

THE RESTORATION OF ALL ISRAEL

**He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.**

Jeremiah 31:10

Christians have been taught for centuries that the Church has *replaced* Israel as the Chosen nation, taking over her mission to the world. In a related way, the dozens of Prophetic texts which promise the full and complete *restoration* of all Twelve Tribes of Israel to the Land have been allegorized and applied to either the Church, or to salvation in Heaven. The sad tale of Christian history, particularly the Christian slander and slaughter of the Jews, certainly belies any such transfer of the Plan to the Church. It is noteworthy that many texts from the New Testament itself reject such displacement interpretations, indicating that such ideas entered the Nazarene movement only over time and slowly took root. However, it is beyond doubt that the Hebrew Prophets know of no such shift in the Abrahamic Plan. Accordingly, those who take the Biblical revelation seriously must thoroughly reject all forms of *replacement* theology.

According to both Torah and Prophets, and pious Jews have understood this through the centuries, the House of Israel (the northern 10 tribes), and subsequently the House of Judah (the Jews) went into Exile because of their sins, and YHVH actually *hid* His face from her:

Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them and I will *hide My face* from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, "Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us? And *I will surely hide My face in that day* because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods (Deuteronomy 31:17-18)

Then He said, I will *hide My face* from them, I will see what their end will be (Deuteronomy 32:20)

Then they will cry to YHVH, but He will not hear them. But He will even *hide His face* from them at that time, because they have been evil in their deeds (Micah 3:4).

However, this "hiding of the face" is neither *rejection* nor *replacement*. On the contrary, the very purpose of the Exile is to prepare for the *full* restoration of all Israel. Exile is always understood as a *temporary* measure of discipline, for a set period of time. Notice, when Moses first mentions the Exile, he includes promise of *restoration*:

When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you in the *latter days*, when you turn to YHVH your God and obey to His voice, for YHVH your God is a merciful God, *He will not forsake you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them*(Deuteronomy 4:30-31)

YHVH your God will *bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again* from all the nations where YHVH your God has scattered you. If any of you

are driven out to the farthest part under heaven, from there YHVH your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you And YHVH your God will *circumcise your heart* and the heart of your descendants, to love YHVH your God with all your heart and will all your soul, so that you may live (Deuteronomy 30:3-6).

The Lost Tribes of Israel

These promises of restoration are addressed to *both* the House of Israel (the Lost Tribes) and the House of Judah (the Jews). One of the most neglected points in the Hebrew Prophets, even among Jews, but virtually unacknowledged among Gentiles/Christians, is their constant emphasis on the total restoration of *ALL* Israel--meaning all twelve Tribes. Ephraim/Joseph, who has seemingly been lost among the Gentiles, will make himself known to his brother Judah. The results of this reunion will astound the world and alter world history. This is even hinted at mystically in the Joseph story (Genesis 45), but is declared in most uncertain terms throughout the Prophets. The average reader seldom notes the careful distinction which the Prophets consistently make between the House of Israel (Ephraim/Joseph), which refers to the Lost Tribes, and the House of Judah, whom we have known since the Babylonian Exile as the Jewish people.

2 Kings chapter 17 recounts the stark story of how the Assyrian king Sargon II took the Ten Tribes into captivity in 723 B.C.E and settled them northwest of Palestine, in the area of the Habor River near Lakes Van and Urmia. The writer makes it clear that "none was left except the tribe of Judah" (17:18). Josephus tells us that in his day many of them were still living in these areas, "beyond the Euphrates" (*Antiquities* 11. 133). However, there is a persistent tradition that significant portions of these tribes began to migrate elsewhere. The question of just where they went has been a subject of controversy down through the years and has given rise to many legends and attempts to locate them. 2 Esdras says that after crossing the Euphrates they journeyed a year and a half and came to a distant sparsely inhabited country called "Arzareth," where they are to remain until the last days (13:43-47). Unfortunately this name simply means "another land" and tells us only that they left their original area and went a considerable distance. The rabbinic sources say that they migrated beyond the river Sambatyon, across which they will someday return. This mysterious river is said to flow six days a week, but rest on the Sabbath. Most scholars have taken this reference to the Sambatyon River as purely legendary and fantastic. However, recent research in Jerusalem has identified the river as none other than the Bosphorus strait, where the waters of the Black Sea flow past Istanbul toward the Aegean. There the current does actually slow down drastically, and at times even stop or reverse, on average about once a week, giving rise to these accounts. Isaiah also indicates that these tribes were located to the *west* in his time (Isaiah 66:18-21).

Based on this and much additional recent research it can definitely be shown that significant portions of the Lost Tribes migrated *northwest*, toward Europe and are to be found today among the Scandinavian, Celtic & kindred peoples. In other words the tribes are largely located today in the United States, Great Britain, northwestern Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and other scattered areas. They are primarily Protestant, tied to their Biblical heritage, and have by and large provided a hospitable climate for Jews and even supported Zionism. Unfortunately, most researchers have tended to look to the East, and have only found scattered pockets of peoples

who might be associated with the tribes--the Bene Israel of India, the Pathans on the Afghani-Pakistani border, the Kashmiris, the Chiang-Min on the Chinese-Tibetan border, and even many tribes of Africa of whom the Ethiopians have been the most prominent example. These attempts at locating the tribes miss the fact that the most significant group went *northwest into Europe*, and did finally fulfill the promises that were made to the two sons of Joseph--Ephraim and Manasseh, about unprecedented national greatness (Genesis 48:4-20). They were to become a great company of nations leading the world in wealth and influence (Genesis 49:22-26; Deuteronomy 33:13-17). This fits in well with what the Prophets predict for the last days, when the Lost Tribes return. They are pictured "without number, as the sand of the sea" not as tiny insignificant pockets of tribal groups. The official rabbinic ruling (*halacha*) is that the Lost Tribes *will* return.

The Hebrew prophets consistently and carefully distinguish between these two "Houses." This is not a minor theme, but actually *the* dominant emphasis that runs throughout these texts. This restoration of all Israel rests upon the absolute promise of YHVH. Although Israel (that is the Ten Tribes) is scattered through the nations, numbering as the sands of the sea, and they even come to *think of themselves as Gentiles*, YHVH declares that not the "least grain" will be lost. His eyes are on all their ways, and they will surely RETURN--to YHVH their God, to Judah (the Jews), and to the Land. The following texts provide a brief overview of the prophetic picture. The details and consistency one finds in the Prophets on this subject is quite impressive. Anyone who will bother to carefully *study* these texts will come away with a transformed understanding of what lies on the horizon with regard to the prophetic times in which we live.

Isaiah 11:11-12: The Davidic ruler gathers *both* the House of Israel and the House of Judah--and peace comes between the two. This full gathering seems to come with the appearance of the Davidic Messiah, however, many texts indicate that the first stages of the reunion begin earlier and in less dramatic ways.

Jeremiah 3:6-18: The northern tribes of Israel return and join Judah, "one from a city, two from a family" prior to the complete union when the Kingdom of God comes. This appears to be what has begun to happen in our day.

16:14-19: This is often applied to Judah and to the Jews returning to the Land in our century, but in context, it applies in particular to the House of Israel (Lost Tribes), who have become like the "nations," whose fathers have inherited lies. Note the images: the first stage is fishing; the second is hunting. Judah already went through this stage, particularly after 1880, when the Zionists were able to "fish" *ordraw* a number of Jews back to the Land. However, it took the "hunters" (Nazis, Arabs, Soviets) to really get them to leave "Egypt and Babylon," following WWII. Perhaps we may expect a similar pattern with the return of the Lost Tribes.

23:1-6: This passage makes it clear that *both Houses* will come eventually--and again their return is associated with the Davidic Messiah. This *GREAT RETURN* is to rival the Exodus from Egypt in the time of Moses!

30-31: These key chapters are particularly full and vivid regarding the sequence of events to come about in the "latter days," and the establishment of the much expected *new covenant* with the restored Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Hosea 1-3: The Lost Tribes become "not My people," losing their identity and their knowledge of God and turning to paganism ("days of the Baalim," through they number as the sands of the sea (1:10-11; 2:13). They remain in this state for "many days" but return to Judah and to their God in the "latter days." Once again their return is associated with the appearance of the Davidic Messiah (1:11; 3:4-5).

5:6- 6:3: They are "revived on the third day," probably meaning after 2500 years of exile.

Amos 9:8-10: In 8:11-12 the northern Ten Tribes lose contact with God. They are to be sifted through the nations, nonetheless they are kept intact. Their restoration is once again connected to the Davidic Messiah.

Obadiah 15-21: A restored "Joseph/Ephraim" (Lost Tribes) is instrumental in finally punishing the Arabs who have rejoiced at Judah's (the Jews in the Land) troubles and distress (the Holocaust, the Wars of 1947-73, the Gulf War).

Micah 2:12-13: Great multitudes of the remnant of Israel return, until there is no room for them, even spilling over into Gilead (the east Bank, see 7:14).

5:3-15: They are given up until the Davidic restoration, "then the remnant of the Messiah's brethren return *unto* the children of Israel!"

Zechariah 8:13; 9 & 10: All the tribes eventually come together--Judah and Ephraim are joined. Judah seems to be *saved first* (12:7), and have great military success (10:3-5), but Joseph (the Lost Tribes) is afterward associated with them (10:6-10). They are so numerous that they spill over into Lebanon and Gilead. Of particular note is the language of Zechariah 10:9: "And I will sow them among the peoples; and they shall *remember me in far countries*, and they shall live with their children, and turn again."

Ezekiel 34-37: YHVH Himself will search out His "lost sheep" which have been scattered among the nations (34:11-13). The "two sticks" of the House of Judah (the Jews) and the House of Israel (the Lost Tribes of Joseph and his brethren) are absolutely destined to become *one*, leading to the Messianic era (37:15-28).

Almost all interpreters of prophecy, whether Jewish or Christian, tend to loosely read these texts and apply them in a blanket way "to the Jews." Surely, the return to Zion in our century, with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, is of the *greatest* prophetic significance. However, these passages from the Prophets clearly speak of a further GREAT RETURN of *ALL Israel*. This vital distinction between the House of Judah and the House of Israel must be carefully noted if one wants to understand the detailed prophetic picture presented in these texts.

These promises to national Israel are *absolute and unconditional*. There are over *forty* separate sections of the Hebrew prophets which deal specifically, and in the greatest of detail, with this theme of the full and unqualified restoration of all twelve of the Tribes of Israel. The cumulative impact of these texts is overwhelming. They cannot be ignored or spiritualized if one wishes to interpret the Scripture with any historical seriousness. Yet they have never been fulfilled in past history--not in the 6th century B.C.E when a few thousand Jews returned to the Land, nor yet in our day. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is a bare beginning, a kind of "firstfruits" sign of what is to come. The Prophets speak of Judah returning *first* to the Land. Their return in our day is a concrete demonstration that YHVH has not and will not cast off or reject His people Israel--*including* the Ten Lost Tribes:

Thus says YHVH, who gives the sun for light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea so that its waves roar; YHVH of Hosts is His name: "If those ordinances depart from before Me, declares YHVH, then the offspring of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever."

Thus says YHVH, "If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then I will also cast off *all the offspring of Israel* for all that they have done," declares YHVH (Jeremiah 31:35-37).

'For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, *so have I sworn* that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, *but my kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall my covenant of peace be removed,*" says YHVH who has mercy on you (Isaiah 54:9-10).

Surely language could be no plainer. The full restoration of all Israel is as sure and certain as the laws of Nature and as the sworn testimony of YHVH God Himself. The Prophets speak about a specific period of time when this restoration will come:

For the children of Israel shall abide *many days* without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. *Afterward* the children of Israel will return and seek YHVH their God and David their king. They will fear YHVH and His goodness *in the last days* (Hosea 3:4-5)

Though scattered to all nations, shifted like wheat, YHVH declares "my eyes are on all their ways," and "not the least grain will fall to the ground" (Jeremiah 16:17; Amos 9:9). Both Israel and Judah (all Twelve Tribes) will be brought back to the Land and reunited in a GREAT RETURN that will rival the Exodus from Egypt (Ezekiel 37:15-23; Jeremiah 16:14-15). This return is for spiritual purposes which leads to the arrival of the Messianic age and the Kingdom of God.

Therefore thus says the Lord YHVH, "Now I will bring back the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My Holy Name When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and I am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations, then they shall know that I am YHVH their God

who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and *left none of them captive any longer*. And I will *not hide my face* from them anymore; for I shall have *poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel*" (Ezekiel 39:25-29).

‘But this is the covenant that I will make *with the house of Israel* after those days," says YHVH: "I will *put my Torah in their minds, and write it on their hearts*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all the countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean . . . I will give you a *new heart and put a new spirit within you* . . . (Ezekiel 36:25-26).

This is all part of the Plan: that through the nation Israel, and her Messiah, all the world will come to experience the Kingdom of God. Israel suffers Exile, receiving "double for all her sins," but according to Isaiah 40-53 she is also the "servant of YHVH" whose suffering leads to redemption for all nations. Jeremiah puts it most succinctly:

I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first. I will cleanse them from all their iniquity . . . then it shall be to Me a *name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all the nations of the earth* (Jeremiah 33:7-9).

The conversion of Israel leads to the turning of *all nations* to the knowledge of YHVH and His Torah Way for all humankind. The Davidic Messiah regathers all Israel, and at the same time the nations seek YHVH (Isaiah 11:10-12). It is at that time the "earth becomes full of the knowledge of YHVH as the waters cover the seas (Isaiah 11:9). The Torah goes forth from Jerusalem to all nations; the nations stream up to the Land to learn the Way of YHVH (Isaiah 2:2-4). Consistently the Prophets associate *these three related phenomena*: the return of the House of Judah, the joining of Judah with the Lost Tribes, and the subsequent conversion of all the nations to YHVH and His Way (see Isaiah 14:1-2; 56:7; 60:3; Zechariah 2:10-13; and Psalm 67). Note these clear examples:

Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst, declares YHVH. And *many nations* will join themselves to YHVH in that day and will *become My people* (Zechariah 2:10-11)

. . . For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers . . . The *Gentiles shall come to You* from the ends of the earth and say, surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthless and unprofitable things (Jeremiah 16:15-19).

At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of YHVH, and *all the nations shall be gathered to it*, to the name of YHVH, to Jerusalem. Nor more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts. *In those days* Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers (Jeremiah 3:17-18).

Yes, *many peoples and strong nations* shall come to seek YHVH of Hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before YHVH . . . Thus says YHVH of Hosts, "In those days ten men from every language of the nations will grasp the corner of the garment [the *tzizit*; Numbers 15:38-40] of a Jewish man saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'" (Zechariah 8:23).

Jeremiah says, "Israel was holy to YHVH, the *firstfruits* of His harvest" (2:3). This image of the firstfruits relates to the symbolic meaning of Israel's Holy Days and the harvest seasons, as set forth in Leviticus 23. The Way of YHVH will first be realized through the "great nation," as promised to Abraham, repeated to Isaac and Jacob, and reiterated throughout the Bible, then the "full harvest" will follow. There is *nothing racist* about this Plan of God, rather it is a matter of YHVH using those whom He has determined and prepared for his historic purposes, thus fulfilling His promises. As YHVH Himself declares, this Restoration of All Israel is a "vindication" of His Holy Name (Ezekiel 36:23). This is the prime Messianic task according to all the Prophets.

Unless and until all Israel is restored to the Land, with Judah and Joseph joined as one, there is no Messianic fulfillment, and there will be no realization of the Kingdom of God.