

The Biblical, Rebellious Legacy of the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim

truly considering the instability of the Northern Kingdom of Israel

The Two-House teaching of Judah and Ephraim, being reunited in the period prior to the Messiah's return, is one which has certainly stirred a great deal of controversy across the broad Messianic community. Why has this been the case? A ministry like Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics has always thought that the safest approach to this difficult issue, is to focus the attention of Bible readers to a series of unfulfilled prophecies (i.e., Isaiah 11:12-16; Jeremiah 31:6-10; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Zechariah 10:6-10), which point to a larger restoration of Israel occurring subsequent to the Second Coming of Yeshua the Messiah. Such an eschatological approach to the subject matter, with many of its finer details only known by a Sovereign and Eternal God, should not really be that controversial. At the very most, such an approach is about as controversial as pre-tribulationism versus post-tribulationism.¹ Things can get a bit heated from time to time, but ultimately it comes down to one's vantage point regarding various prophecies, events that have yet to occur in future history, and how much we let God be God.

What has drawn a great deal of the controversy over the past two decades, or so (1990s-2000s), is what is often labeled to be the "Ephraimite movement." Such a group of people, aside from emphasizing commonly overlooked prophecies regarding the restoration of Israel involving the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom as a player, *go much further* than the Biblical text itself. They commonly claim that the considerable, or even vast majority, of non-Jewish Believers in the broad, contemporary Messianic movement today, absolutely must be those descendants. Far from adhering to the Scriptural word, "He who scattered Israel will gather him" (Jeremiah 31:10), with God only knowing all of the details of where the Northern Kingdom has gone (cf. Hosea 8:8; Amos 9:9), those non-Jewish Believers who commonly and/or forcibly label themselves "Ephraimites," feel that their identity as descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim is

¹ For the tenor of how this discussion often ends up, consult Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Paul D. Feinberg, Douglas J. Moo, Richard R. Reiter, *Three Views on the Rapture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

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absolutely certain. It does not matter if such people have no documentation proving this or not; they have a “feeling” that they are, and that is good enough.

For a non-Jewish Believer like myself, my ancestry is not at all what motivates me to serve and worship and obey the Lord; what motivates me to serve and worship and obey the Lord is the salvation of Yeshua, and how the Holy Spirit is to continually mold my heart and mind to be more like Him. I am a human being who is subject to the fallenness of sin; I need redemption from eternal punishment like everyone on Planet Earth; I have received it via the Messiah of Israel, and am incorporated into the Kingdom realm of Israel via my trust in Him.

Given the fact that the actual pockets of people in today’s world, who claim to be descended from the exiled Northern Kingdom, are found in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Africa, and the Mediterranean basin—I have a much better chance at having Jewish ancestry from someone who assimilated into Medieval European Christianity, than being some sort of descendant of “Ephraim.” Regardless of who I am in the flesh, I am by my faith in Israel’s Messiah, a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13) or the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), grafted-in to the olive tree (Romans 11:17-18). I possess citizenship in Israel via Yeshua. The larger restoration of Israel anticipated by the Scriptures is going to affect me as a participant, regardless of who I am in the flesh—because it involves Judah, Israel/Ephraim, and far many more companions from the nations themselves (cf. Ezekiel 37:15-28).

I have interacted with many people over the years who claim to be some sort of “Ephraimites.” Usually, their claims to such an identity are rooted in sentiment, and not in any kind of documentable fact. *Some of these people base their belief on supposed dreams and visions.* A selection of these people, unfortunately, have latched onto various tall tales and stories about the exiles of the Northern Kingdom migrating to various countries, and that whole, modern ethnicities in Europe today can actually trace their origins to Tribe XYZ of Ancient Israel. What is most disturbing, though, is that very few of those, who claim to be “Ephraimites,” have taken a good, honest look at what the Tanach (Old Testament) really says about the Northern Kingdom of Israel. **The legacy of Ephraim, as seen in the Scriptures, is not at all a positive one**—and why anyone would really want to claim this as their own, is more than a bit confounded. The well-known epithet on the fallen Northern Kingdom seen in 2 Kings, squarely places their downfall and exile with sin and rebellion committed against God:

“The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight. When He had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD and made them commit a great sin. The sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day” (2 Kings 17:20-23).

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This is not the only part of the legacy of Ephraim that Bible readers encounter in the Tanach. We see a disdain that the Northern Kingdom of Israel had for the Southern Kingdom of Judah, we see a series of different ruling houses present in the Northern Kingdom contrasted to the singular line of David in the Southern Kingdom, and we see significant prophetic rebukes issued against the Northern Kingdom. In too much of the Two-House sub-movement, when one encounters people who are self-claiming “Ephraimites,” this is not the heritage that a non-Jewish Believer tends to claim. On the contrary to dealing honestly with the Biblical record of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, such “Ephraimites” tend to instead want to claim some of the pseudo-history of people like Steven Collins or Yair Davidi, which stem from British-Israelism and its associated mythology. *Few want to actually deal with the Scriptural legacy of Ephraim, and the great sins committed against the LORD God that caused the Northern Kingdom to be judged.*

Ephraim Breaks Away From Judah

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was an illegitimate entity from its very beginning. It is true that in the narrative of 1 Kings, as Solomon fell further and further into idolatry (1 Kings 11:1-10), the decree is issued by the Lord that following his death the United Kingdom of Israel will split into two (1 Kings 11:11-13). Jeroboam, one of Solomon’s servants, and from the tribe of Ephraim, is promised ten of Israel’s tribes by God (1 Kings 11:30-40). In order for him to have an enduring legacy like that of David, there is a condition from God that Jeroboam remain faithful to him:

“Then it will be, that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house [a dynasty as enduring, NIV; a lasting dynasty, NJPS]² as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. Thus I will afflict the descendants of David for this, but not always” (1 Kings 11:38-39).

Following the death of King Solomon (1 Kings 11:41-43), his son Rehoboam succeeds him, and fails to heed the advice of his counselors in making the yoke of the people lighter (1 Kings 12:1-15). This only fueled the fire of secession for the ten northern tribes (1 Kings 12:16-20). While there were some legitimate grievances issued by the people to King Rehoboam’s exclamation, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions” (1 Kings 12:14), the authors/editors of Kings observed, “So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day” (1 Kings 12:19). When the Books of Samuel-Kings reached their final form after the end of the Babylonian exile in the Sixth-Fifth Centuries B.C.E., the Northern Kingdom of Israel was still regarded as corporately being in rebellion. We are capriciously reminded, however, that when Rehoboam tried to recapture the

² Heb. *bayit-ne'e'man* (בַּיִת נְאִמָּן).

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northern tribes with a great army, that the division of Israel into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms was from the Lord, and it was prevented (1 Kings 12:21-24).

While the Lord had promised the new King Jeroboam an enduring legacy if he remained faithful to Him and His Instruction, from the very beginning of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim—**this is what we do not see**. In establishing his base of power, King Jeroboam was very concerned that the people would demand reunification with the Southern Kingdom, because they would have to go to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices and commemorate the appointed times as instructed by the Torah. Jeroboam installed his own centers of worship in Bethel and Dan, he made golden calves for the people to serve, and he instituted a separate priesthood and separate holidays for the people to remember:

“Jeroboam said in his heart, ‘Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, *even* to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.’ So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.’ He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went *to worship* before the one as far as Dan. And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi. Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense” (1 Kings 12:26-33).

The Lord had promised an enduring legacy for the kingship of Jeroboam, if he would remain faithful to Him and to His ways. This did not happen, and so it should not be surprising that rebukes were issued against Jeroboam. A prophet from Judah went to Bethel and denounced the pagan altar that had been established (1 Kings 13:1-4). King Jeroboam’s hand withered up, and then was restored by the prophet (1 Kings 13:5-6), and with it is witnessed a momentary recognition of Israel’s One True God by Jeroboam. But, the prophet said that he must leave without any food or drink (1 Kings 13:7-10). This prophet encountered another prophet, who lied to him by saying that the Lord would allow him to eat and drink at his house (1 Kings 13:11-18). Because of this deception, the prophet who denounced Jeroboam was later killed by a lion (1 Kings 13:19-31). Hearing that the prophet who spoke out against him had fallen, Jeroboam’s temporary lapse back into fidelity with God stopped, and so anyone who wanted to be a priest in

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the religion of the Northern Kingdom could be: “the lowest of the people”³ (1 Kings 13:33, KJV). This could have been those not even remotely qualified to help service the specific Levitical priesthood, in a secondary or tertiary capacity. *Those who would abuse religious service now became priests.* This sin sealed the fate of Jeroboam’s legacy, and as it is stated, “This event became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to blot it out and destroy it from off the face of the earth” (1 Kings 13:34).

A scene later arose when Abijah, Jeroboam’s son, became deathly ill. The original prophet, Ahijah, who had told Jeroboam that God was intending to give him the northern tribes, is visited by Jeroboam’s wife at Shiloh (1 Kings 14:1-5). Jeroboam’s wife tried to hide herself, but her trickery did not work (1 Kings 14:6). All Ahijah had for Jeroboam’s wife was a negative word of rebuke for the Northern Kingdom, and Jeroboam’s family, in particular:

“Go, say to Jeroboam, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel, “Because I exalted you from among the people and made you leader over My people Israel, and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you—yet you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My sight; you also have done more evil than all who were before you, and have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back—therefore behold, I am bringing calamity on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male person, both bond and free in Israel, and I will make a clean sweep of the house of Jeroboam, as one sweeps away dung until it is all gone”’” (1 Kings 14:7-10).

Far from Jeroboam’s son just dying (1 Kings 14:12-13, 18), the dynasty of Jeroboam in the fledgling Northern Kingdom would fall fast: “Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the dogs will eat. And he who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat; for the LORD has spoken *it*...Moreover, the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who will cut off the house of Jeroboam this day and from now on” (1 Kings 14:12, 14). Ahijah not only decreed that the reign of Jeroboam and his family would not last long over the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, but that eventually Jeroboam’s sin would cause the people to be exiled:

“For the LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the *Euphrates River*⁴, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger. He will give up Israel on account of the sins of Jeroboam, which he committed and with which he made Israel to sin” (1 Kings 14:15-16).

When one reviews the history of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel, no honest reader can deny that sin and idolatry were present among all of

³ Heb. *m'qetzot ha'am* (מִקְצוֹת הָעָם); “all classes of the people” (NEB); “commoners of the peoples” (ATS).

⁴ Heb. *v'zeira m'eiver l'nahar* (וְזַעֲרָה מֵעֵיבֹר לְנַהָר).

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the people. There was idolatry and rebellion against God present in Judah just as there was in Ephraim. Yet, Judah still had an operating Temple, at least superficially loyal to the God of Israel. Upon its secession, Ephraim established a different religious system, and one that would haunt it for the remainder of its time as a state.

The Northern Kingdom was Not a Model of Stability

Speaking for the Lord, the observation of the Prophet Hosea regarding the legacy of Ephraim was, “They have set up kings, but not by Me; they have appointed princes, but I did not know *it*. With their silver and gold they have made idols for themselves, that they might be cut off” (Hosea 8:4). While the idolatry and paganism of the Northern Kingdom of Israel tend to rightfully garner a great deal of attention from Bible readers, not enough attention is probably given to the fact that not only would the ruling line of Jeroboam fall, but that it would give rise to a wide number of succeeding ruling lines. Far be it from no legitimate heirs being present for a ruling family in Ephraim, the change in royal dynasties was often instigated by rivalry, a conspiracy, and a violent coup.

In the history of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, only the House of David ruled. In the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, a total of **nine royal dynasties** ruled, along with one period where there was a pretender to the throne also ruling.⁵ While a bit abbreviated from the history seen in 1&2 Kings, the following summary of the rulers of the Northern Kingdom should give you a good enough idea about how many problems were present among those of Ephraim, simply because of how one royal dynasty fell due to intrigue, and/or the weight of its own corruption and mistakes, and then another arose in its place:

House of Jeroboam

Jeroboam (928-907 B.C.E.)

Nadab (907-906 B.C.E.)

Nadab falls because of evil (1 Kings 15:25-26). Baasha rises up against him in a conspiracy, killing him at Gibbethon (1 Kings 15:27).

House of Baasha

Baasha (906-883 B.C.E.)

Elah (883-882 B.C.E.)

Elah rules for two years (1 Kings 16:8), and then is overthrown by Zimri, a chariot commander. Zimri eliminates all of the House of Baasha, with no male heir or any relative or even a friend left over (1 Kings 16:9-11).

⁵ This information has been adapted from “Chronology of the Monarchies,” in *JPS Guide: The Jewish Bible*, 259.

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House of Zimri

Zimri (882 B.C.E.)

The reign of Zimri is very short lived, having lasted a total of only seven days. Those in the army at Gibbethon hear of this. Omri, the army commander is made king. Zimri dies in a fire that he sets himself in the king's palace (1 Kings 16:16-19). The people of the Northern Kingdom were divided on who to follow as their next monarch. Half of them follow after Tibni, and the other half follow after Omri (1 Kings 16:21-22).

Tibni (882-872 B.C.E.)

House of Omri

Omri (882-871 B.C.E.)

Ahab (871-850 B.C.E.)

Ahaziah (850-848 B.C.E.)

Jehoram (848-842 B.C.E.)

The House of Omri is one of the most infamous in the history of the Northern Kingdom, because of the presence of the evil Queen Jezebel, wife of King Ahab.

Having come back from battle, defending Ramoth-gilead against the Arameans, King Jehoram is killed with an arrow by Jehu (2 Kings 9:14-26). Jehu also assassinates King Ahaziah of the Southern Kingdom (2 Kings 9:27-32). Most significantly, Jehu sees to the downfall of Jezebel herself (2 Kings 9:33-37), and judgment is enacted upon Ahab's family (2 Kings 10:1-17) and the Baal worshippers (2 Kings 10:18-19). The Lord promises Jehu that his family will rule over the Northern Kingdom through four generations (2 Kings 10:20-33).

House of Jehu

Jehu (842-814 B.C.E.)

Jehoahaz (814-800 B.C.E.)

Jehoash (800-784 B.C.E.)

Jeroboam II (784-748 B.C.E.)

Zechariah (748 B.C.E.)

Following the death of his father, Zechariah becomes ruler of the Northern Kingdom, and rules from Samaria for only six months (2 Kings 15:8-9). Due to his evil, Shallum conspires against him, killing him in public, and takes over (2 Kings 15:10).

House of Shallum

Shallum (748 B.C.E.)

Shallum rules for one month in Samaria, and then Menahem overthrows him, becoming king in his place (2 Kings 15:13-14).

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House of Menahem

Menahem (748-737 B.C.E.)

Pekahiah (737-735 B.C.E.)

Pekahiah becomes king after his father's death, but because of doing evil, his officer Pekah strikes him down and becomes king in his place (2 Kings 15:23-25).

House of Pekah

Pekah (735-732 B.C.E.)

Pekah did evil (2 Kings 15:28), and so because of this Hoshea conspires against him and becomes king in his place (2 Kings 15:30).

House of Hoshea

Hoshea (732-725 B.C.E.)

Hoshea does evil against the Lord (2 Kings 17:2), and is captured by Shalmaneser of Assyria, for failing to send tribute (2 Kings 17:3-4).

The Fall of Samaria to the Assyrians and the Fall of Israel (722-721 B.C.E.)

There is obviously more to the history of Ephraim that Bible readers should investigate, by digging into what actually took place during the reigns of each of the Northern Kingdom monarchs. Much can be learned, though, by simply seeing how many rulers Ephraim actually had, and the collective legacy that they have left for us in Scripture.

One does not have to seek out any kind of numerological connection between the nine royal houses and the one pretender to the throne, which ruled in the Northern Kingdom, **to know that this was a less-than-stable or ideal country.** There was internal rivalry and insurrection, and one could legitimately wonder what would have happened if the Assyrian Empire did not encroach upon Ephraim. Would the Northern Kingdom have fallen into its own civil war? Would a demand for reunification with the Southern Kingdom occur, in order to bring more political stability? We do not know.

What we do know is that any person in today's Two-House sub-movement, forcibly claiming some kind of an "Ephraimite" status—claims *this utterly ridiculous mess* as his or her national heritage—as opposed to any of the hype as put out by some Lost Tribes seekers. The legacy of Ephraim seen here is not something worth boasting about, nor should anyone take any sort of pride in it. Anyone who reads the Biblical narrative is to learn valuable lessons on how not to rule or be ruled, from the internal political rivalries present in the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim. One can legitimately wonder if, among the many self-claiming "Ephraimites" in today's Two-House sub-movement—if in their strident insistence that they must be descended from the exiled Northern Kingdom—

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whether they are or not, if they have actually opened themselves up to the same insidious spiritual influences, which were quite active in the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim. In many cases, given the strong feelings of resentment that many people in the Two-House sub-movement have for those in Messianic Judaism, the possibility that they could be influenced by the same demonic principalities which ultimately led the Northern Kingdom—even if many of these people are not descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom—is something to seriously contemplate.

Some Prophetic Rebukes Issued Against the Northern Kingdom

While the political issues surrounding the leadership of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim often elude many people in today's Two-House sub-movement, what should not elude any of us are the prophetic declarations issued against it. The Books of Amos and Hosea, in particular, are often cited as containing many important rebukes against the legacy of Ephraim. Common sins that the people of the Northern Kingdom are faulted for include idolatry, child sacrifice, and oppression of the rich upon the poor. Here is a selection of key prophetic rebukes that anyone approaching the debated subject matter of the "Two-House teaching" needs to be quite consciously aware of:

*"Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring now, that we may drink!' The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness, 'Behold, the days are coming upon you when they will take you away with meat hooks, and the last of you with fish hooks. You will go out *through* breaches in the walls, each one straight before her, and you will be cast to Harmon,' declares the LORD" (Amos 4:1-3).*

*"For those who turn justice into wormwood and cast righteousness down to the earth. He who made the Pleiades and Orion and changes deep darkness into morning, who also darkens day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is His name. It is He who flashes forth *with* destruction upon the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress. They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks *with* integrity. Therefore because you impose heavy rent on the poor and exact a tribute of grain from them, *though* you have built houses of well-hewn stone, yet you will not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine. For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great, *you* who distress the righteous *and* accept bribes and turn aside the poor in the gate. Therefore at such a time the prudent person keeps silent, for it is an evil time. Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and thus may the LORD God of hosts be with you, just as you have said! Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the gate! Perhaps the LORD God of hosts may be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:7-15).*

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“Do you put off the day of calamity, and would you bring near the seat of violence? Those who recline on beds of ivory and sprawl on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall, who improvise to the sound of the harp, *and* like David have composed songs for themselves, who drink wine from sacrificial bowls while they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, and the sprawlers' banqueting will pass away. The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, the LORD God of hosts has declared: ‘I loathe the arrogance of Jacob, and detest his citadels; therefore I will deliver up *the city* and all it contains’” (Amos 6:3-8).

“Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel, for the LORD has a case against the inhabitants of the land, because there is no faithfulness or kindness or knowledge of God in the land. *There is* swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, and everyone who lives in it languishes along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, and also the fish of the sea disappear. Yet let no one find fault, and let none offer reproof; for your people are like those who contend with the priest. So you will stumble by day, and the prophet also will stumble with you by night; and I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children” (Hosea 4:1-6).

“When I would heal Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered, and the evil deeds of Samaria, for they deal falsely; the thief enters in, bandits raid outside, and they do not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds are all around them; they are before My face. With their wickedness they make the king glad, and the princes with their lies. They are all adulterers, like an oven heated by the baker who ceases to stir up *the fire* from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened. On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with scoffers, for their hearts are like an oven *as* they approach their plotting; their anger smolders all night, in the morning it burns like a flaming fire. All of them are hot like an oven, and they consume their rulers; all their kings have fallen. None of them calls on Me” (Hosea 7:1-7).

These five passages from Amos and Hosea, respectively, should be enough of a snapshot to get a good idea about how bad the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim actually was.⁶ It is observed how in judgment, “Strangers devour his strength, yet he does not know *it*; gray hairs also are sprinkled on him, yet he does not know *it*” (Hosea 7:9). The Northern Kingdom might be described as a person aging too quickly, with old age setting in before its time—all due to the presence of sin. We should not be surprised how it is said of them, “they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law⁷...Though I wrote for him

⁶ For a further review, consult the entries for Amos and Hosea in *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic*.

⁷ “rebelled against My Torah” (ATS); “faithless to My teaching” (NJPS).

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ten thousand *precepts* of My law, they are regarded as a strange thing” (Hosea 8:1, 12).

Still, in spite of the collective, sinful legacy of Ephraim, there is hope. Thankfully, when the prophesied restoration of Israel finally consummates, there is a recognition on the part of Ephraim of its sinful legacy and its waywardness toward God’s Instruction:

“I have surely heard Ephraim grieving, ‘You have chastised me, and I was chastised, like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for You are the LORD my God. For after I turned back, I repented; and after I was instructed, I smote on *my* thigh; I was ashamed and also humiliated because I bore the reproach of my youth” (Jeremiah 31:18-19).

It is at such a point that all of the corporate dimensions of the New Covenant can then be realized, with a permanent cleansing of sin, forgiveness, and realization of Moses’ Teaching enacted (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34).⁸ While there are rebukes issued against those of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, at a future point in history, its legacy of sin, idolatry, rebellion, and insurrection will be a thing of the past.

Approaching the Legacy of Ephraim

In much of the popular literature that has circulated throughout the 1990s and 2000s about the “Two-House teaching,” there has not been a huge amount of attention really focused on what actually took place in the Northern Kingdom of Israel—as recorded in the Bible. One cannot totally blame some of these materials for not focusing too much on the political instability present in the Northern Kingdom, or the prophetic denunciations encountered—because the negative legacy left by Ephraim in the Biblical record (or even just a brief survey of it) is something that is to surely teach the succeeding generations of God’s people on how *not to behave*.

Anyone who believes that there is still resolution to be brought to the issue of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, by necessity has to recognize that there will be a corporate repentance of the sins committed in ancient times by the Northern Kingdom. Unfortunately for many people in the Two-House sub-movement, there has not at all been a significant, and more further review of the legacy of Ephraim as witnessed in the Tanach. The sinful problems the Northern Kingdom had, have not at all been probed and considered, for the key lessons that they contain—for anyone who wants to take instruction from the Holy Scriptures. Unlike the Southern Kingdom of Judah, which was similarly judged for sins of idolatry and rebellion against it, the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim never corporately returned from its exile. We still await for its return as salvation history looms closer and closer to the return of the Messiah—even if the vast and considerable majority of self-claiming “Ephraimites,” are going to actually be

⁸ For a further discussion, consult the author’s article “What is the New Covenant?” (appearing in *The New Testament Validates Torah*).

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companions from the nations themselves, involved in Israel's restoration (cf. Ezekiel 37:16).

When I look through some of the royal history of the Northern Kingdom, I can only be reminded of a question that a good Messianic Jewish friend of mine once asked: *Why would anyone want to be Jewish?* Serving in the leadership of a Messianic congregation, he encountered many non-Jewish Believers who thought that they were in the assembly because of having a lost Jewish ancestor several generations removed. When seeing this, he could only think back on the complicated history of his own Jewish ancestors over the past few centuries, including the pogroms of the Russian Empire and various levels of anti-Semitism he had witnessed in his life in America. (Thankfully, his Jewish family was not caught in the Holocaust.) My friend honestly wondered why some non-Jews in the Messianic world would urgently, or even desperately search, for a Jewish relative. In his own Jewish experience, at least, he did not think it was really "worth it."

With this in mind, we should legitimately wonder why any non-Jewish Believer in the Messianic movement **would really want to be** some sort of "Ephraimite." While the Jewish struggle throughout history has been quite significant, the Northern Kingdom's sinful legacy of rebellion against the Lord, should not be something that any Believer would want to eagerly claim as his or her own. Why would anyone want to claim figures like King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, as his or her national "heroes," as it were? *I know that I do not want to be associated with these two grossly evil people, who lived in utter rebellion toward God.* Some non-Jewish Messianics are looking for an identity beyond being in Yeshua⁹—falsely thinking that only those physically descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are truly God's own—and claiming to be a descendant of the exiled Northern Kingdom is the option they have chosen. Many claim an identity of being "Ephraim," without truly knowing what they have claimed.

When we see the prophecies of a larger restoration of Israel in the Tanach, if it were not **for the sheer grace of God** and His love for the Patriarchs—then the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim should have just been assimilated into the nations of the Ancient Near East, and then become a forgotten part of ancient history. This is not what we see in the Prophets, however. Zechariah 10:6, 10 tells us, "I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them back, because I have had compassion¹⁰ on them; and they will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them...I will bring them back from the land of Egypt and gather them from Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon until no room can be found for them." While there are many specific details yet to be known regarding a prophetic word like this, there is every indication that the sinful legacy seen of Ephraim in the Tanach, will one day be replaced by a new legacy of

⁹ Consult the author's article "The Faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah" (appearing in *The New Testament Validates Torah*).

¹⁰ Heb. verb *racham* (רָחַם).

The Biblical, Rebellious Legacy of the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim

corporate fidelity and reconciliation with not only Judah—but most importantly with the LORD God of Israel.

The testimony of the Apostolic Scriptures is that the greater restoration of Israel has already begun. At the Jerusalem Council, James the Just indicated that the restoration of David's Tabernacle had already started, with the nations coming to faith in Israel's Messiah (Acts 15:15-18; cf. Amos 9:11-12). Whether the early non-Jewish Believers in the Mediterranean basin had a small few among them descended from the deportees of the Northern Kingdom or not, was humanly unknown to the Apostles. What is known from the Scriptures, is that restoration of Israel prophecies are applied to the nations—meaning that the salvation of Yeshua is available to all people, and all followers of the Messiah will be involved in the process of the Kingdom being restored to Israel (cf. Acts 1:6).

The Kingdom of Israel that is to be restored, is not at all the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim. The Kingdom of Israel that is to be restored, is that realm which is ruled by Great David's Greater Son, Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ). In much of today's Two-House sub-movement, there are non-Jewish Believers who stridently claim the legacy of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim as their own. Yet, how many have overlooked *the utter illegitimacy* of any of the monarchs or ruling lines of Ephraim?

There is much more to be investigated regarding the legacy of Ephraim, from the Tanach Scriptures. If a larger restoration of Israel is something to be genuinely anticipated in the future, and we have started to see it in our day—then why have we not seen an understanding of Ephraim's heritage of sin, rebellion, insurrection, intrigue, and even coups merit more attention? Perhaps the greater restoration of Israel many anticipate, will not occur until some more Bible studies are conducted on the Divided Kingdom era? If so, let us not be *too afraid* about some of the things that may be uncovered, and how many self-claiming "Ephraimites" really are indeed *of the nations themselves*...