



**Sukkot I**

September 30, 2023

***Talmidim Shel Yeshua 10***

*Shabbat shalom Mishpacha! Chag sameach* on this first day of the Festival of *Sukkot*, 5784. *Sukkot*, the Festival of Tabernacles, is the sixth of seven *moadim*, ADONAI's festivals, which He described in Leviticus 23. Each of His festivals had a purpose under the First Covenant and were a foreshadowing of ADONAI's purpose for them under the New Covenant. Since His spring festivals were fulfilled by Yeshua, we expect the fall festivals to also be fulfilled by Yeshua. *Sukkot* is in part a depiction of the fall harvest in Israel when grapes, olives, dates, figs, pomegranates and other fruits and vegetables are harvested. ADONAI also gave it to Israel as a remembrance of their time in the wilderness and commanded that they live in *sukkot* and celebrate it with fruits and branches of trees. As a festival unfulfilled under the New Covenant, to followers of Yeshua, *Sukkot* is a picture of the coming spiritual harvest which will be gathered by Yeshua, especially the salvation of all Israel, but also a large harvest from the nations during this time before Yeshua returns to earth to put His enemies under His feet and begin His rule and reign over the earth in Jerusalem. In our *Haftarah* reading today, we read from the Prophet Zechariah: *16 Then all the survivors from all the nations that attacked Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, Adonai-Tzva'ot, and to celebrate Sukkot.* (Zechariah 14:16 TLV). In Yeshua's restored Kingdom of Israel, the Prophet Ezekiel describes who will be there, which tribes and where they will be located (Ezekiel 48). But, the people of the nations will not be living there. In chapter 56 (vv. 1-8), Isaiah tells about the foreigners who join themselves to Israel and do not profane His *Shabbats*. ADONAI will give them special favor, but it is not clear if they will also live in the Land of Israel. Isaiah then tells us that after ADONAI creates new heavens and new earth (Isaiah 65), the people of Israel will live securely in the Land. He goes on to say regarding the time on the new earth: *23 "And it will come to pass, that from one New Moon to another, and from one Shabbat to another, all flesh will come to bow down before Me," says Adonai.* (Isaiah 66:23 TLV). All flesh means not only the people of Israel who live there, but also the people of the nations. In Yeshua's coming kingdom, we will all worship the King in Israel, not only on *Sukkot*, but also each *Shabbat* and probably other festivals as well. But right now, ADONAI has commanded us to rejoice and we will rejoice today by worshipping Him with the *lulav* and *etrog*. (Leviticus 23:40).

Recently, in our ongoing series, *Talmidim Shel Yeshua*, we spoke about Jeremiah 31:30 and the New Covenant which ADONAI made with Israel and Judah. The people with whom He made this covenant were "all Israel," representatives from all the twelve tribes of Israel who were alive in the year 30 CE when Yeshua died on the cross, thereby cutting the covenant. This established a new group, those who were a part of New Covenant Israel. But, not long after the New Covenant's establishment, the composition of the people in it began to change. Beginning in Israel with Cornelius and his household, the people of the Nations, Gentiles, began trusting in Yeshua and becoming covenant partners of the New Covenant. Now, the Israel of the New Covenant is made up of both Jews and Gentiles who have trusted in Yeshua. But, Israel in the flesh hasn't changed. It is still made up of the descendants of

the patriarchs and matriarchs of the twelve tribes, the people today called Jews. The Jewish people who have not trusted Yeshua are not a part of the Israel of the New Covenant right now, but they are a part of ADONAI's Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2) and in covenant with ADONAI through the covenant He made with Abraham. Prophetically, we know that they will become a part of the New Covenant when "all Israel is saved" (Ezekiel 36; Romans 11) and our major prayer is for that day to come soon. But, as disciples of Yeshua, "who is Israel in the flesh, the inheritors of the land which ADONAI gave through His covenant with Abraham" is a question that cannot be ignored. Who is a Jew?

By covenant, ADONAI promised the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants through ADONAI's chosen son, Isaac. Abraham had other sons, but ADONAI said that his seed would be determined through Isaac. (Genesis 21:12). Who Abraham's rightful descendants are is fully established in the Books of Genesis and Exodus as the twelve tribes of Israel, the descendants of the twelve sons of Isaac's son Jacob whose name was changed to Israel. But, things began to get a little murky after the tribes separated into two separate kingdoms, the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah. Who are the physical Israelites, Israel in the flesh today, has been challenged by certain modern teachings, teachings which claim that some Gentiles are physical descendants of Abraham. We will address that question today to refute those teachings and to bring clarity to who is physical Israel today.

These modern teachings began with a belief system called "British Israelism." Traditional Christian theologians call it "a pseudo-archaeological belief," in other words, a false belief. This belief system states that the people of the British Isles, England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, are "genetically, racially, and linguistically the direct descendants" of the ten lost tribes of ancient Israel. The earliest mention of this was by a Frenchman, Monsieur le Loyers, who wrote the book, *The Ten Lost Tribes* in 1590. In it, he claimed that Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Scandinavian, Germanic, and associated cultures were direct descendants of the Northern Kingdom Israelites, those who had been conquered and taken into captivity by the Assyrians. There are also several writings about this from the 19th century including the 1840 book by Englishman John Wilson entitled, *Our Israelitish Origin*. Beginning in the 1870s there were numerous organizations set up in England and the United States which favored British Israelism and gave rise to something called "the Christian Identity Movement." This movement continues today, primarily in far right extremist groups which rationalize racist and anti-Semitic violence.

In the 1960s, British Israelism was taught by Herbert W. Armstrong. He believed that the teaching was a key to understanding biblical prophecy and also believed that he was called by God to proclaim the prophecies to the Lost Tribes before the end times. This belief caused his separation from the Church of God, Seventh Day, because they refused to adopt that teaching. This led him to found the Worldwide Church of God. After Armstrong's death, the Worldwide Church of God abandoned its belief in British Israelism and in 2009, changed its name to Grace Communion International. But, the seeds had been planted.

In 1988, Batya Wooten wrote the book, *In Search Of Israel*, and it and the numerous books she has written since have become Bibles to thousands of Gentile Messianic followers of Yeshua. She teaches that the bulk of Abraham's physical descendants today are not Jews, but descendants of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and that the Jews are only the descendants of the Tribes of Judah and Benjamin and part of the Tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe.

This is how the combined authors of British Israelism believe it came about. Scripture tells us that the Assyrians defeated Israel, the northern kingdom, and carried them into captivity in Assyria. (2Kings 17:1-6). Then, according to British Israelism, following the resettling of the tribes of Israel in the east by the Assyrians in 722 BCE, the Scythians, Cimmerians and Goths descended from these lost tribes. They are the ancestors of those who later invaded Britain. To simplify this complex theology, it is believed by certain groups who follow Yeshua today, that the British are descended from the Tribe of Ephraim and that the Americans are descended from the Tribe of Manasseh. This belief is held in a number of Messianic congregations today, congregations not affiliated with main-stream Messianic Judaism. They adhere to what is called a “two house” theology, a theology based upon the theology of British Israelism. They believe that they are the descendants of the “the lost tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh,” and are one house of Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. According to them, the Jews are the other house, those descended from Judah, Benjamin and parts of Levi. I personally believe that most of those who follow this theology are sincere followers of Yeshua, but do question their doctrine stating that they are descendants of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. This is not a judgment of their hearts, but of the truth of their teaching, itself a barrier today between actual Messianic Judaism and the Messianic congregations who follow this theology.

Why is this important to us today? It’s important because truth is important. Does the Scripture support this belief? Some have used Scripture to make it seem so, but all of their evidence is circumstantial. Today, two house theology followers challenge Messianic Judaism with regard to “who is Israel in the flesh.” But, the truth of Scripture is that the Jews of today do include within their numbers, descendants of all twelve tribes of Israel, including Ephraim and Manasseh and it was also true of the Israel of Yeshua’s day.

After the Babylonian captivity, there were other people groups in the land of Israel. The Samaritans of Israel’s midsection included people descended from the mixture of Israelites and the people brought in from other lands by the Assyrians. And, by the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the physical Israelites, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, lived in every part of the land of Israel from south to north. Yeshua’s disciples that came from the north of Israel were Israelites, but not Judeans. The Judeans were those living in the south, the area of the former Kingdom of Judah. However, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the term Judean began to be applied to all Israelites and that is where the name Jew comes from. All physical Israelites became known as Jews and Scripture proves that their number included some from each of the twelve tribes.

The prophecy of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37 very much relates to this question. In a vision, ADONAI carried Ezekiel out to a valley full of dry bones. He told him to prophesy over them, for the bones to hear the word of ADONAI. *5 Thus says Adonai Elohim to these bones: “Behold, I will cause Ruach to enter you, so you will live. 6 I will attach tendons to you, bring flesh on you and cover you with skin. Then I will put breath in you. You will live. You will know that I am Adonai.”* (Ezekiel 37:5-6 TLV). Ezekiel prophesied over them and began to see the bones come together with tendons, flesh and skin on them. But, there was no breath in them. *9 Then He said to me, “Prophecy to the Ruach. Prophecy, son of man, and say to the Ruach, thus says Adonai Elohim: ‘Come from the four winds, Ruach! Breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’”* (Ezekiel 37:9 TLV). *11 Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say: ‘Our bones are dried up; our hope is lost; we are cut off—by ourselves.’”* *12 Therefore prophesy and say to them, thus says Adonai Elohim: ‘Behold, I will open your graves. I will bring you up out of your graves, My people. I will bring*

you back to the land of Israel. 13 You will know that I am Adonai, when I have opened your graves and brought you up out of your graves, My people.” 14 I will put My Ruach in you and you will live. I will place you in your own land. Then you will know that I, Adonai, have spoken and that I have done it.” It is a declaration of Adonai. (Ezekiel 37:11-14 TLV). “Your graves” is ADONAI’s symbolic language for captivity in Babylon. In proclaiming this, ADONAI said that He would bring the whole house of Israel out of captivity in Babylon and back to *Eretz Yisra’el*, the Land of Israel.

Ezekiel was a priest, a descendant of *Zadok*, a *kohen* in the time of King David. He was taken to Babylon in about 597 BCE in one of the deportations, some eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 BCE. While living in Babylon, he prophesied against the sins of his people who were still in physical Israel. The prophecy about dry bones was initially about the approaching return of the Jews from Babylon to Israel, but it is also an ongoing prophecy, a prophecy of the end times. It is being fulfilled today with Jews today coming from the four winds, north, south, east and west on the earth and returning to Israel.

ADONAI told Ezekiel to “take a stick and write on it, for Judah and the children of Israel,” and then, take another stick and write on it, “for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel.” Then, he was told to “join them together so that they become one stick in your hand.” Then, ADONAI said to Ezekiel: 18 “*When the children of your people speak to you saying, ‘Won’t you tell us what you mean by these?’ 19 say to them, thus says Adonai Elohim: ‘Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph—which is in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel joined with him—and I will put them together with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick. They will be one in My hand.’*” (Ezekiel 37:18-19 TLV). In the northern kingdom, the Tribe of Ephraim had grown in influence and ADONAI frequently used its name to represent the entire nation. In these verses, ADONAI told Ezekiel that He was going to put descendants from of all of the tribes of Israel back into the whole Land of Israel as one kingdom.

It happened in 538 BCE when King Cyrus granted the Jews the right to return to Jerusalem and to Israel. Prior to Judah’s going into captivity, Jeremiah had prophesied: 11 “*So this whole land will be a desolate ruin, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for 70 years.*” (Jeremiah 29:11 TLV). The 70 years is about Israel not giving the land its *Shabbat* rest, the 70 *Sh’mithah* years during their past 490 years. Later the *Kohen* Ezra wrote: 1 “*Now in the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order to accomplish the word of Adonai from the mouth of Jeremiah, Adonai stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his entire kingdom, announcing in a written edict, saying: 2 “Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: Adonai, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build a House for Him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whoever is among you from all His people—may his God be with him—may go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the House of Adonai, the God of Israel—He is the God who is in Jerusalem.”* (Ezra 1:1-3 TLV). In 538 BCE when Ezekiel had been in Babylon for 58 years, the Israelites were granted permission to return home. Their time in exile came to a total of 70 years in captivity when counting from the time that the first captives were taken. Daniel was in the first group of captives taken, some 12 years before Ezekiel was taken.

The prophecy of the dry bones was about the whole house of Israel returning to the land. All of the tribes of Israel were represented when they returned because many from the northern tribes were already living in the southern Kingdom of Judah and went into captivity with the Tribes of Judah and Benjamin. This was because when the two kingdoms split after

Solomon's death, not all of the rebelling tribes went with Jeroboam, the new king for the north, the Kingdom of Israel. (2Chronicles 10:17; 11:3). The territory that ADONAI originally gave to the Tribe of Simeon was completely surrounded within the territory of the Tribe of Judah and not all of them went north with Jeroboam. Many of the Tribe of Levi, Levites and priests, who already lived in the north left the Northern Kingdom for the south after Jeroboam became king. (2Chronicles 11:13-15). They did this because Jeroboam rejected ADONAI and set up golden calves in Dan and Ephraim and appointed his own priests from the other tribes. Solomon's son Rehoboam was the King of Judah. 2Chronicles 11 says this in reference to him: *13 Moreover, the kohanim and the Levites from all their territories throughout Israel presented themselves to him (Rehoboam). 14 The Levites even abandoned their pastures and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem because Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them as kohanim to Adonai, 15 and had appointed his own priests for the high places, for the he-goats and for the calves that he had made. 16 Those from all the tribes of Israel, who had set their hearts to seek Adonai, followed the Levites to Jerusalem to sacrifice to Adonai, the God of their fathers.* (2Chronicles 11:13-16 TLV). I underlined "all the tribes of Israel" to make the point that even at this very early time, all twelve tribes of Israel were living in the south in the Kingdom of Judah. Some from all of the tribes of Israel went to the southern kingdom because of their desire to worship ADONAI. In the time of King Asa of Judah, Rehoboam's grandson, Scripture says: *9 He gathered all Judah and Benjamin, as well as those dwelling with them from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon—for many had defected to him from Israel when they saw that Adonai his God was with him.* (2Chronicles 15:9 TLV). Ephraim and Manasseh were in Judah in the time of Asa and even more Simeonites from the north as well. Some 155 years later, the northern kingdom was destroyed and taken captive. During and after its destruction, some of those living in the north escaped and moved to the Kingdom of Judah. This was about one hundred years before Judah was taken captive to Babylon and during the time that Hezekiah was King of Judah. During Hezekiah's reign, we read this: *1 Hezekiah then sent word to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh to come to the House of Adonai at Jerusalem to keep the Passover for Adonai, the God of Israel. 5 So they decided to issue a decree and to proclaim it throughout all Israel from Beer-sheba to Dan, calling the people to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover for Adonai, the God of Israel. For it had not been celebrated as prescribed for a long time.* (2Chronicles 30:1; 5 TLV). Some of them laughed at Hezekiah's messengers, but some didn't: *11 Nevertheless some men from Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.* (2Chronicles 30:11 TLV). And, they celebrated Passover: *6 The children of Israel and Judah who lived in the towns of Judah, also brought in the tithe of bulls and sheep, and the tithe of the sacred things consecrated to Adonai their God. They piled them in heaps.* (2Chronicles 31:6 TLV). Note that they were: "the children of Israel and Judah" who were living in Judah. In addition to the visitors from the north, who may have stayed, this is another confirmation that the people of Israel, the northern tribes lived in the Kingdom of Judah.

About a hundred years after Hezekiah's time, Judah's sins, the sins of the people of the southern kingdom, had grown so great that ADONAI brought about their defeat and deportation to Babylon. 1Chronicles 9 speaks of this and then states this about those who returned from captivity: *1 So all Israel were registered by genealogies—behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel. Judah was carried away captive to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. 2 The first to settle on their property (upon their return) in their towns were Israelites, kohanim, Levites and the Temple servants. 3 Those from the children of Judah, the children of Benjamin, and the children of Ephraim and Manasseh who settled in Jerusalem*

were:... (1Chronicles 9:1-3a TLV). The first group returning from Babylon included Israelites, priests, Levites, Judahites, Benjaminites, Ephraimites and Manassites. Ezra brought a contingent of people back to Jerusalem from Babylon during the reign of King Artaxerxes: 35 *“Then the exiles returning from captivity sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel: 12 bulls for all Israel,...* (Ezra 8:35a TLV). This sacrifice of 12 bulls was an acknowledgement that all twelve tribes had returned. The prophetess Anna from the Tribe of Asher prophesied over Yeshua: 36 *“Now Anna, a daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher, was a prophetess.” ...* (Luke 2:36 TLV). When the people of the southern Kingdom of Judah came back from captivity, people from the former Kingdom of Israel were included in the group for they had already been living in Judah and had gone into captivity with them. It was when they returned that the two sticks of Ezekiel 37 became one stick. ADONAI regathered from Babylon, “all Israel,” the twelve tribes of Israel, to live in their own land. They returned as Judah and after their return, the southern area was called Judea and the people, regardless of their tribe, were called Jews. A case in point is *Sha’ul* of the Tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5), who said: 39 ..., *“I am a Jewish man from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city.”* (Acts 21:39a TLV). He actually said: “I am a Jew,” Greek, *Ioudaios* (ee-oo-dah'-yos). All Israel continued to live in not only the south, but the whole land of Israel until they were again scattered by the Romans in the year 70 CE. ADONAI is today regathering them, an ongoing process. This means that the people known as Jews who have been scattered over all the earth are people from all of the twelve tribes of Israel and will continue until the time of Yeshua’s return and His reign over all Israel as Son of David. ADONAI said: 26 *“I will cut a covenant of shalom with them—it will be an everlasting covenant with them. I will give to them and multiply them. I will set up My Sanctuary among them forever. 27 My dwelling-place will be over them. I will be their God and they will be My people.”* (Ezekiel 37:26-27 TLV). His covenant was cut with His Son Yeshua’s blood in the year 30 CE. His sanctuary, His holy Temple, will be set up when Yeshua returns. The “ten lost tribes” are a myth. “The whole house of Israel” was and currently is within the Jewish people.

It’s exciting to watch prophecy being fulfilled and also to be a part of it. Everything we have talked about so far today has been about the “whole house of Israel,” the Jews. We understand where the Jews in Messianic Judaism fit into these prophecies. But, how do those of us who are Gentile fit in? We understand our calling today to be like those Gentiles in the 1<sup>st</sup> century who became a part of Jewish congregations. They became a part of Israel, not the other way around. The *Edah* of Israel, the Congregation of Israel, was established by ADONAI and Gentiles have always been a part of it. From the mixed multitude with Israel in the Exodus to the new Gentile followers of Yeshua in Antioch in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, it has always been ADONAI’s plan that Gentiles would come into the *Edah* of Israel. Today, the Messianic *Edah* of Israel is comprised of Jews who have trusted Yeshua and like-minded Gentiles. Messianic Jews are relatively few in number and some Gentiles have been called to stand alongside them. Because of this, these Gentiles have the “calling of Ruth.” We, the Gentiles of *Beit Shalom* and the other Messianic Jewish Congregations, have been called into a Jewish ministry. Our example is Yeshua’s Gentile ancestor Ruth. Ruth was a Moabite, but she followed the calling of ADONAI’s Spirit and left her country. Her mother in law Naomi pleaded for her to return to her own country, but Ruth replied: 16 ....., *“Do not plead with me to abandon you, to turn back from following you. For where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God”* (Ruth 1:16 TLV). The Gentiles of the Messianic Jewish Movement are modern Ruths. We have left the religion of our fathers and adopted Jewish worship, identifying with them in culture, having become an actual part of the Jewish communities of Messianic Judaism.

There is no question that we are living in the last days and Yeshua's return is on the horizon. This is a time that we desperately need unity among His followers, those in the Church, Messianic Judaism and the people of the other Messianic oriented congregations. Just recently, another huge stain has come upon Messianic Judaism from traditional Judaism. It came in the form of an article from The Jewish Telegraphic Agency entitled: "The New Jews of Show Low, Arizona: How a pastor parted with Jesus and led his congregation to Judaism." It was not because of what anyone in our Movement did, but what someone who identified as Messianic, a teacher of two house theology has done. In my online message, I reported this person to be Rico Cortes, a well-known Messianic teacher. I did not do due diligence to learn that it was not Rico Cortes, but Richard Cortes, a completely different person, who went to a conservative rabbi for conversion to Judaism, forsaking Yeshua and saying that everything he did in the past, the using of Jewish symbols and teaching about Yeshua, was in error. Traditional Judaism has identified him and his group of twenty who converted as Messianic Judaism. I sincerely apologize to Rico Cortes for defaming him and his witness of Yeshua. But, Richard Cortes' group were not and never were a part of Messianic Judaism. As a Gentile called into Messianic Judaism, I entreat those who follow the "two house" teaching to forsake it. Seek dialogue with those in Messianic Judaism that we might be made whole. There has never been a time when unity within the body of Messiah has been so needed. I also call to the Church to understand that Messianic Judaism is not trying to take you over. Each part of Yeshua's body has a role to play in reaching our brothers and sisters in traditional Judaism and bringing about the return of our Messiah and King. Yeshua said: **<20>** *20 "I pray not on behalf of these only, but also for those who believe in Me through their message, 21 that they all may be one. Just as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You, so also may they be one in Us, so the world may believe that You sent Me."* (John 17:20-21 TLV). Our unity will lead not only the world to believe, but also our Jewish people. As we celebrate *Sukkot* 5784, pray that the harvest of *Sukkot* and the eternal rest which it promises is near. **<21>** *Chag Sukkot Sameach and Shabbat shalom!*