

# The Four Gateways of Messianic, Two-House Theology

by J.K. McKee posted 01 December, 2002 www.tnnonline.net

The Messianic community is at a crossroads and people are looking for answers.<sup>1</sup> In our day, many Christians are being led into Messianic congregations and fellowships, because they know that there is more “out there.” The Holy Spirit is moving on these people to seek greater Biblical truth, maturity, and to cede more control of their lives over to God. These individuals feel a strong love for Israel, and a connection to the Jewish people. As a result, many of these Christians enter into the Messianic movement, because they desire to live a life more consistent with that of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, embracing their Hebraic Roots for *more than just enrichment* to their faith, but as a lifestyle they should be practicing on a consistent basis.

The things that are happening in our faith today are wonderful and are indeed a sign that the return of the Messiah is somehow approaching. But even though many are turning to the Messianic movement, it would be an understatement to say that we are controversial. What we stand for goes against some of the things that many have been taught in the contemporary Church. How we live our day-to-day lives in compliance with the Bible is different than how many modern Christians go about doing so. And, our steadfast claim that Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah of Israel, does not often win us many fans in the Jewish community.

There are many issues that face us today as the Messianic community. There are many questions that are being posed that we cannot let go unanswered. There are challenges that we must face if we truly endeavor to be in the will of God and not to be following our own humanistic, fleshly desires.

## Are we truly Israel?

It is not difficult for a Jewish Believer in Yeshua to know that he or she is a part of Israel. But what of non-Jewish Believers? To what extent are they co-heirs (Ephesians 3:6) along with Jewish Believers? Consider what the Apostle Paul wrote to non-Jewish Believers in Asia Minor:

“Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’ *which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Messiah Yeshua you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Messiah*” (Ephesians 2:11-13).

Paul tells these Believers that prior to their faith in Israel’s Messiah they had been separate from Israel, but recognizing Yeshua’s salvation they had been brought near (cf. Isaiah 57:19), and the status of being away from Israel had been reversed. Non-Jewish Believers are a part of what is literally the polity of Israel, or the community, commonwealth people of Israel. The Greek *politeia* (πολιτεία) means “**the right to be a member of a sociopolitical entity, citizenship,**” and “**a sociopolitical unit or body of citizens, state, people, body politic.**”<sup>2</sup> Nowhere in ancient times did Paul teach that these people were a part of a separate entity known as “the Church.”<sup>3</sup> Rather, they were part of the assembly or congregation of Israel, “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16)—and the same remains true until today.

In our day, at the very least, many Christians are awakening to the reality that they are inextricably connected to “Israel,” whatever that is. While definitions of “Israel” vary, ranging from the historical Jewish people to the Land of Israel to the assembly of all Believers, interest in “Israel” is at an all-time high, and it is only increasing with each passing day. This has helped to balloon the Messianic movement with scores of new people. At the same time, though, it is not without its challenges.

<sup>1</sup> This article has been reproduced from the paperback edition of *Introduction to Things Messianic*, pp 85-98.

<sup>2</sup> *BDAG*, 845.

<sup>3</sup> Do recall the connections between *ekklēsia* (ἐκκλησία) and *qahal* (קהל). Cf. Jack P. Lewis, “qāhāl,” in *TWOT*, 2:790; *Thayer*, 196; K.L. Schmidt, “*ekklēsia*,” in *TDNT*, 397.

Messianics such as myself advocate that all Believers who have faith in the Messiah of Israel, Yeshua, are indeed a part of Israel. They are not part of a separate Church. Whether they be physical Israel or not, they are indeed all called to be Israel as defined by the Scriptures. In this article, we examine some of the things currently going on in the Messianic community that we all must face, and how we might approach them in a reasonable way.

## **The Call of Israel: Never to Give Up**

If all Believers are indeed a part of Israel, and we are called to live as Israel, it is imperative that we all know what the rallying cry of Israel is. The name “Israel” first appears in the Bible in Genesis 32:28-29, and lays the important groundwork for what the call upon God’s people actually is:

“He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; **for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.**’ Then Jacob asked him and said, ‘Please tell me your name.’ But he said, ‘Why is it that you ask my name?’ And he blessed him there.”

The Hebrew verb *sarah* (שָׂרָה), translated as “striven” or “struggled” (NIV) here, appears in the Qal stem (simple action, active voice) and specifically means “persist, exert oneself, persevere” (BDB).<sup>4</sup>

We should all know the story quite well of how the Patriarch Jacob endured through the night wrestling with the angel (whom some believe was a Christophany of Messiah Yeshua). We are told, “When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob’s thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. Then he said, ‘Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.’ But he said, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’ So he said to him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Jacob’” (Genesis 32:25-27).

By enduring or struggling through the night until daybreak, Jacob (Heb. *Ya’akov*, יַעֲקֹב) demonstrated an internal urge and desire to be blessed by God. The mortal Jacob never gave up and continued fighting, even when the supernatural being seemingly grew frustrated and tiresome of their combat. But Jacob continued, perhaps knowing that he could not win, and it is for this reason why he was renamed *Yisrael* (יִשְׂרָאֵל) or Israel. J.H. Hertz gives us a very important definition of Israel in his commentary *Pentateuch & Haftorahs*:

“The name is clearly a title of victory; probably ‘a champion of God’. The children of the Patriarch are *Israelites*, Champions of God, Contenders for the Divine, conquering by strength from Above.”<sup>5</sup>

This is extremely interesting and something that every Believer in Yeshua should take note of. If we are indeed all a part of Israel, via our faith in Him, then we are called to be champions of God and contenders for the Divine. We are to represent the Lord here on Planet Earth and strive for the Forces of Light. We wage battle against Satan and his forces via the power of God inside us. Paul writes in Philippians 3:14, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Messiah Yeshua.” The Greek verb rendered as “press on” is *diōkō* (διώκω), “to run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing, to run after.” It also can mean “to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away” (Thayer).<sup>6</sup>

As Believers in Yeshua, and as a part of Israel, we are all called to endure. We are called to run toward the things of faith that God has set before us, and seek the rewards and prizes that await the completion of our marathon race. Most importantly, we are called to never give up, no matter the cost. This cost may be our friends, our family, our reputation, or perhaps even our lives. But even so, if we are committed to the Lord, we know that He runs our lives and that He is sovereign. If we are in the Messiah, regardless of what happens, we are in His care. We must function as those who contend for the faith and who will strive and fight *with* the Divine fulfilling His mission, rather than strive and fight *against* the Divine.

---

<sup>4</sup> BDB, 975.

<sup>5</sup> J.H. Hertz, ed., *Pentateuch & Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1960), 124.

<sup>6</sup> Thayer, 153.

## A Blessing to All Nations

Sadly, the history of Ancient Israel does not always reveal that God's people have been prevailing and contending for Him. Israel's history is anything but "hunky dorey." As with all people groups, the temptations of sin have crept in and the enemy has been allowed access. There have been division and internal fighting which has led to the Torah-required judgment of God upon His people, and a series of dispersions into the nations (cf. Deuteronomy chs. 28-30).

But many times when Satan intends something for evil, God will turn it around for good. Consider the example of Joseph and how his brothers sold him into slavery. Joseph went down into Egypt and through a series of trials became second only to Pharaoh, being able to aid his family when they came to Egypt during the famine (Genesis 50:20). Even though there have been divisions and dispersions for the people of Israel, what the enemy intends to use for evil, God will use for His purposes. Consider how synagogues and Jewish communities outside the Land of Israel in the First Century aided the Apostles significantly, providing them some kind of a base for sharing the good news of salvation with the nations.

The Apostle Paul considered the original promise given to Abraham, "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3), to actually constitute the gospel being proclaimed to him "beforehand" (Galatians 3:8). *Abraham's seed is to bless others.* As the Lord promised Abraham, "indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:17-18).

The promise that God made to Abraham was that from his loins he would have multitudes of physical descendants,<sup>7</sup> who would then serve as the conduit of His blessings to the entire human race. The same promise of physical multiplicity was given to Jacob in Genesis 35:11, "God also said to him, '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.'"

We have evidence in the Tanach (Old Testament) that these promises were already being fulfilled after the time of the Exodus. Moses attested in Deuteronomy 1:10, "The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day like the stars of heaven in number." Conservative Biblical scholars may estimate that at the time of the Exodus the Ancient Israelites could have numbered in the hundreds of thousands,<sup>8</sup> shortly before Moses made this declaration. Moses' next words are extremely perplexing, as he says, "May the LORD, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand-fold more than you are and bless you, just as He has promised you!" (Deuteronomy 1:11).

If we take Moses' words at face value, then how many descendants of Israel are there on Planet Earth today? Is it fair to suggest that the number exceeds today's Jewish population of 14-15 million? This is by no means a suggestion that *every person* is descended from the Patriarchs, but is a simple question of whether this word has continuing fulfillment today.

Obviously, the primary part of the promise that the Lord made to Abraham about his seed blessing the world is a **reference to the Seed, who is the Messiah Yeshua** (cf. Galatians 3:16). *Everything must be focused around Messiah Yeshua*, who says "I am the root and the descendant [seed] of David, the bright morning star" (Revelation 22:16). But even so, Abraham's offspring or seed would have to be plural in order to bless all nations—and those "descendants" would bless all nations by bringing forth the truths of the God of Israel from His Word and the message of the Messiah (cf. Galatians 3:8).

Paul writes in Galatians 3:28-29, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua. And if you

---

<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew *zera* (זֶרַע) means "sowing, seed, offspring" and "descendants, posterity; seed of the woman" (BDB, 282).

<sup>8</sup> Consult the FAQ on the TNN website "Exodus, numbers of."

belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham's descendants [seed], heirs according to promise." All people who make up God's Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-12) are equal in His eyes, and are a part of His "one new humanity" (Ephesians 2:15, NRSV/CJB) brought forth by the work of Messiah Yeshua. Membership is by no means determined by heredity, but rather by faith.

A dictum in the Talmud, based on Genesis 17:5,<sup>9</sup> observes how "At first you were the father of Aram [the Arameans]. Now you are the father of the entire world" (b.*Berachot* 13a),<sup>10</sup> making all people connected to Abraham in some way—most especially via the blessings that would come forth from him. Anything having to do with physical descent from the Patriarchs, be a person a known Jew, a person with distant Jewish ancestry, or a person with lost ancestry from Ancient Israel—solely regards the completion of yet-to-be-fulfilled prophecies in the eschaton.<sup>11</sup> And, since all of God's people are a part of Israel, *all will be involved* in it to one degree or another.<sup>12</sup>

Many theologians throughout the centuries have interpreted Galatians 3:29 as meaning that those who have faith in Yeshua are of the spiritual seed of Abraham, because Believers in Yeshua are to have Abraham's kind of faith. Having the faith of Abraham is obviously important, but "spiritual seed" is not exclusively what is meant by the text.<sup>13</sup> There is more for the understanding of "descendants" (or even "progeny," New Jerusalem Bible) than some are willing to give credence to. We are descendants of Abraham through our union with the Messiah; we are descendants of Abraham if we live like Abraham; we are descendants of Abraham if we partake of Abraham's covenant promises. Likewise, many who know the Messiah are descendants of Abraham, and are recipients of the promises made to him because of progeny.<sup>14</sup> Considering the fact that both Abraham, and later Jacob/Israel were to have multitudes of physical descendants, what is being implied here?

If there are some implications regarding physical seed to be considered, **they are not speaking of one having to be of Abraham's physical loins to "be saved."** On the contrary, the emphasis of being Abraham's seed primarily speaks to how a person lives his life and views the Bible—in order to be a blessing to all! One can be of the "seed" of Abraham via any number of ways. It ultimately concerns the mission that God has for Israel, and how all born again Believers today should get to fulfill that mission as a part of His chosen people. If one is Abraham's seed via bloodline, one is mandated by God to be a blessing to others. And, if one is Abraham's seed via faith, one is to likewise be a blessing, and be grateful to the physical descendants from whom the Messiah came forth (cf. Romans 11:29-32).

## The Two Houses of Israel

Many of you are quite familiar with the history of Ancient Israel. Israel was a united kingdom under the reigns of Kings Saul, David, and Solomon. But even though the kingdom was united, there were divisions, aside from the obvious tribal distinctions. For example, 1 Samuel 18:16 tells us "all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them." Some kind of division between Israel and Judah existed before King David ascended to the throne (i.e., Joshua 11:21). It manifested itself much more clearly after David's son King Solomon died and his son Rehoboam came to power. Because of Solomon's worship of gods other than the God of Israel, the kingdom was to be divided between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. 1 Kings 11:30-33 speaks of the Lord offering Jeroboam, then a servant of King Solomon, ten of the twelve tribes of Israel:

---

<sup>9</sup> "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations" (Genesis 17:5).

<sup>10</sup> *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*.

<sup>11</sup> Including, but not limited to: Isaiah 11:12-16; Jeremiah 10:6-10; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Zechariah 10:6-10.

<sup>12</sup> Do note that the emphasis of equality for all in Messiah *first* within Israel, followed by the prophetic expectation of Israel's greater restoration, is not one commonly emphasized in today's Messianic Two-House sub-movement. Yet, I believe it is the safest approach to use that will do justice to the Biblical text. Consult the author's article "Contemporary Options Concerning 'Israel.'"

<sup>13</sup> Grk. *tou Abraam sperma* (τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα); "Abraham's offspring" (RSV), "'issue' of Abraham" (REB).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 549.

“Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him and tore it into twelve pieces. He said to Jeroboam, ‘Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes (but he will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel), because they have forsaken Me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon; and they have not walked in My ways, doing what is right in My sight and *observing* My statutes and My ordinances, as his father David *did*.’”

Biblical history tells us the rest of the story. Because of this idolatry, the Kingdom of Israel split into the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. While there was some intermingling and relations between the two groups, the political division remained permanent. In fact, when the kingdoms were first split, the Lord had to tell the Southern Kingdom not to amass its forces so that it could re-conquer the Northern Kingdom, because the division was from Him:

“Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, ‘You shall not go up or fight against your relatives; return every man to his house, for this thing is from Me.’” So they listened to the words of the LORD and returned from going against Jeroboam” (2 Chronicles 11:3-4).

We know what happened later. As the Northern Kingdom continued to disobey the Lord and it devolved further and further into idolatry, it was conquered by Assyria. Many of its people were assimilated into the nations, per the Assyrian practice of deportation. Aside from individuals loyal to the God of Israel, and those who fled to the Southern Kingdom, the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim was never *corporately* heard from again.<sup>15</sup>

The Patriarch Jacob had prophesied centuries earlier that Ephraim would become “the fullness of the nations” (Genesis 48:19, YLT) or *melo ha'goyim* (מְלֵאֵי הַגּוֹיִם), a likely part of the mystery of Israel’s grand redemption later referenced by the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:25: “For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until **the fullness of the Gentiles**<sup>16</sup> has come in.” Until this group of people returns to the fold, mature in the Lord, then the complete restoration of Israel will not be accomplished.

The Southern Kingdom of Judah experienced its own dispersion as it also practiced idolatry against God. Judah was taken captive by the Babylonians, but was able to return to the Land of Israel. The Jewish people experienced another exile at the hands of the Romans in 70 C.E., but then began returning to the Promised Land through the advent of Zionism in the late 1800s, and helped establish the State of Israel in 1948. For approximately 2,500 years, the Jewish people have been—*without any dispute*—identifiable as “Israel.” They also possess an irrevocable calling that must be honored (Romans 11:29).

## Has all Israel been reunited?

Even though the Jewish people are certainly legitimate Israelites and descendants of the Patriarchs, are there many more descendants of Israel out there? A division between the Two Houses of Israel—the descendants of the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom—would certainly still exist if there are prophecies regarding their reunification that are yet-to-be-fulfilled.

---

<sup>15</sup> For a further discussion, consult B.E. Kelle and B.A. Strawn, “History of Israel 5: Assyrian Period,” in Bill T. Arnold and H.G.M. Williamson, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), pp 468-469.

Kelle and Strawn note how “The presence of Israelite exiles in Mesopotamia after 720 BCE is attested also by the appearance of West Semitic personal names in Assyrian texts, but the occasional references suggests that Israelite ethnic and national identity was lost within a few generations” (Ibid., 469).

<sup>16</sup> Grk. *to plērōma tōn ethnōn* (τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν); see *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*, as he notes linguistic connections between מְלֵאֵי הַגּוֹיִם and πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν in Romans 11:25.

There are many in today's Christianity, Judaism, and for that same matter Messianic Judaism, who believe that the Two Houses of Israel have already been reunited. (Although there are many in Orthodox Judaism who believe that all Israel has yet to be reunited.)<sup>17</sup> I do not believe that they can make a solid Scriptural basis for this claim—not because as a non-Jewish Believer I am somehow claiming to be “Ephraim”—but because of the expectations seen in the Tanach. Consider the following prophecy concerning Judah and scattered Israel/Ephraim from Ezekiel 37:25-28:

“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.”

Has this prophecy been fulfilled? Is God's Sanctuary established in the Land of Israel for all the nations of the world to see? Also consider the fact that Ezekiel 37:24 directly states, “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.” **David is representative of the Messiah.** If indeed the Two Houses of Israel were fully reunited in the past, then Messiah Yeshua would be present in Jerusalem right now ruling and reigning over the world. But He has not yet returned, and thus we are still waiting for the reunion of *all* Israel and the other parties involved.<sup>18</sup>

But do not just take my word for it. Popular author Tim LaHaye tells us, in regard to Bible prophecy, “The Kingdom of David and Solomon split in 931 B.C., becoming Israel and Judah, all tribes are represented and the nation will be united.”<sup>19</sup> 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 fulfillment has ever been recorded in history, and the future regathering of Israel will occur in the Millennium.”<sup>20</sup> These two dispensationalists recognize some level of future fulfillment that cannot go unaddressed.

Many of us believe that in our day the Two Houses of Israel are in the process of being reunited. They are being reunited as many Jewish people turn to faith in Messiah Yeshua, and many non-Jewish Believers (possibly including some from that scattered House of Israel/Ephraim) turn toward their Hebraic Roots and embrace a lifestyle of Torah obedience. As important as it has been to see the advent of Messianic Judaism since the 1960s, and many Jewish people welcoming Yeshua into their lives as Messiah—is there something *more* going on with many non-Jewish Believers being led into the Messianic movement? **We may have to wait in order to fully find out.** But if the prophecies of Israel's greater restoration have begun, then this will one day result in the return of Yeshua the Messiah and the establishment of His Kingdom on Earth. *It is something that will affect the entire world.*

---

<sup>17</sup> Cf. b.*Sanhedrin* 110b, for a summary of the Rabbinic debate.

<sup>18</sup> Take important note that the Two-House reunification involves the “companions” of Judah and Ephraim (Ezekiel 37:16). This means that more people than *solely* physical Israelites are involved—those who have joined themselves to the God of Israel are involved and considered as though they are native Israelites. Far from being *exclusive*, the prophecies of Israel's restoration are quite *inclusive*.

We are reminded once again, “it is clear that ‘Israel as a light to the nations’ is no peripheral theme within the canonical process. The nations are the matrix of Israel's life, the *raison d'être* of her very existence” (Christensen, “Nations,” in *ABD*, 4:1037).

<sup>19</sup> Tim LaHaye, ed., *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2000), 873.

<sup>20</sup> John F. Walvoord, *Every Prophecy of the Bible* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1999), pp 186-

## The Movement Today

As can and should be expected, much of what we have just discussed is new, and also presents some controversies. Known by a variety of names from Messianic Israel, Judah and Ephraim, the Two Houses of Israel, or just Two-House, there are many Believers coming to some kind of awareness of the Two Houses of Israel and are seeing themselves as a part of Israel, not necessarily a part of “the Church” or “the Synagogue,” exclusively. But as this has been occurring, and I believe it is an important part of our Father’s end-time plan, many questions and issues have arisen. The subject matter has been approached in a variety of ways, some good—and some not so good. Some view it as a matter of eschatology (such as myself), and others view it as their principal spiritual identity (even more important than personal salvation).

These questions and issues are expected. Ezekiel 37:18 tells us that those who participate in Israel’s restoration will say, “Will you not show us what you mean by these?” (RSV). The implications of the Two Houses of Israel are much more than knowing whether or not one is a part of Israel. The implications change how a person reads the Bible and lives his or her daily life. How do we relate to the Jewish people who do not know Messiah Yeshua? How do we relate to our Christian forebearers who diligently proclaimed the gospel, but did not understand their Hebrew Roots as we do today? While we may not have all of the answers until the Messiah returns, it is imperative that we not ignore the challenges that lie before us.

## The Four Gateways of Our Theology

Because of the current controversial nature of the Two-House teaching,<sup>21</sup> and indeed the fact that it is presently rejected by most Christians and Messianic Jews, it is absolutely imperative on those of us who believe that the Lord is reuniting all Israel, to define our beliefs and continually refine our theology. If we can understand what God has started to do in our day, by beginning to restore all Israel, we can properly formulate those things on which we need to concentrate. The Two-House understanding needs to be something viable from the Biblical text, as opposed to being something that is aberrant, off the wall, and something that should be avoided—lest we fall into the traps of others who have addressed what some call the “Lost Tribes” before. What we are actually addressing *is not* the “Lost Tribes,” but are instead overlooked prophecies of Israel’s restoration. We are observing what is going on in today’s Messianic movement, wondering if there is something more.

I give you my four gateways of Messianic, Two-House theology. These four sub-categories of Biblical study will no doubt constitute what most of us will focus on in the years and decades ahead, as all Israel is reunited and the Messianic community grows and gains new adherents.

### #1 Foundational Doctrine

**Foundational Doctrine** should be a very obvious area. This includes important issues as they relate to the core beliefs of our faith. Topics that need to be addressed in this category include: the nature of God and His plurality, the Divinity of Messiah Yeshua, the doctrine of salvation, and eternal punishment. Additional issues include the gospel message, proper discipleship for new Believers, and the spiritual gifts. These would be definite areas where commonality needs to be expressed with our evangelical Christian heritage, and the views of mainline Messianic Judaism.

### #2 Ecclesiology

**Ecclesiology** is the study of who God’s elect or *ekklēsia* is. This comprises our understanding of the nature of the assembly or congregation of the redeemed, and the roles that individuals play within it. It involves the study of what the Two Houses of Israel actually are, and

---

<sup>21</sup> This is in no small part due to some of the current Two-House proponents or “leaders” (cf. Galatians 2:6) who have closely associated some aberrant teachings with the basic message, *and* an almost unwillingness for Messianic Jewish leaders to simply sit down and honestly discuss the relevant Biblical texts.

how they and their companions make up God's chosen people. It addresses how a person being a part of Israel impacts how we view the Bible, and the mission of God's people in the world. An overlooked area would be the new status of human beings inaugurated by the work of Yeshua, and how this affects Israel's restoration.<sup>22</sup>

An important area of study that ecclesiology also involves is responding to the false teachings of dispensationalism and replacement theology. Dispensationalism advocates that God has two groups of elect, and that all of the Bible is *not* for all of His people. Replacement theology is the idea that "the Church" has replaced Israel in the Lord's eternal plan. Suffice it to say, as we discuss the teaching of the reunification of the Two Houses of Israel, it is absolutely imperative that we address these two false viewpoints.

### #3 Torah Application

**Torah Application** is the area relating to the role that the Torah plays in our lives as Messianic Believers. We do not believe, as much of contemporary Christianity does, that the Torah or the Law of Moses was done away with in the New Testament. We fully believe that the Torah's guidelines are to be followed by Believers today, although we do recognize that Messiah Yeshua came in fulfillment of its sacrificial requirements via His atoning work on the cross.

This is the most controversial of all the areas, because degrees of Torah observance vary throughout the Messianic community. Some follow a level of *halachah* consistent with Orthodox Judaism, others want nothing to do with Jewish tradition, and then many such as myself follow a level of *halachah* most consistent with Conservative-Reform Judaism. This area cannot go unanswered or unaddressed. While confronting lawlessness and antinomianism, which has led to a great erosion of ethics and morality in much of today's Church, so must we also discuss how the Torah is to be applied in our lives and why it is important that we study these foundational Scriptures.<sup>23</sup>

### #4 Eschatology

**Eschatology** regards our teachings of the Last Days and directly affects how we see Israel restored. It is extremely important that we have a good working model of the end-times, because of the reality that the Two Houses of Israel being reunited are to play an important role in world events prior to Yeshua's return. While overlooked by many, especially because of the heated discussions that can ensue because of the Last Days, it is nevertheless incumbent upon us to develop our own viable and reasonable eschatological teachings.

While the end-times are by no means a salvation issue, it is important that we develop a working Two-House prophecy model that is pre-millennial and post-tribulational, but fluidic enough so that it considers the fact that we live in a changing world. Our model of the end-times must also *not* try to make any predictions—complete with Date X chosen for Yeshua's return—about the future or restrict our eternal God to a human timetable.

### Challenges Before Us

This article has only scratched the surface of where we are today. It is important that each one of us sees ourselves as a part of Israel, composed of Judah, scattered Israel/Ephraim, and their companions—and not part of a "Church" or "Synagogue" that may be completely separate from what the Lord has started. It is imperative that we begin defining who *we are*—and not necessarily who *we are not*, taking the missional imperatives of being Israel more seriously. We

---

<sup>22</sup> For a further discussion, consult the author's exegetical paper on Galatians 3:28, "Biblical Equality and Today's Messianic Movement."

<sup>23</sup> It will also be incumbent upon us to understand the effect of Higher Criticism on the Pentateuch, which has derided not only Mosaic authorship/involvement in its composition, but also its reliability as Biblical history.

For a further examination, consult Walter C. Kaiser, *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), and the author's workbook *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic*.

must, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, begin to take the understanding of Israel's restoration and deal with the controversial issues that lie before us. *It is a restoration that will affect everyone*, and it is imperative for us to present this as an *inclusive* plan of our Father's, **not** one where people are excluded (cf. Isaiah 49:6).

A person who is a part of Israel is called to endure with God and meet the challenges of life head on. We cannot back down in the sight of battle, but must stay the course. The Lord expects us to make a positive difference and declare His goodness to the entire world. Are we willing to do this? Are we willing to make the required sacrifices? Will we be able to take the heat? Are we willing to do the work necessary, even in the sight of both external *and* internal opposition?

May we indeed fight the good fight of faith! Let us be the Kingdom of priests He has called us to be (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9)!

J.K. McKee (B.A., University of Oklahoma; M.A., Asbury Theological Seminary) is the editor of TNN Online ([www.tnnonline.net](http://www.tnnonline.net)) and is a Messianic apologist. He is author of several books, including: *The New Testament Validates Torah*, *Torah In the Balance, Volume I*, and *When Will the Messiah Return?* He has also written many articles on the Two Houses of Israel and Biblical theology, and is presently focusing on Messianic commentaries on various books of the Bible.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, published by The Lockman Foundation.

revised 05 July, 2004

edited for spelling/grammar  
14 March, 2007

edited edition from paperback *Introduction to Things Messianic*  
posted 25 August, 2009