

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL?

Written by Rabbi Mordecai Silver. Posted in Articles

In Shemot, the first Portion of Exodus, we see that the people of Israel are slaves in Egypt, and Moses, a shepherd, takes his sheep into the wilderness. There he turns aside to see a wonder and he encounters God! Moses gazed at a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed (vs 3:2). A Voice calls out: Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground (vs 3:5).

The Lord appeared to Moses to send him on a mission: Tell Pharaoh to let My people go, tell Israel the time of liberation is at hand.?

Just as the flame did not harm the bush, so God's nearness is not a threat to us, but a reassurance.

In Exodus/Shemot 3:6-12, The Lord said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to gaze toward God. God said, I have indeed seen the affliction of My people that is in Egypt and I have heard its outcry because of its taskmasters, for I have known of its sufferings. I shall descend to rescue it from the hand of Egypt and to bring it up from the land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey. And now, behold the outcry of the children of Israel has come to Me and I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. And now, go and I shall dispatch you to Pharaoh and you shall take My people the Children of Israel out of Egypt. Moses replied to God, Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should take the Children of Israel out of Egypt? And He said, For I shall be with you and this is your sign that I have sent you: When you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve God on this mountain.

This was Moses' calling to his new profession, that of Leader and prophet of God. Most of us today find our jobs through school, newspapers, friends, etc. How many of us have been called or directly contacted by God Himself about a job position? Think about that for a moment. Reflect on the awesomeness of the encounter with God that we refer to as The Burning Bush. Moses was in the presence of God and he knew it. But, how would

Moses know he was in the presence of God since the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt raised him?

How?

Moses' mother nursed him in his early years, he knew he was a Hebrew, and he must have been taught many of the ways of his Hebrew brethren.

Moses was a Hebrew, not a Jew. He was a son of Israel. It says in Exodus 10-11: And now, go and I shall dispatch you to Pharaoh and you shall take My people the Children of Israel out of Egypt. Moses replied to God, Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should take the Children of Israel out of Egypt?

In Scripture, God refers to His people as the Children of Israel, not as the Jewish people. Likewise, Moses in the next verse refers to his people as the Children of Israel. He does not call them the Jewish people.

I do not say this to put down the Jewish people, because I am of Judah. Instead, I say this to tell you that the Children of Israel are made up of Judah and Ephraim, the two houses of Israel, and that within those two houses are the people of the twelve tribes plus those who choose to join themselves to one of the two houses.

If we were meant to be referred to as the Jewish people, would we not have been named the Children of Judah? Yet, we were named Israel.

Does this mean that the Jewish people of today represent ALL of Israel?

No, they do not. They are PART of Israel.

Of course it is said by some that only the House of Judah remains identifiable, and I would agree. On the other hand, some say those of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim were scattered to the four corners of the earth and were thereafter lost. However, God knows exactly where they are: I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me (Hosea 5:3). Further, anyone who accept Yeshua as Messiah becomes a part of the Children of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-22).

One might ask, what part does the Church and Christianity play in this? Because, some in the Church say that they are Israel. I would say that they too are but PART of Israel. However, to be all that reunited Israel is called to be, Ephraim needs to give up his idolatrous ways the same as Judah must give up his idolatrous ways brought back from Babylon. Both must sever themselves from pagan influences and return to God.

There are some within Messianic Judaism who insist that they are the keepers of the flame so to speak. They see themselves as the legitimate heirs to the title of Israel. They claim they are protecting Judaism from well meaning Christians who are trying to take the Jewish people's rightful place as the chosen people of God. But this is nothing more than Reverse Replacement Theology.

What is Replacement Theology? It is a teaching wherein some claim they are the New Israel, because the Jews rejected their Messiah, and so were replaced with the Christians.

But how can this be true if Messianic Jews accept Messiah Yeshua and worship Him following Jewish customs and traditions? This blows a hole in Replacement Theology. But, because of this type of thinking Messianic Judaism now claims that they are the defenders of Judaism and that they are now Israel. Wrong, wrong, wrong! Two wrongs do not make it right. If it is not right for Christianity can it be right for Messianic Judaism?

Exodus/Shemot 4:22 You shall say to Pharaoh, So said the Lord, My firstborn son is Israel.

Israel is the firstborn son of God as Yeshua is His firstborn. No one can take the place of Israel, but all become part of Israel when they accept Yeshua as Messiah and enter into the covenant that God made with Israel.

That promised new covenant was not made with Judah nor Christianity, but with a reunited Israel:

Behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the

Lord, I will put My Torah within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:7-13).

This is the covenant God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to Israel.

The patriarchs, no matter what anyone might claim, were not Jewish nor were they Christians nor were they of any denomination that some may lay upon them. Abraham was at first a Gentile who came to be called a Hebrew. It was the Children of Jacob/Israel who went down into Egypt. They were called Hebrews, which means Boundary Crosser. They crossed over the Jordan River, which was a boundary, and they received the Hebrew name, Ivrit Hebrew.

The first Jew was not Abraham, as many in Judaism claim. The first Jew, according to the Biblical record, was Judah, the son of Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons, and so to speak, he adopted two grandsons, Manasseh and Ephraim, the two sons of Joseph.

The sons are referred to in Scripture by their own tribal names, and collectively they are known as the Children of Israel. This designation referred not only to the sons of Israel but also to their descendants. Ultimately the twelve tribes were divided into two camps or two houses, and they became known as Judah and Ephraim. Judah remained in the south with Jerusalem as its capital. Benjamin remained with Judah and some of Levi, the priests, remained with Judah also. The rest were with the northern kingdom.

Some say that when Assyria came and took away those of the northern kingdom of Ephraim/Israel that some of Ephraim migrated south and became part of Judah. While there is some truth to this, it still does not make everyone Jewish. Nor does it make anyone Jewish who comes into Israel. While we might not know our heritage, God does, and it is through the Ruach of God that He calls us back. He tells us through the prophet Ezekiel in 37:15-28 that it is His intention to bring Israel/Ephraim and Judah together as one stick or tree. Some say that this indicates that everyone will be made Jewish. That is not what the prophecy says. It says we are made one in the hand of the Lord. Where does it say in Scripture that God has identified Himself as Jewish? Some say all are Jewish because Judah is the only house still recognizable.

But if God is the One doing it, don't you think He knows the truth?

Isaiah/Yeshayahu 27:12-13 It will be on that day that the Lord shall thresh from the surging river to the Brook of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, O children of Israel. It will be on that day that a great shofar will be blown, and those who are lost in the land of Assyria and those cast away in the land of Egypt will come, and they shall prostrate themselves to the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

Here a promise is given that the day will come when God will gather the northern house of Israel/Ephraim from Assyria where they were scattered. This happens when the great shofar is blown. When will that day be? The great shofar, or the Shofar HaGadol will be blown at Yom Kippur. In that day Ephraim will bow before God on His holy mountain in Jerusalem. So why does it matter? Why do we need to learn about the two Houses of Israel?

Because it matters to God. And, if it matters to Him it should matter to us. It is in His Word, given to Moses in the Torah, and in the Books of the Prophets. It is spoken about in the Apostolic Scriptures. The Lord promises to bring us back to His Holy Land and to restore His people and His worship to His holy city Jerusalem.

The day is coming when Judah and Ephraim will be united as one people, as one nation, called Israel. That is His promise to us. But He also promises that we will be called by His Name, so it may very well be that a new name will be given to us. It will not be a name given to us by ourselves but it will be a name given to us by God. So no matter what we may call ourselves today, one day soon, we will be called by a new name given to us from the mouth of God Himself. But for now as the Scripture calls us we should be known. And Scripture calls us the Children of Israel.

I am not trying to replace the Jewish people and put them out of the picture the same as I am not trying to put Christianity out of the picture. But if you look at the fullness of what God is doing you begin to realize that Christianity, for the most part, rejected the Torah of God. But, like Yeshua, the Living Torah, so Torah is at the center of who He is and what He is about. Without the Torah we will never understand what it is that the Lord expects from us. Torah is the Word of God and the Word of God in the flesh is Yeshua HaMashiach. We who do profess faith in Yeshua need to embrace His Torah.

Judah sees part of the picture when he holds onto Torah, but many reject Yeshua. But God promises that the day is coming when He will allow Judah to see her son and

recognize Him for who He is. Judah has a calling in the Lord. They have been keepers of the oracles of God, the Torah. Their calling is to teach the Torah to the rest of the world. The Great Commission was for the Shalachim/Apostles to go and make talmidim/students of the Living Torah (Matthew 28:19). When Ephraim/Israel left the Torah behind they wandered down their own road. We are now in the day when he is returning to Torah and looking to Judah to teach him.

But many in Judah are refusing to teach Torah to Ephraim. They claim they are Gentiles and that the Torah is not for them. Judah is abdicating its God-given responsibility to teach Ephraim the Torah of the Lord. The things of God cannot be shut up into a box and put away until a later time. Now is the time and the place for Torah to be shared with Ephraim. Ephraim wants to return to the ways of the Lord and wants Judah's help in doing so. Messianic Judaism wants to keep Ephraim at arms length and is not welcoming Ephraim home with open arms. But I say, Remember my brother Judah: In Messiah Yeshua we are all one, there is no difference in Messiah. We are all equal in the Lord!

Jeremiah/Yiremayahu 2:1-3 The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Go and call out unto the ears of Jerusalem, saying: So said the Lord, I recall for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your nuptials, that you followed Me in the Wilderness in an unsown land. Israel is holy to the Lord, the first of His crop; whoever devours it will be held guilty evil shall come upon them! The words of the Lord.

As Isaiah called Israel the firstborn of the Lord so too does the prophet Jeremiah; he also calls Israel the first of His crop. The first fruits must be given to God because He has required that of us. So we do not belong to the world. We do not belong to one another. We belong to the Lord. We are His and His alone.

Judah and Ephraim together as one people are the firstborn of God. We are joint heirs with Messiah Yeshua of all that the Father has promised. If we remain separated we cannot ever hope to inherit the promises of God but together we can realize the fullness of His covenant. My cry is that Ephraim and Judah would come together as brothers and sisters in Messiah Yeshua. This division within the Body of Messiah does more harm and no good can come from it. We must make peace with one another and stop trying to divide the Body by claiming that we each by ourselves hold the real truth.

The truth is, we must unite as prophesied in Ezekiel 37:15-28 and become one people, one nation a true Goy. Israel is calling forth that nation. We call for unity in Messiah, for equality, for a return to Torah. In Israel there are no second class citizens.

I call for my brothers in Messianic Judaism to heal the wound that divides us and to help us return to our rightful places standing together as the Children of Israel.

We invite you, want you, to join us in declaring the foundational principles of God's Israel. We are being made one stick in the Lord's hand.