

## Israel's Purpose

One of the most basic keys to understanding the mystery is that Israel will be a witness to God's greatness no matter if she<sup>1</sup> is obedient or not. It's easy to understand how she would be a witness through obedience, but somewhat harder to see if she is disobedient. But like what was touched on earlier, God has a plan, and it's found in Deuteronomy –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Deuteronomy 4:5-8** "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to *them* in the land which you go to possess. <sup>6</sup> "Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.' <sup>7</sup> "For what great nation *is there* that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God *is* to us, for whatever *reason* we may call upon Him? <sup>8</sup> "And what great nation *is there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?"

If Israel is obedient to her calling, she will enjoy abundant blessings and the nations will take notice and will be drawn to be like her. On the other hand, if she is not obedient, curses will come upon Israel<sup>2</sup>, and again – the nations will take notice. At the close of the curses portion of Deuteronomy 29, Moses stated the following in regards to those who reject Yah's calling. He said that –

**Deuteronomy 29:22-28** "... the coming generation of your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, would say, when they see the plagues of that land and the sicknesses which the LORD has laid on it: ... <sup>24</sup> "All nations would say, 'Why has the LORD done so to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean?' <sup>25</sup> "Then people would say: 'Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt; <sup>26</sup> 'for they went and served other Gods and worshiped them, Gods that they did not know and that He had not given to them. <sup>27</sup> 'Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against this land, to bring on it every curse that is written in this book. <sup>28</sup> 'And the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger, in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as *it is this day*.'

Based on this passage, the nations will see that when Israel turns from God, and He subsequently turns His back on them – Israel will suffer devastation. Though though this is bad for Israel, God is glorified in the sight of the nations because what He had predicted would happen – did happen.

But that's not all! Just making the nations aware that God is able to follow through with His promises is just the beginning. God also stated that after she suffered, Israel would turn back to Him and He would bring her back. We see that spoken of in a number of places throughout the scripture. Here are a couple of them.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Deuteronomy 30:1-4** "Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, <sup>2</sup> "and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with

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<sup>1</sup> Israel is considered by God to be his wife.

<sup>2</sup> It is this author's opinion that YHVH never has to 'curse' His people. Instead, He simply removes the hedge of protection from them so that the Destroyer can come in and wreak havoc among them.



all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>3</sup> "that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. <sup>4</sup> "If *any* of you are driven out to the farthest *parts* under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you.

... and this portion from Solomon's dedication of the Temple –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **1 Kings 8:46-50** " When they (the Israelites) sin against You (for *there is* no one who does not sin), and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to the land of the enemy, far or near; <sup>47</sup> "yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of those who took them captive, saying, 'We have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness'; <sup>48</sup> "and *when* they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to You toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name: <sup>49</sup> "then hear in heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause, <sup>50</sup> "and forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You; and grant them compassion before those who took them captive, that they may have compassion on them ..."

Once God's Hebrew people turn back, God said He would then bring them back to their land, and that the event would be greater than the Hebrew's exodus from Egypt –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Jeremiah 16:14-15** <sup>14</sup> " Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that it shall no more be said, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' <sup>15</sup> "but, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.' For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers."<sup>3</sup>

Being that Israel's exodus from Egypt is the most widely known story in the world, it is going to be an incredible event when God gathers His people at the end time. That event will cause the exodus from Egypt to be insignificant in comparison.

So Israel is a witness to God's greatness either way, and since the northern tribes have chosen disobedience, they are a witness in that they have been scattered – just as God said would happen.

There are many other prophecies that show that because Israel rejected her God, she would be scattered<sup>4</sup>, but like I said earlier, there are just as many prophecies that show she will turn back to God (i.e. 'repent') and attempt to return to the land. These prophecies were well known by the Jewish people in Paul's day. The Jewish leadership of that day should have recognized what was happening when they saw the flood of so called 'gentiles' showing up at the synagogue. They should have welcomed these returning exiles back with open arms, but instead, they turned against them. It's much like the story of the Prodigal Son<sup>5</sup>. But Paul did recognize what was happening, and he did welcome them with open arms.

So, the real inclusion Paul was talking about is how God's Hebrew people - who had been scattered throughout the nations and were wanting to return back to God, could be a part of Israel without having to

<sup>3</sup> See also Jer. 23:7-8

<sup>4</sup> Lev. 26:33; Deut. 4:27; 28:63-64

<sup>5</sup> Luke 15:11



become Jewish<sup>6</sup>. Those in Jewish leadership in Paul's day knew that, but were unwilling to accept it - without conditions.

Up to this point, we've seen that Israel has a calling and that God intends for Israel to fulfill her calling, but today's churches teach that Israel is 'lost' and that her calling has been transferred to 'the church'. But as we've seen, that belief flies in the face of so many Old Testament prophecies. The reality is that – though Israel became spiritually 'dead', they are not lost. Speaking of Israel, the prophet Amos said –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Amos 9:8-9** <sup>8</sup> "Behold, the eyes of the Lord God *are* on the sinful kingdom, And I will destroy it from the face of the earth; Yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," Says the LORD. <sup>9</sup> "For surely I will command, And will sift the house of Israel among all nations, As *grain* is sifted in a sieve; Yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.

Though God scattered Israel, He knows where all His people are, and guess what. So did the Jewish people in Yeshua's day.

### Restoring the Kingdom

In Paul's first letter to his friend and student Timothy, he said this –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **1 Timothy 2:1-4** Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all Godliness and reverence. <sup>3</sup> For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The salvation of all mankind has always been God's desire, and as I mentioned earlier, that is the reason God raised Israel up in the first place – to be a witness to the nations so that they would desire to be a part of God's people. But, of course – Israel did not fulfill her calling EXCEPT for a period of about 50 years under the leadership of King David and King Solomon.

The blessings God bestowed on the Kingdom of Israel during the later years of King David and the early years of Solomon's reign were beyond compare. God had indeed blessed Israel as He said He would do in Deuteronomy –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Deuteronomy 28:1** "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. <sup>2</sup> "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

In other words, when Israel pleases God and does the job she was given to do, He will shower her with blessings beyond what she can use. At the same time, she will be looked up to and be honored as the leading nation in the entire world. Because of that, nations will send emissaries to her to discover the source and reason for her blessings. This is exactly what happened when King Solomon received a visit from the queen of Sheba -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **1 Kings 10:6-9** <sup>6</sup> Then (*the queen of Sheba*) said to the king: "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. <sup>7</sup> "However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard. ... <sup>9</sup> "Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel!"

<sup>6</sup> Note that the scriptures make it very clear that all Jews are Israelites, but not all Israelites are Jews. See our article titled "[Understanding Israel - the Tribes](#)".



One point that many miss when they read of Israel's 'glory years' is that from the days of Joshua up until David had been king of Judah for nearly seven years, the Hebrew people were just a number of divided 'tribes', and though the tribes would from time to time form brief confederations, they were oftentimes at war with each other. It was not until David brought them together as one kingdom that they began to prosper<sup>7</sup>. What that seems to indicate is that in God's mind, Israel is not a kingdom unless all twelve tribes are united under one king. This is so important to understand because after Joshua died, Israel was not a kingdom until David became King over BOTH Israel and Judah, and that took place in the 8<sup>th</sup> year of King David -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **2 Samuel 5:1** Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and spoke, saying, "Indeed we *are* your bone and your flesh. <sup>2</sup> "Also, in time past, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and the LORD said to you, 'You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over Israel.' " <sup>3</sup> Therefore all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD. And they anointed David king over Israel. <sup>4</sup> David was thirty years old when he began to reign, *and* he reigned forty years. <sup>5</sup> In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.

David's 'united kingdom' continued through the remainder of his life and well into the life of David's son Solomon. But in his later years, Solomon turned to idolatry and under the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam, the kingdom was split<sup>8</sup>. After the split, Israel became two kingdoms: "Israel: - the ten northern tribes, and "Judah" – the three southern tribes - AND IT HAS BEEN THAT WAY EVER SINCE. Israel and Judah have never re-united after the kingdom split - in spite of what many believe.

### Israel and Judah – Still Divided

HaSatan – the Adversary, has been quite successful in convincing Bible believers that the Biblical 'chosen people' are the Jewish people today. If you were to ask most Bible students the question "who was Abraham"?, they would most likely answer that he was a Jew. They would also say that the patriarchs Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and even Moses were Jews. But that is not the case. In reality, Judah (the patriarch of 'the Jews')<sup>9</sup> was the great grandson of Abraham. Abraham was not a 'Jew', he was a 'Hebrew'. In fact, all of Abraham's descendents through his son Isaac and grandson Jacob were 'Hebrews', but only one of Jacob's sons was Judah.

Nevertheless, HaSatan has been able to perpetuate the lie that "all Israelites are Jews" for the past two thousand years, and by doing so, he has been able to keep hidden from the world's eyes the identity of the ten 'Hebrew' tribes that are still today considered to be "lost".

So let's look at some of the proofs that show that to be the case. Let's start by going to 2nd Chronicles. This book is a chronicle of the kings of Israel and Judah. It was written near the beginning of the Babylonian captivity of the Jewish people years after the northern ten tribes were taken captive..

In recording the fall and captivity of the northern tribes by the Assyrians, the chronicler said -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **2 Kings 17:23** ... the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.

<sup>7</sup> The unification of Israel and Judah is shown in " [Understanding Israel - a United Kingdom](#)"

<sup>8</sup> 1 Kings 11:11-13;12:24

<sup>9</sup> When the kingdom split, Judah was joined by the Levites and the southern part of the tribe of Benjamin. They are collectively referred to in the scripture as "Judah" or 'Jews'.



The day that this was spoken was around 530 BC - about when Judah was taken captive by the Babylonians. The chronicler is stating that at that time Israel – the northern ten tribes – had been captured and taken to Assyria. This took place in 721 BC – some 200 years earlier. He's saying that the northern tribes are still scattered to that day.

The prophet Daniel supports that understanding in this prayer of lamentation where he said -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Daniel 9:7** To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you . . .

Daniel was in Babylon which had by then been conquered by the Persians. Notice that in the prayer Daniel spoke of 'the men of Judah' as a group and of 'all Israel - both near and far' as another group. Though just prior to the Babylonian captivity a number of Jews had fled to Alexandria, Egypt, that was not what Daniel was referring to because that was a relatively small group. In his prayer, 'all Israel, both near and far' refers to the northern tribes – some of whom were still in Samaria (near), but also those who were taken captive by the Assyrians and subsequently scattered (far). So Daniel delineates between Judah and Israel.

Daniel went on to say -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Daniel 9:11** "Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him."

Daniel acknowledged that the cause of their captivity was a result of the curse written in the law of Moses. We find that curse in Leviticus 26 where God explains what will happen to Israel if she turns away from Him –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Leviticus 26:33** I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.

This 'curse of the law' is that Israel would be scattered throughout the nations. We see the same thing in the 'curses' portion of Deuteronomy –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Deuteronomy 28:64** " Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other Gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known -- wood and stone."

Secular and Biblical history shows that the northern tribes (scripturally call 'Ephraim' or 'Israel) were captured by the Assyrians in the early part of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, but were subsequently released beyond the Euphrates. On the other hand, though Judah was captured and (for the most part) removed to Babylon, the people of Judah remained as a people (either in Babylon or in Egypt) until they were allowed to return to Judea. It wasn't until after the second temple was destroyed (circa 70AD) that the Jewish people were driven out of Judea and Samaria, from where they spread through the known world as well.

There is no evidence indicating that Israel later joined with Judah, nor were they absorbed by Judah. In fact, it's quite clear that they continued to be separate from Judah, and in many ways became indistinguishable from the 'gentiles'. The following is a prayer that is recorded in the book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Maccabees - about 100 or so years before the birth of Yeshua. It goes like this –

**2 Maccabees 1:27** Gather those together that are scattered from us, deliver them that serve among the heathen, look upon them that are despised and abhorred, and let the heathen know that thou art our God.



This is an interesting passage. Chronologically, 2 Maccabees comes after 1st Maccabees – after the Jews had driven the Greeks out of Judea. This prayer appears to be a letter from the Jews to the Northern tribes stating that the Jews had driven the Syrians out of Judea, and that it's time to restore the kingdoms of Israel and Judah back together. Therefore, you from the northern tribes, should join in with us, then together, we can reestablish the Kingdom of God.

Though this is pure speculation, it does seem plausible. Nevertheless, what is important is to see that just 100 or so years before Yeshua came on the scene, it is clear that the Jews recognized the Northern tribes to be distinct from themselves.

Years later, even after the death of Yeshua, the Jewish historian Josephus made two references to the northern tribes as being distinct from Judah. The first is found in Antiquities of the Jews.

<sup>JOE</sup> **Ant 11:133** . . . there are but two (Jewish) tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers.

Josephus was saying that there are two tribes of Judah right here in the land (Judah and Levi), but the ten tribes of Israel are beyond the Euphrates and they are an immense multitude.

So the Ten Lost Tribes – according to Josephus – were east of the Euphrates, which then would have been Persia. That's not to say that all the Ten tribes were in Persia since there is Biblical evidence that many had settled into Asia Minor as well.

An interesting concept to consider is that it is quite possible that the wise men from the east<sup>10</sup> - could have been sages from the northern tribes. Note that the scripture doesn't call them 'wise Jewish men', it just says 'wise men'. But we do know this – they were searching for the King of the Jews so that they could worship Him. Now it stands to reason that if they were coming to worship 'the King of the Jews', these wise men were of Hebrew descent. So if the 10 Tribes were in Persia, and they had seen a sign that hinted of the re-establishment of the Davidic kingdom<sup>11</sup>, it is possible – if not likely – they were hoping this child-king would be instrumental in restoring Israel to the way it was during King David's reign.

Let's look at another passage from Josephus, this time in his work called Wars of the Jews -

<sup>JOE</sup> **Jwr 2:388** "Where then are those people whom you are to have for your auxiliaries? Must they come from the parts of the world that are uninhabited? for all that are in the habitable earth are [under the] Romans. Unless any of you extend his hopes as far as beyond the Euphrates, and suppose that those of your own nation that dwell in Adiabene will come to your assistance?"

At this part in his historical record of the Jewish wars, the Romans had defeated the outnumbered Jews, and so Josephus asks – "are you (Jews) going to reach out to your Hebrew brothers that are beyond the Euphrates to come rescue you?"

So again. Josephus is referring to those of 'their' nation - in other words - the Israelite people who were in the east beyond the Euphrates. This is very clear historical evidence that the northern tribes had not joined in with Judah up to this point.

There are also a number of New Testament passages that confirm this as well. For instance, Yeshua made this statement to a woman who was asking Him to heal her daughter –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Matthew 15:24** "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

<sup>10</sup> Matt. 2:1

<sup>11</sup> Numbers 24:17-19; David was king over Judah before becoming king of Israel as well.



If we take Him at His word, this means that Yeshua was sent by God with a mission, and that mission was to reach the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel'. That's the northern tribes – Ephraim, and His message was that God was beginning the process of restoring the Kingdom of God, which would eventually require Israel and Judah to become a people once again.

One last New Testament example is that of the High Priest Caiaphas. Yeshua had just raised His friend Lazarus from the dead, an action that infuriated the Jewish leadership and motivated them to search for a way to have Yeshua put to death. As they were talking amongst themselves, Caiaphas stated -

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 11:49-50** ... "You know nothing at all. <sup>50</sup> Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."

Noting that Caiaphas's statement was somewhat out of character for a Jewish high priest to make, John clarified why he stated it by noting –

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 11:51-52** ... He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

So it's quite clear that in the first century the Jews knew that the lost sheep of the house of Israel - the northern tribes of Israel – were a viable people, and though they were Hebrews, they were not Jews. So when we get into Paul's letter to the Romans and see these people coming into the congregation – apparently causing a stir amongst the Jewish leadership, we can understand what's going on. The Jews feel threatened by their Hebrew brothers and resist their desire to again be part of the 'commonwealth of Israel'<sup>12</sup>. It's just like Yeshua's parable of the prodigal son coming back to his father's house. The older son – the one who had been with his father from day one, resisted his younger brother who had stepped out of the family for a season.

Though this is just a small sampling of the evidence that Yeshua, His disciples, and Paul were all reaching out to the returning exiles from the northern tribes of Israel – people who were at that time considered to be 'gentiles' (i.e.- 'heathen') by their Jewish brothers.

Nevertheless, Paul, as well as Yeshua's disciples, understood what they were witnessing as being a fulfillment of Jacob's blessing on Joseph's sons when he called Ephraim – the younger son – a 'mela ha goyim' the 'fullness of the Gentiles'<sup>13</sup>

<sup>YLT</sup> **Genesis 48:19** And his father refuseth, and saith, 'I have known, my son, I have known; he also becometh a people, and he also is great, and yet, his young brother is greater than he, and his seed is the fulness of the nations;'

Though they did not understand it until after Yeshua died, the disciples finally recognized that He had taught them to focus their efforts on their non-Jewish Israelite brothers – the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel. They understood that to be an attempt to restore the Kingdom of Israel as it had been under King David and King Solomon. So shortly after Yeshua was resurrected from the dead, His disciples asked Him –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Acts 1:6** . . . "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Of course, Yeshua did not give them an answer, but told them to focus on the mission. Yeshua had done His part; now it was time for them to do theirs. And so they did. They traveled throughout Judea and Samaria, as well as Asia Minor all the way to Rome to reach those from the Northern Tribes who had

<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 2:12

<sup>13</sup> Romans 11:12, 25



settled in those areas. We see that in a number of passages including James where he began his letter with –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **James 1:1** James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

And Peter's first epistle –

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Peter 1:1** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cap-padocia, Asia, and Bithynia . . .<sup>14</sup>

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Peter 2:9** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation<sup>15</sup>, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light,<sup>10</sup> who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy<sup>16</sup>.

These letters were clearly written to congregations that were composed of Hebrew people – predominately those from the northern tribes. Though some in the congregations may have been Jewish, and some may have even been non-Hebrew gentiles, the disciples made it clear that the intended audience was those who were returning (not turning for the first time) to the walk of God – the people the book of Hosea describes as 'Ephraim'.<sup>17</sup> Their eyes were being opened and they were returning to the walk God had given them 1500 years earlier. Why? Because God had instilled in them the same hope He had given their forefathers – the hope to become a sovereign kingdom based on Godly principles, or as Exodus 19 describes it – 'a kingdom of priests'. Thus Paul stated before King Agrippa -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Acts 26:6-7** "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. <sup>7</sup> "To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain . . ."

So Paul showed that at that time, not only were there believing Jews, but there were also other Israelites who were not Jews reaching for the same hope – the Kingdom of God.

In the next part, we'll bring it all together.

Shalom Aleichem

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<sup>14</sup> These are roughly the same areas as listed in Acts 2:9. Note that the city of Ephesus is in the territory Peter called 'Asia' – see <https://www.biblestudy.org/roman-empire/roman-provinces-in-new-testament/asia.html>

<sup>15</sup> Compare with Exodus 19:3-6

<sup>16</sup> Compare with Hosea 1:8-10 and Romans 9:25-26

<sup>17</sup> See Hosea chapters 5-11