

What About “the Gentiles”?

and the terms we use to speak of people

One of my all-time favorite films, going back to my experiences as a young child watching the Disney Channel, is the 1967 piece *The Gnome Mobile*, starring Walter Brennan as both the human D.J. Mulrooney and the gnome Knobby. Frequently throughout the story, as the much larger humans encounter the small gnomes, you hear the gnomes refer to the “big people” as **dudeens**. In the course of the story, it is entirely comedic, as the gnomes ride around in some old man’s Rolls Royce, they are carried in a picnic basket, and they are stolen by a trickster named Quaxton of Quaxton’s Academy of Fantastic Freaks. That the gnomes would have a term like dudeen to refer to big people makes the story rather humorous, but it cannot be denied that the gnomes—at least at first—have a strong distrust of humans. The 900-year old Knobby expresses to D.J. how the gnomes have almost gone extinct because of the chopping down of their redwood forest—with some “Mulrooney outfit” being the worst culprit. And to add to the irony of the story, at their first encounter, Knobby has no idea that D.J. is actually the owner of San Francisco-based Mulrooney Lumber. Suffice it to say, it is easily detected from watching *The Gnome Mobile*, that the term dudeen was probably not originally given out of some kind of respect to big people, in order to charm them.

Unfortunately due to some trends in Western society over the past two to three decades, it is no longer commonplace for a congregation leader, either in the Synagogue or Church, to be referred to by an appropriate title. Mr. and Mrs. Smith or Mr. and Mrs. Jones, are now often referred to by their first names by young people half their age. (To an extent, I can get upset at times when people I do not know do not refer to me as Mr. McKee, and instead call me John.) What happened to the doctors among us? Many are completely unaware if someone has ever served in the military, law enforcement, or some kind of other major service career. *Things are expected to now be more informal and less-stuffy*. Yet, from my early years of visiting my grandparents in Annapolis, MD, and going to the United States Naval Academy where my grandfather worked as museum director and chief archivist—it was always a thrill to see him referred to as Professor Jeffries. And, it was certainly rather impressive to see him call his colleagues titles like Commander,

Israel in Future Prophecy

Captain, and Admiral.¹ (I am sorry I was never there to see the President make a surprise visit.)

While the employment of proper titles is critical to establish some degree of formal respect for one's peers—especially those who have worked hard for some high achievement, like those in academia or those in uniform—terms used in the context of a community of faith, are something even more important.² How we refer to people in a local assembly or fellowship of Believers needs to convey not only a sense of respect, love, and a tenor of feeling welcome—but that we are, to some degree, to be sensitive to their various unique cultural and social needs.

A concept that is very popular not only in today's Messianic Jewish movement, but much of the broader Messianic community in general, is that of **"Jew and Gentile, one in Messiah."**³ Technically speaking, what is intended by this sentiment is that *any person*, regardless of if he or she is Jewish or not, is to be viewed as equal not only in the eyes of God—but most especially with one's fellow Believers viewing one another as equal and valued because of saving faith in Yeshua (Jesus). For many of those in today's Messianic Jewish community, this is exactly what the message of the Apostles is all about: Jew and Gentile becoming one in Messiah. For many of those in evangelical Christianity, in slight contrast, it can be all about Jew and Gentile becoming one in Messiah as a part of "the Church," a group separated from Israel.

In the past two decades or so, given the significant growth of the Messianic movement via a large number of evangelical Christians embracing their Hebraic and Jewish Roots, in a very real and tangible way, various questions have been asked and trends can be noticed. A few of the claims of modern Christianity, and even Messianic Judaism, have been challenged on some noticeable levels. In a large part of today's broad Messianic movement, non-Jewish Believers consider themselves a part of the Commonwealth of Israel, and *equal partakers* in Israel's blessings along with their fellow Jewish Believers (cf. Ephesians 2:11-13; 3:6). While these people are obviously not Jewish either ethnically or culturally, they do not consider their status as God's people to be something separate from Israel, in some

¹ My late grandfather, Prof. Jeffries, did retire as a Commander in the U.S. Naval Reserve. He arrived at Annapolis in 1942 subsequent to Pearl Harbor, as he received his doctorate at Vanderbilt University, written on the Battle of Mobile Bay. While originally a member of the commissioned faculty, he later served as a part of the civilian faculty. For more information, see William W. Jeffries Memorial Archives <usna.edu/LibExhibits/Archives/Academic.html>.

² I am innately aware of the debate surrounding the title "Rabbi" in the Messianic movement, which many oppose using on the basis of Yeshua's statements in Matthew 23:8. I think a better solution than a uniform moratorium on using the title "Rabbi" needs to be found, per the following word in Matthew 23:9 regarding the term "father," and a similar moratorium on calling human fathers "father" has never been proposed by any Messianic person I know.

Alas, though, many of the (male) Messianic Jewish congregational leaders who bear the term "Rabbi," whom I have encountered, have far less theological training than I do. Because of this, and the fact that I will never be ordained by any Messianic organization as a "rabbi," I have a personal tendency to only refer to such persons as Mr. ABC-XYZ or simply "sir."

Consult the FAQ, "Rabbi, Title."

³ This exact sentence has been largely popularized, in no uncertain terms, due to the Joel Chernoff song "Jew and Gentile."

kind of a “Church” entity that sits off to the distance *or* even more closely alongside it.

This causes some problems, because in various parts of Messianic Judaism, non-Jewish Believers can find themselves in congregations relegated to an almost “second class” status to their Jewish constituents. The main purpose that any non-Jewish Believer, *a Gentile*, would need to recognize in such a place, is that he or she is probably there to have an appreciation for the Jewish Roots of Christianity. Yet in some settings it goes even further, as the non-Jewish person or family is only and exclusively there to supplement the congregation’s outreach to the Jewish community (and perhaps with that only by financial offerings). Obviously, each individual Messianic congregation has to be evaluated on its own merits—and many places *can and do change* over the course of time—but in these sorts of environments, it is easy for many Messianic Jews’ reference to non-Jewish Believers as just “Gentiles” or “*goyim*” to have some additional things attached to it.

A significant cause of the rise of various independent Messianic congregations and fellowships from the late 1990s into the 2000s, and even now into the 2010s, has been when non-Jewish Believers find themselves unwelcome in a Messianic Jewish congregation—and they know that they do belong in the Messianic world. A feeling of being unwelcome, even in places where non-Jewish Believers want to clearly fellowship with their Jewish brothers and sisters in Messiah, and be very sensitive to their unique social and cultural needs—has helped give significant rise to the One Law/One Torah and Two-House sub-movements. While both of these sectors of the broader Messianic world have their issues for sure, they can at times more widely emphasize the word of Yeshua’s prayer, “that they may be one, just as We are one” (John 17:22). *The kind of unity that Messiah followers are to reach for is the kind of unity that the Father and Son—as God—have.* This presents us as limited mortals with an almost impossible goal to achieve, but a grand, magnanimous unity of this kind should not be left outside of our view.⁴

Within the Two-House sub-movement, it has become significantly commonplace for non-Jewish Believers to consider themselves “former Gentiles,” based on one reading of Paul’s statement “remember that formerly you, the Gentiles...” (Ephesians 2:11). Along with this, it is said that the word **Gentile** most always means **pagan**, and some verses can be quoted as support for this. 1 Corinthians 5:1, for example, where Paul is horrified upon hearing about “immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles,” more specifically means “there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans” (RSV). When various people speak about non-Jewish Believers with the term “Gentiles,” there can be easily detected a wide amount of resentment and offense. Populist Two-House teachers have stirred their audiences to the point of not only resisting any kind of usage of the word “Gentile,” but they frequently direct them to insist on being referred to as some sort of “Israelite(s).”

⁴ For some useful thoughts, consult the article “Unity, Despite Diversity in the Body of Messiah” by Mark Huey, appearing in the December 2010 issue of Outreach Israel News.

Israel in Future Prophecy

Along with this, given their high emphasis on restoration of Israel prophecies that speak of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, one can often fail to detect the inclusion of any Gentiles—those outside of the bloodlines of physical Israel—in such a restoration process. This presents some serious theological problems, including the warranted accusation that *their message* withholds God’s salvation from the vast, vast majority of human beings, created by Him, who live on Planet Earth.

Among many of the advocates and adherents of the Two-House teaching, have certainly been found many overstatements made about the English word “Gentile” meaning “pagan.” Some people have taken offense a little too readily. But at the same time, it would be disingenuous to think that terms such as “Gentile,” the Hebrew noun “*goy*,” or adjectives such as the Yiddish “*goyische*,” as have been used in much of the Jewish community—have been in an entirely neutral sense, without any context of disparagement. Along these same lines, it should also be observed that there have been Messianic Jewish individuals, at least, who have used the term “Gentile” or “*goyim*” to refer to non-Jewish people as something *other than* not being Jewish. Some have used the English term Gentile as a means of disparagement, or even a derogative slur.

The issue regarding the term “Gentile” cannot be separated from a much bigger issue that has been present in a great deal of Christian theology, and to a lesser extent Jewish theology, over the past two decades: **the inclusive language debate**. Given the changing contours of modern English speech, be it in Great Britain, North America, Australia and New Zealand, or elsewhere—is it appropriate to *exclusively* use terms like man, men, mankind, and brothers where the community of God is concerned? Inclusive language advocates, even those of a more mild variety, would argue that terms such as human being(s), humanity, humankind, brothers and sisters (or perhaps the more generic, although older term brethren), and people—are far better and clearer to now use. Taking some cues from this, would it be advisable that today’s Messianics employ some acceptable substitutes for the term Gentile(s), such as nation(s) or people(s)? Implementing some very easy alternatives, which are already known to Bible readers, might deflate an unnecessarily big balloon.

The “Gentiles” and the Two-House Controversy

Many in the Messianic community, including a great number of individual Messianic Jews I know, have no difficulty seeing Jewish and non-Jewish Believers work together as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel, an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel, *as the people of God*. This is an inclusive body, where Jewish people are no doubt to be honored for sure (Romans 3:2; 9:4), but where others’ place is not at all dishonored. It is not a single, homogeneous group of people—but rather a people made up of peoples (cf. Revelation 21:3, Grk.).

It is when the controversies of the Two-House issue of Judah and Ephraim comes up—that these open-minded people can often become close-minded, regarding the Biblical passages and prophecies. In my interactions over the years,

What About “the Gentiles”?

the way they have often heard about the subject matter of a larger restoration of Israel, is that it is quite exclusive. They see it as such because what is popularly taught, emphasized, repeated, and even sung about at its popular conference events and gatherings, is that *Judah and Ephraim* are coming together as one in the Messiah. What they have been taught, guided by, repeated to others, and even sung about is that *Jew and Gentile* are to be one in Messiah. So naturally, the following can be issued:

What about the Gentiles? What do you do about Gentiles in this so-called coming together of the Two Houses of Israel? If there is no place for the Gentiles then you are preaching falsehoods.

The Two-House teaching, which one will most probably encounter advocated from its literature and various pseudo-denominations, does focus on Judah and Ephraim being one. Biblically, this issue is a matter to be largely reserved to eschatology or future end-time prophecy (i.e., Isaiah 11:12-16; Jeremiah 31:6-10; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Zechariah 10:6-10), with many of the specific details only known by our Eternal God Himself. As such, there are various unknown details regarding the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom and their prophesied return to the Holy Land. But even so, is affirming that there is a futuristic, larger restoration of Israel to occur on the horizon, something that excludes true “Gentiles” from membership within the Kingdom of God—meaning those from the nations of Planet Earth at large, *without* any physical descent from the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

The premise, that all Believers in Messiah Yeshua are somehow a part of the community of Israel, with non-Jewish Believers being grafted into the olive tree (Romans 11:17-18), is not really what is controversial for some.⁵ Rather, for those who tend to hear about a larger restoration of Israel, involving Judah and Ephraim coming together (from populist Two-House literature), the issue concerns who a third group of people is: **the Gentiles**. Are they, too, involved in this reunification process? Or are they really to be excluded from it, meaning that God is only interested in saving physical Jews and (lost) physical descendants from the exiled Northern Kingdom? Because of what various outspoken voices have chosen to emphasize, many perceive the Two-House teaching as pushing a significant form of racially-based salvation. (And, based on some of the sentiments expressed by the recognized “leaders” of the Two-House sub-movement, it might very well be.) All I can tell you is that if I honestly believed that this was the only perspective to be offered regarding this whole subject matter, **I myself would be the first person to rally against the issue of Judah and Ephraim yet to be reunited in prophetic history**. Being an egalitarian, after all, I believe not only that “Jew or Greek” are equals in Messiah—but also “male and female” are complete equals (Galatians

⁵ Be sure to consult the author’s analysis of Romans 11:16-14, 25-29 in his publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

Israel in Future Prophecy

3:28).⁶ This is hardly a position that one can hold to if any group of people are to be *left out* of God's Kingdom and Yeshua's salvation, or be excluded from a place of service or leadership, because of biological factors!⁷

Anyone who would affirm a larger restoration of Israel prophesied for the future, involving Judah and Israel/Ephraim, must properly answer the question: **"What about the Gentiles?"** Are those of the nations of Planet Earth, obviously human beings who God made in His image (Genesis 1:27) and who He loves dearly as His special creations, quantitatively *excluded* as participants from Israel's restoration?

In this examination, it is my intention to recognize a variety of ways that the Hebrew terms *goy/goyim* and the Greek term *ethnos* are witnessed in Scripture, and how they can refer to both Israel and the nations at large. I will be considering various opinions of what it means to be a "Gentile," specifically as it is sometimes seen in Jewish theology and commentary. Does it mean "pagan"? I will even show some specific examples of how in some English Bibles, the proper term "Greek" has been inappropriately rendered as "Gentile." We will also evaluate some of the main promises given to the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob regarding their progeny, and how we can fairly sort through over-statements made regarding their multiplication by Two-House advocates. Most importantly, though, we will clarify how prophecies regarding a larger restoration of Israel *do not exclusively* concern physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but that many companions from the nations themselves are very much involved, welcome, and are the significant majority of participants in it.

Goy and Ethnos: "Gentile" or "Nation"?

In order to properly consider the issue surrounding the English term "Gentile," every Bible reader needs to know the underlying Hebrew and Greek terms appearing in the source text, which are commonly rendered as such. We need to have appropriate definitions of the Hebrew word *goy* (גוי) and Greek word *ethnos* (ἔθνος), and have a good idea of how they were used in their original contexts.

The common Hebrew word that one will encounter, sometimes rendered as "Gentile" in older versions like the KJV, is the term *goy* (גוי). Its plural form, and possibly more common usage that you will encounter is *goyim* (גוים). The HALOT lexicon indicates that it relates to **"people...whole population of a territory; גוֹי [am]** rather stresses the blood relationship," **"nation,"** "often the **pagan** peoples as

⁶ For a further discussion, consult the author's exegetical paper on Galatians 3:28, "Biblical Equality and Today's Messianic Movement."

⁷ The term "egalitarian" is simply derived from the French *égal*, meaning "equal." The position of being egalitarian is commonly associated with those who believe in the ordination of female clergy, as either pastors or rabbis, and with those who deny the concept of so-called "male headship," believing that husbands and wives *together* lead the home.

Consult the FAQs, "Women in Ministry" and "Male Headship," as well as the relevant sections of the author's commentaries *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic* and *The Pastoral Epistles for the Practical Messianic*.

opposed to Israel...the ‘heathen,’” “people=persons.”⁸ The *BDB* lexicon states how *goy* means “nation, people,” “spec. of descendants of Abraham,” “definitely of Israel.”⁹

Witnessed in the Hebrew Tanach, *goy/goyim* has a wide array of uses. In its most neutral sense, *goy/goyim* means nation/nations. This can relate to the masses of Planet Earth, those outside of the bloodlines of Israel, the enemies of Israel, sheer pagans and idolaters, and it can even relate to the people of Israel itself. Regarding the progeny of Abraham, the Patriarch was told by God, “I will make you a great nation [*goy gadol*, גוי גדול], and I will bless you, and make your name great” (Genesis 12:2). The assembly of the Ancient Israelites gathered at Mount Sinai was told by the Lord, “you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation [*goy qadosh*, גוי קדוש]” (Exodus 19:6). The term *goyim* can even relate to the tribes of Israel, as Ezekiel 2:3 states, “I send you to the Children of Israel, to the rebellious nations [*el-goyim*, אֱלֹהֵי-גוֹיִם] that have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have defiantly sinned against Me; they and their fathers have defiantly sinned against Me to this very day” (ATS). Context in a Tanach passage where *goy/goyim* appears, ultimately determines the different contours of what is intended by its usage.

The Greek equivalent term for the Hebrew *goy* (גוי) is *ethnos* (ἔθνος), and is used fairly consistently in the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Tanach to render *goy/goyim*. The *BDAG* lexicon indicates how “(τὰ) ἔθνη [(*ta ethnē* are) **people groups foreign to a specific people group**” which “corresp. to Heb. גוֹיִם [*goyim*] in LXX; a nationalistic expression.”¹⁰ Being concerned with both Biblical and classical usages of *ethnos*, the *LS* lexicon offers us with a variety of definitions, including: “a number of people accustomed to live together, a company, body of men,” “a nation, people,” “the nations, Gentiles, i.e. all but Jews and Christians.”¹¹ *TDNT* further observes that *ethnos* can mean “‘mass,’ ‘multitude,’ ‘host,’ and may be used for a ‘herd’ or ‘swarm’ as well as a human group.”¹²

Unlike how the Hebrew *goy/goyim* is most always rendered in modern versions by the neutral nation/nations, usages of *ethnos* may considerably vary. Among modern versions *ethnos* will be translated as **both** “Gentile(s)” and “nation(s).” And it should not go unnoticed that in the LXX, when Ancient Israel was originally called in the Hebrew to be a *goy qadosh* (גוי קדוש) in Exodus 19:6, in the Greek it reads with *ethnos hagion* (ἔθνος ἅγιον). Just like with *goy/goyim*, context in a New Testament passage will determine what is intended by *ethnos*. Yet unlike *goy/goyim*, which modern versions tend to leave as nation/nations, we have the added complexity of seeing *ethnos* rendered in at least two different ways. This can,

⁸ *HALOT*, 1:183.

⁹ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 156.

¹⁰ *BDAG*, 276.

¹¹ *LS*, 226.

¹² K.L. Schmidt, “*ethnos*,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abrid. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 201.

Israel in Future Prophecy

with some important passages, likely make reviewing their intended meaning(s) a bit more complicated.

Various general theological resources, in their entry for “Gentiles,” have noted some of the translation issues for *goy/goyim* and *ethnos*, that each of us needs to be conscious of when reading an English translation, and considering the source vocabulary:

- *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*: “The Hebrew *gôyim* [גוֹיִם] designates non-Jewish peoples, rendered by the AV as ‘nations’ or ‘heathen,’ by the RV frequently as ‘Gentiles.’ The ‘people,’ *‘am* [עַם], is usually confined to Israel. The LXX makes a similar distinction between *ethnos* [ἔθνος] and *laos* [λαός]...”¹³
- *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: “The Heb. *gôy* [גוֹי] is rendered ‘Gentiles’ in the AV in some thirty passages, but much more frequently ‘heathen,’ and still more often ‘nation,’ which is the usual rendering in later versions; but it is commonly used for a non-Israelite people, and thus corresponds to the meaning of ‘Gentiles.’...In the NT Gk. *ethnos* [ἔθνος] is the word corresponding to *gôy* [גוֹי] (usually rendered ‘Gentiles’ by the English versions)...The AV also renders Gk. *Hellēnes* [Ἕλληνες] ‘Gentiles’ in six passages, but the RSV renders ‘Greeks’ throughout.”¹⁴

A notable definition of the Greek *ethnos* (ἔθνος) that need not overlook us, in evaluating this term, is provided by *BDAG*: “those who do not belong to groups professing faith in the God of Israel, *the nations, gentiles, unbelievers* (in effect=‘polytheists’).”¹⁵ This is a lexical definition where substantiation for viewing the nations/Gentiles in the Greek Apostolic Scriptures as “pagans,” would find some support. And indeed, in places like 1 Corinthians 5:1; 10:20, where a version like the NASU has “Gentiles,” the RSV and NIV have “pagans”:

“It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even **among the Gentiles** [*en tois ethnesin, ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν*], that someone has his father’s wife...*No*, but *I say* that the things **which the Gentiles sacrifice** [*hoti ha thuousin, ὅτι ἃ θύουσιν*; lit. ‘that what they sacrifice,’ HCSB]¹⁶, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons” (1 Corinthians 5:1; 10:20, NASU).

¹³ Richard E. Higginson, “Gentiles,” in Everett F. Harrison, ed., *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 235.

¹⁴ A. van Selms, “Gentile,” in *ISBE*, 2:443.

¹⁵ *BDAG*, 276.

¹⁶ Most modern Bibles (RSV, NASU, NRSV, ESV, CJB) follow the textual variant *ha thousin ta ethnē* (ἃ θύουσιν τὰ ἔθνη), which as Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 560 points out, is “considered to be an ancient gloss” in the event that anybody errantly thinks that the sacrifices of the Jerusalem Temple are somehow being referred to (1 Corinthians 10:18).

What About “the Gentiles”?

“It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even **among pagans**; for a man is living with his father’s wife...No, I imply that **what pagans sacrifice** they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons” (1 Corinthians 5:1; 10:20, RSV).

“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even **among pagans**: A man has his father’s wife... No, but **the sacrifices of pagans** are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons” (1 Corinthians 5:1; 10:20, NIV).¹⁷

One can easily see why versions like the RSV and NIV would choose to render *ethnos* as “pagan(s)” in the verses above (other verses that could be considered include 1 Thessalonians 4:5; 1 Peter 4:3). Yet at the same time, one can see a figure like the Apostle Paul say things in terms of “I am speaking to you who are Gentiles” (Romans 11:13), “the Gentiles in the flesh” (Ephesians 2:11), “I, Paul, [am] the prisoner of Messiah Yeshua for the sake of you Gentiles” (Ephesians 3:1)—all verses that employ the Greek *ethnos*. However, Paul would also instruct non-Jewish Believers, “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk [CJB: do not live any longer as the pagans live], in the futility of their mind” (Ephesians 4:17).

The issue regarding the Greek *ethnos* (ἔθνος), ultimately to be realized, is that while varied English translations can be found rendering it as “Gentile(s),” “nation(s),” or even “pagan(s)” —when the various Apostolic letters and documents were composed, they all used a single term. Readers and speakers in the First Century Mediterranean world could figure out, either because of how *ethnos* rendered *goy/goyim* in the Septuagint translation of the Tanach, or how it was used in the marketplace and on the street—what was really intended. In the English-speaking world, with our diverse vocabulary, we have to read the Apostolic Writings with some care. For some reason or another, many English Bibles have chosen to render *ethnos* as **both** “Gentile(s)” and “nation(s),” making somewhat of a value judgment for their readers. (Two notable exceptions to this, where *ethnos* is consistently rendered by the rather neutral nation/nations, are Young’s Literal Translation and the Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Jay P. Green.)

But where did we get the term “Gentile” from, if *ethnos* best means “nation”? The *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* informs us:

Gentile (From Lat. *gentilis*, “member of a people”) Term used by Jews for one who is not Jewish by racial origin. In the Old Testament, “the nations” (Heb. *goyim*) is used.¹⁸

¹⁷ The Complete Jewish Bible, follows suit with the RSV and NIV quoted here, using “pagans.”

¹ 1 Corinthians 12:2 in the NASU, interestingly enough, says “You know that when you were pagans [*ethnē, ἔθνη*], you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led.”

¹⁸ McKim, 113.

Israel in Future Prophecy

The English term “Gentile” is actually derived from the Latin word *gentilis*, meaning “family, hereditary; national,”¹⁹ being related to *gens* or “clan; tribe; family; race; nation.”²⁰ One will find the term *gentilis* and its cognates employed in the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible, and it is unavoidable for English at least, how this Latin term has influenced the history of English Bible translation. (And to perhaps make things even more complicated, one will also encounter the Latin term *nationis*, “tribe, race; breed class”²¹ in the Vulgate, from which our English “nation” is derived as well.) What this means is that with two terms available for rendering the Hebrew *goy/goyim* and the Greek *ethnos*, there might not be as much consistency witnessed in an English Bible—that may actually be quite necessary where Tanach intertextuality is concerned. One example to be considered would be the quotation of Isaiah 9:1 in Matthew 4:15:

“But there will be no gloom for her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, **Galilee of the nations** [*Galil ha’goyim*; גַּלִּיל הַגּוֹיִם; Galilee of the Gentiles, NASU]²²” (Isaiah 9:1, RSV).

“[T]HE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI, BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, **GALILEE OF THE GENTILES** [*Galilaia tōn ethnōn*, Γαλιλαία τῶν ἔθνων]” (Matthew 4:15, NASU).

The best, most neutral rendering seen for both *Galil ha’goyim* and *Galilaia tōn ethnōn*, the latter clause witnessed in both the LXX of Isaiah 9:1 and Matthew 4:15, is “**Galilee of the nations**” (Isaiah 9:1, NETS). What is witnessed in the Vulgate for both Isaiah 9:1 and Matthew 4:15, however, is *Galilee gentium*. While this is not a problem if one were a Roman, Latin-speaking Christian in the early centuries of the faith, it does interject a dynamic for modern English speakers which we need to be aware of—a likely testament to English having mixed Latin and Germanic origins.

And perhaps interestingly enough, with this in mind, the closest, most wide-spoken relative to modern English, actually appears to lack the term “Gentile” in its vocabulary. If one turns to the rather massive *Langenscheidts New College German Dictionary*, the words offered for the English “Gentile” include the noun *Nichtjude* and the adjective *nichtjüdisch*,²³ which are pretty easily discernible to mean *non-Jew* and *non/not-Jewish*. How did a German Bible like the 1993 Elberfelder Bibel render *Galil ha’goyim* and *Galilaia tōn ethnōn*? In Isaiah 9:1 we encounter “den Kreis²⁴ der Nationen,” and in Matthew 4:15, “Galiläa der Nationen.” One can also

¹⁹ *HarperCollins Latin Concise Dictionary* (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1997), 94.

²⁰ *Pocket Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 60.

²¹ *HarperCollins Latin Concise Dictionary*, 138.

²² “the region of the nations” (ATS).

²³ *Langenscheidts New College German Dictionary, German-English* (Berlin and Munich: Langenscheidt KG, 1995), 275.

²⁴ The term *Kreis* should be understood here as “adm. district” (Ibid., 372), which is certainly allowable as the Hebrew *galil* (גַּלִּיל) can mean “cylinder, rod, circuit, district” (BDB, 165).

do some quick surveying of this German Bible, and will find that where various English Bibles have “Gentile(s),” the term **Nation** [na'tsio:n]²⁵ is used instead. So among many examples to be considered, when the Jerusalem Believers conclude, “God has granted **to the Gentiles** [tois *ethnesin*, τοῖς ἔθνεσιν] also the repentance *that leads to life*” (Acts 11:18), the Elberfelder Bibel has, “Dann hat Gott also **auch den Nationen** die Buße gegeben zum Leben.”

It is at this point where we reach an impasse. What is the best approach to the Hebrew *goy/goyim* and Greek *ethnos*? Is it really Gentile/Gentiles—*or* is it nation/nations? Much of this is undeniably a perspective issue, and how in their most neutral context both of these words mean nation/nations. Seriously consider, what the Apostle Paul communicates to his dear friend Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:17, reflecting back on his life of ministry service to the Lord:

“But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that **all the Gentiles** might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth.”

That Paul had a unique calling to the world at large is easily understood (cf. Acts 9:15; Romans 11:13). But is “all the Gentiles” the best rendering for *panta ta ethnē* (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη)? In the view of some Pastoral Epistles commentators “**all the nations**” is what is to be missionally understood here, which does *not only* include the world at large. The view of William D. Mounce, who is most well known for authoring various collegiate level Greek textbooks, is that when *ethnē* is rendered as “nations” here, then “the phrase ‘all the nations/Gentiles’ can mean ‘all groups of people,’ Jew and Gentile alike.”²⁶ From this viewpoint then, *panta ta ethnē* is akin “to those who had never heard” (The Message) the gospel message. We need to remember that even though Paul had a definite calling and skillset as a Jewish Believer that would help to bring the nations into the Commonwealth of Israel (cf. Ephesians 2:11-12), Paul never stopped believing that his own Jewish people needed salvation nor did he ever stop declaring Yeshua to them (cf. Romans 11:13-14). It would seem appropriate for us to view *panta ta ethnē* in 2 Timothy 4:17 as meaning *everyone* who needed to hear, **all nations** upon Planet Earth *including* Paul's own Jewish people. Philip H. Towner appropriately summarizes,

“[T]he phrase ‘all the Gentiles/nations,’ which certainly need not exclude the Jewish people, is a theologically loaded term in Pauline thought (Rom 15:11; 16:26; Gal 3:28). It sums up the universal scope of the salvation plan of God, from the Abrahamic promise and institution of the covenant to its full unveiling in the Psalms and prophets, from which Paul clearly took his cue (Romans 9-11; 15:9-13; Gal 1:15-16).”²⁷

²⁵ Langenscheidts *New College German Dictionary*, 441.

²⁶ William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*, Vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 597.

In *Ibid.* his further conclusion is, “By proclaiming the gospel to all the authorities in Rome, Paul has now preached to all groups and all types of Gentiles and therefore has fulfilled his ministry.”

²⁷ Philip H. Towner, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 643.

Israel in Future Prophecy

The blessing of Abraham and the sacrifice of Yeshua, remitting the curse of the Law, are for “all nations” (Galatians 3:8, 14), which necessarily includes the Jewish people as well as the world at large.

Surely with what we witness in Yeshua’s Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, the common rendering of “nations” is understood to convey a significant, worldwide effect:

“And Yeshua came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of **all the nations** [*panta ta ethnē*, πάντα τὰ ἔθνη], baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

We may never be able to know why more English Bibles than not have chosen to render the Greek *ethnos* as both “Gentile(s)” and “nation(s),” and not just “nation(s).” But what we can know is that rendering this single Greek term, in two different ways, has created some confusion—if not some significant confusion in some quarters. **The most significant confusion caused by the term “Gentile” is that it can underplay the universal availability of God’s salvation for all of humankind.** In Isaiah 49:6, Yeshua the Messiah has come not only to restore the tribes of Israel, but also to be the *or goyim* (אֹר גּוֹיִם) or *phōs ethnōn* (φῶς ἐθνῶν), “a light of the nations.” For consistency’s sake, English Bible readers need to train their minds to recognize that “Gentile(s)” *really means* “nation(s)” —and today’s Messianic teachers and leaders need to be a little more sensitive to this fact as well.

“Gentile” Can be an Offensive Term for Some

While among many Christians today, and in many theological works, the term “Gentile” is simply employed as a term to refer to a person who is not Jewish, meaning “one of the nations,” it is obvious in Scripture that the Greek *ethnos* can be used in various pejorative contexts. Yeshua’s direction regarding the reproof of someone who sins, includes the admonition, “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the [assembly]; and if he refuses to listen even to the [assembly], let him be to you **as a Gentile** and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:17). The clause *ho ethnikos kai ho telōnēs* (ὁ ἐθνικός καὶ ὁ τελώνης), is rendered into the 1991 UBSHNT as *k’goy v’k’mokeis* (כְּגוֹי וְכַמּוֹכֵי). That both *ethnos* and *goy* can mean “a pagan” (CJB) here, does not go unnoticed.²⁸

Of course, as we have tried to emphasize above, there are not only many neutral usages of the terms *goy/goyim* and *ethnos* witnessed in the Bible, but these same terms are used to describe Israel. Context and usage alone, in the various verses on a case-by-case basis, determines what is to be intended. But to act like the terms *goy/goyim* and *ethnos* can never be viewed from the perspective of “pagan,” and that this does not in any way carry over into the English term “Gentile,” would be dishonest. *ISBE*, for example, indicates how “The general tendency...was one of

²⁸ Matthew 6:32 could also be considered: “For the Gentiles [*ta ethnē*, τὰ ἔθνη] eagerly seek all these things...” This is also rendered with “pagans” (NIV/CJB) and “idolaters” (HCSB) elsewhere.

increasing hostility toward the Gentiles. They and their countries were considered unclean.”²⁹ *EJ* further notes how from a Jewish perspective in much of the Bible, “the low moral, social, and ethical standards of the surrounding gentiles were continuously emphasized, and social contact with them was regarded as being a pernicious social and moral influence. As a result, during this period the world was regarded as divided, insofar as peoples were concerned, into the Jewish people and the ‘nations of the world,’ and insofar as individuals were concerned, into ‘the Jew’ and the idolater.”³⁰

Whether *goy/goyim* or *ethnos* carry with it the intention of “...of the nations” or “pagan” in the Bible, can only be determined in the places where it is used. And, we should think that “nation(s)” is a far better, uniform rendering for these terms, leaving its exact meaning up to the reader to decide. It is, however, to be noted that in Rabbinical literature, one will encounter the Hebrew term *goy* (גוי) used to mean “gentile, idolator” (*Jastrow*).³¹ An example provided by *Jastrow* to be considered is *t.Avodah Zarah* 3:4:

“A gentile woman should not be called upon to cut out the foetus in the womb of an Israelite girl. And she should not give her a cup of bitters to drink, for they are suspect as to the taking of life. And an Israelite should not be alone with a gentile either in a bathhouse or in a urinal. [When] an Israelite goes along with a gentile, he puts him at his right hand, and he does not put him at his left hand. R. Ishmael son of R. Yoḥanan b. Beroqah says, ‘[He goes along] with a sword in his right hand, with a staff in his left hand.’ [If] there are two going up on an ascent or going down on a ramp, the Israelite goes up ahead, and the gentile behind.”³²

Some of the viewpoints here are obviously historically conditioned, and are the result of a longstanding distrust on the part of the Jewish community toward outsiders. But, the point is taken that the *goyim* (גוים) are to be kept at a distance.

More present in Judaism today is the line of an ancient prayer, which is customarily recited as a part of the morning *Shacharit* blessings, when the observant declare, “Blessed are You, HASHEM, our God, King of the universe, for not having made me a gentile,” *asani goy* (אֲשַׁנִּי גוֹי).³³ When non-Jewish Believers in today’s Messianic movement get wind of some individual Messianic Jews in the congregation they are attending (but surely not all), possibly saying this sort of thing before God every morning³⁴—and perhaps including some of their main

²⁹ A. van Selms, “Gentile,” in *ISBE*, 2:444.

³⁰ Editorial Staff, “Gentile,” in *EJ*.

³¹ Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Treasury, 2004), 220.

³² Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew With a New Introduction*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 2:1269.

³³ Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, eds., *Complete ArtScroll Siddur, Nusach Ashkenaz* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1984), pp 18-19.

³⁴ In complete fairness, it must be stressed that another edition of this same prayer, does not use the Hebrew term *goy*. This is seen in Joseph H. Hertz, ed., *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book*, revised (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1960), 18:

“Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast not made me a heathen [*asani nakri*, אֲשַׁנִּי נֶכְרִי].”

Israel in Future Prophecy

leaders from time to time—they do get a little upset. *Some of them even get livid.* The Conservative Jewish *Siddur Sim Shalom* has thankfully changed much of this, only including the declaration “Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe, making me a Jew” (although the Hebrew is actually *Yisrael*, יִשְׂרָאֵל) and “making me free.”³⁵ For reciting traditional prayers from the Jewish community, I do think that many of us can certainly understand the value of what *Sim Shalom* offers, and that we can appreciate how it has removed the rather negative remarks about not being made a Gentile. Thanking God for being a Jew or an Israelite is one thing (that I personally do not have a problem with); thanking God for not being Nationality XYZ is something else.

So what does the non-Jewish person in a Messianic Jewish congregation, who finds out about the ancient prayer of “for not having made me a gentile”—and who is understandably a bit offended—then do about it? The first thing, that tends to happen, is that when the term “Gentile” tends to be spoken in various teachings or announcements or just common speech, the individual feels that he or she is likely being called some kind of a “pagan,” “heathen,” “idolater,” or something worse. Secondly, if various Messianic Jews have not been careful with how they have employed the term “Gentile,” at least also incorporating valid alternatives like “nations” or “peoples,” then some significant resentment can build up (rather quickly). Thirdly, and what can frequently happen, is that the non-Jewish Messianic who has taken considerable offense at being called a “Gentile,” will build a kind of personal credo around Ephesians 2:11, where the Apostle Paul says:

“Therefore remember **that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh**, who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’ *which is performed in the flesh by human hands—*”

It is from a verse like this where many non-Jewish Messianic Believers will claim that they are *former Gentiles*. It is absolutely true that for any non-Believer to come to saving faith in Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ), that he or she is no longer a kind of pagan, heathen, idolater, insolent rebel, or even atheist against the Creator. Yet Paul’s words to those in Asia Minor are specific in that he speaks of those here as *ta ethnē en sarki* (τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί), “the nations in the flesh” (YLT) or “you who are Gentiles by birth” (NIV). When people come to faith in Yeshua, even though they may be saved and spiritually regenerated, their DNA does not change. He identifies these people as being of the nations, in the flesh. The former status that Paul is obviously more concerned about, **and so should any of us for that matter**, is detailed in Ephesians 2:11-12 together:

“Therefore remember that formerly...you were at that time separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

The Hebrew *nakri* (נָכְרִי) largely means, “foreign, alien” (BDB, 648).

³⁵ Jules Harlow, ed., *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2007), 65.

A status of being removed from Israel’s Messiah, Israel’s polity, Israel’s covenants, and being without the hope and knowledge of the Creator God—is what is really considered to be the former status for the non-Jewish Believers addressed in Ephesians. This is one which has been fully reversed. The non-Jewish Believers in Asia Minor now know Israel’s Messiah, they are a part of Israel’s polity, they now benefit from Israel’s covenants, and they are truly known by the Creator God.³⁶

The term “Gentile,” *goy* (גוי), need not always have a negative meaning, but in various places in Jewish theology and commentary it will. The *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* observes how *goyim* is the “generic Israelite expression for all of humanity except Israel. Most often this common biblical expression has a pejorative connotation that parallels the Greek use of ‘barbarians.’ By virtue of its covenantal relationship to YHWH and its observance of the Torah, Israel is contrasted with the rest of humanity, which stands outside the scope of God’s covenantal love.”³⁷ This same entry is actually pretty even-handed, though, in further commenting, “While Gentiles are often pictured as sexually uninhibited and untrustworthy, they are also described as righteous and the progenitors of rabbis and even kings of Israel.”³⁸

But what meaning of *goyim* are we more likely to find for non-Jewish people, used in today’s Judaism and even some of Messianic Judaism? Does it mean “pagan” or just a “non-Jew”?

When non-Jewish Believers in today’s Messianic world know some of the theological background behind the term “Gentile,” it often does not make them very happy when it is used to define them. Knowing that the term *goyim* can frequently mean “pagan,” in many respects, can be offensive to more than a few. What is to be done about this?

When non-believing members of the Jewish community today, refer to those outside the Synagogue as “Gentiles” or “*goyim*,” is it in the most positive of ways? When my mother grew up in Annapolis, Maryland with its sizeable Jewish population, she certainly witnessed the terms “*goy*” and “Gentile” used in some rather negative ways by her friends’ parents. When she has been in some Messianic Jewish congregations, and heard the congregational leader or speaker refer to the non-Jews in the audience as “*goyim*,” she has had difficulty separating it from her youth experience among her Jewish friends.

Non-Jewish Believers being referred to as “Gentiles” in the Messianic Jewish movement, or even some sectors of the independent Messianic world, can at some times be suspect. I do know for certain that many Messianic Jews do not intend any offense when they use the term “Gentile,” and I also know that they want all people to be welcome in their assemblies. The easiest way to deflate some of this potential unwelcomeness is to simply employ a number of valid alternatives like

³⁶ For a further discussion, consult the author’s commentary *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic*.

³⁷ “Gentiles,” in *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*, pp 247-248.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 248.

Israel in Future Prophecy

“nations” or “peoples.” The neutral term “non-Jew” would also be appropriate to use.

The Promises That Were Made, Many Nations, and the Exile of the Northern Kingdom

Jewish Believers in Yeshua do not wonder about their personal pedigree or bloodline. Being born into a Jewish family, and being a part of the Jewish community (although many Messianic Jews are unfortunately ex-communicated and/or spurned from their families and communities for their faith in Yeshua), a Jewish Believer knows that his or her ancestors *definitely* stood at the base of Mount Sinai when Moses was given the Ten Commandments. Many Non-Jewish Believers who enter into the Messianic movement, and who are welcomed with open arms and acceptance by their fellow Jewish Believers into the Commonwealth of Israel, putting a complicated past of Christian anti-Semitism *in the past*, and integrated into various congregations and assemblies—do frequently have that nagging thought. Some days, they *wonder* if whether or not the reason God led them into a Messianic congregation and a Torah obedient lifestyle, was because they had lost Jewish ancestry from hundreds of years ago, and did not even know it. When discussions about the exiled and widely forgotten Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim comes up, it naturally piques the interest of many. *Why am I here?*

It is necessary that we review some of the basic promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob regarding their physical seed, as the issue of who comprises their offspring has undoubtedly arisen, given the controversy of the Two-House teaching. All Bible readers should agree that their descendants were intended to be used by the Lord to bless all people and all nations in the world, so that **all human beings might hopefully come to a knowledge of Him as the One True God and be eternally redeemed.** When God originally told Abraham, “And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2), this is what the Apostle Paul would later testify as, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, ‘ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU’” (Galatians 3:8), as the good news of salvation and redemption in Messiah Yeshua found its beginnings in this Abrahamic promise. To fail to recognize the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as giving rise to *the Ultimate Seed*, Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ),³⁹ will result in one not fully understanding how God had to choose the descendants of these people as His agents and representatives, so that *all peoples* might hopefully be reconciled to their Loving, yet All-Powerful and Magnificent Creator.

No one should ever be led into the simplistic thinking that every human being on Planet Earth is descended from the Patriarchs of Israel, or even just Abraham. Yet, all Bible readers can agree on the fact that it is very true that

³⁹ Cf. Galatians 3:16.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were promised many descendants. And to this, it might also be said that there are a few unanswered questions and details to be reviewed concerning those descendants.

Abraham

Regarding Abram, God “took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be’” (Genesis 15:5). We are especially told how Abram “believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Whatever this promise would mean for the future, Abram had the trust in his Creator that He would bring it to pass. Further on, when we see *Avram* (אַבְרָם) having his name changed to *Avraham* (אַבְרָהָם), meaning “father of a multitude,”⁴⁰ it is intended to be an affirmation of His promises to him:

“Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, ‘As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a **multitude of nations**. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a **multitude of nations**. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make **nations of you**, and kings will come forth from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you’” (Genesis 17:3-7).

A key part of the Abrahamic Covenant is that nations will come forth from the Patriarch: *hamon goyim* (הַמִּנְיֹן גֹּיִם; Genesis 17:4, 5), *u’nettati’kha l’goyim* (וַנְתַּתִּיךָ לְגֹיִם; Genesis 17:6)—“many nations” (NIV) and “turn you into nations” (Alter). As it regards the term *hamon* (הַמִּנְיֹן), employed here, while the word can mean “agitation,” “turmoil,” or “noise, roar, din,” it would be best that we simply take it to mean “**multitude, crowd**” (HALOT).⁴¹ The Septuagint translated *hamon goyim* into Greek as *plēthous ethnōn* (πλήθους ἐθνῶν). The term *plēthos* (πλήθος) similarly means “a great number, a throng, crowd, multitude” (LS).⁴² The point to be taken from Genesis 17:3-7 is that a large group of people will come from Abraham, and come to be associated with him. A Jewish commentator like J.H. Hertz states in his *Pentateuch & Haftorahs* that such “a multitude of nations” would be mainly “The Israelites; the Arabs, descended from Ishmael; and the tribes enumerated in [25:1ff].”⁴³

In Genesis 22:17-18, the Lord promises Abraham that He will multiply his descendants greatly:

⁴⁰ Cf. J. Barton Payne, “‘āb,” in TWOT, 1:5-6.

⁴¹ HALOT, 1:250.

As Baker and Carpenter, 267 further indicate of *hamon*, “In general usage, it also indicates wealth (Ps. 37:16) and a great supply or mass of things (1 Chr. 29:16; 2 Chr. 31:10; Jer. 49:32),” buttressing the concept of multitude in Genesis 17:4, 5.

⁴² LS, 646.

⁴³ Hertz, *Pentateuch & Haftorahs*, 58.

Israel in Future Prophecy

“[I]ndeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

The Hebrew term *zera* (זֶרַע) has a variety of meanings, including “sowing, seed, descendants, offspring, children, and posterity” (AMG).⁴⁴ Its equivalent in the Greek Septuagint and in the Greek Messianic Scriptures is *sperma* (σπέρμα).⁴⁵ It is natural to take the main words of Genesis 22:17-18 as speaking of physical people. But, while it is said *b'zar'akha* (בְּזַרְעֲךָ) or “by your offspring” (NRSV), *kol goyei ha'eretz* (כָּל גּוֹיֵי הָאֶרֶץ), “all the nations of the earth” will be blessed; it does not at all say that all the nations, people groups, or ethnicities on Planet Earth will be physically descended from or genetically related to Abraham. (Throughout history, the Jewish people and the Arabs, to be sure, have claimed actual physical lineage from Abraham.) It may, however, be certainly taken to mean that the physical progeny of Abraham—obviously climaxing with the arrival of Yeshua the Messiah onto the scene of human history—will impact the nations of the world at large in a very significant way.

Many readers and interpreters have associated the reference to “many nations” (Genesis 17:3-7) coming from Abraham, as meaning that the goodness of Abraham’s God, and the life example of Abraham, have touched them (Genesis 22:17-18)—even with them likely not being physical descendants of Abraham. In Galatians 3:29, for example, we read, “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (NIV), meaning that there is an attachment to Abraham for many people who are not his physical progeny. Many are to be regarded as Abraham’s *sperma*, even if they do not bear his DNA. Still, it cannot be avoided that there are many dimensions to what the seed of Abraham is in Galatians 3:29, because there were surely beneficiaries of the Abrahamic promise in the First Century C.E., Jewish Believers, who partook of the gospel message largely because of what was originally declared to their ancient ancestor, and they responded favorably to it.⁴⁶

Jacob

Moving forward in the Book of Genesis, in the second scene (cf. Genesis 32:24-32) where the Patriarch Jacob is renamed from *Ya'akov* (יַעֲקֹב) to Israel or *Yisrael* (יִשְׂרָאֵל), God gives him a confirmation of the Abrahamic promise that he would have multitudes of descendants:

“Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. God said to him, ‘Your name is Jacob; you shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name. Thus He called him Israel.’ God also said to

⁴⁴ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, eds., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 304.

⁴⁵ “seed, offspring, issue” (LS, 740).

⁴⁶ An appropriate summary of what the seed of Abraham involves is offered by David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1995), 549.

him, ‘I am God Almighty; **be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you**, and kings shall come forth from you. The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you” (Genesis 35:9-12).

The word issued by the Lord here to Jacob is *p’rei u’reveih goy u’qahal goyim yih’yeh m’mekha* (פָּרֵה וְרִבְיָה גוֹי וְקָהָל גּוֹיִם יִהְיֶה מִמְּכָה). The word *goy u’qahal goyim*, is rendered by ATS with “a nation and a congregation of nations,” the NIV has “a nation and a community of nations,” and YLT has “a nation and assembly of nations.” The LXX Greek rendering of this is actually *ethnē kai sunagōgai ethnōn* (ἔθνη καὶ συναγωγὰς ἐθνῶν), to be viewed as “nations and gatherings of nations” (Genesis 35:11, LXE/NETS). While the promise given to Abraham, who is widely regarded in the Judeo-Christian world as the progenitor of both the Arabs and the Jews, can be taken as a rather general word—here the promise that Jacob himself would give rise to *goyim* (גּוֹיִם) or “nations,” obviously has to be considered.

What is the word that from Jacob/Israel would arise an assembly of nations? A safe way to definitely take this would be that the *goyim* referred to are the Twelve Tribes of Israel that would arise, as *goyim* can be used (cf. Ezekiel 2:3). We can also, safely, take the word of Genesis 25:9-12 as an extension of the Abrahamic promise, and that it is the specific line of Jacob/Israel which will be responsible for blessing all in the world, as those from the nations find themselves associated in the same Kingdom community with His descendants. The most provocative suggestion, that could be made, would be that beyond the twelve sons of Jacob/Israel, who would give rise to the Twelve Tribes, and beyond the nations of Planet Earth being blessed by and associated with the community of Israel via Israel’s God—would be that nations in addition to the Twelve Tribes of Israel would arise from Jacob’s physical progeny.

Much needs to be tempered with how, “A nation and a company of nations shall come from you,” is paralleled with the word, “And kings shall come forth from you” (Genesis 35:11), which would obviously relate to the monarchs of Ancient Israel. Recognizing the original vantage point of Jacob, following the incident with his sons in Shechem (Genesis 34), and having relocated to Bethel (35:1-8)—it would have been most significant for the Creator God not only to reaffirm promises of descendants, but that kings would actually come from him. The Lord’s declarations of the promises of multiplicity, be they by physical bloodline or others being associated with those who could come from him, would have been most crucial—especially as his beloved Rachel was soon to die (Genesis 35:16-19), and Jacob/Israel was surely shaken by a series of tragic events. He could have been thinking that his family was about to fall apart.

The English of Genesis 35:11 can confuse some readers, as there are some who conclude that both “A nation and a company of nations ,” as well as “kings shall come forth from you,” all mean that these are the products of Jacob’s physical seed. In the statement *u’melakim m’chaltzey’kha yeitzei’u* (וּמַלְכִּים מִחַלְצֵי־כָּה יֵצְאוּ), “kings shall come forth from you,” the verb *yatza* (יָצָא), appearing in the Qal stem (simple

Israel in Future Prophecy

action, active voice), means “go or come out” (BDB).⁴⁷ “Sometimes *yāša’* is used with a special emphasis on source or origin” (TWOT),⁴⁸ which in the case of Israel’s kings, would necessarily mean that they are Jacob/Israel’s physical descendants, as opposed to some outsiders.

Contrary to this, in the preceding clause in Genesis 35:11, *p’rei u’reveih goy u’qahal goyim yih’yeh m’mekha*, one only sees the verb *hayah* (הָיָה), a standard Hebrew verb meaning “to be.” A nation and a company of nations coming from Jacob, meaning being associated with him, does not require that all those who would be associated with Israel must be born of Jacob/Israel’s physical line. *Yih’yeh m’mekha* (יִהְיֶה מִמֶּכָּה) was actually rendered by the Septuagint as *esontai ek sou* (ἔσονται ἐκ σοῦ), “shall be of thee” (LXE), which can relate to both physical descendants **and** those who would come to be associated with those physical descendants.

In Genesis 35:11, we see a combination of promises given to the Patriarch Jacob/Israel: “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body” (ESV).⁴⁹ Jacob/Israel would obviously multiply physically, but the nations of Planet Earth themselves are not quantitatively excluded from being incorporated into Israel’s Kingdom realm. At the same time, the kings of Israel would come directly from Jacob/Israel, with King Yeshua (Jesus) being such a chief descendant.

Ephraim and Manasseh

Promises of multiplicity are witnessed in some of the final words of Jacob, as he prepared to bless his family before dying. The expectation that some of their descendants would become prolific, is witnessed when Jacob blessed his two grandsons from Joseph, who was viceroy of Egypt, Manasseh and Ephraim, who he would adopt as his own:

“He blessed Joseph, and said, ‘The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and **may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.**’ When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim’s head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father’s hand to remove it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. Joseph said to his father, ‘Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head.’ But his father refused and said, ‘I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become **a multitude of nations**’” (Genesis 48:15-19).

⁴⁷ BDB, 442.

⁴⁸ Paul R. Gilchrist, “**נָסַף**,” in TWOT, 1:393.

⁴⁹ “a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins” (Jerusalem Bible-Koren); “a nation and an assembly of nations will come from you and kings will emerge from your loins” (Keter Crown Bible).

The first major word issued by Jacob, regards Manasseh and Ephraim’s multiplicity: *v’yidgu l’roov b’qerev ha’eretz* (וַיִּדְגּוּ לְרוֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ); Genesis 48:16). This is a very unique phrase, which various Two-House advocates have tended to draw readers’ attention toward. Here, regardless of what conclusions or opinions we have, we do have to remember that Ephraim would legitimately be a designation for the Northern Kingdom of Israel, as borne out in the Historical Books of the Tanach. It is unavoidable that the Hebrew can be rendered with, “may they like the fishes increase into a multitude in the midst of the earth” (LITV), or “may they proliferate abundantly like fish within the land” (ATS).

The Hebrew verb often rendered as “grow” is *dagah* (דָּגַח), meaning “multiply, increase” (TWOT),⁵⁰ and is related to the noun *dag* (דָּג) or “fish.” The perspective of the *ArtScroll Chumash* on Genesis 48:16 of these descendants is, “May be like fish, which are fruitful and multiply and which are not affected by the evil eye.”⁵¹ This itself is based on some commentary from the Talmud:

“He said to them, ‘I come from the seed of Joseph, over which the evil eye does not rule. For it is written, “Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine above the eye” (Gen. 49:22).’ And R. Abbahu said, ‘Do not read what is written, but rather, “superior to the evil eye.”’ R. Yosé b. R. Hanina said, ‘Proof comes from here: “And let them multiply like fishes in the midst of the earth” (Gen. 48:16). Just as the fish of the sea are covered by water so that the evil eye cannot get at them, so the evil eye cannot get at the seed of Joseph”’ (b.*Berachot* 20a).⁵²

In ancient Jewish thought, the presence of the evil eye was a real, negative spiritual force, of which one needed to beware.⁵³ Of course, while this Talmudic perspective might imply that the seed of Joseph could hide from the evil eye, as fish hide underneath the water, fish underneath the water—whether they be just underwater a few feet or deep underwater hundreds of feet—are definitely known by a Sovereign Creator to be there.

The perspective of the descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim, or Joseph, multiplying as though they were fish underwater, is a bit strange and odd to many English Bible readers—especially if connections between the Hebrew verb *dagah* and the noun *dag* are not able to be made. A wide variety of Genesis commentators, more Christian than Jewish actually, in working from the Hebrew text, have had to recognize some sort of issue regarding multiplicity at work in Genesis 48:16.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Earl S. Kalland, “דָּגַח,” in TWOT, 1:182; cf. HALOT, 1:213.

⁵¹ Nosson Scherman, ed., *ArtScroll Chumash, Stone Edition* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 2000), 273.

⁵² *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*. MS Windows XP. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005. CD-ROM.

⁵³ Cf. “evil eye, in rabbinic Judaism,” in *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*, 212.

⁵⁴ Nahum M. Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 328; Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50*, Vol 1b (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 465; Victor P. Hamilton, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 633 fn#22; Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 599; Kenneth A. Matthews, *New American Commentary: Genesis 11:27-50:26* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 880.

Israel in Future Prophecy

What, if anything, might this obscure promise by the Patriarch Jacob, to his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh in Genesis 48:16—*v'yidgu l'rov b'qerev ha'ereztz*—teach us about their descendants? The Targum Onkelos on Genesis 48:16 actually offers the paraphrase, “The Angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the youths; and let my name be called upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Izhak; and as the fish of the sea may they multiply among the children of men upon the earth!”⁵⁵

Many Two-House advocates have claimed that with the future deportation and exile of the Northern Kingdom, with the Ephraim reference to be applied to the scattered exiles, that there would be a future multiplication of their descendants in exile—a multiplication largely known to a Sovereign God, but not necessarily to mortals at large, or even to many of the descendants themselves. This is certainly one way to take Jacob’s prophecy made to his grandsons. The challenge is, of course, if there are such descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom “out there” in the world—then why do a majority of the non-Jewish Believers in the Two-House sub-movement *just assume*, without any hard evidence, that they absolutely must be such descendants? **Would it not be better, and much safer, for our Sovereign God to know all of the finer details of Israel’s restoration?**

Concurrent with this, it is specifically communicated by Jacob/Israel to Ephraim, and possibly by extension to the Northern Kingdom of Israel as a whole, that “his descendants shall become **a multitude of nations**,” *melo-ha'goyim* (מְלֵאֵי הַגּוֹיִם), which would suggest some level of abundance. This most probably relates to how Ephraim would be one of the main names for the Northern Kingdom, and would incorporate a wide number of Israel’s tribes into itself, certainly in name.

Many Two-House advocates think that this implies a multiplication of the descendants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, in their exile, to the point of somehow being reckoned as a very numerous body, or bodies, of people. This tends to be connected to the Apostle Paul’s word of Romans 11:25, speaking of the salvation-historical redemption of Israel: “For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until **the fullness of the Gentiles** has come in.” Many Two-House advocates take this as meaning that “all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26) will only take place, at the point when various scores of descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom have entered back into the fold.

No one should deny the fact that Romans chs. 9-11 in total, include some significantly “loaded” words as they involved the Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in Rome, the widescale First Century Jewish rejection of Yeshua, the Apostle Paul’s lamentation over the great dismissal of the Messiah by his countrymen, and warnings issued to Believers from the nations to take significant care in how they approach this. Generally speaking, many interpreters will recognize that Romans chs. 9-11 speaks, at the very least, of a condition regarding the First Century Jewish

⁵⁵ BibleWorks 7.0: Targum Onkelos on the Pentateuch. MS Windows XP. Norfolk: BibleWorks, LLC, 2006. CD-ROM.; cf. Hamilton, 633 fn#22.

people, to be contrasted with a future, fully restored eschatological Kingdom of Israel. When Israel is fully restored in the eschaton, this would necessarily have to involve the complete reunion of the descendants of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

However, the Septuagint translated *melo-ha'goyim* in Genesis 48:19 as *plēthos ethnōn* (πλήθος ἐθνῶν), “a multitude of nations” (LXE), when *to plērōma tōn ethnōn* (τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν) is what actually appears in Romans 11:25. It would be inappropriate to absolutely equate *to plērōma tōn ethnōn* in Romans 11:25 with the *melo-ha'goyim* of Genesis 48:19. What can go significantly overlooked is how *plērōma* (πλήρωμα) or “fullness,” when applied to human beings, generally regards ethical, moral, or spiritual maturity in the Pauline letters⁵⁶—which is certainly the case when he previously speaks of his Jewish brethren: “Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment [*plērōma*; fullness, NIV] be!” (Romans 11:12).

Given the prior usage of *plērōma* in Romans 11:12, the primary purpose of Paul stating that the “fullness of the nations” must enter in, in Romans 11:25, should be taken so that non-Jewish Believers (particularly those he writes to in Ancient Rome) can overcome any arrogant attitudes, and instead strive to be an spiritual/ethical/moral fullness, as grand vessels of mercy and grace to the Jewish people who are widely hardened to the Messiah: “so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy” (Romans 11:31). Only when this takes place at an ultra-high level, can the hardening be gone! Paul has already said that the non-Jewish Believers are grafted into the community of Israel via Messiah faith (Romans 11:17-18). When non-Jewish Believers, operating at their grand spiritual fullness *as vessels of grace and mercy* to the Jewish people, arrive on the scene, then the complete restoration of Israel—obviously involving a massive salvation of Jews recognizing Yeshua as Redeemer—can manifest.

Notably at some point in future history, as a component of “all Israel” being saved (Romans 11:25-27), there will be a return and restoration of the exiled Northern Kingdom with those of the Southern Kingdom, as witnessed within the Tanach intertextuality (cf. Isaiah 59:20-21; 27:9 [12-13]; Jeremiah 31:31-34).⁵⁷ Given that Romans 11:25 labels the entering in of the “the fullness of the nations” as a mystery, no fair reader should suffice for a simplistic explanation. Non-Jewish Believers reaching for a high spiritual, ethical, moral, and intellectual “fullness of the nations” status as grand vessels of mercy and grace—perhaps even overcoming some of their own hardness toward the Jewish people—is something which **is far**

⁵⁶ Cf. D.S. Lim, “Fullness,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 319.

⁵⁷ Kurt Aland, et. al., *The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1998), 551.

Israel in Future Prophecy

more difficult to see achieved, even in much of today's Messianic movement, than a return of descendants from the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim.⁵⁸

The Exile of the Northern Kingdom, and Evaluating the Numbers of Physical Israel

It can be observed that there have been some over-statements made, or at least not enough careful attention given to, various multiplication promises of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as can commonly be seen by many within today's Two-House sub-movement.

When one evaluates Israel in future prophecy, and sees a significant expectation about the reunion of Judah and Israel/Ephraim, one legitimately wonders about who composes this latter group of people. Obviously there are small groups of people in parts of Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Central Africa, and the Mediterranean basin who claim to be descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom. These people are normally monotheistic, they practice what appear to be some sort of Jewish religious customs, and they will usually have an oral tradition associated with themselves going back to the ancient Kingdom of Israel, as seen in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, in some way.

Are there people descended from the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel really "out there" in the nations? In Hosea 8:8-9, for example, we see how "Israel is swallowed up; they are now among the nations [*b'goyim*, בְּגוֹיִם] like a vessel in which no one delights. For they have gone up to Assyria, like a wild donkey all alone; Ephraim has hired lovers." The Hebrew verb *bala* (בָּלַע), appearing here in the Nifal stem (simple action, passive voice), does mean "be swallowed up" (CHALOT),⁵⁹ obviously in the form of judgment.⁶⁰ The view of a Jewish commentator like S.M. Lehrman, is that "The prophecy has been literally fulfilled. The Ten Tribes have disappeared from the scene of Jewish history, and their identity is now only a subject for far-fetched conjecture."⁶¹ And indeed, none of us wants to wander off into the realm of off-the-wall conjecture regarding those of the exiled Northern Kingdom; what we want to do is to stay true to the Word of God, doing justice to the text and affirming that its descendants will be gathered back at the right time in fulfillment of prophecy.

Concurrent with this, Amos 9:8-9 informs us, in a word primarily issued to the Northern Kingdom, "'Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,' declares the LORD. 'For behold, I am commanding, and I will shake the house of Israel among all nations [Heb. MT: *b'kol-ha'goyim*, בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם

⁵⁸ For a further discussion, consult Chapter 5 of the author's book *When Will the Messiah Return?*, "The Restoration of All Things and the Emergence of the Messianic Movement," as well as the relevant sections of his publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

⁵⁹ CHALOT, 41.

⁶⁰ Cf. Walter C. Kaiser, "בָּלַע," in *TWOT*, 1:110-111.

⁶¹ S.M. Lehrman, "Hosea: Introduction and Commentary," in *Soncino Books of the Bible: The Twelve Prophets*, 30.

בָּקָל; Grk. LXX: *en pasi tois ethnesin, ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν*] as *grain* is shaken in a sieve, but not a kernel will fall to the ground.” The Divine punishment to be issued against a rebellious and idolatrous Northern Kingdom is a significant calamity, doubtlessly in the form of besiegement and massive deaths at the hands of Assyria, as well as various survivors being shaken among the nations. The leaders of the Northern Kingdom would no doubt fall, but survivors would be shaken like grain into the nations—and regardless of what would happen, they would surely be known by the One shaking them.

Can we know the real numbers of descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? I want all reading this to know that **this is an area that makes me feel extremely uncomfortable**. The reason is that many people, be they Jewish *or* they have a feeling that they think they are of the exiled Northern Kingdom, get the idea that their ethnicity and background will merit them special favors before God. The Scriptures stand clearly against this: “sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people” (Romans 5:12, TNIV). In Adam and Eve, every person on Planet Earth is a sinner in a condition of separation from his or her Creator, and this can only be rectified by us receiving salvation in Yeshua (Jesus). The baseline for all of us is that **we are fallen human beings in need of redemption**. The presence of some group called “Ephraim,” however large or small, coming back, whether they are hidden away out in the nations, or have been assimilated into the nations here or there, is *only* necessary for the fulfillment of future prophecies.

But what about the numbers? This is an area where there has been some significant abuse, embellishment, and over-exaggeration witnessed within a significant majority of the Two-House sub-movement. But, it also probably needs to be considered, that the total numbers of descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, do probably go beyond the known 14-15 million Jews of today:

- Today’s Two-House populists tend to claim that there are somewhere in the range of 2-3 billion descendants of Israel on Planet Earth, multiplying 2-3 million Ancient Israelites in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 1:10) by a factor of 1,000 (Deuteronomy 1:11).⁶² But, given the controversy over the Semitic term *elef* (אֶלֶף), and whether or not it means “thousand” *or* something along the lines of “company” or “troop,” the population statistics seen of Ancient Israel in the Books of Exodus and Numbers are probably considerably less than 2-3 million, and perhaps even less than 600,000.⁶³ If there are 2-3 billion descendants of the exiled Northern

⁶² Moses said, “The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day like the stars of heaven in number. May the LORD, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand-fold more than you are and bless you, just as He has promised you!” (Deuteronomy 1:10-11, NASU).

⁶³ K.A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 264 astutely informs us,

“In the Biblical texts, the actual words for ‘ten(s)’ and ‘hundred(s)’ are not ambiguous, and present no problem on that score; the only question (usually) is whether they have been correctly recopied down the

Israel in Future Prophecy

Kingdom on Planet Earth, then it makes the 14-15 million Jews of today seem absolutely miniscule, or even practically like nothing, especially in light of the 6 million who perished in the Holocaust.

- A Messianic Jewish evangelist like Jonathan Bernis actually thinks, “Today we find that there are around 6 million Jews living in Israel but there are physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dwelling in almost every nation on the planet. In fact, there are estimates that the total dispersed Jewish population is anywhere from 20 to 30 million.”⁶⁴ It is uncertain if he is using the label of “Jewish population” to include those small groups in places like India or Africa which claim to be descended from the exiled Northern Kingdom. Yet, 20 to 30 million is almost twice the known Jewish population.

The total numbers of descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom, prophesied to have been widely swallowed up, are in all likelihood between two or three or four times the known Jewish population or so—and are not at all in the hundreds of millions, and especially not in the billions, as is widely touted throughout the Two-House sub-movement. The word of Deuteronomy 28:62 is especially poignant to keep in mind, and has been almost totally overlooked, ignored, and perhaps even derided by Two-House proponents: “**Then you shall be left few in number [Heb MT: *b’mtei m’at*, בְּמִתֵּי מֵאֹט; Grk. LXX: *arithmō brachei*, ἀριθμῶ βραχεί], whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, because you did not obey the LORD your God.**” While there are promises that God will multiply the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—there is also a surety that if they disobey Him, that they will be reduced in number to a fraction of what they could have been.

Unfortunately, though, given the reality of human sin, a great majority of any descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—however tabulated or guess-timated, and whether they know they are such descendants or not—is likely to die in **trespasses and sins** (Ephesians 2:1) *the same* as any human being who fails to acknowledge Yeshua as Savior. Just as Paul said, “the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin” (Galatians 3:22), meaning “both Jews and Greeks are all under sin” (Romans 3:9) without Divine intervention.

centuries. With ‘*eleph*, ‘thousand,’ the matter is very different, as is universally accepted. In Hebrew, as in English (and elsewhere), words that look alike can be confused when found without a clear context. On its own, ‘*bark*’ in English can mean the skin of a tree, the sound of a dog, and an early ship or an ancient ceremonial boat. Only the content tells us which meaning is intended. The same applies to the word(s) ‘*lp*’ in Hebrew. (1) We have ‘*eleph*, ‘thousand,’ which has clear contexts like Gen. 20:16 (price) or Num. 3:50 (amount). But (2) there is ‘*eleph*’ for a group—be it a clan/family, a (military) squad, a rota of Levites or priests, etc....It is plain that in other passages of the Hebrew Bible there are clear examples where ‘*eleph*’ makes no sense if translated ‘thousand’ but good sense if rendered otherwise, e.g., as ‘leader’ or the like.”

Consult the FAQ, “Exodus, numbers of.”

⁶⁴ Jonathan Bernis (2005). *The Scattering of the Tribes of Israel*, March/April 2005. *Jewish Voice Today*. Retrieved 17 April, 2011 from <<http://www.jewishvoice.org>>.

When the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim was corporately deported into exile, they were taken away into the nations as a punishment for rebellion against God, who knows where they fully are. As *IDB* summarizes,

“Samaria, capital of Israel, held out until early in 721, the siege having been laid by Shalmaneser V (727-722) and the fall of the city effected by Sargon II (722-705). This marked the end of the ten tribes: ‘None was left but the tribe of Judah only’ (II Kings 17:18). According to the biblical account the Assyrians exiled the Israelites to Assyria in Halah (cf. Obad. 20), on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes (II Kings 17:6; 18:11); on the other hand, they brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Hamath, and Sephar-vaim to the cities of Samaria (II Kings 17:24; cf. Ezra 4: 10).

“The displacement of populations was, it seems, so complete so far as the identity of the N ten tribes is concerned; for they eventually assimilated beyond the point of return to any historical continuum with their Israelite origins...”⁶⁵

As a Biblical examiner, I can go as far as to say that there are likely groups of people—some of them who know, and others of them who do not readily know—with a line of ancestry from the deportees of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim “out there” in the nations.⁶⁶ Objectively speaking from Biblical history, we should be considering the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom to be placed among people groups located within the sphere of influence of the ancient Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires—*not* Northwestern Europe and the British Isles or the South Seas and Polynesia. (There are groups of people who similarly, whether they have kept it relatively hidden, or they only need some genealogical research conducted, who have Jewish ancestry.) I trust that our Sovereign Eternal God will bring these people back in fulfillment of His Word in His timing, as the return of Yeshua draws closer:

“For there will be a day when watchmen on the hills of Ephraim call out, ‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.’ For thus says the LORD, ‘Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise and say, “O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel.” Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, and I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together; a great company, they will return here. With weeping they will come, and by supplication I will lead them; I will make them walk by streams of waters, on a straight path in which they will not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.’ Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare in the coastlands afar off, and say, ‘**He who scattered Israel**

⁶⁵ J.A. Sanders, “Exile,” in *IDB*, 2:186-187.

⁶⁶ As is discussed in Chapter 3, “Cross-Examining the Two-House Teaching,” there were certainly some Northern Kingdom Israelites who escaped to the Southern Kingdom.

Israel in Future Prophecy

will gather him and keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock” (Jeremiah 31:6-10).⁶⁷

Our thrust as Bible readers is to simply affirm key, eschatological words like this, and allow prophecy to naturally take shape as time moves forward. For ultimately, only the One who exiled the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim in the nations, the Lord Himself, is He who can gather them back. And most significantly, it is only the Lord Himself *by the power of His Holy Spirit* who can unite Judah, Israel/Ephraim, *and* their many companions from all the nations as one in Him!

Never, EVER, exclude or forget the companions!

Because of the emphasis that one commonly sees in the Two-House sub-movement upon Judah and Ephraim, outsiders often conclude that not only does their anticipated reunion *only involve* the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but that the Two-House teaching actually *withholds salvation* to non-Israelites. Notwithstanding the fact that many of those non-Jewish Messianics, who have self-adopted the label of “Ephraim” for themselves, are in all probability not descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom at all—it is **frequently under-emphasized** within the Two-House sub-movement that the restoration of the God’s Kingdom actually involves the nations at large. Yet as it is clearly emphasized within the mission of the Servant Messiah,

“It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6).

Here, we are specifically told that “It is too light a thing” (RSV) for only the tribes of Israel to be restored; Yeshua must also be an *or goyim* (אֹרֹת גּוֹיִם) or “a light of the nations,” in order for salvation to be declared *ad-qetzeih ha’eretz* (אֲדֹתֵי הָאָרֶץ) (“Nations”: עַר). As Duane L. Christensen astutely reminds us in the *ABD* entry for “Nations”: “it is clear that ‘Israel as a light to the nations’ is no peripheral theme within the canonical process. The nations are the matrix of Israel’s life, the *raison d’être* of her very existence.”⁶⁸ Israel is to be a beacon of the Creator’s goodness and love to all! Sojourners or *gerim* (גֵּרִים) have always been welcome within the community of

⁶⁷ While this prophecy is sometimes often applied to support the return of Jewish people in the former Soviet Union to Israel, and by all means **we should support** this, the specific context of “Israel” in Jeremiah 31:1, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people,” is to those of the Northern Kingdom. Jeremiah 31:5-6 has previously specified,

“Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the planters will plant and will enjoy *them*. For there will be a day when watchmen on the hills of Ephraim call out, ‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.’”

Remarking on this, a Jewish commentator like H. Freedman, *Soncino Books of the Bible: Jeremiah* (London: Soncino, 1968), 204 states that this is “An indication that the breach between Samaria and Judea will have been healed, and Jerusalem resume its rightful place as the religious centre of a reunited Israelite nation.”

⁶⁸ Duane L. Christensen, “Nations,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:1037.

Israel,⁶⁹ especially per the Divine mandate given to Abraham and later Ancient Israel for the people to be a blessing to the whole world (Genesis 12:2; Deuteronomy 4:6). The key declaration of Psalm 24:1 is, “The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.” Our Sovereign God loves all people who He has created, regardless of if they are of the physical line of Israel or not! *He desires all to be reconciled and redeemed unto Himself* (cf. 1 Timothy 2:3-4).

While any teaching on the Southern and Northern Kingdoms of Israel being reunited in fulfillment of prophecy, will necessarily focus upon “Judah and Ephraim,” in too many circles there has been such an over-emphasis upon this—that the nations at large themselves have been greatly overlooked. So, what about those who have no physical claim to being descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel? Are they excluded from the Kingdom realm of Israel? Are they not a part of the prophesied restoration of Israel? Do they have no hope of salvation? If we see what is spoken of in Ezekiel 37:15-28, which details the two sticks coming together, it clearly includes “companions”:

“The word of the LORD came again to me saying, ‘And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, “For Judah and for the sons of Israel, **his companions** [חֵבֵרוֹ, *chavero*]”; then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, **his companions** [חֵבֵרוֹ, *chavero*]”’” (Ezekiel 37:15-16).

Who are these “companions” or “comrades” (ATS)? It should be quite obvious that connected to either Judah or Ephraim are various associates—those from the nations who are to be involved in the restoration process! The Hebrew word here in its singular form is *chaver* (חֵבֵר), “**comrade, companion**” (CHALOT),⁷⁰ “an associate, a companion, fellow” (Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon),⁷¹ which is “A masculine noun indicating friendship, association with, being friends with, companion” (AMG).⁷² In modern Hebrew, the term *chaverim* (חֵבֵרִים) actually means “friends.” In other words, we see that when those of the Southern and Northern Kingdoms of Israel are together in the end-times there will be *far more* than just physical Israelites as part of the unification; their “friends,” if you will, are going to very much be involved in the process as well.

The companions which are involved in the reunification process of Israel are physical non-Israelites, but they are surely a part of the Commonwealth of Israel through Messiah Yeshua (Ephesians 2:11-13) or the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), grafted-in as wild olive branches (Romans 11:17-18), similarly likened unto the ancient sojourner or *ger* (גֵּר) in the Torah. They will be most certainly *included* as participants within Israel’s restoration. With this in mind, it should never be thought that there is an exclusion of true “Gentiles” from God’s salvation in

⁶⁹ Cf. Exodus 22:21; 23:9; Leviticus 19:33-34; 24:22.

⁷⁰ CHALOT, 94.

⁷¹ H.F.W. Gesenius: *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, trans. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 259.

⁷² Baker and Carpenter, 311.

Israel in Future Prophecy

Yeshua. One way or another, these *chaverim* from the nations—**most probably being the significant majority of those involved in the restoration process**—will be a part of a larger restoration of Israel, and are considered full-fledged citizens of the Commonwealth of Israel.

While I have never had difficulty comprehending that scores of companions from the nations themselves, are to be involved as participants in a greater restoration of Israel—the fact does remain that today a significant amount of what you will hear in the Two-House sub-movement has decisively *left out* such companions. And a considerable challenge, for those who have popularized much of this, is what happens if in the reunification they so desperately seek, there actually ends up involving a significant majority, i.e., eighty to ninety percent or more, of companions. Most of the non-Jewish Believers one is likely to encounter, identifying themselves as some sort of “Ephraimites,” are not. **This is why a focus on the equality of all people in the Lord** (cf. Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11), **and all people feeling welcome and a sense of belonging and usefulness within the Messianic movement, is so imperative!** Most sadly, such a Messianic community that is welcoming of Jewish *and* non-Jewish Messianic Believers—is not something that enough people often encounter.

Going to the Source Text:

When did “Jew and Greek” become “Jew and Gentile”?

When we hear many people within today’s Messianic movement talk about “Jew and Gentile” being one in the Messiah, the intention is to surely encourage unity and camaraderie—which is good. At the same time, though, some of the verses commonly quoted to support “Jew and Gentile” being one in Messiah, if examined much more carefully, **do not actually have this terminology employed.** In the New International Version, and to a greater extent, the Complete Jewish Bible (which is widely used in the Messianic community), one can find some specific places where the proper noun *Hellēn* (“Ἕλλην”) has been rendered as “Gentile.” Is this something that is appropriate? Surely, rendering *Ioudaios* (Ἰουδαίος) as anything other than “Jew,” “Jewish,” or perhaps in some places “Judean,” would not be proper.

In various places within the Apostolic Scriptures, where versions like the NIV or CJB might speak of “Jew and Gentile,” the actual source text instead reads as “Jew and Greek.” To take a specific nationality like “Greek,” and instead replace it with “Gentile,” is an inappropriate liberty. Once again, this cues us into the fact that as Believers in Yeshua—who make up a multi-national Commonwealth of Israel—that we need to be sensitive to the terms that we use. For in the case of the Greeks, even though there were many injustices done to the Jewish people by the Syrian-Greeks during the Maccabean crisis of the Second Century B.C.E., the fact does remain that both “Jews and Greeks” were some of the first *major* recipients of

the good news.⁷³ Obviously the good news would reach far beyond Greek areas as time would advance, but by translating a specific term with a generic term, at the very least some significant historical settings of various Bible verses can be skewed.

I would ask you to consider a listing of passages where the NIV and CJB have noticeably taken a few liberties. You may have read some of these verses before, and have not thought anything of it. The chart below compares the NIV and CJB against the Greek New Testament (UBS Fourth Revised Edition), Young’s Literal Translation (YLT), and the New American Standard Bible (NASU). Do note that some verses in the NIV have properly rendered “Greek” as “Greek”:

“JEW AND GENTILE” IN THE GREEK APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES

ROMANS 1:16

NIV: I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

CJB: For I am not ashamed of the Good News, since it is God’s powerful means of bringing salvation to everyone who keeps on trusting, to the Jew especially, but equally to the Gentile.

GNT: Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, **Ἰουδαίῳ** τε πρῶτον καὶ **Ἑλληνι**.

*Ou gar epaischunomai to euangelion, dunamis gar Theou estin eis sōtērian panti tō pisteuonti, **Ioudaiō** [Jew] te prōton kai **Hellēni** [Greek].*

YLT: [F]or I am not ashamed of the good news of the Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to every one who is believing, both to Jew first, and to Greek.

NASU: For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

ROMANS 2:9-10

NIV: There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

⁷³ Acts 14:1; 18:4; 19:10, 17; 20:21; 1 Corinthians 1:22, 24; 12:13.

Israel in Future Prophecy

CJB: Yes, he will pay back misery and anguish to every human being who does evil, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile; but glory and honor and *shalom* to everyone who keeps doing what is good, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile.

GNT: θλίψις καὶ στενοχωρία ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ἀνθρώπου τοῦ κατεργαζομένου τὸ κακόν, Ἰουδαίου τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνας· δόξα δὲ καὶ τιμὴ καὶ εἰρήνη παντὶ τῷ ἐργαζομένῳ τὸ ἀγαθόν, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνι

Thlipsis kai stenochōria epi pasan psuchēn anthrōpou tou katergazomenou to kakon, Ioudaiou [Jew] te prōton kai Hellēnos [Greek] doxa de kai timē kai eirēnē panti tō ergazomenō to agathon, Ioudaiō [Jew] te prōton kai Hellēni [Greek].

YLT: [T]ribulation and distress, upon every soul of man that is working the evil, both of Jew first, and of Greek; and glory, and honour, and peace, to every one who is working the good, both to Jew first, and to Greek.

NASU: *There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

ROMANS 10:12

NIV: For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.

CJB: That means that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—*Adonai* is the same for everyone, rich toward everyone who calls on him.

GNT: οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολὴ Ἰουδαίου τε καὶ Ἑλλήνων, ὁ γὰρ αὐτὸς κύριος πάντων, πλουτῶν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἐπικαλουμένους αὐτόν

Ou gar estin diastolē Ioudaiou [Jew] te kai Hellēnos [Greek], ho gar autos Kurios pantōn, ploutōn eis pantas tous epikaloumenous auton.

YLT: [F]or there is no difference between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord of all {is} rich to all those calling upon Him.

NASU: For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:32

NIV: Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.

What About “the Gentiles”?

CJB: Do not be an obstacle to anyone—not to Jews, not to Gentiles, and not to God’s Messianic Community.

GNT: ἀπρόσκοποι καὶ **Ἰουδαίους** γίνεσθε καὶ **Ἑλλήσιν** καὶ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ
Aproskopoi kai Ioudaiois [Jews] ginesthe kai Hellēsin [Greeks] kai tē ekklēsia tou Theou

YLT: [B]ecome offenceless, both to Jews and Greeks, and to the assembly of God.

NASU: Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13

NIV: For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

CJB: For it was by one Spirit that we were all immersed into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free; and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

GNT: καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε **Ἰουδαῖοι** εἴτε **Ἑλληνας** εἴτε δούλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύματι ἐποτίσθημεν

Kai gar en eni pneumati hēmeis pantes eis hen sōma ebaptisthēmen, eite Ioudaioi [Jews] eite Hellēnes [Greeks] eite douloi eite elutheroi, kai pantes hen pneuma epotisthēmen

YLT: [F]or also in one Spirit we all to one body were baptized, whether Jews or Greeks, whether servants or freemen, and all into one Spirit were made to drink.

NASU: For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

GALATIANS 3:28

NIV: There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

CJB: [T]here is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female; for in union with the Messiah Yeshua, you are all one.

Israel in Future Prophecy

GNT: οὐκ ἔστι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληνας, οὐκ ἔστι δούλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔστι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἓστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

ouk esti Ioudaios [Jew] oude Hellēn [Greek], ouk esti doulos oude eleutheros, ouk esti arsen kai thēlu pantes gar humeis heis este en Christō Iēsou.

YLT: [T]here is not here Jew or Greek, there is not here servant nor freeman, there is not here male and female, for all ye are one in Christ Jesus.

NASU: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

COLOSSIANS 3:11

NIV: Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

CJB: The new self allows no room for discriminating between Gentile and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, foreigner, savage, slave, free man; on the contrary, in all, the Messiah is everything.

GNT: ὅπου οὐκ ἔστι Ἕλληνας καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία, βάρβαρος, Σκυθῆς, δούλος, ἐλεύθερος, ἀλλὰ [τὰ] πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός

Hopou ouk esti Hellēn [Greek] kai Ioudaios [Jew], peritomē kai akrobustia, barbaros, Skuthēs, doulos, eleutheros, alla [ta] panta kai en pasin Christos

YLT: [W]here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, foreigner, Scythian, servant, freeman—but the all and in all—Christ.

NASU: *a renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

A comparison of these different passages shows that there is some inaccuracy on the part of a few Bible translators in regard to “Jew and Greek,” and its improper translation as “Jew and Gentile.”⁷⁴

Some may say that pointing out some discrepancies among versions like NIV and CJB, where “Jew and Gentile” has been used instead of “Jew and Greek,” is

⁷⁴ The 2011 Messianic version, *Tree of Life—The New Covenant*, has properly rendered the proper noun *Hellēn* (Ἕλληνας) as “Greek” in Romans 1:16; 2:9-10; 10:12; 1 Corinthians 10:32; 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11.

going a little far—or at the very least is “nit picking.” Yet, how many things can be missed from the Bible, if we get into the habit of skewing some specific details? By missing some specific details, how might this affect our interpretation of a Biblical passage? It should be clear, in a verse like Colossians 3:11 at least, that some significant historical and cultural issues can be overlooked when *Hellēn* (“Ελλην”) is improperly rendered as “Gentile” and not “Greek”—especially as it sits alongside “circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman.”

In the case of the Ancient Greeks, this is a specific nationality that undeniably has made some significant contributions to human civilization⁷⁵—and neither they, nor any other ethnic group, should be allowed in Bible translation to be recognized by the generic term “Gentile” or “nation” when their proper name is used. For some reason or another, though, much of today’s contemporary Messianic movement does not often make the effort to pay attention to these kinds of specific issues.

Should we really use the term “Gentile”?

What are other terms we need to be careful of?

No one in today’s Messianic community should ever “freak out” when they hear the term “Gentile” used, because it is going to be heard at the very least from various English Bible translations and various theological resources. There can probably be, however, some better ways to communicate that are more sensitive to a group’s needs. If a Messianic congregational leader knows that there is a group of non-Jewish Believers in the assembly who might be offended if the term “Gentile” is used, then it might be incumbent to employ some worthwhile and valid alternatives like “nation(s)” or “people(s)” to offset a potential problem.

Many non-Jewish Messianics are asked to be sensitive to Jewish concerns with their usage of terms like “cross,” given the reality of many heinous acts of anti-Semitism committed in history involving the cross. While we may never totally stop using terms like “cross” or “crucified,” it is fair and advisable to employ valid alternatives like “tree” and “executed.”⁷⁶ Is it too much, given some of the post-Second Temple usage of terms like “*goy*” and “*goyim*” and possible negative aspects surrounding the term “Gentile” in current Jewish culture, that some alternatives likewise be used? I have a feeling that in the case of many people in the Messianic movement, especially in much of Messianic Judaism, that for the considerable time being we may be dealing **with a one-way street** on this issue.

⁷⁵ Do be quite aware of the fact that it is quite commonplace in some quarters of the Messianic movement to hear claims made against a so-called “Greek mindset” or “Greek perspective” on various spiritual issues. How much of this quantitatively lacks engagement with the relevant Hellenistic philosophers or ancient voices/historians? Should we ever allow statements made about “the Rabbis,” positive or negative, when no specific Rabbinical voices or references are really made? If Greek philosophy is targeted as being in error, or Rabbinic/Talmudic perspectives are touted as valued, then appropriate references should be provided.

For a specific example of how this works, consult the FAQ, “Dualism.”

⁷⁶ Consult the FAQ, “Crucifixion.”

Israel in Future Prophecy

Consider some of the thoughts offered by Toby Janicki in his article “What is a Gentile?”:

“The word ‘Gentile’ is not a negative term, nor does it refer to idolaters in any essential way. Although it has had various implications in different contexts, its primary meaning is that of ‘one from the nations.’ This is the designation that the apostles used to distinguish non-Jewish believers from Jewish believers. If it was good enough for them, it should be good enough for us.”⁷⁷

The Biblical terms that are actually used to describe the nations are *goy/goyim* and *ethnos*—**nation(s)**. While context determines whether people in general, or some kind of pagan idolaters are intended, it is disingenuous of anyone in either Messianic Judaism or the broader Messianic world to fail to recognize that in the Twenty-First Century, the English term “Gentile” can offend some non-Jewish Believers. It is also disingenuous to think that in some modern Jewish cultural contexts, when the *goyim* or Gentiles are referred to, it is speaking of non-Jews in a totally neutral way.

But let us consider for a moment some more of the shortcomings found in the broad Messianic world as it concerns the terms used to describe people in general. A fair majority of today’s Messianic community balks at using any degree of inclusive language, dismissing it as being the product of so-called “political correctness”—even though it is adhered to in part by many conservative evangelical Christians, and is actually reflected in much of David Stern’s Complete Jewish Bible (1998), as well as in the new Tree of Life Bible—The New Covenant (2011).⁷⁸ *What is the inclusive language debate?* A big part of it is recognizing that there are some specific terms in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures where a masculine-centric rendering is less-than-accurate, especially given some of the changing dynamics of modern English speech. The major terms to be aware of include:

- The generic *adam* (אָדָם) and *anthrōpos* (ἄνθρωπος), can be better rendered with **“humanity”** or **“humankind,”** rather than “man” or “mankind”; or in the case of individuals, **“human being(s),”** **“mortal(s),”** or **“person(s).”**
- The specific *ish* (אִישׁ) and *anēr* (ἀνὴρ), relates to a person who is a **man** or of the **male** gender, and can sometimes refer to a **husband**.
- The specific *ishah* (אִשָּׁה) and *gunē* (γυνή), relates to a person who is a **woman** or of the **female** gender, and can sometimes refer to a **wife**.

Obviously, some renderings of these Hebrew and Greek terms are largely dependent on their usage in a passage. But in general when people at large are described, it is probably safe to say that calling them “men” has become more than a bit out of place in normal, everyday English language across the world. So even if a Bible version might use “men” when “people” is intended, such as where Yeshua

⁷⁷ Toby Janicki. “What is a Gentile?” *Messiah Journal* Issue 101, Summer 2009/5770:44.

⁷⁸ Other Bible versions that employ a principle of inclusive language, to one degree or another, include: the New Revised Standard Version (1989), the Revised English Bible (1989), and the Today’s New International Version (2005).

calls His disciples to be “fishers of men⁷⁹” (Mark 1:17; cf. Matthew 4:19), we need to be geared toward speaking on these sorts of passages relating to “fish for people” (NRSV/NLT/TNIV). A key passage where an inclusive language rendering will convey a far better and clearer understanding for Messianics, is where Ephesians 2:15 speaks of *kainon anthrōpon* (καὶνὸν ἄνθρωπον), the “**one new humanity**” (NRSV/CJB), as opposed to “one new man.” Obviously, what the Father has brought about via the magnanimous work of His Son is to influence far more than just those of the male gender.

Once again, reality being what it is, not enough of today’s Messianic teachers and leaders may be sensitive to employing a little bit of inclusive language in their speech. *In fact, more than a few Messianic leaders are probably some of the greatest offenders when it comes to not using any degree of inclusive language.* I want you to know that I myself do not get upset when I see terms like “man” or “mankind” used to refer to the human race, because I do use them from time to time. Yet we do need to recognize the various limitations present in modern English speech, by only using terms like “man,” “men,” or “mankind.”

In the Twenty-First Century, we have more than a few Messianic voices who are still quite prone to using “men,” when in normal speech “people” is far more natural and preferable. Does it at all offend you when a Messianic speaker says—regardless of which slice of the broad Messianic movement in which the statement is made—something like, “God is raising up men in this hour” and the audience is clearly mixed? Why would we not hear something more like, “God is raising up men *and women* in this hour” or “God is raising up *people* in this hour”? How would you feel if you were a woman and you heard terms like men, mankind, and brothers *exclusively* used? Speaking for myself, I know that I am offended when I only hear male-specific terms used, and I am a male!

Obviously, if some of today’s Messianic Believers cannot compute the fact that using male-centric terms exclusively might cause some discord—would they even be able to see that using a term like “Gentile” exclusively, might also create some angst?

The issue of the terms we use affects our historical readings of the Scriptures. How many of today’s Messianic Jews, even among those who are well-educated Bible teachers (with significant degrees), will say things along the lines of, “when God brought the Jewish people out of Egypt...”? Now it is certainly true that God brought the ancestors of today’s Jewish people out of Egypt, but it is largely and historically incorrect to use the term “Jew” or *Yehudi* (יהודי) to describe anyone prior to the dispersion of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. As the entry for “Jew” in *IDB* directs us,

“In the OT, יהודי (‘Jew’) is not used for members of the old tribe of Judah or even to distinguish persons of the Southern Kingdom from those of the Northern Kingdom...It is scarcely used until the kingdom of Judah had survived N Israel (II Kings 25:25; Jer. 38:19; 52:28-30). In postexilic times ‘Jew’ refers to a subject of the

⁷⁹ Grk. *alieis anthrōpon* (ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων).

Israel in Future Prophecy

Babylonian or Persian province of Judah or of the Maccabean state (Esth. 9:15-19; Neh. 4:1-H 3:33; Zech. 8:23; I Macc. 8:20; Jos. Antiq. XI.v.7).⁸⁰

There is, of course, nothing wrong with using terms such as “Jew” or “Jewish,” provided that we are able to recognize when in Biblical history that *Yehudi* started being legitimately used, in association with the Southern Kingdom. The point to be taken is *not* that “Jew” is a bad term to use; rather, “strictly speaking, it is anachronistic to use the term with reference to the Hebrews or Israelites of an earlier period” (*ISBE*).⁸¹ Yet many of today’s Messianic Jews were raised in an environment where the Ancient Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai, to those who made up the populations of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, to those who returned from Babylon—were *all* “Jews.”⁸² Specificity in terms of Biblical history, for such people, is not only something that is overlooked, but it is actually reinforced in some Jewish teaching materials. The Orthodox Jewish *ArtScroll Tanach*, for example, renders Exodus 21:2 with, “If you buy a Jewish bondsman...,” when the source text clearly has *Ivri* (עִבְרִי) or “Hebrew.” Its chart detailing the rulers, of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, is actually labeled to be “The Jewish Monarchy.”⁸³ Even Stern’s Jewish New Testament/Complete Jewish Bible may be said to have made a faux paux when labeling the Epistle to the Hebrews as “Messianic Jews,” when modern Hebrew New Testaments tend to have *Iirim* (עִבְרִיִּים), Hebrew for “Hebrews,” instead (for the Greek title ΠΡΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ, *Pros Hebraious*).⁸⁴

Not paying attention to specific details in Biblical history has enabled many throughout the Messianic world to say things along the lines of, “When Paul writes to the Gentiles in Letter XYZ...” While it may be true that there was a large, non-Jewish readership for many of Paul’s epistles, almost all of the Pauline letters are titled by a geographic-specific audience—in addition to having Jewish readers as well. Why would any of us ever speak in terms of Paul writing *the Gentiles*, when what we should be more tuned into is Paul writing the Romans, the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Philippians, the Colossians, the Thessalonians, etc.?⁸⁵ Cultural

⁸⁰ J.A. Sanders, “Jew,” in *IDB*, 2:897.

⁸¹ W.W. Gasque, “Jew,” in *ISBE*, 2:1056.

⁸² In the annotation for John 4:22-24, appearing in Daniel Gruber, trans., *The Messianic Writings* (Hanover, NH: Elijah Publishing, 2011), 148, it is actually stated, “After the Babylonians exiled the Jewish inhabitants of Shomron [Samaria], they brought other captive people to live there. (2K 17:22-41).”

This statement is not at all true to history, and even the text of 2 Kings 17:22-41 itself, as it details the exile of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians, not the Babylonians. Yet, these kinds of remarks litter the Messianic Jewish spectrum, and often go unnoticed by even those leaders who have weighty post-graduate degrees.

⁸³ Nossan Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, eds., *ArtScroll Tanach* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1996), 2026.

In contrast, *JPS Guide: The Jewish Bible* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008), 188 correctly refers to “The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah.”

⁸⁴ The Phillips New Testament has also incorrectly labeled the Epistle to the Hebrews as “The Letter to Jewish Christians.”

⁸⁵ You do probably need to be aware of the textual issues in Ephesians 1:1, and how “in Ephesus” (*en Ephesō*, ἐν Ἐφέσῳ) does not appear in the oldest manuscripts (cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 601). In all likelihood the Epistle of Ephesians was originally a circular letter written by the Apostle Paul to assemblies

and historical circumstances in places such as Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, and Colossae in the ancient Mediterranean world might factor into us understanding some difficult verses, and some of the location-specific issues ancient groups of Messiah followers faced.

The Terms We Use, and Your Messianic Speech

Sensitivity toward non-Jewish Believers who may be a little upset when they are called “Gentiles,” does need to be recognized by many within the broad Messianic community. Sensitivity toward people of both genders, when terms like “man” or “mankind” or “brothers” are exclusively used, needs to *also* be recognized. And above all, when contemplating the prophecies of a larger restoration of Israel, the place of the nations as *welcomed companions* within what is going on, need not at all be overlooked. **Does our Creator God have a program for the wide world that He has made, or does He not?**

It will be a challenge for all parties concerned to begin employing terms like “nations” or “peoples” to refer to non-Jewish Believers. Some will strongly resist speaking in terms of “humanity” and “brothers *and* sisters.” And in terms of much of what is commonly encountered surrounding the Two-House issue, we may not see any significant shift toward an emphasis on the companions of either Judah and Ephraim, being a valued part of the restoration process too, anytime soon in the populist literature. Yet if we can be committed to seeing a Messianic movement, and indeed an “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16), where are all welcomed and can be involved in the unique work He has begun in our day — **then we will go far**. For, it is only our Sovereign Creator who can bring diverse groups of people together: Jews, Christians, men, women, and everyone on Planet Earth who He loves, in a unique Messianic community that can see His Kingdom fully restored.

within Asia Minor, eventually making its way to Ephesus. The RSV notably rendered Ephesians 1:1 with: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus.”

Specific Pauline letters that actually concern the Believers in Ephesus, are actually the Epistles of 1&2 Timothy, as Timothy served as Paul’s duly-appointed superintendent to Ephesus and the surrounding region. For more information, consult the entries for the Epistles of 1&2 Timothy in the author’s workbook *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*.