwide, many practices of Christianity are not Biblical and are substitutes for God's ordinances. This is all too reminiscent of the establishment of substitute practices that Jeroboam instituted for the Northern Kingdom.

This is the problem that we have to fix. The prophecies of Israel's restoration tell us that the scattered House of Israel/Ephraim will return to the faith of the entire Scriptures, and will repent of the sins that started with Jeroboam. We are likely seeing some of this today as groups of non-Jewish Believers enter into the Messianic community. They are certainly entering in for a greater, overall purpose, than simply living a more Biblical life.

Many look to the example of the Jewish people for insight into following the Torah. This is good because Judaism indeed has much valuable insight and understanding concerning God's commandments. However, the Southern Kingdom of Judah was also taken into its own captivity by the Babylonians for its idolatry, and likewise picked up its own errors. The Jewish people, while not rejecting the validity of the Torah, have placed a fence around many of the commandments, adding customs and traditions that have enhanced the keeping of God's commandments, and then others that have skewed or negated some. But perhaps most significant, most Jews, unfortunately, have rejected Messiah Yeshua as the Savior. When looking to Judaism for spiritual insight, we must use discernment.

But even though true, it is also true that the Jewish people have accumulated over 2,500 years of study and obedience to the Torah. **To reject all Jewish interpretations and insight is wrong.** Consider the seemingly anti-Semitic rhetoric that we have encountered in regard to what is being said about Jewish interpretations of various Torah commandments. The criticism directed by some non-Jewish Believers is often directed toward some specific mainline Jewish interpretations of the Torah.

Whether you agree with these interpretations or not is unimportant here. What is important is that you take note of the attitudes in which these things are criticized. Some of these things regard the "finer issues" of the Torah, and they are to a certain degree open to interpretation **as you will see variance in Judaism itself.** But even so, we must be very careful when critiquing the varied Jewish positions on them, as obedience to these commandments is fundamental to many Jews. We need not *unnecessarily offend* anyone.

The Name of God

One of the major criticisms that quite a few Two-House advocates have of Judaism in general is Judaism's avoidance of using the proper name of God. Many in the Two-House

community use God's proper name, YHWH (יהוה), often pronounced either Yahweh or Yahveh, and believe that Judaism is in error for failing to use it. Some have accused the Jewish people of "hiding the name of God" from them, and believe that failure to speak the proper name of God is a "gross error" of Judaism.

While it is absolutely true that our Heavenly Father has a name, we should agree as Believers that whatever Yeshua and the Apostles did concerning its usage should be what we do. In contrast to what those who advocate its usage may say, **there is not a single instance in the Apostolic Scriptures of Yeshua or the Apostles ever speaking the Divine Name.** By the period of Second Temple Judaism, the name of God was only spoken on *Yom Kippur* or the Day of Atonement in the Temple. The Mishnah reflects these traditions that existed in the Judaism of Yeshua's day:

"And the priests and people standing in the courtyard, when they would hear the Expressed Name [of the Lord] come out of the mouth of the high priest, would kneel and bow down and fall on their faces and say, 'Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom forever and ever'" (m.*Yoma* 6:2).⁶

Within the Judaism of Yeshua's day the people used terms such as "the Temple," "the Place," "the Kingdom," "Heaven," or even "the Name" to refer to God, a custom we see employed throughout the Gospel of Matthew. This extended into early Christianity as well with Christians using "God" and "Lord" to refer to the Supreme Deity. Neither Yeshua nor the Apostles made using the Divine Name an issue, and they fully adhered to the Jewish custom that was prevalent in the First Century.

We would do well to follow Yeshua's non-usage of the Father's name. Using the proper name of God, as is too commonplace in today's Two-House community, offends our Jewish brethren and is not something that Yeshua did during His Earthly ministry. The Jewish people of the First Century and the Jewish people today hold the name of God in such high regard and holiness that they consider it to be blasphemous to pronounce it with human lips. While pronouncing God's name might not be "blasphemy," per se, we must treat it with holiness and respect *by not speaking it casually.*⁷

Tzit-tzits and Tallits

"Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue" (Numbers 15:38; cf. Deuteronomy 22:12).

Many non-Jewish Messianic Believers today wear fringes or *tzit-tzityot* (צִיִּצִיּוֹת) on the corners of their garments, some with "a cord of blue." This may include using *tzit-tzits* from the Temple Institute in Jerusalem which uses a special blue dye believed to be the blue dye used in ancient times (this is debated), or "homemade" *tzit-tzits* with a synthetic "sky blue" as the Hebrew *techelet* (תְּכֵלֶת) can be rendered. *Tzit-tzits* can be worn on a four-corner garment, or often times these *tzit-tzits* are attached to belt loops.

None of us should be dogmatic how *tzit-tzits* are worn, whether they be worn out or worn in, or whether they are worn with or without blue. There will be those who interpret this commandment differently, but how Judaism has traditionally interpreted this should not be ignored.

Tzit-tzits are one of the most obvious commandments adhered to by Orthodox Jews today. Largely in Judaism, the *tzit-tzits* that are worn are all white, because of the scarcity of the blue dye. Orthodox Jews believe that the *tzit-tzits* should be placed on a four-cornered garment. One such garment that has evolved over time is the *tallit* (טְלִית) or prayer shawl, onto which four *tzit-tzits* are attached, one at each of the corners. These prayer shawls are customarily worn during prayer times, and often in congregational services. They vary in size and usually have colored stripes, often blue or black. They are only worn during the daytime, except for the evening of the

⁶ Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 275.

⁷ For a further discussion of this issue, consult the editor's article "Sacred Name Concerns."

high holidays of *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Another garment that is often worn is the *tallit katan* (תלית קטן), a four-cornered undergarment worn by men onto which *tzit-tzits* are attached and then can be pulled out to be seen at the waist.

But some non-Jewish Believers, believing themselves to be returning Ephraim, have said that *tallits* are unimportant and are a “vain tradition of men.” Their rhetoric is that wearing the *tallit* is an invalid interpretation of Scripture and *tallits* should not be worn by non-Jewish Believers. The reason given is that this is an invalid Jewish tradition and that they should be allowed some “creativity” for how this commandment is applied. While everyone has a free will, the Jewish reaction—especially in the Land of Israel—to independent interpretations of wearing *tzit-tzits* speaks for itself, and it is anything but positive.

Tefillin (Phylacteries)

“So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt” (Exodus 13:16).

“You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead” (Deuteronomy 6:8).

This commandment is viewed with suspicion by many non-Jewish Believers, although it is considered in Orthodox Judaism to be one of the most important commandments of the Torah. Judaism has largely interpreted the admonition to bind the Word of God on one’s arm and forehead as physically binding the Word on the arm and forehead. Every day, Orthodox Jews bind leather boxes known as *tefillin* (תפילין) or *phylacteries* (Grk. sing. *phulaktērion*, φυλακτήριον) to their arms and heads, remembering that the Lord led His people out of Egypt with an outstretched arm, and that we are to have His Word in our minds.

Many non-Jewish Messianics, again believing themselves to be of returning Ephraim, view this commandment as being entirely allegorical, meaning that we are to have the Word of God continually in what we do with our hands and in our minds. While remembering what God’s Word says about what we do with our hands and minds is important, this does not make the practice of wrapping *tefillin* wrong. Some will tell us that Yeshua the Messiah spoke against *tefillin* on the basis of Matthew 23:5 in His criticism of the Pharisaical leaders:

“But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.”

Does Yeshua speak against wrapping *tefillin* in this verse? I do not believe that He does. Notice that He also criticizes these Pharisees for their wearing of *tzit-tzits*—yet Yeshua Himself also wore *tzit-tzits*, having the fringes attached to the corners of His garments:

“Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured” (Mark 6:56).

“And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped” (Luke 8:43-44).

If we look at the correct context of Matthew 23:5, Yeshua is actually criticizing these Pharisees for the manner they wore *tzit-tzits* and wrapped *tefillin*. He is not saying that wrapping *tefillin* is wrong. More than likely, Yeshua wrapped *tefillin* Himself. Those who might say that *tefillin* did not exist in the First Century, as there are some who have said so, are saying things which scholarship and archaeology easily denounce.

Now if you do not wish to wrap *tefillin* and consider it an invalid interpretation of the Torah, you are entitled to your opinion. Some of you may not do it because *tefillin* are very expensive, or are unprepared to make the commitment to use them. Do not feel obligated to wrap *tefillin*, but do not criticize our Jewish brethren for adhering to something that pre-dates the Messiah. *Tefillin* existed before His birth, and in all likelihood Yeshua used them.

Kippas (Yarmulkes)

One of the most obvious elements of modern Jewish identity is men wearing the *kippa* (or *yarmulke*) or skullcap. The idea behind wearing this small skullcap is that it shows submission

to God. The term *kippa* is derived from the Hebrew verb *kaphar* (כָּפַר), meaning “to cover, to forgive, to expiate, to reconcile” (AMG).⁸ The *kippa* is believed to be a “covering” which represents a man’s submission to God.

It is notable that the man’s headcovering is not a commandment of Scripture. This is a Jewish tradition that has developed over time. Alfred J. Kolatch explains this in *The Jewish Book of Why*:

“A *yarmulke*, called a *kippa* in Hebrew, is a skullcap worn by Jews. Some wear one at all times, others only during prayer and at mealtime.

“...The custom of covering the head received wide acceptance, but not by all. Historian Israel Abrahams points out that in the thirteenth century ‘boys in Germany and adults in France were called to the Tora in the synagogue bareheaded.’

“In the Middle Ages, French and Spanish rabbinical authorities regarded the practice of covering the head during prayer and when studying the Tora to be no more than mere custom. Some rabbis were known to pray bareheaded.

“Today, Orthodox Jews and many Conservative Jews believe that covering the head is an expression of *yirat Shama’yim* (‘fear of God’ or ‘reverence for God’)...”⁹

It is not uncommon in many Messianic congregations to see men wear *kippas*. Many non-Jewish Believers feel led to wear a *kippa* so that they can identify with their Jewish brethren, especially as it has been debated that during the Middle Ages Jewish men were forced to wear these headcoverings by Christians, so as to be easily identified. However, there is a substantial amount of criticism from various others on whether the *kippa* is appropriate to wear. It is usually based on the following verse from the Apostolic Scriptures:

“For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man” (1 Corinthians 11:7).

There is a translation issue here. The Greek verb translated as “covered” is *katakalyptō* (κατακαλύπτω), which according to BDAG means “cover, veil,” specifically to “cover oneself w. a veil.”¹⁰ AMG defines it as “To cover with a veil or something which hangs down, hence, to veil.”¹¹ What is really being said here is that men should not have their heads veiled over, specifically over their face in a feminine manner. This is why the NRSV renders 1 Corinthians 11:7 as “a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man.”

I do not consider the wearing of the *kippa* to be a mandatory commandment, nor something that should be obligated upon anyone. At the same time, though, I urge sensitivity concerning the Jewish custom of wearing the *kippa*. Do not speak against this to such an extent that you condemn the Jewish people. Sadly, this is what I have encountered among too many non-Jewish Believers who believe they are returning Israel. In a distinct quest not to be Jewish, anti-Semitism is allowed to seep out in unwarranted criticism of traditions that help form Jewish identity.

Meat and Dairy

“You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the LORD your God. You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother” (Exodus 23:19; cf. 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21).

One of the careful practices of Orthodox Judaism today in regard to the dietary laws of the Torah is the separation of meat and dairy. This is based on the admonition not to “boil a young goat in the milk of its mother.” Orthodox Jews today do not eat meat and dairy products together,

⁸ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, eds., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 521.

⁹ Alfred J. Kolatch, *The Jewish Book of Why* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 1981), pp 121-122.

¹⁰ Frederick William Danker, ed., et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, third edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 517.

¹¹ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 831.

and will only eat one or the other after a sufficient time of digestion, which varies from group to group. This position is well stated in the *ArtScroll Chumash*:

“Meat represents the animal portion of life, the muscle and sinew. Milk represents the reproductive capacity of animal life, for milk is the nourishment that supports new life. In animals, these two aspects of life are inseparable; animals instinctively eat and reproduce. Man has a higher calling. He must not mingle these aspects of his nature. To the contrary, he must learn to differentiate between his activities and—primarily—to subjugate them all to his duty to grow in the service of God and to put Godliness into all his activities. The higher duty is symbolized in the prohibition against mixing milk and meat. Its proximity to the law of the festivals and the first of first fruits conveys the teaching that one who succumbs to his animal instincts destroys the holy nature of the seasons and God’s blessings of prosperity.”¹²

You may or may not agree with the Rabbinic separation of meat and dairy. The Hebrew verb translated as “boil” is *bashal* (בָּשַׁל), which *BDB* indicates means “boil, seethe.”¹³ It has been argued by some in the Messianic community that perhaps ancient pagans surrounding the Land of Israel used to worship their deities by performing rituals involving boiling goat kids in their mother’s milk, and that this does not prohibit people from eating cheeseburgers or lasagna. But, regardless of our interpretation of this command we must be sensitive to Jewish views and traditions. The practice of separating meat and dairy was *present* in the Second Temple Judaism in which Yeshua’s ministry functioned (m.*Chullin* 8:3-4; b.*Chullin* 104a; cf. b.*Shabbat* 130a), and so it cannot be dismissed as an illegitimate application of the Torah as it often is.

There are some in the Two-House movement today who do not respect our Jewish brethren in this regard. These non-Jewish Believers have little or no regard for the fact that the Jewish people, who placed fences around the Torah and areas like the dietary laws, have at least been faithfully keeping the dietary laws. Many are criticizing the Jewish separation of meat and dairy and will sometimes even vehemently decree that it is not necessary in any regard to do so.

Remember the prophecy to Ephraim in Hosea 9:3: “Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria” (LITV). The Hebrew text specifically says *u'b'Ashur tamei yokelu* (וּבְאַשּׁוּר טָמֵא יֹאכְלוּ), “in Asshur an unclean thing they eat” (YLT). Those who criticize Jewish interpretations for keeping kosher often do not consider the fact that scattered Israel/Ephraim was prophesied to eat unclean things, not considered food, in their exile.

Beards and Facial Hair

“You shall not round off the side-growth of your heads nor harm the edges of your beard” (Leviticus 19:27).

The final area where our Jewish brethren have received unwarranted criticism by some is in regard to the commandment not to “clip off the edges of your beard” (NIV). As must be noted, there is a wide variance of interpretations regarding this commandment within both Judaism and the Messianic community. Many Jews and Messianic Jews alike believe that the admonition of men wearing beards is clear from this verse. There is, of course, a variance of opinion on beard length and whether one should or should not trim his beard. Facial hair, though, is a natural distinguisher as to one being male or female.

The specific area where a sector of our Jewish brethren have been unfairly criticized regards the practice of wearing *payots*, or curls that extend from the area of the sideburns. Kolatch explains that “many Jews, particularly members of *chassidic* sects, will not trim the sidelocks even of children. Long, curled sidelocks (*payot*) on the children of *chassidim* is a common sight.”¹⁴ This interpretation stems from the meaning of the Hebrew word for “corner,” *peah* (פֶּאֶה), “side, edge, border” (*BDB*).¹⁵

¹² Scherman, 437.

¹³ *BDB*, 143.

¹⁴ Alfred J. Kolatch, *The Jewish Book of Why* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 1981), 122.

¹⁵ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 802.

Not very many in the Messianic community practice the custom of having *payots*. But we should not be found harassing Jews who do wear them. It is notable that many of those who criticize this practice are those in the Messianic community who actually put down men for wearing beards, or often any form of facial hair. We need to remember that while one's spirituality is not determined by outward appearance (cf. 1 Samuel 16:7), neither should we be criticizing someone for holding to a particular interpretation. We should no more criticize this than we would if a person chooses to wear a blue or a red shirt, or athletic shoes or dress shoes.

The King of Ammon had half of the men of David's beards shaved off, and David did not permit them to return until their beards grew back (2 Samuel 10:1-5). We do not need to find ourselves in a position where we can be accused of being anti-Semitic. We need to recognize that our Jewish brethren have been faithfully keeping this commandment for centuries, whereas in the Twenty-First Century it has become largely taboo to wear any form of facial hair.

Ephraim and Judah—or—Judah and Ephraim?

All too often, the criticism that we have seen from non-Jewish Messianics, believing themselves to be the House of Ephraim, regarding the Jewish people mostly comes from those who believe in the restoration of **Ephraim and Judah**. While we believe in the Two Houses of Israel and the fulfillment of the prophecies no doubt as much as these people do, we also recognize the fact that the Two-House message cannot be an attempt to rob the title of Israel away from our Jewish brethren, as the Jewish people have been the faithful torchbearers of Israel since the Northern Kingdom was taken into Assyrian exile in 721 B.C.E.

In recent days, we are sad to report that an "Ephraimite-only" element has arisen in the Two-House community that emphasizes scattered Ephraim over Judah and that ardently and quite strongly pushes **Ephraim and Judah**. While to an extent this may just be terminology, and indeed some innocently use it, *others use it to put down the Jewish people*. These people fail to recognize that Judah is indeed the older brother and deserves respect. While it may be true that non-Jewish Believers in Messianic Judaism have been treated unfairly, it is not appropriate to reciprocate. In order for the Two Houses of Israel to be reunited, we **must make every effort to keep our Jewish brethren in the fold!**

What do the Scriptures tell us about the position of the Jewish people in Israel? Prior to blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, Jacob/Israel blessed his fourth son, Judah:

"Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down to you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples" (Genesis 49:8-10).

The Rabbinical commentary on this is extremely notable:

"The word *until* does not mean that Judah's ascendancy will end with the coming of Messiah. To the contrary, the sense of the verse is that once Messiah begins to reign, Judah's blessing of kingship will become fully realized and go to an even higher plateau (*Sh'lah*). At that time, all the nations which assemble to acknowledge his greatness and pay homage to him."¹⁶

Those who believe that Yeshua is the Messiah need to pay very, very close attention to this. Yeshua the Messiah came from the House of Judah. If it were not for the Jewish people we would have no Savior, "for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). We all have a great debt to Judaism and the Jewish people, and while *it will take time* for them to recognize the restoration of all Israel—**non-Jewish Believers in the Messianic movement should not be causing problems**. Consider what Yeshua says about those who treat His Jewish brethren will disrepute:

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matthew 25:41, KJV).

And what does the Apostle Paul tell us?

¹⁶ Scherman, 279.

“Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God” (Romans 3:1-2).

Paul very plainly says that the Jewish people have been entrusted with *ta logia tou Theou* (τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ), “the very words of God” (NIV). They have had the responsibility of preserving the Torah, and while being misguided at times, many of the traditions Judaism has preserved with the Torah and Tanach (Old Testament) can be considered “Spirit-inspired.” Non-Jewish Believers, believing themselves to be “returning Ephraim,” have no right to criticize Judaism to such an extent that it is made unimportant in the restoration of the Two Houses of Israel. Judah does indeed still have the scepter or *shevet* (שֵׁבֶט), lest we forget the fact that when Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah, returns, He will be ruling with a *shevet barzel* (שֵׁבֶט בַּרְזֶל) or “a rod/staff/scepter of iron” (Psalm 2:9; cf. Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15).

We all need to give Judaism and the Jewish people the respect that they deserve. This does not mean that all of us have to “become Jewish” and dispense with our own distinct cultural heritage, but it does mean we have to be careful and not be found discriminating. If we talk about the Two Houses of Israel, let us **stop using** Ephraim and Judah, and recognize that Judah is the older brother **and start using *Judah and Ephraim***. Let us recognize who leads Israel.

Your Halachah and the Restoration of All Israel

Having been involved in the Messianic movement since 1995, I have seen and witnessed a great deal firsthand that most of you have not experienced. I have been involved with several Messianic Jewish congregations, and have been exposed to many “independent” forms of Messianic expression. I have seen individuals who largely embrace an Orthodox or even ultra-Orthodox style of Torah application for their lives, and then others who completely shun any mainline Jewish tradition. How do we weather these two extremes?

In today’s Two-House Messianic community, it is commonly taught that we want to see “Judah and Ephraim reunited in Messiah.” I agree with this. The prophecies of Israel’s restoration tell us that the House of Judah, the scattered House of Israel/Ephraim, and those of the nations will come together and be one people. But how this is to come about in a movement that is overwhelmingly non-Jewish at present will be very, very difficult. The Jewish people are the leaders of Israel, and when one embraces a form of Torah application foreign to, if not hostile to Judaism—*are you doing more to keep Israel divided than reunited?*

I understand that some non-Jewish Messianics shy away from Jewish custom and tradition because they see the pitfalls of their friends or colleagues who embrace it all. These are the people who often want to be “more Jewish” than most Jews. These are the ones who will be enamored with an Orthodox Judaism that represents less than 12% of the total world Jewish population. These are the ones, sadly, who can be easily persuaded against the Messiahship of Yeshua because embracing tradition is more important to them than knowing and having a supernatural experience with the Creator God via His Son.

At the same time, can tradition *and history* be totally discarded as one attempts to keep God’s Torah? Absolutely not. The Messianic movement would not be here unless someone had started examining the Gospels and the letters of the New Testament with more Jewish resources at their disposal than generations past. We recognize that Yeshua and His Disciples lived like the average Jews of the First Century. They adhered to many of the customs and traditions of their age, and instructed their followers to likewise keep them. If they were living today, they would be living, active members of the worldwide Jewish community.

What Jewish community the Disciples would be a part of today is a vigorous debate going on in the Messianic movement. Many believe that they would be Orthodox. Many believe that they would be Conservative or Reform. I believe that they would be part of the Jewish community that interacts with the world—because it was that Judaism of the First Century that had synagogues planted all throughout the Roman world to tell Greeks and Romans about the God of Israel *centuries prior to Yeshua being born*. I do not believe they would be Orthodox were

they living today, as the Orthodox community largely stays to itself and seldom interacts with society at large. They would be part of the more Centrist branches of Judaism.

No religious practice, be it of Judaism or Christianity, is beyond criticism. No one's own personal faith is beyond criticism, as we must reevaluate where we stand with God every day. Constructive criticism is a good thing, as it helps us grow and learn. In mainline Judaism, the traditions and customs that have developed are supposed to help one's relationship with God, and they are based in the Scriptures. At the same time, no one Jew is going to apply it the same, and non-Jewish Believers in the Messianic movement are likewise not going to apply these things the same way.

But should the Torah be applied in a manner that is not consistent with any branch of Judaism? Some say yes, **but I would say no**. Even though that other 88% of Judaism is not Orthodox, those who are observant still wear a *yarmulke* to a religious service, they know what *tefillin* are and what a *tallit* is, and they will nominally separate meat and dairy. I believe that a moderate approach to these issues is best, where we can recognize the value in them, while at the same time respecting one's personal choice. Coming against them is wrong, but equally so is forcing them on someone entirely out of obligation. Non-Jewish Messianics, be they of returning Ephraim or not, have to find the common ground that is going to bring unity with our Jewish brethren.

Truly Provoking Judah to Jealousy

Speaking of his Jewish brethren, Paul wrote in Romans 11:11, "I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous." If we believe that within the nations or Gentiles is the scattered House of Israel/Ephraim, then they are obligated to provoke Jews to jealousy for faith in Messiah Yeshua. All of us have to testify to both our Jewish brethren and the world of Yeshua via our good works.

How will this take place? Many of us believe that this will only occur when the returning House of Israel/Ephraim, and all others claiming to be a part of Israel, truly start living the life of Messiah Yeshua and observe the Torah as He did. For centuries the Jewish people have rejected Yeshua as Savior because Christianity has largely taught that the Torah has been abolished. Today, vast numbers of Jewish people do not follow the Torah. We must prove to these Jews that Torah obedience and faith in Messiah are not mutually exclusive concepts, but they go hand to hand. When we obey God, He is able to bless us—and His blessing us is to be a testimony to all we encounter—*especially non-believing Jews*.

Thankfully, as our Heavenly Father awakens many non-Jewish Believers to their Biblical heritage in Israel, many are following the Torah. It is not anyone's call to "become Jewish," per se, at the expense of their own cultural heritage. However, it is equally not anyone's call to bring further division to an already divided Israel. Judah cannot be robbed of his scepter, and we cannot demean our Jewish Messiah. We cannot forget the great responsibility that the Jewish people have had as the sole representatives of Israel for 2,500 years.

We must provoke our Jewish brethren to jealousy to faith in Messiah in a way that unites Israel and does not create more problems. May any anti-Jewish, anti-Semitic attitudes that we have be placed at the door, and let us recognize that Judah has a major role to play in the restoration of all Israel just as scattered Israel/Ephraim has. It may just be that time is the only thing that will ultimately solve our problems, with people coming together *who want solutions*, and not more divisions. Then and only then will we all become one Israel with Yeshua the Messiah as our King.

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