

## **WHO IS ISRAEL? AND WHY WE NEED TO KNOW!**

In Hebrews chapter 8, the LORD describes with whom he would make a new (renewed) covenant. The writer of Hebrews very plainly states that it is with the house of Judah and with the house of Israel. Since we trust that through Messiah we have become partakers of this covenant, we must be or have been a part of one of these houses. It should be obvious to anyone that this fact is foundational to our faith. Many people have come to recognize that these passages referring to two houses of Israel are describing the historical houses following Solomon's Kingdom, the Southern Kingdom (House of Judah) and the Northern Kingdom (House of Ephraim or Israel). Other Scripture refer to a single group brought about by the renewed covenant through the blood of Messiah from the two groups as "the Israel of GOD". Since the Israel of GOD is the subject of what GOD is now doing in the earth, the question of who is Israel should be paramount on our lips and more than just a passing interest!

In Ephesians chapter 2, Paul speaks of the gentiles by birth who have been estranged from the national life of Israel. He also says beginning in verse 13 *"But now, you who were far off have been brought near through the shedding of the Messiah's blood. For He himself is our shalom (peace) – He has made us both one and broken down the m'chitzah which divided us by destroying in His own body the enmity occasioned by the Torah, with it's commands set forth in the form of ordinances. He did this in order to create in union with himself from the two groups a single new humanity and thus make shalom, and in order to reconcile to GOD both in a single body by being executed on a stake as a criminal, and thus killing in himself that enmity."*

As stated above, the question of the identity of "Israel" is fundamental to who we are in the LORD. However, and unfortunately, the resolution of this question in truth may have to be done outside prevalent Christian circles. Many of these circles contain thinking consisting of something called "Replacement Theology" where something man made called the "Church" (usually consisting of their denomination) replaces the Jews as "Israel"; and, something called "Separate Entity Theology", where something man made called the "Church" co-exists with Israel. Both of these are obviously unscriptural doctrines.

One of the houses of Israel, "Judah", is easily identifiable today. The Jewish people have been and are the identifiable representatives and offspring of Judah. The Jewish people have been preserved and kept by Yahweh so that in turn

they might preserve the Torah, the Feasts, the Shabbat and the Hebrew language and be restored in the last days. The national salvation of the Jewish people will be the most glorious event in the redemption of mankind. The Apostle Paul in the Book of Romans equates this event to life from the dead (Romans 11:15). He also talks about their present condition in Romans 11:25-26 *"For brothers I want you to understand this truth which God formerly concealed but has now revealed, so that you won't imagine you know more than you actually do. It is that stoniness, to a degree, has come upon Israel, until the Gentile world enters it's fullness; and that it is in this way that **all** Israel (Judah and Ephraim) will be saved."*

The above scripture referring to the Gentile world entering into it's fullness is the key to identifying the other house of Israel. It is obviously contained within the Gentiles and has something to do with the Gentile world coming into it's fullness. . The book of Genesis also contains a prophesy related to the Gentiles or nations (goyim) coming into it's fullness. In Genesis 48:19, Jacob prays a blessing over Ephraim, the son of Joseph, and says that his seed will become the fullness of the nations or gentiles (melo ha goyim). Other prophecies in scripture state that the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim (Israel) would become "*lo-ami*" (not a people), but would be restored in the last days. While God preserved the Southern Kingdom of Judah (present day Jews) intact even until the present time, the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom, through the judgments of Yahweh, were defeated and assimilated by the Assyrians and disappeared as a separate people from the face of the earth. Much has been written and said regarding the ultimate fate of this people, but it is generally accepted that they were assimilated into the Assyrian population and ultimately migrated to all the nations. Many believe that the journeys of the Apostle Paul was designed by GOD to follow the migratory path of the Ephraimites as he searched for the "lost sheep of the tribe of Israel". In summary, through scripture Yahweh said that the Ephraimites would become not a people, but that they would become the fullness of the nations (or Gentiles) and that they would be restored as a people in the last days. From scripture, we can now say that the other house of Israel today is hidden within the gentile world (nations).

Just as Judah has a present purpose, Ephraim also has a present purpose. The book of Romans says that the Gentiles (Ephraim), as the "wild olive branch", are to stimulate Judah to want what they have, which is a personal relationship with Yahweh through Yahshua and His grace, as well as the availability of the abundant life and freedom of obedience to the commandments of GOD.

The book of Ezekiel chapter 37 speaks of two sticks with the names of the houses of Israel written on each becoming one in the hand of Yahweh. Yahweh promises that *"I will take the people of Israel from among the nations where they have gone and gather them from every side and bring them back to their*

*own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one King will be King for all of them. They will no longer be two nations, and they will never again be divided into two Kingdoms."* (Ezekiel 37:21-22) This is the Israel of GOD!

Romans 11:25 and Isaiah 8:14 says that all Israel (both houses) has been partially blinded by GOD. The house of Judah - Israel as presently manifested by the Jewish people in or out of the land, is blind to the Messiah Yahshua and HIS work of atonement, while Ephraim- Israel is blind to their Hebrew heritage and their identity as Israel. GOD speaks throughout scripture regarding this partial blindness that He has placed upon His people. Everything that GOD does is in accordance with His own word and law, and this blindness is no exception. This law is given in Exodus 21:26 and is called the law of blind servants. A Master that causes blindness to one of His servants, must allow that servant to go free as compensation for the loss. This partial blindness is all within the purposes of GOD and it appears that we may be living during the time that the blindness is being lifted and freedom is coming. The Jewish people have returned to the land and are turning to Messiah in large numbers for the first time in history; and the called out ones from among the Gentiles are turning to the ancient paths of the Hebrews. A tremendous movement within the Christian religion in recent years is resulting in millions of people recognizing their Hebrew roots and being blessed by GOD because of it.

Has the call gone out to the people of GOD to return to Zion (Jeremiah 50:4), weeping as they come? I think maybe it has.