



The Ephraimite Error

(The Two-House Heresy)

A Position Paper Endorsed by the International Messianic Jewish Alliance and the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America

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A movement alternately known as the "Ephraimite," "Restoration of Israel," "Two- Covenant Israel," or "Two House" movement has recently gained ground in some areas among ardent Christian Zionists. Proponents of this movement contend that members of the "born-again" segment of the Christian church are, in fact, actual blood descendants of the biblical Israelites who were dispersed as a result of the Assyrian invasion of the ancient kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.E.¹

The movement's proponents further argue that these dispersed "Israelites," or "Ephraimites," whose identities have remained undisclosed even to themselves until recent times, primarily settled in areas now recognized as largely populated by Anglo- Saxons. At times they argue that all Anglo-Saxons, and even all of humanity, are descended from these lost Ephraimites. At other times, that only born-again Christians can claim descent. In either case, Christians from Anglo-Saxon lands, such as Great Britain, Australia, Canada, and the United States, can feel assured that they are most likely direct blood descendants of the ancient people of Ephraim.

It is now incumbent upon these members of "Ephraim," they argue, to "accept their birthright" and live as members of Israel.² They urge Gentile Christians to keep the Torah³ in obedience to the Hebrew scriptures, to strive to re-educate Jews and other Christians about their new, "latter-day prophecy," and to work toward the repatriation of the land of Israel by their own number.

Primary among the movement's spokespersons are Batya and Angus Wootten and Marshall, a.k.a. Moshe, Koniuchowsky. The Woottens publish a newsletter entitled the *House of David Herald*, as well as several books. Batya's books include *In Search of Israel*, *The Star of David*, *The Olive Tree of Israel*, and *Who Is Israel? And Why You Need to Know*. Angus' books include *Take Two Tablets Daily*, *A Survey of the Ten Commandments and 613 Laws that God Gave Moses* and *The Messianic Vision*. Other names mentioned by Wootten are Brian Hennessy and David Hargis. Ed Chumney has written a book entitled *The Bride of Christ*, which I was unable to review.⁴ Among the Woottens, I will deal only with Batya's writings.

Moshe Koniuchowsky leads a ministry called "Your Arms to Israel." In addition, he has recently formed an organization named "The Messianic Israel Alliance," which, despite its misleading name, has no affiliation with or endorsement by the International

Messianic Jewish Alliance or any of its affiliates. The movement is growing to the point that it now has some areas of overlap with the Christian Zionist movement as well as the Messianic Jewish

movement. As a result of this, there are several spokespersons in both these groups who advance this teaching while maintaining primary affiliation either as Christian Zionists or as Messianic Jews.

Analysis

Logic and Exegetical Method

Batya Wootten and Koniuchowsky build their theology of "born-again Christians" as Israel on typological and grammatically suspect readings of the stories of the biblical patriarchs and the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.E. In doing so, we will see that they create an artificial and contrived analogy between *type* and *reality*. All the patriarchs of the past are models for Wootten's and Koniuchowsky's present. The rhetoric that follows from this, then, is based on typological foreshadowing.

A Multitude of Nations

Starting with the patriarchs, Wootten argues that Jacob's promise to Ephraim in Gen 48:19 predicted the transformation of Ephraim/Israel into Gentiles.⁵ The phrase reads, "and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations" (Heb. *v'zar'oyihyem'lohagoyim*). This is the first instance of a foundational grammatical error on the part of Wootten (also shared by Koniuchowsky) that presupposes that every time the Hebrew word, *goy*, is employed, it is a reference to a Gentile or a Gentile nation.⁶ Upon this supposition they will build their case.

This erroneous definition resulting from an inadequate knowledge of Hebrew grammar and syntax is one exegetical problem among many that we shall encounter. In the Hebrew Bible and the Apostolic Writings, the word *goy* (English: people or nation; Greek: *ethnos*) may refer to a Gentile nation, or, just as easily, it may refer to the nation of Israel. Thus a *carte blanche* assumption that the words *goy* or *goyim* always refer to "Gentile" or "Gentiles" in scripture is unwarranted and erroneous. In the Hebrew Bible, Jer 31:36 is especially enlightening in this regard, as it states, "'If this fixed order departs from before me,' declares the LORD, 'then the offspring [lit. "seed"] of Israel also shall cease from being a nation (*goy*) before me forever.'" Exod 19:6 is equally illuminating. It states, "'and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (*goy kadosh*). These are the words that you shall speak to the *sons of Israel*.'" Other examples of the term being used to refer to Israel or the Jewish people are: Deut 32:28, cf. 32:45;

Josh 10:12-13; Isa 1:4; Isa 26:2; Jer 31:36; Zeph 2:9.⁷ In the Greek Apostolic Writings, the word *ethnos* refers to the Jewish people in Luk 7:5; 23:2; John 11:48-52; 18:35; Acts 10:22; 24:2,10,17; 26:4; 28:19; 1 Cor 10:18; Phil 3:5. The first contention, then, that *goy* or *goyim* is always translated as Gentile or Gentiles is patently incorrect. It must be determined from the context, and if the context does not call for it, such a translation is unwarranted.

In addition to this, the term "Gentile" is anachronistic as they employ it in this context. At the time of Joseph and Ephraim, the identity of the people was that of a loosely organized kinship group. The concept of "Gentile" as we read it today would have been unknown to the speakers. There was as yet no tribal coalition as we see in the later history of Israel that would have allowed for an in-group/out-group identifier term such as "Gentile." To read that into the text is to read a concept as understood centuries later into the language of the Torah writer.

Koniuchowsky makes the same errors of grammar, logic, and anachronism. In Part I of his four-part article, "The Full Restoration of Israel," he states of Gen 17:5, that the term there, "a multitude of nations" (*hamon goyim*) "literally means a noisy multitude of Gentile nations."⁸ Wootten also builds upon the definition of *hamon*, a term which in some contexts can include the concept of a noisy crowd. She ignores the context in Genesis and argues that "Abraham was to father a great multitude of peoples who would cause a tumultuous commotion, or great noise (about God) throughout the world"⁹ Her implication is that the evangelistic fervor of Christians is what is referred to in the use of the

phrase. The context, however, indicates no such interpretation. Koniuchowsky makes the same argument based on Gen 28:3 but compounds his problems by misquoting the passage. Curiously, although the phrase under discussion is *k'hal ĩamim* (assembly of peoples), Koniuchowsky states, "The Hebrew term found in verse three is '*kehelat goyim*' or an assembly of nations or even better an 'assembly of goyim.'" "Somehow," he continues, "the Father will fill the earth with the physical seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by putting together an assembly of goyim."¹⁰ It may be that Koniuchowsky confuses the verse with Gen 35:11 (*k'hal goyim*). Nevertheless, not only does he misquote *both* words in the phrase, but he makes the same broad-brush statement, that the term *goyim* is always translated as "Gentiles," which it is not. His argument is doubly fallacious.

Building on this same promise of *hamonor m'lo goyim*, Koniuchowsky lays out his arguments. They go something like this:

ARGUMENT 1:

1-A Abraham and Ephraim are promised that their seed will be a multitude of gentiles. 1-B The Jews are not gentiles.

Therefore:

1-C The promise does not refer to Jews.

ARGUMENT 2:

2-A Abraham and Ephraim are promised that their seed will be a multitude of nations. 2-B Gentiles do make up a multitude of nations.

Therefore:

2-C The promise refers to gentiles.

This is the first of many examples of faulty reasoning and poor logic, in which the conclusion does not follow from the premises. First of all, the reasoning in argument 1 is based on a flawed misreading of the Hebrew, as discussed above. There is no promise of gentiles here, as the concept of what a gentile is will not develop for centuries. The context will not allow for such a translation. Thus premise 1-A is false, rendering Argument 1 false as well. If the premise is false, the conclusion must also be false. Argument 2 is similar, and it is a line of reasoning that both Koniuchowsky and Wootten use. Here, passing over the definition of "gentile" for *goy*, they anachronistically ascribe to the English word "nation" the same meaning that it holds in the modern-day period of "nation-state" or race. Based on this modern notion of "nation," they argue that the social- historical people of Israel is only one nation. Therefore it cannot have fulfilled the promise.

In point of fact, however, a nation in ancient biblical times could be any kind of loose kinship federation, such as the nations of Edom, Ammon or Moab (cf. Jer 48:2). Thus it is entirely consistent that Abraham or Joseph could be foreseeing a future that involved a multitude of kinship groupings centered around a people who call themselves Israel. In the case of Abraham, this is demonstrated by his descendants through the line of Ishmael. But even in the case of Joseph, the kinship groups do not have to include gentiles. Israel itself consisted of a number of kinship groups. This reading of Gen 17:5 and 48:19 has been accepted throughout history by both Jewish and Christian exegetes. For Argument 2 above to be true, it must be ruled out that the other group, Israel, could call itself a multitude of nations. But Israel indeed developed into a multitude of nations, as the term was understood in antiquity to refer to kinship groups. Therefore, Argument 2 is also false. Abraham's and Ephraim's seed was predicted to grow exponentially to a multitude of kinship groups, collectively called Israel, a promise clearly fulfilled in the history of Ā Israel and the Jewish people. It does not require looking outside of the traditional social- historical people of Israel in order for the promise to be "fulfilled."

"Dust of the Earth"

This reading of the text betrays another exegetical problem. One of the hallmarks of Koniuchowsky's exegesis is a hyper-literalist reading of a phrase that precludes the common-sense interpretation of that phrase. For instance, he cites Gen 13:16: "And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered." Based on this kind of reading, he argues:

If this promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has been literally fulfilled only through the Jewish people alone, who continue to number only 16 million and can easily and readily be counted, censused (sic) and numbered, then the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is an outright lie! Yahweh lied! ... The promise of physical multiplicity was not fulfilled in Judah alone! That is a numerical and practical impossibility!"¹¹

Koniuchowsky goes on to claim:

At the time that this promise [Gen 13:16] is literally and physically brought to pass it will be absolutely impossible for mankind to even count it, or in any way census it, since mankind is totally impotent and unable to count the dust of the earth. This promise is straightforward, needing absolutely no interpretation or explanation. That same seed will inherit the land eventually to be known as Israel...

Whoever this physical seed would turn out to be it would literally have to be more than the dust particles of the sea and the visible stars of the heaven. This promise must be taken extremely and solely on a literal face value. Any tendency to somehow spiritualize this promise is a lack of faith in Yahweh's literal Word. That would be the very opposite of the faith of Abram himself.¹²

Koniuchowsky uses the phrase "dust of the earth" to argue vehemently that the relatively small and theoretically quantifiable people of Israel as known historically cannot possibly be the fulfillment of Gen 13:16. Any group that fulfills the prediction must, he argues, be incapable of being numbered for its sheer vastness. What he ignores is that the Bible is full of hyperbole — expressions or phrases that communicate much more than the idea being expressed. For instance, Gen 8:17, in describing the plagues against Egypt, states that "all the dust of the earth (*kal ðafar ha-aretz*) became gnats through all the land of Egypt." Clearly this is not meant to be taken literally, to argue that there was not one speck of dust left on the ground in Egypt and that every last speck turned into a gnat. It is a hyperbolic rhetorical style that seeks to get across the point that the number of gnats was vast. 2 Chron 1:9 is even more important for our purposes because it argues that the people over whom King Solomon reigned were "a people as numerous as the dust of the earth." Koniuchowsky has just told us that Israel cannot possibly be meant when referring to "the dust of the earth." He forgot to tell the author of 2 Chronicles, who consciously chose the words of Gen 13:16 to describe his people Israel during the reign of Solomon.

Despite Koniuchowsky's dire warnings, it is not a matter of "spiritualizing" the promises when one recognizes hyperbole in the Bible. It is a matter of being knowledgeable about the rhetorical conventions — the writing styles — used by the biblical writers (see also 2 Sam 22:43; but cf. Isa 40:12).

Wootten betrays a similar ignorance of rhetoric and grammar in her exegesis of Gen 48:4b: "I will make you a company of peoples" (Heb: *v'n'tatichalik'hal ðamim*). She points out that the term for company, or assembly, the Hebrew word *kahal*, is translated elsewhere in the Septuagint into the Greek word *ekklesia*, where it refers to "Congregation or Church."¹³ Her point in making this statement is to argue that the "Church" today is physically and materially the same as the ancient assembly of the *b'nei Israel* in the wilderness.¹⁴ Ironically, the LXX (Septuagint)¹⁵ translation here in Gen 48:4 for "company of peoples" is *synagogasethnwn*, not *ekklesiaethnwn*. To use the word, "Church," is hardly an acceptable way to translate *synagogas*. But the problems with her statement go beyond this. Not only does she incorrectly translate from *kahal* to *synagogas* Church, but, in addition, she mistranslates the term *kahal* in its own right. The term means "assembly," not church. It can refer to any gathering or company of people and is not even used to refer exclusively to Israel (cf. Ezek 16:40;

23:46). The same goes for the Greek, *ekklesia*, which can refer to any gathering of people for religious, secular, or political purposes. In ancient Greek, a town hall meeting can be an *ekklesia*. The term "Church" was used to translate the Greek *ekklesia* centuries later than the writing of Genesis. It is another example of anachronism and an unwarranted, sweeping application of a single word to all uses of that word, whether or not they are granted sufficient grounds by the context.

Wootten's purpose in recasting *kahal* as "Church," in clear violation of grammar and syntax, is to reinforce the argument that the modern-day Ephraimite Christians, who see themselves as physical Israel, are indeed the selfsame "church" that received the Torah on Sinai. Koniuchowsky elaborates, "Let it be clearly understood that the word "church" is nothing more than the *ekklesia* or assembly of the *Tanach*. It is the *same assembly* [emphasis his] that was receiving Torah on Mt. Sinai (Acts 7:37-38)."¹⁶ Using anachronism and mistranslation, Koniuchowsky has with a dash of the pen superseded the social-historical people of Israel with born-again Christians.¹⁷

Anachronism

The contentions of Koniuchowsky and Wootten contain many anachronisms and examples of circular reasoning beside those discussed above. Wootten argues that, since "the Shepherd Messiah" said in John 10:27-28, "My sheep hear my voice," and since ¹⁸ followers of Yeshua hear his voice, therefore, followers of Yeshua are physical Israel.

In another example of misinterpretation of hyperbole, Koniuchowsky interprets Hos 1:10, which states, "Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea which cannot be measured or numbered; and it will come about that, in the place where it is said to them, 'You are not my people,' it will be said to them, 'You are the sons of the living God.'" Based on this verse, Koniuchowsky states,

This verse further reveals to us just where we are going to find the ten lost tribes or the sand of the sea that cannot be counted. The ones who call themselves and are called by Yahweh children of Elohim! Do you know any modern day group of people that run around referring to themselves and claiming themselves to be children of the living Yahweh! [sic] You got it! *The born-again community of Gentile believers is nothing more than the former dispersed House of Israel* [emphasis his].¹⁹

This conclusion is based on several incorrect premises. The first is another hyper-literalist reference to the "sand of the sea" as being a number so vast that it cannot possibly refer to the historical people of Israel. As in Koniuchowsky's hyper-literalist reading of "all Israel" and "the dust of the earth," so here, he ignores the many instances where the phrase "sand of the sea" is clearly used hyperbolically to refer to a very large and vast number. Examples of this include Gen 41:49, which equates Joseph's store of grain to "the sand of the sea." Isa 10:22 refers to his contemporaries in Israel as "like the sand of the sea." Note that Jer 33:22 refers to the descendants of David and the Levites as comparable in number to "the host of the heaven" which "cannot be counted, and the sand of the sea" which "cannot be measured." Even Koniuchowsky and Wootten are not so bold as to claim that this reference to the descendants of David and the Levites is actually a reference to gentiles! Thus Koniuchowsky's disqualification of social-historical Israel as the referent of Hos 1:10 is, again, not warranted.

The second error in the above citation is his leap from the statement in Hos 1:10 that the revived people will be called "children of the living God." Here, he precludes the obvious, that the renewed and revived social-historical people of Israel will be called "children of the living God" and supersedes the people of Israel by claiming that the reference is to born-again Christians. We will see more evidence of this new supersessionism below.

The final error he makes is to assume that the *only* people referred to in the verse must be those of his own time. Again, this is a hopeful assumption but not demonstrable by the context. His argument is another example of fallacious reasoning:

ARGUMENT 3

3-A Based on Hos 1:10, the children of Israel are those who call themselves and are called "children of Elohim"

3-B Gentiles call themselves and are called children of Elohim _____

Therefore:

3-C Gentiles are Israel

Hanging on a Thread

For the argument to be valid and the conclusion (3-C) to be true, he must be able to argue that *no time* and *no people*, present or future, have called themselves or are called by anyone children of Elohim except those that he names. This is patently absurd. We have ample evidence from the post-exilic biblical writers, from the Jewish pseudepigrapha, from the Qumran documents, from the Apostolic Writings, and from the rabbinic literature that Jews during all those periods have called themselves and one another children of Elohim. Further, since Koniuchowsky does not have at his disposal available data about the events of the future, neither can he justifiably disqualify *future* Jewish claimants to the premise 3-A. The conclusion, then, cannot follow from the premises. It is only true if *both* premises provide an irrevocable guarantee for the conclusion. His argument has failed. Instead, all he is left with is a hope "and a hope hanging on a badly unraveled thread."

Parallel Universes

In her book, *The Olive Tree of Israel*, Wootten, drawing her research from the margins of her NIV Study Bible, lays out the history of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah.²⁰ Fundamental to Wootten's argumentation (and shared by Koniuchowsky) is the idea that "*never once did Scripture call them [the Ephraimites] Jews [italics hers].*"²¹ The purpose of her contention here is to make the argument that the Ephraimites, exiles from the despoiled northern kingdom, could not have joined themselves to the Judahites and the related tribes that populated the southern kingdom in sufficient numbers to keep their corporate identity alive. For her, the exile of the northern kingdom automatically transformed that people into gentiles.²² This becomes her warrant for the claim that all (or "born-again") gentiles are in fact Israel.

This effort to create a clear and impenetrable boundary between the northern Ephraimites and the southern Judahites is one of the foundation stones of her and Koniuchowsky's argumentation. Koniuchowsky asserts, "this family split is from Him [God]. He ordained it and desired it so that He could bring to pass the promise He made to the patriarchs."²³ If it can be established that the members of the former northern kingdom cannot possibly be called Jews from the post-exilic period on, then it opens the possibility to ask the question as to how God could allow for 10/12ths of God's people to be annihilated. The obvious answer to this is that God could allow no such thing! The stage is then set to attempt to demonstrate that these "lost tribes" are indeed Christians "that they are not lost at all but have been waiting for this end-time prophetic movement to reveal their true natures. As Wootten states, "God allowed them to become lost among the nations. He allowed them to become "Gentile Israel" [italics hers]."²⁴

If, on the other hand, it can be established that a significant remnant of the northern kingdom's subjects reassimilated into the southern kingdom both before its demise and subsequently during the period of the diaspora, and that, based on this assimilation, the Jews today represent "all Israel," then the Woottens' and Koniuchowsky's arguments fail. In fact, "Gentile Israel" in terms of the biblical world of ideas, is an oxymoron.²⁵

The truth is, Wootten's and Koniuchowsky's claims about the annihilation of the northern Israelites are exaggerated and unwarranted. Wootten states, "For the people of Israel remain divided. The two houses still exist. This fact is repeatedly proven in Scripture." She quotes Jeremiah and makes much of the fact that he is found "speaking to 'The house of Israel and the house of Judah' (Jer 11:10)" as if speaking to two distinct entities.²⁷ Koniuchowsky adds, "From the original Ephraimites of the north, none stayed in the land and remained (2 Kings 17:18)."²⁸ As a matter of fact, while there are indeed cases in which Ephraim and Judah are referred to separately, scripture just as often uses the terms

"Ephraim" and "Judah" in tandem, employing the two terms ("Ephraim," or "Israel," and "Judah") as a parallelism – a poetic way of speaking synonymously of the two groups. In a parallelism, when two elements are listed separately, such as Israel and Judah, the rhetorical purpose is usually to correlate or equate them. It appears that the source of some of Wootten's and Koniuchowsky's confusion is that they have failed to understand another rhetorical convention – that of biblical poetic parallelism and its literary function.

Poetic parallelism is one of the most common stylistic conventions in the Hebrew Bible. Biblical poets put together synonymous parallel units for the purpose of rhetorical effect. In doing so, they render the meanings of the parallel units interchangeable. Stephen Geller lays out how two parallel motifs are structured in one of the most common types of parallelism – the epithet. He states, "The B Line parallel is a description of or circumlocution for the A Line parallel."²⁹ An example of this is Deut 32:30, "How could one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them [A Line parallel], and the LORD had given them up [B Line parallel]?" In this case, it is clear that the reference to "their Rock" and "the LORD" are parallel epithets, both referring to God. It would be foolish to assume that the reference is to two, distinct deities, one named Rock and one named LORD. But this is exactly the argument that Wootten and Koniuchowsky make with respect to Israel and Judah. Psalm 24:7 gives another example: "Lift up your heads, O gates [A Line parallel], and be lifted up, O ancient doors [B Line parallel], that the King of glory may come in!" Here again, the "gates" and the "doors" are synonyms.

James Kugel points out that the purpose of the parallelism is often to accentuate the idea that the B parallel *completes* the A parallel. He argues, "B *must inevitably be understood as A's completion* [italics his]; A, and what's more, B; not only A, but B; not A, not even B; not A, and certainly not B; just as A, so B; and so forth."³⁰ Indeed, Israel and Judah are often cited as two elements in biblical parallelism. But for the most part, the purpose is not that of distinguishing the two but of accentuating their selfsameness. Thus when the Psalmist states, "God is known in Judah; His name is great in Israel," the intention is not to differentiate Israel and Judah but to equate them.³¹ The post-exilic Judahite prophets considered the return of the southern exiles from Babylon to be a restoration for *all* Israel precisely because they made no sharp distinction between Judah and Israel.

"All Israel"

Jer 30:10, while clearly addressing the Judahite exiles (cf. Jer 29:1, 30-31), addresses them as follows: "And fear not, O Jacob my servant," declares the LORD, "And do not be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar and your offspring from the land of their captivity. And Jacob shall return and shall be quiet and at ease, and no one shall make him afraid." For Jeremiah, the return from Babylonian exile entailed the return of Jacob/Israel to its land. Jer 31:17-20 reports that Ephraim has repented (past tense) and describes Ephraim grieving over its own acts. Ezra 2:70, after naming the genealogical list of returnees from the Babylonian captivity, states of the returned exiles, "and all Israel lived in their cities." Here the author implies that the returnees comprised "all Israel," despite the fact that this author was fully aware that not every last member of Israel had in actuality escaped the dispersion and returned to the land. Neh 5:8 mentions that the returnees had redeemed "our Jewish brothers (*acheinu ha-y'hudim*) who were sold to the nations [pl.]," that is, who were in exile not just in Babylon but in captivity to a number of different nations (cf. Ezr 6:21). Neh 5:17 mentions that Nehemiah had at his table "one hundred and fifty Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us."

Again, this indicates that the returning exiles' numbers were swelled by refugees from the nations. Zechariah, writing to the same Medo-Persian returnees, addresses them collectively as "Oh house of Judah and house of Israel" (8:13; cf. 8:15) and distinguishes them from the people of the nations who would also be drawn to the rebuilt Temple (Zech 8:23). In doing this, he equates Judah and Israel and makes a distinction between them and the nations – precisely the opposite of how Wootten and Koniuchowsky imagine the events to have been perceived. In fact, in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the returnees are called Jews and its derivatives 32 times, but are called Israelites,

Israel, children of Israel (*b'nei Israel*), fathers to Israel (*avotl'yisrael*), people of Israel (*'am Israel*), or all Israel (*kal Israel*) 39 times. Add to this the evidence that by the time of the Judahite exile, the Babylonian empire had already swallowed up Assyria and its captive nations. In the year 627 B.C.E., the last Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal, died. In 614 B.C.E. Ashur, the religious center, fell. Nineveh fell in 612, allowing Babylon, which had aligned itself with the Median tribes from the northeast, to capture Assyria. In 539 B.C.E., Babylon, in its turn, fell to Cyrus, king of Persia.³² Thus for the returnees, the restoration of Judah *by definition* entailed the restoration of Israel. All of the former Israelite exiles were as free as were the Judahite exiles to return to the land. It is thus not supported by the biblical record to argue that references to post-exilic Judah are unique to Judah and do not apply to Israel.

Those who returned from exile saw that their numbers included many more than the physical descendants of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi alone.³³ And the returnees, who referred to themselves both as Jews and as the people of Israel, did so not because of tribal affiliation but because they affirmed the theocratic reign of God centered in Jerusalem, the capital of the former kingdom of Judah (*Yehudah*). Wootten argues against the idea that the returnees saw themselves as comprising the collective people of Israel, citing Jer 31:20 to support her position.³⁴ However, throughout the post-exilic prophetic writings runs the call for the dispersed of *both* Israel and Judah to return to the land. That call continues to this day as those whose community involvement has included a *distinct memory* of being part of Israel continue to yearn for their homeland.

Gentile Israel?

But Wootten has more at stake in her efforts to differentiate Judah and Ephraim. The argument she hopes to establish is that the "lost" Ephraimites as a group became "pagan Gentiles" as a result of their assimilation, this despite the fact that nowhere in scripture is that term used to describe dispersed Israelites.³⁵ She and Koniuchowsky have a reason for ignoring or obscuring the record of scripture and its tradition as transmitted in both Jewish and Christian history. They want to transform modern-day Christians into Israel using racial and biological categories. But the scriptural record indicates that the returnees from Judah incorporated all from the northern kingdom who wished to join them and thus, as a result, comprised "all Israel." Despite this, Wootten states of the Israelites, "*When scattered, they were Israelites who lived and worked in Assyria. They struck roots in Mesopotamian society. They were absorbed. They became foreigners. Gentiles [emphasis hers].*"³⁶ But for her, it is not just some who became gentiles...they *all* became gentiles. Koniuchowsky adds to this that "the lost physical sheep of the house of Israel...became the Gentiles and have been living like Gentiles for 2700 years."³⁷

While the biblical record confirms that members of the northern kingdom were scattered, it makes no such leap as to declare that Ephraim is now corporately a gentile people. In fact, long before the two kingdoms separated, the various tribes had so integrally mingled together that one would be hard-pressed to make clear definition between any of the tribes at any point in history after the time of the Judges. A cursory analysis of the names listed in the genealogies in Num 26:35-51 and 1 Chron 7:20-27 shows that from the earliest period, Ephraim mingled with many other tribes, especially Asher, Benjamin, and Judah, two of which purportedly comprised the majority of the populace of the southern kingdom generations later.³⁸ Members of one tribe often lived in the territory of another tribe, even marrying into that tribe. Cultic sites set up in the territory of one tribe were frequented by members of other tribes. H. H. Ben-Sasson notes that in the genealogies can be observed indications "of continual inter-tribal regroupings, the rise and decline of the various sub-units within the tribal frame and their dissolution and eventual merger, as well as the migratory movements of branches to new tribal territories and their frequently distant wanderings from region to region."³⁹ Wootten counters by arguing that, based on restrictions in land transactions, "surely this restriction limited intermingling."⁴⁰ But the evidence is exactly to the contrary. Neither in terms of genealogy nor in terms of territory can clear lines be drawn between one tribe and another. From the time of the earliest confederacy, the tribal groupings offered a way of distinguishing family territorial inheritance, but they did not create the

pure, homogeneous racial lines that Wooten and Koniuchowsky imagine. They were never intended to serve such a purpose.

The reason for the intermingling of the various tribes in the period of tribal conquest is a function of the rising and falling fortunes that are recounted during the period of the tribal confederacy. The Danites migrated north from their territories, starting out in the south and ending up at the headwaters of the Jordan river (Jdg 18); the Benjamites suffered defeat at the hands of other confederacy members; Ephraim spread into the territories of Dan and Benjamin and overlapped the territory of Judah.⁴¹ As a result, the genealogy lists show the names of some families and geographic locations that are at one time said to be part of Judah, and, at another time, those very same families and geographic locations are said to be a part of Benjamin, Dan, or Ephraim. The people of Israel, from the earliest period after entering the land, maintained fluid territorial boundaries between tribes that often shifted and fluctuated. However the people themselves intermarried, worshipped together, settled in one another's territories, and generally interacted so closely that all the tribes were justified in calling themselves by the title, "Israel."

Two Houses?

More importantly, the sense of unity fostered by this intermingling was not interrupted, not even by the division into two kingdoms. Koniuchowsky disputes this, declaring fervidly, "Get it fully settled in your minds that after 921 BC there was and still is [sic] two separate houses of Israel!!!"⁴² But the distinctions are simply not so neat as he desires. The author of 2 Chronicles often makes mention of Israelites from the northern kingdom who lived in the southern kingdom under Rehoboam after the split between the two kingdoms (2 Chron 10:17; 15:9; 31:5-8). It is worthwhile to quote 2 Chron 10:17, which states, "But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them." The importance of this statement is magnified when we read the previous verse, 2 Chron 10:16c, "So *all Israel* departed [from Rehoboam and the southern kingdom] to their tents." In fact, not all Israel departed, but rather many from the northern kingdom remained in Judah, as verse 17 contends. This is merely another example of the rhetorical technique of hyperbole. We have seen that Koniuchowsky sometimes argues for a hyper-literalist reading of the text, disallowing the possibility of this kind of hyperbolic language which is common in scripture.⁴³ Note also, 2 Chron 11:16, which states, "And those from *all the tribes of Israel* [italics mine] who set their hearts on seeking the LORD God of Israel, followed them to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD God of their fathers." This occurred *after* the rise of the northern kingdom — *after* the two kingdoms had separated. In 2 Chron 30:1-11, the southern king Hezekiah invited Ephraim and Manasseh (tribal heads whose names were often used synonymously with Israel to designate the northern kingdom) to celebrate Passover together with his subjects in Jerusalem. Indeed, a great assembly accepted his invitation and came from the north to worship in Jerusalem (2 Chron 30:25; 31:5-6). This unity is underscored as well in 2 Chron 31:1. The Chronicler, in choosing to relay these accounts and not others, did so with a specific purpose. That purpose was to demonstrate the unity of the people Israel around the Jerusalem cultic sites *despite* the tribal split. Daniel 9:11 echoes the sentiment of the Chronicler when he refuses to separate the various tribes in Israel in his prayer of repentance before God.

We have seen that the Chronicler, Jeremiah, and Daniel all portray all Israel as united, during the time of the divided monarchy and after, and despite the fact that the two kingdoms were taken captive in two different periods. This effort of theirs points to the great care that these writers took to portray the exiles from Jerusalem and Judah as nevertheless representative of all the people of Israel. It was not necessary for them that every last Israelite join the southern kingdom in order for Israel to survive as a people. These writers found consequential, and thus worthy of expansion, the information that those who went into the southern kingdom's exile to Babylon in 586 B.C.E. contained a representation of all twelve tribes (cf. Ezra 6:17; 8:35). And for them, this representation was adequate to demonstrate that the whole people had survived as a corporate entity.

The Jerusalem Temple

To those priests who returned with Ezra, the Temple cult mattered most, and integrally tied to Temple practice was the notion that all Israel received the benefits and participated in the activity of the cult – this despite the fact that we have plentiful historic evidence that among the southern kingdom exiles, as well as the northern, many in actuality did not return to Jerusalem upon the decree of Cyrus. Nevertheless, those charged with executing the duties surrounding the Temple cult knew that those duties could not properly be carried out unless they conceived of Israel as a corporate entity. The priests were offering sacrifice for their own people, not for some future imagined people in an age far off in the future. They perceived *their own number* as comprising "Israel" and thus were able to offer sacrifices on behalf of Israel.⁴⁴ Offerings made for the community were made "on behalf of the children of Israel" (cf. Num 8:19; Neh 1:6). It is this collective that survived the great destructions of 722 and 586 B.C.E. And this collective called itself Israel. The Bible never refers to the God of the Israelites, only to the God of Israel – the collective people. The reason for this is that Israel has always been an indivisible collective. Thus the people as constituted in any one point in time in the tradition *is* Israel, the *whole* people Israel, irrespective of the number of tribes actually represented (if such a thing could ever be established, which, of course, it cannot).

Not "Not-Judah"

We know that many of the exiles from the southern kingdom elected to stay in Babylon where they developed a thriving and flourishing community that would continue for centuries. Their continuing presence in exile, however, did not render them "not-Judah" or "not-Israel." Rather, it was a witness to the continued state of exile that has been a part of the experience of the people of Israel even to our present day. Only a part of Israel and only a part of Judah went into exile. But the specter of alienation and exile has nevertheless encompassed a significant part of the biblical story as we know it today. In fact, it is this very response to exile that characterizes how Israel is to live and how Israel views itself today.

When Judah returned from Babylon, Ezra made a command concerning the one who did not join with the returnees, that "all his possessions should be forfeited and he himself excluded from the assembly of the exiles" (Ezra 10:7-8). And yet Isaiah and Jeremiah represent a different perspective. They looked forward to the day that the exiles would return in the arms of the God of Israel (Isa 40:11; Jer 46:27). But all three – the authors of Ezra, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, took very seriously the conscious choice to remain a part of the people, demonstrating that membership in Israel has never comprised merely a racial category but has always been primarily a matter of choice – albeit not arbitrary choice.

Thus the phrase "the Jewish people" has become the title for all of Israel. The term *Jew* (Heb. *yehud*), which is derived from the tribe, *Judah*, encompassed all those who were taken into captivity by the time of the Babylonian exile, both former Israelites and Judahites, "the remnant of Israel" (Jer 31:7. Cf. Jer 50:33; Neh 12:47; Dan 9:11; Lam 2:5). This designation was strong enough that by the time of the writing of Esther, the term *Jew*, derived from *Judah*, could refer to someone from the tribe of Benjamin (Esth 2:5). The deuterocanonical book of Tobit relates a story about Tobit, a Naphtalite exiled to Assyria along with the northern tribes. In Tobit 11:17, in a clear reference to the Israelite exiles in the Assyrian capital of Nineveh, it states, "So on that day there was rejoicing among all the Jews who were in Nineveh." What this tells us is that by the Hellenistic period, the term "Jew" was understood as applying to former members of either the northern or the southern kingdom.⁴⁵ The book of Tobit reports that the Israelite exiles concentrated in Media, where they were able to maintain group cohesion and thus remained connected corporately to the larger Jewish world.⁴⁶ The term had moved beyond a designation of tribal kinship to a designation for a broader social group of adherents to a certain socio-religious entity who desired to be numbered within its boundaries (including gentiles, by the way. Cf. Esth 8:17; 9:27).⁴⁷ By the time of the Hellenistic period, the term *Jew* identified those of all the former tribes who dwelt in the diaspora and who affirmed a particular religious system. Nevertheless, the rabbis were and are ever mindful that the term *yehudis* not completely adequate to

describe their people, preferring always to use the terms *am Israel*, *b'nei Israel*, *beit Israel*, *kneset Israel*, or just plain *Israel* for these selfsame Jewish people.⁴⁸

Israel in the Apostolic Age

The Apostolic Writings (New Testament) reflect this Hellenistic usage. The author of Acts describes Peter referring to his Jewish audience members as "all the house of Israel" (Acts 2:36; cf. 4:10). The author continues by referring to the Jewish leaders as the "Council of the children of Israel" (Acts 5:21; cf. also 10:36; 21:28). Acts 13:24 refers to John's proclamation of his baptism of repentance "to all the people of Israel." His audience was comprised of Jews, not gentiles. The apostolic record is reinforced by the later rabbinic evidence that the Jewish people in the rabbinic period also saw themselves as comprising "all Israel." In Acts 26:7, Paul refers to the hope of "our twelve tribes." We notice also that Luke 2:36 mentions Anna as being from the tribe of Asher. Paul states that he himself is of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5). Thus some members of non-Judahite tribes still maintained a memory of their original tribal affiliations. Yeshua claims that his followers are to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30). Their function here is that of representatives of the full twelve tribes.

James (Ya'akov), the apostle sent *to the circumcision*, according to Paul (Gal 2:9), that is, to the Jewish people, not to the gentiles, addresses his epistle "to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad" (Jas 1:1). Yet Koniuchowsky, making a circular argument, states of Jas 1:1, "If the ten tribes remained lost and nowhere to be found why would James write to them and call them brethren of faith in verse 2 of James chapter One?"⁴⁹ Why indeed? Because Ya'akov considered the Jewish people of his day to represent all twelve tribes. But Koniuchowsky's conclusion *requires* the premise that the ten tribes are lost. Ya'akov himself, by addressing the twelve tribes, indicates precisely the opposite.

In fact, the Apostolic Writings make no mention whatsoever of a gathering of lost Ephraimites. Instead, they portray the gathering of gentiles as a *novum*, an unexpected move in the history of redemption. Never are the gentiles referred to as Ephraim. Moreover, these gentiles are not called upon to receive circumcision, neither at the time of the writing nor in the future. If they were Israelites, they would be expected to receive circumcision. There could be no discussion of a gradual easing into circumcision. When Abraham was given the sign of circumcision, he himself had come out of paganism just as Paul's converts had. But as soon as God had given him the command, he went "in the very same day" and circumcised himself, his son, and all his male servants (Gen 17:23). As gentiles, those who became followers of Yeshua were not required to undergo circumcision precisely because they had no known physical connection to Abraham.

When Ya'akov in Acts 15:15-18 cites Amos 9:11-12, he is referring to a promise for a future age when all the gentile nations will accept the jurisdiction of the Tabernacle of David. For Ya'akov, the future kingdom has broken into the present with Jews and gentiles experiencing a foretaste of that Messianic Age through Messiah Yeshua.

In Romans 11:7-14, Paul states that salvation has come to the gentiles in order to make Israel jealous. If gentile believers are Israel, then how can Israel make Israel jealous? Yet in Rom 11:13-14, Paul claims that a major purpose for his ministry to gentiles is specifically to make Israel jealous. He himself makes a clear distinction throughout his writings between gentiles and Jews. Contrast this with the way that Paul's references to Israel and to Jewish people are interchangeable.

In Romans 15:8-12, when Paul cites scripture to encourage his readers about the unity of Jews and gentiles in Messiah, he does not quote passages dealing with some future regathering of the northern Israelite tribes, although, if Koniuchowsky and Wootten were correct, one would expect him to do precisely that. Instead, he quotes passages that refer to the eschatological renewal of the gentiles. In v. 8, the work of Messiah on behalf of the circumcision is "to confirm the promises to the fathers." What is the purpose of the Messiah's work on behalf of the gentiles? "To glorify God for his mercy"

(Rom 15:9). There is no reference to any promise to the gentiles' fathers. This work of Messiah is a foretaste of the Age to Come, when all the nations of the world will acknowledge the God of Israel.

Thus the Ephraimite message undermines the great power of the message of the Apostolic Writings. It makes a message of hope and comfort for all peoples regardless of their heritage, regardless of their station in life, into a racist and race-based plan of salvation for those with the proper bloodlines.

Demonstrating deep ignorance of rhetorical devices such as hyperbole and parallelism, of proper grammar, syntax, and context, of the historical record of the experience of the post-exilic people of Israel, Wootten and Koniuchowsky have made their case. When the exegetical, syntactical, and interpretive data are surveyed more closely, however, the data reinforce the contention that the promises to Israel were not transferred to gentiles because of the "lost tribes." Rather, significant numbers of northern Israelites assimilated with the Judahites, both during the period of the southern kingdom and during the post-exilic period, when large numbers of Israelites who had maintained their identity as Israel, even in Assyrian captivity, returned to the land and joined with their kinsfolk from the south to perpetuate the covenant community of Israel.

Not My People

The book of Hosea is important for Wootten's and Koniuchowsky's arguments. Hosea prophesied to the northern kingdom shortly before, during, and after its fall. Hosea described the awful judgment to be meted out against Israel and its final eschatological restoration. In Hos 1:9, Hosea's wife gives birth to a son whom God commands to be named *Lo-ammi*, "Not my people." Wootten combines this verse and others in Hosea that describe Israel's dispersion in Assyria to claim, "Therefore the Lord decreed that they would become indistinguishable from the Gentiles" He said they would become, *Lo-Ammi* "Not A Recognizable People" [italics hers].⁵⁰ The scripture does not state, however, that *Lo-Ammi* means "Not a Recognizable People." Wootten adds those words herself. According to Wootten, the collective people of Ephraim, that is, northern Israelites, have ceased from being a people before God but continue to exist as individual members of Israel "individuals who are now gentiles but for whom the promises to Israel continue to stand.

The problem here is again twofold. On one hand, Wootten and Koniuchowsky are selective in their choices of scripture. They cite verse 1:9, "for you are not my people and I am not your God," in support of the idea that Ephraim has ceased to have a corporate identity until the time of the final restoration of all things. However, they ignore other verses such as Jer 31:36, "'If this fixed order departs from before me,' declares the LORD, 'then the offspring of Israel also shall cease from being a nation (Heb. *goy*) before me forever.'" Hosea and Jeremiah are responding to the tragedy of exile in two different ways. And yet the difference is not so great as may appear at face value. For Hosea's call for the restoration of Israel is not limited to the distant future. In Hos 14:1-8, speaking prophetically, Hosea calls out to the Israel of his *own day* to repent and offers full restoration to them. The promise is not to some future time, but to Hosea's present and to Hosea's own people. Jeremiah also expects that from among the exiles would come those who desire to repent. It is not uncommon to see this kind of alternation among the prophets between calls for repentance among their own kinsfolk as well as an eschatological call for a future age of full restoration (cf. Jer 29:31-30:24).

This expectation of full restoration has been a product of the experience of exile from the time of the prophets into the modern period of rabbinic Judaism. The call is for a future time when all Israel, many of whose members are scattered to this day throughout the globe, returns to the land and to gather together under the anointed Redeemer figure. Such a call does not, however, demand that those scattered peoples must now be gentiles. For Jews who have had strong, centuries-old traditions and memories of their communities' sojourns in Persia, in Egypt, in Yemen, and in Africa, this hope has reigned supreme since the time of exile. Much more evidence than what has been brought forward based on Hosea's prophetic naming of Ephraim as "Not my people," must be given in order to claim that God has eradicated 10/12ths of Israel. Jer 31:36 precludes such a reading. To be sure, such hyperbolic language is used against Judah as well. Isa 22:4b states concerning Judah, "'Do not try to

comfort me concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people." And yet the book of Isaiah is full of words of comfort for future restoration. Jeremiah, who lamented the destruction of Judah, stated prophetically about it: "And I will scatter them among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them until I have annihilated them" (Jer 9:16). Words of harsh judgment and annihilation ring out repeatedly in scripture against *both* the northern and the southern kingdoms. Neither Israel's sin nor its punishment was any greater than Judah's. In fact, Jer 3:11 states, "Faithless Israel has proved herself *more* righteous than treacherous Judah." Jeremiah goes on to call out to northern Israel to repent and promises that God will receive them one-by-one to the restored post-exilic Jerusalem: "'Return, O faithless sons,' declares the LORD; 'For I am a master to you, and I will take you one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion' (Jer 3:14)." Other verses that indicate that Judah's sin is just as grievous as northern Israel's include Jer 3:10; 5:11, 20-31; 11:10, 17; 12:14; 15:7; 32:30, 32; 36:2; 44:11; Ezek 9:9; Hos 5:5, 9-14; 8:14; 11:12; 12:1-2; Mic 1:5, 9; Zech 12:1-9. The sheer number of these verses clustered together in the exilic and post-exilic prophets demonstrates that there is a motif of judgment that incorporates *both* northern Israel and southern Judah, and thus the attendant restoration includes them both together as well. In fact, in Jer 9:26, both Judah and northern Israel are named among the *uncircumcised* who will be punished. Jeremiah addresses his audience in Judah as the "House of Israel" (Jer 10:1). And his promise of restoration to the land after exile is for *both* of them. Note Jer 30:3-4: "'For, behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel and Judah.' The LORD says, 'I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers, and they shall possess it.' Now these are the words which the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah." This promise was fulfilled with the return to the land under Ezra and Nehemiah (cf. Jer 33:7).

Yet although the diaspora has been a part of the experience of Israel since the times of the two captivities (722 B.C.E. AND 586 B.C.E.), Koniuchowsky argues that the diaspora occurred only in 70 C.E. with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.⁵¹ This is incorrect. Even during the time immediately preceding the destruction of the Temple, the people did not have autonomy in the land and were controlled by the Romans. The experience of the diaspora is much older than Koniuchowsky claims. This historical error causes Koniuchowsky to attribute to northern Israel and them alone the continued statements about exile that are found in the prophetic writings, when, in fact, we know from biblical, epigraphic, textual, and archaeological evidence that thousands of Jews were living all over the known world by that time.

History

But how do they claim it happened? How did the Ephraimites turn into gentiles? Much of their argumentation is circular as we have seen above. God promised Abraham and Joseph that their descendants would be as numerous as the sand of the sea. Jews do not fulfill that promise (they assert). Therefore, the promise must be for gentiles. Or there is the argument that God promised that Israel would call upon God. Jews do not call upon God (implicit in their argument). Christians do call upon God. Therefore, Christians are Israel. God promised that Israel would be "Not My People" and at the same time promised Israel's restoration. Israel assimilated into the nations and became gentile. Therefore, the promised restoration is to the gentiles. All of these circular arguments have been treated above.

However, Wootten and Koniuchowsky also attempt to give some historical basis for their fantastic claims. As mentioned above,⁵² the split between Israel and Judah during the time of the monarchies precipitated this great historical drama. They argue that northern Israel began to adopt pagan customs, ignoring the fact that the record of the whole history of Israel, beginning with the time of the exodus from Egypt, includes accounts of idolatry, and yet the people never lose the designation, "Israel." Nevertheless, Wootten and Koniuchowsky construct a scenario in which the idolatry of northern Israel was so extensive that they became "Ephraimite pagans."⁵³ This group of pagans, argues Koniuchowsky, "would one day become hidden as individuals within the Christian Church through Yahweh's program of the regathering of Ephraim through Messiah Yahshua."⁵⁴ But how did

we get from here to there? Koniuchowsky explains by describing the global dispersion of these northern Israelites. "Thus," he claims, "was born the ten lost tribes of Israel."⁵⁵ Koniuchowsky sees no hope for a corporate identity for the northern Israelites until the time of Yeshua (or "Yahshua" as Koniuchowsky addresses him). Again, working with circular arguments, Koniuchowsky claims that the statement of Yeshua in Matt 15:24, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," indicates that non-Jewish followers of Yeshua are in fact Israel. Koniuchowsky boldly states, "*In other words Paris, London, Hong Kong, Tehran, Beirut, Tokyo, New York, Boston, Philadelphia etc., are all considered cities of Israel by our Heavenly Father...the globe is 'His Israel [emphasis his].*"⁵⁶ Yet, Yeshua was clear when giving instructions to his disciples in Matthew 10:5-6. He specifically *ruled out* the gentiles *and* the Samaritans, whom Wootten and Koniuchowsky claim as their own, saying, "*Do not go in the way of the gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" In saying this as Matthew reports, Yeshua, during the time of the Second Temple, made a clear distinction between those of the house of Israel (Jews) on one hand and the gentiles and Samaritans on the other.

While there is ample evidence that post-exilic Israel saw itself as the sole heir of the title "Israel," there is further evidence that, not only Yeshua, but also the post-exilic prophets continued to see a distinction between Israel and the nations. Wootten and Koniuchowsky argue that the gentiles *were* Israel after the Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C.E. Yet the author of Isaiah, in 11:12, writes that God will assemble Israel and Judah, but offers no such promise to the nations in that particular context. Instead, in the same verse, he writes that "he [God] will lift up a standard to the nations." Israel and Judah are restored, but the nations are not in need of restoration as they were never part of the people of God in the first place. To be sure, God cares about the nations, and God will gather the nations, but not for repentance and restoration as he does for Israel. Rather, God's concern for the nations is for salvation (cf. Isa 49:6).

In the mission speech of 10:5-6, Matthew records Yeshua sending his twelve disciples only to other Jews. And even in the case when Matthew writes of gentiles, we do not see evidence that those gentiles became Yeshua's followers or disciples. The magi in Matt 2 return to their homeland. It is never recorded about the Centurion in Matt 8 that he becomes a disciple. The same is even true of the Centurion who acknowledged Yeshua as Son of God in Matt 27:54. Those in Yeshua's immediate circle of followers were Jews. This is the reason that the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10 caused such an uproar "because it was a *novum*, unprecedented during the time of Yeshua's earthly ministry.

Who Is Israel?

Wootten and Koniuchowsky give contradictory evidence as to how all believing Christians throughout history could be physically descended from the ancient northern Israelite exiles. At times, they argue that all people on *earth* are physically descended from Israel. Koniuchowsky declares that "*you can rest assured that almost everyone on this planet has a drop if (sic) Israelite blood since Yahweh' (sic) blessing of physical multiplicity would fill the globe through Ephraim's banishment and subsequent intermarriage and assimilation [emphasis his].*"⁵⁷ Wootten adds, "While we are asleep, for all we know, He could be turning the whole world into the seed of Abraham."⁵⁸ At other times, Koniuchowsky back-peddles, conceding only that the believing followers of Yeshua may only include "perhaps some true Gentiles."⁵⁹ Still other comments are made in which believing followers of Yeshua are designated "another 'sect' of Judaism," without any explanation as to how they can be a sect of Judaism and not Jews!⁶⁰

Wootten changes direction and argues a different angle when she declares that when Paul spoke of gentiles being "grafted in" to the olive tree of Israel (Rom 11:17-24), "they became natural branches *at that time!*" From this she reasons that "any children born to these people [to whom Paul wrote] were born of *natural branches!* Furthermore, if *you* [the modern-day Christian reader] are one of their descendants, *you are a natural branch!* [italics hers]"⁶¹ Thus Wootten and Koniuchowsky wildly contradict themselves in their efforts to explain how non-Jewish Christians today can be natural

descendants of ancient Israelites. On the one hand, all people are physical Israelites; on the other hand, Israelite status is conferred only when one is "grafted in" to the olive tree of Israel.

Wootten tries to put the argument to rest by quoting Paul in Gal 3:29,⁶² "If you belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham's *seed* [sperm], heirs according to *the* promise." This portion of Galatians is where Paul makes the case theologically how it can be possible for gentiles to join in the blessings reserved for the people of Israel. Paul, too, shares a biologically-based understanding of the blessing of the *sperma* of Abraham. But rather than arguing that *all* followers of Yeshua are in themselves direct physical descendants of Abraham, as do Wootten and Koniuchowsky, Paul states the following: "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ." Thus Paul specifically refutes the notion that the gentiles gain entrance into the people of God through "seeds"... "as referring to many, but rather to one, ...that is, Messiah" (cf. Gal 3:19). Paul argues that it is only through their standing in Messiah that gentiles can claim acceptance into the people of God. That acceptance is not based on any hint of physical descent from Abraham by any individual except Messiah Yeshua in whom the gentiles have obtained an inheritance. And neither is it a claim to physical descent to have standing "in Messiah," any more than our sitting "in the heavenlies" (Eph 2:6) means that we are sitting on clouds!

Abraham - the Second Adam

Koniuchowsky makes Joseph the typological paradigm for his gentile/Israel. He argues that just as Joseph's brothers did not recognize him, so Jews today do not recognize those formerly gentiles, now Israel.⁶³ Again, this is no argument. It is typological and no doubt inspiring to Mr. Koniuchowsky, but it does not demonstrate how it can be that gentiles are Israel.

What about genealogy? Is it statistically possible that everyone on earth is descended from one man? Only if that one man be Adam. Their theory would require that no one but Abraham had ever produced offspring that survived - that Abraham indeed be the "new Adam." For any offspring that were produced before or during Abraham's life, including all their descendants throughout history cannot exist according to Wootten's and Koniuchowsky's theory. Wootten desperately tries out another angle to this genealogical argument, contending that since the earliest followers of Yeshua were Jewish and Samaritan (hence Ephraimite), and since those early followers certainly produced offspring, then today's followers of Yeshua, although considered gentiles, are actually offspring of those early Jewish and Samaritan believers.⁶⁴ Thus, she reasons, even if the reader were to discount her other arguments, the reader must accept that today's Christians, as "descendants" of the earliest believers are indeed physical Israel. Again, the contention is statistically and historically untenable. We have numerous accounts from the patristic writers that the early Christian message was widely accepted by thousands and thousands of former pagans. How then, can today's Christians be heirs, not of those former pagans, but only of the earliest Jewish (or Samaritan) followers? The argument is patently weak. Secondly, descendants of Jews, by Wootten's own definition, are not descendants of Ephraim. Finally, as we will see, Wootten and Koniuchowsky discount the Middle East as the source of these Israelite descendants and claim that they are found primarily in the West. Yet, if one were to follow the logic of this argumentation of Wootten's, if any Christians today can make the claim to physical descent from the early Jewish followers of Yeshua, it should be Christians of North African, Egyptian, Syrian, and Palestinian descent, for all of which there is indeed evidence of the presence of Jewish or Jewish-influenced communities that followed Yeshua from the second century onward.⁶⁵ However, Wootten and Koniuchowsky ignore the people from these geographic areas and, moreover, have only harsh words against the Palestinians.⁶⁶

are the enemy to be vanquished by this new Israel. Koniuchowsky states that "the Jewish people will never ever conquer the Palestinians, Arabs, Edomites and sons of Esau [all the most likely candidates for his pseudo-genealogy, but all non-white], until they are reunited with one heart...into one massive army...with non-Jewish Israel [!]"⁶⁷

Crypto-Jewish Ephraimites?

Koniuchowsky even makes the case that the crypto-Jews of Spain, known to have come from Jewish descent, are in reality Ephraim. He does not explain how self-proclaimed Jews could become Ephraimites in 10th through 16th century Spain, but he claims them as his own regardless.

Koniuchowsky tries another angle when he quotes Don Isaac Abarbanel, a medieval Jewish philosopher. Koniuchowsky accepts as literal the rabbinic Jewish metaphorical designation of the church as Edom. From there, he argues that the Christians of European descent, as Edom, are part of this same Ephraimite people, despite arguing, as quoted above, that the Edomites are the enemy! He states that the European churches "were made up of many very lost Ephraimites and Edomites."⁶⁹ But although we know that the references to the church as Edom in rabbinic Judaism are metaphorical, Koniuchowsky accepts this designation as historically valid.⁷⁰

Both Koniuchowsky and Wootten visibly struggle to make the case for this physical inheritance. Yet, like their exegetical arguments, their "historical" arguments tend to be circular, unhistorical, contrived, and based on false or unproven premises. It may be that they sense the weakness of these arguments, for ultimately, they both have to resort to the *argumentum ad ignorantiam* (argument to ignorance), the classic logical fallacy. This fallacious argument is that because a claim cannot be proven false; therefore, it is true. However to make such an argument is by definition to fail to substantiate that same argument. The burden of proof is on Wootten and Koniuchowsky. It is their responsibility to come up with solid arguments to support their claims. Yet Wootten's reply to the challenge to demonstrate her claim that non-Jewish followers of Yeshua are Israel is, "No one can prove that they are " – and *no one can prove that they are not!* [italics hers]⁷¹ This is no argument.

Ultimately, the argument made is purely subjective " – if you *feel* that you are Israel, then you are. Wootten illustrates: "It will be as it was when you were born from above: You knew in your 'knower.'...So it is regarding the truth of your heritage: You cannot prove it. But neither can any man *disprove it* [italics hers]."⁷² Koniuchowsky adds, "Genealogy is an issue of faith in who you think you are."⁷³

This *pseudo*-genealogy that Wootten and Koniuchowsky have created is ultimately a desperate and contrived one " – one that exists if you "know it" in your heart. This differs drastically from kinship groups that have shared communal memories of kinship that are supported by a rich history of literature, archaeology, and epigraphic evidence. Wootten and Koniuchowsky are unable to see a difference. But the differences are striking. One has a subjective, "touchy-feely" base; the other is based in history, memory, kinship, and shared traditions.

The Ephraimite Error (concerned)

British Israel

We still have to answer the question as to how these physical descendants of Abraham made their way from ancient Canaan through ancient Israel to places as far-flung as Australia and Canada. Our authors have already explained the dispersion of the northern Israelites to other nations " – primarily Assyria. But it is a long trek from Assyria to Australia! Koniuchowsky takes his clues from Hosea 12:1 and 13:5, which state that Ephraim will pursue or be swept up by an "east wind" (Heb. *kadim*). The east wind, as it sweeps into Israel from the deserts of the east, is a hot, dry wind that scorches and leaves the land parched and barren. It is often used as a metaphor for God's judgment, as in Psa 48:8 [English: 48:7], Job 27:21, and Jer 18:17, where it refers to the *southern* kingdom being expelled "on the day of the east wind" (*bayomkadim*). This is significant in light of Koniuchowsky's later contention that the Judahites did *not* experience global dispersion.⁷⁴ But the term can also be a reference to vacuousness and emptiness, as in Job 15:2. To argue directly from this phrase that the Ephraimites would, following the westerly wind currents, migrate to *Great Britain* is again to argue for a conclusion that simply does not follow from the evidence. The cryptic references to the east wind in Hosea 12:1 and 13:5 are merely references to the severity of the judgment. They make no geographical claims about Israel.

But pursuing this line of reasoning, Koniuchowsky then adds that Zech 10:8-9 states that the people of Ephraim will be summoned by Yahweh from "all the western nations where they have been sowed (sic).⁷⁵ These verses, however, make no mention of "western nations," stating only that Israel will remember him "in far countries" (Heb. *merkhakim*). Yet Koniuchowsky, based on these verses, boldly asserts that "all land today west and northwest of Israel such as the Americas, North, Central & South, as well as Europe and the British Isles are all locations of major population centers of Ephraimites."⁷⁶ Wootten contends that these lost Ephraimites would by now exist in all the nations, but she adds, "Of necessity, these nations would primarily, but not exclusively, be located in the West."⁷⁷ It is significant to note that the areas that Koniuchowsky names are primarily populated today by white anglo-Saxons, although Koniuchowsky does concede that Russia is another area of settlement, an area also, conveniently, populated by white, although Slavic, people.⁷⁸ In fact, when Koniuchowsky quotes Rashi to argue that the reference to "Sinim" in Isa 49:12 is to the south, he skips China and Africa completely and argues that it refers to Australia!⁷⁹ Further, according to his theory, any follower of Yeshua who is of the descendants of Esau or Edom or Ishmael is disqualified, since Koniuchowsky "nullif[ies] any claims by Islam and Ishmaelites."⁸⁰ This will become significant as we compare this movement to the eighteenth-century Anglo-Israelite movement. Koniuchowsky goes on to construct a convoluted history of development based on questionable etymologies and obscure geographic references to support his claims.⁸¹

Rabbinic Attestation

Koniuchowsky argues vigorously that rabbinic tradition supports his claim. This bold contention flies in the face of 2,000 years of rabbinic history. Koniuchowsky interprets rabbinic expectation for the regathering of the people to be consistent with his own theology. However to do so is to ignore the whole corpus of rabbinic literature. Throughout rabbinic literature, the reference to the Jewish people interchangeably as *b'nei Israel*, *Israel*, *kal Israel*, *kneset Israel*, *am Israel*, *klallIsrael*, et al, are too numerous to list. The perception during the rabbinic period of the people of Israel as united was not shaken by the political rise or fall of kingdoms during the biblical era. The rabbis perceived the people Israel as a whole people. The election of one entailed the election of all. The destruction of those destined for perdition only allowed for the survival of the corporate group. Thus developed the idea that "all Israel be surety for one another" (*Israel 'aravinzel'ze*) as a way of demonstrating the "wholeness of the nation."⁸² The early rabbis believed that punishment of the sinner released the corporate people from punishment. According to Urbach, virtually all of the Tannaitic Midrashim contain the homily, "And that soul shall be cut off from among his people" then his people will be at peace."⁸³ The multitude of attestations of this saying indicate the strong sense of unity and wholeness that has pervaded rabbinic tradition. For the rabbis, "Israel was 'as one body, as one soul.'" ⁸⁴The rabbis of the Talmud and Mishnah demonstrated no concern for any supposed lost Ephraimites "if any former Israelites had been cut off in ages past, it was for the purpose of the remnant being at peace. Nor did the rabbis view Christians as Ephraim. In fact, as stated above, the preferred designation for Christians was Edom, not Ephraim. They did not equate Christians with pagans either. The *halachot*(rabbinic interpretations of biblical laws) that the rabbis developed for Christians differed from that which they developed for pagans.⁸⁵ To argue, as Koniuchowsky does,⁸⁶ that the rabbis support his position, is to ignore the vast body of rabbinic evidence to the contrary as well as the whole of rabbinic history.

Parallels to Anglo-Israelism and Racial Theory

Where have these ideas of Wootten's and Koniuchowsky's come from? The sources they give are few. Koniuchowsky cites Yair Davidy as a major source,⁸⁷ but attributes to him few specific citations. Neither he nor Wootten make any mention of another probable source, the writings produced during and after the eighteenth century movement called Anglo-Israelism or British-Israelism. And it is for good reason that these sources are not mentioned, as they are popular among some American anti-Semitic groups for their pro- white, racial claims to being Israel. Wootten and Koniuchowsky make the

same pro- white, racial claims, although they do not cite any Anglo-Israelite authors. Nevertheless, the parallels between their teachings and those of Anglo-Israelism are uncanny and should be discussed.

One of the best known proponents of Anglo-Israelite theology was Herbert W. Armstrong, whose "Worldwide Church of God," based in Pasadena, California, grew into an international movement. Although Armstrong is now deceased, the church recently gained media attention when it repudiated its former teachings and joined the mainstream evangelical movement. However, the Anglo-Israelite movement originated in England with a man named Richard Brothers (1757-1824).⁸⁸

Both Wootten and Koniuchowsky share many theories with traditional Anglo-Israelite teachings, although they acknowledge no dependence on them. I will list several parallels that are striking in their agreement.

Both groups (Anglo-Israelites and Ephraimites) build their theories on the mythic story of the ten "lost tribes" of the northern kingdom. However, there is one significant difference between the two groups, and that is that the "Ephraimite," or "Two House" movement rejects the Anglo-Israelite claims that Jewish Israel is under a divine curse.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Wootten and Koniuchowsky share with Anglo-Israelites the concern to distance the two tribal groups, Israel and Judah. As Herbert W. Armstrong, stated,

This distinction [between Israel and Judah] is vital if we are to understand prophecy...The next place where the term 'Jew' is mentioned in the Bible, the House of Israel had been driven out in captivity...and the term only applies to those of the House of Judah. There are no exceptions in the Bible.⁹⁰

Both groups put great store by suspect etymologies and often their contrived etymologies are identical, pointing to direct dependence. For instance, both argue that the term "British" is derived from the Hebrew *b'rit*(covenant) and *ish*(man), thus "man of the covenant (Wilson)" or "covenant of man (Koniuchowsky)."⁹¹ However, the problem is that the Hebrew *b'ritish* cannot be correctly translated either way. Both are nonsensical grammatically. It is thus no surprise that I have been unsuccessful in finding any etymologically sound dictionary that makes any mention of such derivation. Martin adds that "every major work on the subject of English derivatives reveal a total absence for support for the Anglo-Israelite contention that there is a connection between the Anglo- Saxon tongue and the Hebrew language."⁹²

The Anglo-Israelites focus strongly on the biblical passage that states that Joseph made the younger son, Ephraim, first-born, making Ephraim preeminent among the tribes. John Wilson wrote in 1877, "The Birthright or heirship to the Promises made to the Fathers was given to the GENTILES in a way in which it was never bestowed upon the people called Jews."⁹³ I shall quote extensively from Wilson, who wrote sixty responses to questions posed to Anglo-Israelites. There he based his argument on Gen 48:19 and compared it to Rom 11:25, as do Wootten and Koniuchowsky, even making identical errors of interpretation.⁹⁴ Wilson also argued that the salvation of "all Israel" must entail the salvation of the "lost" Israelites.⁹⁵ He made a distinction between "backsliding *Israel*" and "treacherous *Judah* [italics his], as do Wootten and Koniuchowsky.⁹⁶ Like Koniuchowsky, Wilson invites the Jews to join with him and enjoy the "privileges of Ephraim," when he states, Our view facilitates the conversion of the Jews, because it enables us to approach them upon greater terms of equality, and not as magnifying them in the flesh, which must always be a hindrance to their embracing Christianity, whereby they lose that very *caste* on account of which they are valued. It is surely better to invite 'the Jew' to join the commonwealth of Israel and to partake of the privileges of Ephraim, 'My Firstborn' and of being set among '*the children*' of Joseph, whose is '*the Birthright* [italics all his]."⁹⁷

His peculiar reference to "the Jew" in the singular to refer to Jewish people at large is parallel to Wootten's writing, where she peppers her book, *The Olive Tree*, throughout with references to "the Jew,"⁹⁸ using the term as a disembodied, abstract singular to reference an impersonal and thus removed "other." Koniuchowsky also uses the term in this manner.⁹⁹ Wilson, Wootten, and

Koniuchowsky all point to the area north of Israel as the locus of the ancient forebears of the Saxons.¹⁰⁰ Like Wootten and Koniuchowsky, Wilson equates the British Isles with the Isles of Tarshish (Psa 72:10).¹⁰¹ Wilson shares the same exegesis of Hos 1:10 with Koniuchowsky.¹⁰² Both groups share an innate hostility toward Roman Catholicism. Wilson depicts the "Church of Rome" which cut itself off, as opposed to the "churches of the Reformation which were of Israel."¹⁰³ Koniuchowsky's references are even more inflammatory. He refers to "the Roman Church and her daughter hookers," "the Roman Church and her harlot offspring,"¹⁰⁴ "the church and her Roman Pontiff," "the Pontiff Maximus (Supreme Divine King)," "the unholy father in Rome, and his disciples," "the unregenerate pope," and "false apostate Roman ecclesiastical heresy" and "this breakaway, illegal, and renegade flock."¹⁰⁵ He even accuses the Vatican of secretly plotting to move its headquarters to Jerusalem.¹⁰⁶

Both proclaim that the teaching they propound is a "mystery" revealed only through their teachers who are relieving the rest of God's people from a state of blindness.¹⁰⁷ Wootten states, "The absolute truth about ones (sic) physical heritage remains hidden to humanity."¹⁰⁸ Wootten sees the "time of the end" as the time when, people will gain "latter-day insight," citing Daniel and proclaiming, "'Those who have *insight* will shine brightly' (Dan 12:3)."¹⁰⁹

White Supremacy

Of most concern about the Anglo-Israelite and the "Two House" theory (I use the singular because the two theories are virtually identical – the differences are minimal) is the racial element found in both. Wilson, lauding the accomplishments of the Anglo-Saxon "race," states, Let us consider what provision God, in His good providence, has made towards this glorious result: the various blessings we possess – physical, mental, spiritual, artistic, mechanical, commercial, political, and literary; our remarkable position in regard to other races all around the globe; our responsibilities as rulers and missionaries; as civil, naval, and military servants...Let us fill up our destiny of being for Blessing to all nations....Soon may Ephraim indeed possess and exercise the spirit of the Firstborn!

¹¹⁰

The arguments of Wootten and Koniuchowsky focus entirely on race as well, especially in their focus on white, Anglo-Saxons as comprising the majority of these Israelites. Wootten makes mention of "blood-line Israelites" and the promise that the scattering of the northern Israelites "did not dilute the bloodlines."¹¹¹ She refers to Jews today as "biological Jews."¹¹² There is no recognition on her part or on the part of Koniuchowsky that the issue of God's relationship with Israel is not racial. Yet the social-historical people of Israel have never claimed racial priority as the basis for their covenant relationship to God. Throughout the recorded history of Israel and the Jewish people, outsiders have been welcome into their ranks, receiving full acceptance in the process. Jewish identity is based, not on racial deliberations but on a shared communal memory and on choice. Each generation is called upon to remember Sinai as if its own members stood at the foot of the mountain along with their ancient forebears. This is true whether you are an Israeli Jew or a Chinese Jew. Jewish identity is not racial – it is based on memory and choice.¹¹³

Wilson's glowing racial panegyric can perhaps be excused as a product of his time, the late nineteenth century, when nationalist ideas were fresh and hopeful, and the idealism of the post-Enlightenment period had not yet been trampled under Nazi Storm-trooper's boots. But in this post-Holocaust world, to excuse the race-based theology of Wootten and Koniuchowsky and their reduction and limitation of God's grace to nationalist and racial criteria is to be remiss in our concerns for the welfare of our communities.

The most striking parallel between the two groups is their focus on white, Anglo-Saxons as the locus of the majority of the people of Israel. Both argue that the lost tribes migrated to areas where they became known as Scythians and eventually Saxons. Both groups make mention of the nobility of Anglo-Saxons as evidence for their biblical, Israelite heritage. Citing a rabbinic commentary on 1 Sam 1:1, Wilson quotes, "Ephrati is taken to mean someone from the tribe of Ephraim and of noble birth."¹¹⁴ Based on the same verse, Koniuchowsky states that "these rabbis understood that ...the House of Joseph...would turn up in the west as nobles, aristocrats and monarchs." "The ancient sages," he

adds "understood that the ten tribes would flourish as noblemen every where (sic) they went. Nowhere is this truth found more than in the former British Empire and her colonies."¹¹⁵ Wootten adds, "To be Israel is to rule with the Almighty. Thus, the 'Who is Israel?' question, of necessity, is also asking, 'Who will rule with the Almighty?'"¹¹⁶

Citing Obadiah 1:20, Koniuchowsky calls Germany the land of the Canaanites and Zarapheth he labels France and Britain!¹¹⁷ Both groups argue forcefully that the people of Israel are in the West.¹¹⁸ The significance of this is that it indicates the dependence of Wootten and Koniuchowsky on classic Anglo-Israelite theology despite their protestations.¹¹⁹

Koniuchowsky is right to be sheepish about his dependence because of the primarily anti-Jewish stance of the Anglo-Israelites. Our extant textual, historical, archaeological, and epigraphic evidence universally points away from the west toward Persia, modern Iran and Iraq, Egypt, Asia Minor, North Africa and Syria as areas of significant populations of exiles. But these areas are primarily populated with non-whites. In the face of such overwhelming evidence, why would these two groups, the Anglo-Israelites and "Two House" theorists, purportedly unrelated to each other in their teaching, both argue for white Anglo-Saxons as the true descendants of Israel unless there was indeed dependence of the latter [Wootten and Koniuchowsky] upon the former [Wilson et al]?

Koniuchowsky works vigorously to separate himself from the teaching of "replacement theology." In Part 3 of his series, "The End Time Solution to Replacement Theology," he puts the full blame for this theology on the Roman Catholic church, sometimes overlooking the serious role played by post-Reformation Protestants in the church's history of anti-Judaism. He also overlooks the strong history of anti-Jewish thought that goes back to the pre-Roman period, the second century, with Justin Martyr and the Epistle of Barnabas.¹²⁰ Filled with vituperation and sarcasm, Koniuchowsky "protesteth too much." He speaks with great vehemence and passion, admitting that his "blood is boiling."¹²¹

"Babylon is Fallen"

But in his effort to distance himself from his Anglo-Israelite forebears, he presents a hysterical and caricatured portrayal of the church's treatment of the Jews. Certainly there is much in Christian history to condemn, but rather than an even-handed and scholarly treatment, Koniuchowsky presents a tirade of confused and confusing accusations. At one point the Protestants are Israel, at another point, the Reformer upon whose teaching so much of Protestantism is based, Martin Luther, is excoriated.¹²² Certainly Luther deserves excoriation for his anti-Jewish remarks, but the inconsistency in Koniuchowsky is unnerving. He calls "Dominion Now" or "Kingdom Now" theology, which is a recent Pentecostal theological development, a "*papal farce, designed to enlist Protestants in a new age attempt to liquidate the Jewish race, by theology rather than by a sword* [emphasis his]."¹²³ He does acknowledge, grudgingly, that there may indeed be "Israelites" in the Roman Catholic Church,¹²⁴ but he makes no mention of Rome's repudiation of their anti-Jewish stance since the time of the Second Vatican Council — no mention of the Lutheran repudiation of Martin Luther's anti-Semitic statements. Instead, with biting sarcasm, Koniuchowsky denounces the "so called 'church' system" and its "second covenant law, which is love, baby, love," this "man made ecclesiastical organization started, funded,, (sic) and headquartered in Rome," which "now wants to force their (sic) paganized Christendom down the throats of the worlds (sic) populace." Engaging in further speculative pseudo-etymology, he claims that for these Christians, "a pagan blonde haired, and blue eyed European, pork eating Jesus (the English translation of the sun diety Zeus), has replaced Yahweh the Father as LORD (from the pagan deity Lourdes), over his 'church' (from the pagan circular ritual conducted by the Celts)."¹²⁶

Messianic Replacement Theology?

The final irony is that in one broad sweep, Koniuchowsky indicts Messianic Jews as major players in this "replacement theology" debacle as well. He argues that Messianic Jews are the unwitting pawns of these evil conspirators in that they accept the notion that the church is not social historical Israel. His argument in this section is filled with mischaracterizations, not only of Christian theology, but

clearly of Messianic theology as articulated by any known Messianic spokesperson. For those who know Messianic theology, it would be unimaginable for a Messianic teacher to claim that the church has replaced Israel. But Koniuchowsky is not daunted in his accusations. There is none that escapes his scorching condemnations. He even has words for Hebrew Christians, calling their movement "a dying dinosaur if there ever was one."¹²⁷ As the article progresses, the bold print and underlined sections of his treatise threaten to dwarf the normal font. Koniuchowsky's cry to Christians is to call them "BACK INTO THE COMMONWEALTH OF ALL ISRAEL, HER MESSIAH, AND HER ETERNAL PRECEPTS! [emphasis his]."¹²⁸

Koniuchowsky argues that those Christians and Messianic believers who accept the church as a viable entity along with the Jews are "enflam[ing] the nefarious fires of replacement theology...guarantee[ing] its survival."¹²⁹ He accuses Christians and Messianic Jews of fostering the idea of "spiritual Israel."¹³⁰ He wrongly imputes "replacement theology" to those who do not teach it. Christian and Messianic theologians today teach that the church has status as "grafted in" to Israel (Rom 11:17) and are members of "the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph 2:12) or the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). But they do not conceive of this membership in racial terms. Koniuchowsky ignores this in his efforts to mischaracterize his opponents. In doing so, he creates a false "straw man" that he can knock down in righteous indignation. The straw man, I am afraid, does not exist in most Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Messianic Jewish circles, all of whose noted theologians have repudiated replacement theology and the notion of the church as spiritual Israel.¹³¹

The same exegesis, the same contrived etymologies, the same constructed histories, the same white, Anglo-Saxon racial focus, the same arguments against the church – the parallels are unmistakable and undeniable. Without leveling the formal charge of plagiarism, it indeed appears that Wootten and Koniuchowsky have built their "Two Houses" on the shifting sand of Anglo-Israelite theology. The concerns that this raises for Jews, whether Messianic, rabbinic, or secular, and for non-Jewish Christians are evident.

Anti-Jewish Elements in the "Two House" Theology

Certainly Wootten and Koniuchowsky are not Jew-haters. But the words of Lloyd Gaston are worth citing here. He states: "Perhaps I should make clear what I mean when I speak of antisemitism or anti-Judaism in this connection [of Christian interpretive tradition about the Jews]. Just as individuals can be relatively free of personal prejudice and still participate actively in a system of racism, so anti-Judaism has to do with the *objective effect* [italics mine] of the word used, whether or not the people who speak them subjectively hate Jews."¹³²

Thus despite the fact that Koniuchowsky may be Jewish (we have not verified this), and despite his vigorous and at times comic protests, there is indeed a great deal of anti-Jewish rhetoric in his claims. It is to Wootten's credit that she is more discretionary in this regard. However, even in Wootten's case, the implications of her teaching are of grave concern to those of us in the Jewish community. Wootten warns that current theologies about Jews and Gentiles "can produce feelings of superiority [among Messianic Jews]." She goes on to say, "Believing they are 'natural' sons (sic), descended from the 'Chosen race of the Jews,' some contend they are 'Twice Chosen.'" She continues by accusing Jews of a "false racial pride."¹³³ Following what has become a typical motif among Christian critics of Messianic Judaism, Wootten raises the specter of Jewish attitudes of superiority without citing any actual evidence for it. In all my own 18 years in the Messianic Movement, I have yet to find any Messianic Rabbi arguing for a superior stance for Jewish over non-Jewish believers in Yeshua. It is a charge that has no foundation. Despite that, however, the charge persists in Christian circles and is now taken up and repeated by Wootten.

In this, Wootten and Koniuchowsky, in their grand claims to have solved the issue of racial pride, have done so by replacing an old racial argument with a new one. Those who can count themselves among the redeemed are the racial Ephraimites. Among those who cannot, Wootten and Koniuchowsky

include rabbinic and secular Jews as well as the rest of the nations, who, purportedly, will experience a lesser status during the Messianic age. In all cases, race and "bloodline" is the determining factor.

Functional Supersessionism

Both Wootten and Koniuchowsky are careful to denounce "Replacement Theology."¹³⁴ But their efforts to distance themselves from it is drawn, not so much out of a concern for the Jewish people, but from the fact that it is a rival theology of Israel that cannot coexist along with their own. Ultimately, however, their own theology functions in the same way as replacement theology. Rather than *supplant* social-historical Israel, they argue that their standing as physical Israel is *in conjunction with* social-historical Israel. As we will see, however, this stance is a Trojan Horse to allow them to establish the idea that they, as physical Israel, are owed a 10/12th percent of the land of Israel. The end result is that indeed they *do* supplant those of social-historical Israel that are not followers of Yeshua. Both the writings of Wootten and Koniuchowsky lack any reference to the eternal nature of the covenant with any Jews except Messianic Jews.

Certainly redemption is through Yeshua, but this does not do away with the eternal nature of the covenant with all Israel. We as Jewish believers in Yeshua are still in a covenant relationship with Jews who do not know Yeshua. We believe that God will ultimately be faithful to that covenant and draw our rabbinic and secular sisters and brothers into relationship with him through Yeshua. But in our claims, we give full recognition to the assertion that God's covenant with Israel as a corporate people is eternal. It is not in any way supplanted by the church. How are Wootten's and Koniuchowsky's claims any different from the former supersessionists who also claimed that only those among the Jewish people that were believers in Messiah could participate in the blessings of the kingdom? There is no difference.

It appears that the existence of Messianic Judaism may provide an "out" for those who want to deprive the members of social-historical Israel of their rightful blessings as covenant partners with God. The blessings of social-historical Israel, claim Wootten and Koniuchowsky, are bestowed upon Messianic Jews alone.¹³⁵ Compare Ruether's words as she describes the church's tradition of supersessionism:

Essentially, there is one covenant, *promised* to Abraham, *foretold* by the prophets, and *fulfilled* in the gentile Church, who accepted the Messiah promised to Israel... The message of election refers to a believing people. The Jews proved through their history that they are not this people. So the believing people becomes a historical reality only with the gentile Church.¹³⁶

The only difference between this statement describing traditional supersessionism and that of the "Two House" theorists is that the latter group can point to modern-day Messianic Jews and argue that because they accept Messianic Jews, they have not supplanted Israel. Messianic Jews have become their "out" to recast supersessionism and to continue to deny to rabbinic and secular Jews a place in God's redemptive history. As a result of this, the net result of their teaching is not functionally or effectively different from the results of replacement theologies — theologies that also fully embraced Jews as long as they joined their ranks. It is functional supersessionism. It functions in the same way as does supersessionism. Even their use of Gen 17:5, God's promise to make Abraham "a father of a multitude of nations," calls to mind the church's history of anti-Jewish rhetoric that seeks to prove that Abraham's promised descendants are gentiles, not Jews.¹³⁷ It appears that what we have here is nothing really new.

Wootten and Koniuchowsky make much of "Ephraim's jealousy of Judah,"¹³⁸ which is Wootten's code for what she perceives as the jealousy of non-Jewish followers of Yeshua toward Jewish followers. While arguing that her teaching is the key to the end of such jealousy (because, purportedly, all sides will follow her teaching and will thus be in agreement), she nevertheless implies that her own proponents are "vexed" because Jews do not recognize them as fellow members of physical Israel.¹³⁹ This "vexation" and alienation from Jewish people, from Messianic as well as secular and rabbinic Jews, shows up often in Wootten's and Koniuchowsky's rhetoric. Koniuchowsky writes of "a battle

royal over the title of who is Israel!"¹⁴⁰ And of course, it is only when all accept his own definition that the battle will be resolved.¹⁴¹ He builds his case typologically on the inability of Joseph's brothers to recognize him and argues that the biblical story is a type for Jews' inability to recognize the "Ephraimites."¹⁴² In all of this, there is noticeably absent any effort on the part of Wootten or Koniuchowsky to ameliorate the problems that they perceive save by calling all parties to submit to their own teaching.

What is equally interesting is that, despite their charged rhetoric against historical Christianity, despite their purported abandonment of classical Christian antinomianism, Wootten and Koniuchowsky have nevertheless internalized much of those Post-Reformation Christian scriptural exegetical traditions that are inherently anti-Jewish. For instance, Wootten argues that "Jewish Israel seek[s] justification by the Law of righteousness."¹⁴³ This is a standard post-Reformation reading of Rom 9:30-32 (cf. Gal 2:16; 5:4), which ignores the overwhelming evidence that first-century Judaism (as well as any Judaism since) did not look to the law for justification. It follows that any reader that attributes this interpretation to Paul misunderstands him.¹⁴⁴ Thus while claiming a positive view of social historical Israel, Wootten nevertheless internalizes the Church's history of distorting Jewish texts.

Wootten goes on to create an expansion upon Rom 11:1, "Has God rejected his people?" However, she is careful not to cite the passage specifically, possibly because she takes very real liberties with the text here.¹⁴⁵ Her discussion is interesting, however, because it gives an example of her selective reading of the term "Israel" in scripture and especially in the Apostolic Writings. For when her topic is Israel as not "saved," then Israel equals the Jews. Otherwise the term equals the Ephraimites. "Brothers," she freely paraphrases, "my heart's desire and prayer to God for *Jewish* Israel is that they may be saved [*italics mine*] (cf. Rom 10:1)."¹⁴⁶ For her, Israel as not "saved" is Jewish Israel. Israel as "saved" is Ephraimite Israel (read: non-Jewish followers of Yeshua). Moreover, she repeats the oft-cited but inaccurate accusation of "Judah's rejection of Messiah,"¹⁴⁷ She would do well to note that Paul never uses the term "Israel" without a modifier to describe the church. For Paul, Israel *means* the Jews and as such needs no modifier. For Wootten, Israel *means* the non-Jewish church and *only* needs a modifier when it refers to the Jews. Something is upside-down. Thus in Wootten's writings, as well, we see evidence for functional supersessionism. For the "Ephraimites," references to Israel's ultimate redemption are now appropriated to themselves.¹⁴⁸ As Ruether notes about this tradition, "By dividing prophetic wrath from prophetic promise, one makes the Old Testament a text for anti-Judaism, on the one hand, and for ecclesial triumphalism, on the other."¹⁴⁹ This is indeed a kind of supersessionism.

Law or Grace?

Most striking is Wootten's internalization of and acceptance of the Law/Grace dichotomy of the post-Reformation interpretive tradition. In her apocalyptic vision of the end times, she reinterprets the two witnesses of Rev 11:3-4 as "a Judahite and an Ephraimite."¹⁵⁰

And their "two-fold message is: The Lord has a Law, yet for the lawbreakers, He offers Grace. Two witnesses. Law and Grace."¹⁵¹ Thus, for Wootten, Jews are equated with Law...Christians are equated with Grace, or, in her words, "One only knows the Law, the other only knows Grace."¹⁵² This is a patent misunderstanding of Jewish approaches to law and grace and demonstrates her dependence on the anti-Jewish exegetical traditions of Christianity for her ideas.¹⁵³ In point of fact, as Gaston notes, for Paul, the problem of legalism "of doing works in order to be counted righteous" is a distinctly gentile problem and not a Jewish problem at all.¹⁵⁴ Wootten magnifies her Reformation-based theological bent by accepting the neoplatonic hierarchy common among church fathers, which portrays Christians in a higher realm than Jews. Thus she states, "In Elementary school [i.e., from the Jews] we learned the basics about the Law. In High school [i.e. from the Christians] we learned the basics about Grace."¹⁵⁵

"Blind Jews"

Another motif that crops up often in Wootten's and Koniuchowsky's writings is the motif of the "blind Jews," again, a long-standing, standard motif of Christian anti-Jewish rhetoric.¹⁵⁶ Wootten states, "They cannot hear. They cannot see. Until the Lord lifts the veil..."¹⁵⁷ Messianic Jews are repeatedly the targets of demands to accept their viewpoint.¹⁵⁸ Koniuchowsky admonishes Messianic Jews to "take off your blinders."¹⁵⁹ Thus ultimately, Wootten's call to "let each [Jews and "Ephraimites"] begin to hear the other," rings false and empty.¹⁶⁰ She and Koniuchowsky show no desire to "hear" the perspective of Jewish people. Instead, she scolds Jews, demanding that they "must accept" her own viewpoint.¹⁶¹ Wootten and Koniuchowsky demand to set the vision for Messianic Jews today. What both do not understand is that they must give to the people of Israel the right to define themselves and to set their own vision without being defined by Wootten's and Koniuchowsky's "mystery."¹⁶² Wootten argues that it is only when Jews follow *her* teaching that they will be obedient to God, "for only then," she promises, "will you be what the Father called you to be..."¹⁶³

The Elder and the Younger Brother

Even their message of the "Two Houses," or two peoples, is only mildly different from the church's tradition of contrasting the rival sons Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau as two peoples.¹⁶⁴ Now it is Joseph and his brothers or Ephraim and Judah. The function of the typology is the same – it allows Christians to make claims to status of primacy vis-à-vis the Jews. In order to support the church's supersessionist claims, Maximinus, writing in his treatise *Contra Judaeos*, listed many of the same sibling rivalries as do Wootten and Koniuchowsky. The first that he lists is Cain and Abel.¹⁶⁵ Compare Koniuchowsky's accusation against Jews as having "the murderous vexing, (sic) spirit of Cain."¹⁶⁶ In this, Wootten and Koniuchowsky have not moved far from the church's tradition of creating a dichotomy between the Jews and "the nations," which, argues Ruether, was "the heart of the *adversus Judaeo* tradition."¹⁶⁷ The message, ultimately, is still one of substitution – perhaps not total substitution as before, but substitution, nevertheless.

Wootten castigates the church and the Messianic world for making a distinction between Jews and non-Jews within the body of believers in Yeshua.¹⁶⁸ In this, she fails to understand current Christian and Messianic treatments of the Pauline doctrine of the people of God. In arguing for different *functions* and different *callings* between Jewish and non-Jewish believers, Messianic Jews are in no way arguing for a "spiritual Israel" vs. a "physical Israel," nor are they arguing for separate status in God's sight, nor for a hierarchy of Jews over gentiles or gentiles over Jews. The Christian church has also largely repudiated the notion of the church as "spiritual Israel." But as Lloyd Gaston has stated, "Paul (and the whole Christian movement before Justin Martyr) continues the Biblical distinction between Jews and non-Jews, Israel and Gentiles."¹⁶⁹ In fact, for Paul it is a fundamental distinction (cf. Gal 2:15). To make a distinction, then, between Jews and non-Jews with respect to calling and purpose while affirming their equal standing before God is a very Pauline thing to do. In Gal 2:7, Paul mentions two gospels, one to the circumcised and one to the uncircumcised. And just as the gospel to the circumcision was a beautiful thing, so the gospel to the uncircumcised was also glorious. It stated that gentiles can share in the blessings of Israel without physically *becoming* Israel. This is the great theological moment for which Paul is responsible. Paul never uses the phrases "new Israel" or "spiritual Israel," and neither do Messianic Jews (nor do most Christians today).

The "Final Solution"

With an irony that Koniuchowsky seems to be unaware of, he refers to his solution for the problem of Jewish and Christian relations as "the biblical final solution."¹⁷⁰ As with many in the past history of the church who have come forth with a new message for Israel, so Wootten and Koniuchowsky appear originally to have been enthusiastic about the expected response of Messianic Jews to their message. But Koniuchowsky, especially, shows that his reaction is classical and typical when Messianic Jews do not accept his teaching.¹⁷¹ His charged rhetoric is filled with name-calling and accusations. For instance, he states that "saved Judah's carefree, careless attitude towards trying to discover where in the world the rest of his lost physical family really is, is nothing more than a colossal case of a self centered mindset!"¹⁷² Dripping with sarcasm, he chides, "Could it be that Ephraim is just as chosen as

Judah? Does that burst your bubble? Poor thing!"¹⁷³ He accuses Messianic Jews of keeping "'saved Ephraimites' in perpetual second class adopted chains worshipping at the throne of Judaism instead of His Son."¹⁷⁴ He chastises Messianic Jews with the admonishment, "Shame on you for believing the party line birthed in fear rather than in the faith of Yahweh."¹⁷⁵

Koniuchowsky's sarcasm and personal attacks extend to the Messianic Jewish Alliance as well. In thinly veiled terms, he condemns those "man made steering committees...who continue to tell so called 'Gentile believers', (sic) that they are...at worst associate members, who cannot vote."¹⁷⁶

We do not need another "final solution," such as the one offered by Koniuchowsky. The Jewish people barely survived the last one. Koniuchowsky's and Wootten's statements speak for themselves. All of these statements of theirs are of concern to the Jewish world as well as to the Christian world. What we see here may not be the same as past anti-Jewish theologies, but it draws its life-spring from them and, ultimately, results in functional supersession.

Dangers of the Movement

Notwithstanding this heated rhetoric, both Wootten and Koniuchowsky try elsewhere to apply a thin veneer of philo-Semitic rhetoric. However, despite their efforts, Wootten's and Koniuchowsky's words elicit the gravest concern in the images they construct for the future. For as physical Israel, they expect (and Koniuchowsky claims to be aggressively working toward) their full reintegration into the political and territorial picture of the modern State of Israel "which integration includes their claim to Ephraim's ancient territorial possessions " 10/12th of the ancient tribal boundaries of Israel. Wootten states:

The heirs of the patriarchs [among whom she of course numbers the "Ephraimites"] are to *possess*, to *yaresh* the Land (the verb is *lareshet*). They are to occupy, by driving out previous tenants and possessing in their place. They are to seize, inherit, expel, impoverish (literally), ruin, cast out, consume, destroy, disinherit, and dispossess the enemy. They are called to succeed " utterly."¹⁷⁷

Who is the enemy about which she speaks in such ruthless and pitiless terms? We are left to wonder. However, given Wootten's strong claims to the land and her assertion of Ephraim's territorial rights, we must conclude that the "enemy" includes any people now living in regions once occupied by the ancient tribal groups, hence, thousands of Jews along with other ethnic groups. In evidence for this, she cites Hos 1:9-10, "This declaration was made *on the hills of Ephraim*. And to those hills Ephraim will yet return."¹⁷⁸ Wootten also cites Zech 10:10 as referring to her own "Ephraimites." She states, "At that time [during the eschaton], the people of Ephraim will return in great numbers, 'Until no room can be found for them' (Zech 10:10)."¹⁷⁹ Given this kind of supersessionist rhetoric, this should cause some alarm to the Israeli Jewish community. For in the pages of both Wootten's and Koniuchowsky's writings lies a strong assumption, sometimes stated explicitly, sometimes implicitly, that the land belongs to them (along with the Jewish people, of course). Writing of the eschaton, Koniuchowsky describes "the 'catching away,' where millions of Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Nazarenes and other regathered born again folk, are supernaturally caught up and airlifted to Israel on His Almighty wings to, (sic) be returned *to their land forever more* [italics mine]."¹⁸⁰ For the "Two House" proponents, the land of Israel is "their land." Koniuchowsky also writes "about returning Ephraim as born again Israelite-Christians (non-Jewish believers) and Christian Zionists, who will rebuild the Hekal, or the third temple on Mt. Moriah!" He adds that this return *must* occur before Jewish people can be regenerated: "By definition the Jews cannot return to Israel physically and Messiah spiritually, without a simultaneous revival of the other House of Israel."¹⁸¹ He states that believers are "legitimate saved physical citizens of the Commonwealth of Israel,"¹⁸² by which he means the State of Israel. Here we have people with no social or historical connection to the Jewish world making claims that the land of Israel is theirs.

The Next Middle-East War

And as if this were not serious enough, they anticipate that such taking of the land will not be without a fight. Without any context of changing times and places, without any sense of pity, they are preparing for a role as combatants in a future, eschatological war, when "the enemies of Judah are cut off."¹⁸³ Lest we have any doubt about who the chief of these "enemies of Judah" might be, Wootten supplies the answer: "their ancient enemy, the Philistines."¹⁸⁴ We can assume that she interprets the Philistines of ancient times as the Palestinians of today, for she also calls for "the complete destruction of the Palestinians and Babylon."¹⁸⁵ Koniuchowsky elaborates: "The Jewish people will never ever conquer the Palestinians, Arabs, Edomites and sons of Esau [all of whom, if anyone, are statistically most likely to be made up of former "Israelites"], until they are reunited with one heart...into one massive army, through this reconciliation of Jewish Israel with non-Jewish Israel."¹⁸⁶

This militaristic, aggressive, and warlike stance is unnerving in light of the volatile powder-keg that currently exists in the Middle East. But it is even more unnerving when we read that Koniuchowsky is mapping out his own future territory. He states, "Scripture talks about the Mountains of Ephraim (Samaria), that will produce the watchmen [Christian followers of Yeshua] of the last days."¹⁸⁷ It is unclear how aggressively Koniuchowsky is pursuing efforts to work with those groups who are attempting to rebuild the third Temple; however, he makes glowing reference to them more than once.¹⁸⁸ His words also cause the reader to question the motives of the many Christian Zionists who flock to Israel. "Christian Zionists," he states, "long to return home. [People in the government of Israel] openly welcome Christian Zionists, their monies, and their tourist pilgrims with open arms. *This is no doubt a major first step to full restoration!*" [italics mine]¹⁸⁹ He dismisses those who oppose him by quoting the Pauline statement, "they are not all Israel who claim to be Israel."¹⁹⁰

Here again, the acorn has not fallen far from the tree. Traditionally, Anglo-Israelite thinking has also included an expectation that the land would be theirs as physical Israel.¹⁹¹ It evokes for us memories of the Crusaders of the 11th through 13th centuries, who also, based on the claim to be heirs of Israel, sought to take their "rightful place" as dwellers of the land through conquest and warfare.

Conclusion

Through this analysis of the writings of two major "Two House" spokespersons, we can observe that, for them, everything rests on their reinterpretation of the phrase, "multitude of nations," in Gen 17:4-5 and 48:19 and on their contention that post-exilic Israel did not formally include the former northern kingdom of Israel. These two propositions have been shown to be flawed due to faulty logic, poor grammar, inadequate knowledge of the sociology and history of ancient tribal groups, and subjective, pseudo-genealogies.

Moreover, we have observed that this teaching is fraught with inconsistencies and contradictions. On the one hand, we have seen them argue that every person on earth has some Israelite blood. On the other, the claim is made that only followers of Yeshua have Israelite blood. At one point it is stated that the former Ephraimites are concentrated in Western, Anglo-Saxon areas. But we know that the total number of Asian, African, and South American believers outnumbers the number of white, Anglo-Saxon believers. What of them? Further, Wootten claims that direct descendants of the early *Jewish* followers of Jesus are the Ephraimites, a contradiction in itself — and that somehow all Christians today are biological descendants of those early Jews. But she compounds the confusion by arguing that Palestinians and Syrians, who have the greatest claim to direct descent from these earlier followers, are the enemy and are to be utterly destroyed. Elsewhere we read that Ephraimites will take over the land of Israel (at least 10/12ths of it). But there are hundreds of millions of Christians in the world. How will they fit? How can these "Ephraimites" take over the Galilee and lands now owned by Israelis without dispossessing them? And when is this conquest to take place? At one point it is stated to be before the expected revival breaks out among Jews; at another point it is during the Messianic age. This confusion is an indication of the imprecision of thinking that is the hallmark of this movement.

Finally, Wootten and Koniuchowsky never explain to us what this new racial identity adds to any believer in Yeshua. What is lost to non-Jewish believers who do not see themselves as part of Ephraim? Do they experience less of the grace of God? Do they experience less of the presence of God...less of the acceptance of God...less of the blessing of God? In all of these cases, the answer should be a resounding "No." Yet Wootten and Koniuchowsky create false accusations against Messianic Jews of fostering "second-class status" and feelings of inferiority among non-Jews that have no basis in fact in their attempt to stir up envy and discontent among today's Christians. The fact is, gentiles are free to participate fully in Messianic congregations; they are free to celebrate biblical holidays and shabbat; they are free to live a life consistent with the Torah as a free-will expression of their love for God. The only thing that non-Jewish followers of Yeshua cannot claim is a legitimate claim on the land of Israel. Can it be that this claim to the land is driving this movement?

Or can it be that the movement is driven by racist, race-bating motives in people who demand to be "first-born," who demand to have spiritual primacy and to see themselves as the center of the plan of God based only on their bloodline? This racial element is perhaps the most disconcerting component of this teaching. For while the promises to Abraham were indeed made to his physical heirs, the door has never been shut to extending that promise to all who come and to all who believe, irrespective of their nationality. The Apostolic Writings reinforce this idea, opening the doors to all the nations by not requiring the covenantal obligations that Israel had taken upon itself. Ultimately, the message is anti-gentile because it finds no validation in the non-Jew unless that person is physically an Israelite. For while inconsistent in this matter, both Wootten and Koniuchowsky admit that there are those among the followers of Yeshua who cannot claim physical descent from Abraham or Joseph. Such individuals have no solid basis for justification in the Ephraimite camp. Finally, it is anti-Jewish for its attacks on Jews, its perpetuation of anti-Jewish stereotypes, and its claims of Jewish blindness.

The position of the I.M.J.A., then is that the Ephraimite, or "Two House" movement is in error for the following reasons:

1. flawed, unwarranted, and dangerous interpretation of scripture
2. inconsistent logic and contradictory positions
3. racist and race-based theology
4. supersessionist theology
5. historically inaccurate depiction of Israel
6. dangerous, false, and militant claims to the land which threaten the stability of the current State of Israel

It is not unusual for a group to construct a false genealogical myth, that is, one that is empirically unfounded, in order to create for itself a new story, a new mythic purpose in the world, a new ideology and sense of rootedness. It appears that this may be the impulse that gave birth to this teaching. What it tells us is that Messianic Jews have an important task ahead to offer to the Christian world a clearly-articulated theology of Israel. We should not forget that, up until the time of the Holocaust, the only formally developed theology available to Christians was a supersessionist theology. Since the time of the Holocaust, several Christian theologians have made important efforts to contemplate the theology of the Apostolic Writings in light of a sincere and open dialogue with the Jewish world.¹⁹² The Messianic world would do well to encourage the dissemination of these theological works to the Christian world as well.

End Notes

1: Moshe Koniuchowsky, in "Your Arms to Israel: Updated Doctrinal Statement Reflecting Kingdom Restoration Views of the Ministry of Your Arms to Israel" (www.teshuvah.com/yati/articles/full_restoration1.htm) states, "the Jewish people have been the identifiable representatives and offspring of Judah. Non-Jewish followers of Messiah from all nations have been up to now the unidentifiable representatives and offspring of Ephraim (Zechariah 8:23)." It should be stated that Koniuchowsky would not use the term "Christian." See Moshe Koniuchowsky, "The Full Restoration of All Israel: Part 3," 8. Please note that for purposes of research, I printed out all four parts of the series, and my page number references are to that of the final printout. Because of

the size of the document, I determined that it was important to have more detailed reference than just to the document as a whole.

2: Batya Ruth Wootten, *Who Is Israel? And Why You Need to Know* (St. Cloud, FL: Key of David, 1998), 55.

3: However, Batya Ruth Wootten, "House of David Herald: Muddled Doctrines" (<http://www.mim.net/hod/hod0160/rf0160.htm>), 6, states that for followers of Yeshua, the "emphasis of circumcision" is moved "to that of the heart."

4: For more information on this book, go to hebroots.org, a website that primarily posts general Christian Zionist material.

5: Batya Ruth Wootten, *The Olive Tree of Israel* (White Stone, Virginia: House of David, 1992), 31. Cf. also *Who Is Israel?*, 16-17, 28.

6: Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 82-83, acknowledges that it sometimes refers to Israel, but she asserts that by the time of the conquest of the land by Israel, the name referred primarily to the foreign nations. This is not the case, however, for the exilic and post-exilic prophets continued to use the term to refer to Israel. Add to this the common usage of the Greek term *ethnos* in the Apostolic Writings to refer to Jews. Moreover, she constructs her doctrine precisely upon the use of the term *goy* in the pre-conquest period, during the time of the patriarchs.

7: Koniuchowsky, "The Full Restoration of All Israel: Part 2," 7, argues that these references reinforce his point that Israel is Gentile. The reasoning is circular and begs the question.

8: Moshe Koniuchowsky, "The Full Restoration Of [sic] Israel: Part 1 of a Series," 1. 9: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 32.

10: Koniuchowsky, "The Full Restoration of Israel: Part 1," 2. Cf. also Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 3.

11: Koniuchowsky, "The Full Restoration of Israel: Part 1," 9. 12: *Ibid.*, 1.

13: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 32, 33. In the footnote to the above passage, she concedes that "this does not mean the 'Greek westernized cultural Christianity' implied by the word today," but we will see that her qualification here is not to contradict her argument above but to safeguard her group's rhetorical stand against modern-day Christianity. See below.

14: Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 6.

15: The Septuagint (LXX) is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, completed late third century B.C.E.

16: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 7.

17: whom he contends to be physical Israel along-side with the Jewish people who comprise the tribe of Judah.

18: Wootten, "Muddled," 3.

19: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 6.

20: pp. 41-43. Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 5 shows a lack of facility in dealing with historical data as well. He calls the Assyrian king "TilgatPilsger III" (his name was Tiglath-pileser III).

21: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 42.

22: *Ibid.*, 43.

23: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 5.

24: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 43.

25: Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 93, calls the term, "Gentile Christian" an oxymoron, but has no problem using the term "Gentile Israel." Cf. *Olive Tree*, 43.

26: *Ibid.*, 50.

27: Wootten, "Muddled," 12.

28: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4: What Judaism Really Says About Joseph's Seed!" 7.

29: Stephen A. Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 36.

30: James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981), 13.

31: Examples of the use of parallelism to demonstrate that Israel and Judah are synonymous (the list is far from exhaustive) are Ps 114:2; Isa 5:7; Jer 23:6; 50:20; Hos 5:12-14; 8:14; 11:12; 12:1-2; Mic 1:5; Mal 2:11.

32: W. Lee Humphreys, *Crisis and Story*, 2nd edition (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1990), 152.

33: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 2, 1, does acknowledge that "both houses" contain representatives from all the tribes, but he does not see this representation as adequate for redemption. The record of the post-exilic prophets belies this conclusion. Further, Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 51, also admits to references to the post-exilic people as "all Israel." ironically, however, she insists that while it may be said that "all Israel" returned, because the term does not really represent every last northern Israelite, it does not tell us anything about the post-exilic status of Israel. But what it does tell us is how post-exilic writers in the Hebrew Bible interpreted Israel's status after the exile. As writers of scripture, their interpretation of events is crucial for the modern theologian. And according to their interpretation, the residual people of Israel who had returned represented "all Israel." Cf. Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 24, 109.

34: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 49.

35: Wootten, "Muddled," 12.

36: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 42-43.

37: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 7.

38: "Ephraim," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1971 ed., 807. See H. H. Ben-Sasson, Ed., *A History of the Jewish People*, trans. George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), 65-67, for examples of genealogies that list identical chains of names (i.e., identical father to son to grandson, etc.) in differing tribes, including evidence of admixture with non-Israelites as well.

39: Ben-Sasson, 63.

40: Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 25.

41: *Ibid.*

42: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 5.

43: For other examples of such hyperbolic language that is clearly not meant to be taken hyper-literally, cf. 2 Chron 13:15; 16:6; 35:18; Jer 13:19; 20:4; 44:14; Ezra 10:9. On the Jeremiah references, cf. Jer 39:10; 40:11-12; 40:4-7. Also see above, p. 4.

44: In response to this, Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 112, using characteristically racial categories argues, "Prayer cannot change Israelite genetics." However, the practice of the Temple cult in the post-exilic period is evidence for how the people during this time viewed themselves. In turn, this viewpoint, then, was recorded and affirmed by the prophets and writers of scripture.

45: Richard Bauckham, "Anna of the Tribe of Asher (Luc 2:36-38)," *Revue Biblique* 410 (1997), 169, states, "Despite their origins in the northern kingdom, many (if not all) of the exiles of the northern tribes in the Second Temple period adopted the same kind of Judaism as their fellow exiles from the southern tribes in Babylonia, i.e. they acknowledged the Jerusalem temple and its form of the Torah."

46: *Ibid.* See Tob 1:9; 3:15; 4:12-13.

47: Cf. Robert M. Seltzer, Ed., *Judaism: A People and its History* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 121.

48: *Ibid.*, 122.

49: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 10.

50: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 46; *Who Is Israel?*, 38. For an example of the use of this verse in Christian anti-Jewish tradition, see Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, repr. 1997), 140.

51: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 10. 52: p. 7.

53: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 5. 54: *Ibid.*

55: *Ibid.*

56: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 2," 2.

57: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 8-9. He also states (*Ibid.*, 3), "there will be virtually no one in the earth that is not somehow belonging to the seed of Ephraim."

58: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 112.

59: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 6. But Wootten, Olive Tree, 107, remains steadfast, arguing, "It is very probable that these former Gentiles actually descend from the scattered Ephraimites that Yahveh said He would regather...Though their background may appear to be that of a Gentile, in reality, they probably are physical Israelites."

60: Wootten, "Muddled," 7. 61: Wootten, Olive Tree, 106.

62: She wrongly cites the verse as Gal 2:29 in Olive Tree, 114. See also Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 2," 5.

63: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 11.

64: Wootten, Olive Tree, 9, 106. See also "Muddled," 8; Who Is Israel?, 97.

65: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4," 6, indeed acknowledges the significance of Syrian Antioch for the growth of the early communities of followers of Yeshua. However, he does not develop the logic of his contention, which would point to today's Syrian Orthodox Church as a major center for his theory of physical Ephraimites in today's churches.

66: Cf. n.184 and 185.

67: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4," 8.

68: Ibid., 9-10.

69: Ibid., 12.

70: Ibid.

71: Wootten, Olive Tree, 117. Cf. Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 2," 11. 72: Ibid., 119.

73: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 2," 11.

74: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 2," 9. He argues there that Judah's dispersion was confined only to Babylon.

75: Ibid., 8.

76: Ibid.

77: Wootten, Olive Tree, 49; Who Is Israel?, 74.

78: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4," 3, adds New Zealand and South Africa to the areas populated by former Israelites. No doubt his reference is to the white populace of South Africa.

79: Ibid., 4. Although he does very briefly mention "Black Israelites" on p. 5. He never elaborates, though.

80: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 2. But contrast his statements in n. 69. 81: Ibid., 6.

82: E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press), 1979, 539.

83: Cited in Urbach, 539. 84: Ibid.

85: Cf. Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav), 1985.

86: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4." 87: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 2," 12.

88: Walter R. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1965, rev. 1968), 297.

89: Cf. Martin., 298.

90: cited in Martin, 299. Cf. also John Wilson, *Sixty Anglo-Israel Difficulties Answered: Difficulty One* (<http://www.abccog.org/wilson2.htm>), 2; Difficulty 18, 10.

91: Wilson, Difficulty One, 2; Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4," 10. 92: Ibid.

93: Ibid., 1. Wilson adds (2), "The 'Jews' have their own place in prophecy, but not that of the 'Firstborn,' which belongs to the descendants of Ephraim, ...the people contemplated by our Lord when He said to the Jews, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (Matt. 21:43)." Wootten and Koniuchowsky do not share the idea that the entire kingdom will be taken from the Jews - only 10/12th of the kingdom, as we will see below.

94: Ibid. and Difficulty 13, 3. Cf. Wootten, Olive Tree, 31-32.

- 95: Wilson, *Difficulty One*, 1. Cf. Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 86.
- 96: Wilson, *Difficulty One*, 2.
- 97: Wilson, *Difficulty 2*, 3. Cf. Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 15.
- 98: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 6, 77, 81 et passim. See also, her "Muddled Doctrines" and *Who Is Israel?*, 91, 92.
- 99: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 3," 2. 100: Wilson, *Difficulty 3*, 5.
- 101: Wilson, *Difficulty 4*, 5.
- 102: Wilson, *Difficulty 8*, 7. Cf. n. 19.
- 103: Wilson, *Difficulty 12*, 2.
- 104: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 3," 3.
- 105: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 2," 5; Part 3, 3-5.
- 106: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 3," 3.
- 107: Wilson, *Difficulty 14*, 6.
- 108: Wootten, "Muddled," 5.
- 109: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 14-15. Cf. also 71, 77, 79-83; *Who Is Israel?*, 83-88.
- 110: Wilson, *Difficulty 13*, 4.
- 111: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 52; "Muddled," 5; *Who Is Israel?*, 73. 112: Wootten, "Muddled," 4.
- 113: Nevertheless, Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 97, accuses others of "separat[ing] Christians and Jews based on genetic heritage." But because of her singular focus on race and genetics as the only valid category, she even questions the Jewish status of converts to Judaism (Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 98).
- 114: Wilson, *Difficulty 13*, 4.
- 115: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4," 2.
- 116: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 22. Cf. Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 6. 117: *Ibid.*, 9.
- 118: Wilson, *Difficulty 19*, 12; cf. above, n. 74, 75 et passim.
- 119: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 2," 10, states, "We do not need Herbert W. Armstrong, Mormons the replacement theologians of British Israelism [*italics mine*], or the American Indians to tell us where to look for ...the Tabernacle of David."
- 120: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 3," 1. Cf. n. 103. For more information on the church's tradition of anti-Jewishness, see Ruether.
- 121: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 3," 3.
- 122: *Ibid.*, 1.
- 123: *Ibid.*, 1-2.
- 124: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4," 11. But he adds, "Yahweh help us!"
- 125: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 3," 2.
- 126: *Ibid.*
- 127: *Ibid.*
- 128: *Ibid.*, 10.
- 129: *Ibid.* 130: *Ibid.*, 12.
- 131: For an excellent Catholic theological treatment of the Jewish people, see Clemens Thoma, *A Christian Theology of Judaism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980). For a Protestant theology, see R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian*

Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

132: Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver, Univ. of British Columbia, 1987).

133: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 2. Cf. also "Muddled," 10; *Who Is Israel?*, 104-105.

134: *Ibid.*, 7. See also n. 119.

135: Cf. Wootten, "Muddled," 2, where citing Isa 11:13 she makes the threat against Jews who are not Messianic, stating, "And those who harass Judah will be cut off." Cf. 11.

136: Ruether, 137.

137: Ruether, 138, n. 70 cites Ep. Barn. 13, 7; Just. Dial. 119; Ter. Adv. Jud. 2; Euseb. D. E. I, 2, 15; Cyp. Test. I. 5; Aph. Dem. II, 4; 13, 8; 16, I; Iren. Haer., IV, 7, 2; Max. C. Jud. 5; Prud. Apo. 363-5; Dial. A.-Z. (Conybeare, Expositor 45, p. 447).

138: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 54. See also Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 7.

139: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 54; *Who Is Israel?*, 135. She indicts modern-day Messianic Jews because of events described in 2 Sam 19:41-43, 3,000 years ago! She goes on to accuse rabbinic Jewish treatment of modern-day Messianic Jews as an example of Judah vexing Ephraim (*Who Is Israel?*, 138). When it is convenient for her, Jewish followers of Yeshua are Ephraim; when it is not, they are Judah. She cannot have it both ways.

140: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part "Part 1," 4; cf. "Part 3," 11. Cf. Wootten, "Muddled," 13: "There is a war between Jew and Christian over the title of Israel."

141: *Ibid.*

142: *Ibid.*, 11.

143: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 74.

144: On this, there is a wealth of current scholarship. Cf. Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997); Gaston; and E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and*

the Jewish People (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 17. There is an excellent bibliography in Donaldson for further research on the topic.

145: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 74-75.

146: *Ibid.*, 74.

147: *Ibid.*, 76.

148: Cf. the treatment of Hos 2:21-23 in Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 6 and of Obad 1:20 in "Part 4," 9.

149: Ruether, 132.

150: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 85. Cf. "Muddled," 14. 151: *Ibid.*, 85-86. Cf. also 88.

152: *Ibid.*, 92.

153: Nowhere is the tradition of the parallel contrasts, Jew/Gentile and Law/Grace, more overt than in Marcion, who posited the existence of two gods with two distinct characteristics, also representing two modes of operation in the world.

154: Gaston, 25. 155: *Ibid.*, 119.

156: Cf. Ruether, 121, 135. In 135, she reminds us that the cathedrals built during the Medieval period often included statuary images of two women, representing Church and Synagogue. The one representing the Church looked alive and full of power. The one representing the Synagogue looked sad and always wore blindfolds over her eyes. For an example of this identical motif in Anglo-Israelism, see Wilson, *Difficulty* 15, 6.

157: *Ibid.*, 92.

158: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 8; "Part 3," 10, 11; "Part 4," 5, 12.

159: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 2," 6.

160: Wootten, *Olive Tree*, 124. Cf. Wootten, *Who Is Israel?*, 142-143, for her treatment of the blindness of the Jews.

161: Wootten, Olive Tree, 124.

162: Cf. Gaston, 34.

163: Ibid., 125. Cf. also Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 3," 6. 164: Cf. Ruether, 133.

165: Cited in Ruether, 133.

166: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 2," 6.

167: Ruether, 137. She writes (133), "The Church especially seized on the line in Genesis 25:23 where it is said that 'two nations' are in the womb of Rebekah and 'the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger.' Unquestionably, this refers to the Church, the gentile people, who came after the Jews but overcame them, while the elder people, the Jews are made to 'serve' the younger people, the Church." This motif of the younger brother is also used by Wootten in proclaiming "Ephraim" to be the prodigal son of Luke 15:11-32 while the Jews are the elder brother" (Wootten, Who Is Israel?, 130-134).

168: Wootten, Who Is Israel?, 147-155.

169: Gaston, 6.

170: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 3," 4.

171: For a discussion on the history of Jewish converts to Christianity turning on their fellow Jews when their message was not accepted, cf. Sander L. Gilman, Jewish Self- Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1986), 53-67.

172: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 1," 9. 173: Ibid., 10.

174: Ibid., 11.

175: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 3," 11. 176: Ibid., 6.

177: Wootten, Who Is Israel?, 13. 178: Ibid., 175.

179: Wootten, Who Is Israel?, 179. On p. 76, she states, "Yahveh...promised to give 'the land to them and to their 'seed' after them.' These two blessings - fruitful multiplication and the land are the heart of all His blessings. And they are first to be taken in a p'shat, literal, sense." In the Prologue to Olive Tree, she writes with regard to Ephraim, "And I [God] will bring them back, each one to his own inheritance, each one to his own land." In Olive Tree, 67, she cites Isa 9:1 and Matt 4:15, "Galilee of the Gentiles," implying by such a citation that the area of the Galilee belongs to her "Ephraimites." Later (69), she writes, "The Galilee was the area where the Samaritans lived." Still later (72) she castigates Jewish returnees who "continued to scorn those who lived in the Galilee." Here I will cite H. H. Ben-Sasson, who writes (135), "As only a section of the population [of Galilee] was deported [in 733-732, when Tiglath-pileser annexed Galilee] and a considerable Israelite element remained, it is not at all clear whether Galilee was resettled with foreign colonists. In any case, we have no evidence of a new ethnic entity consisting of a mixture of Israelites and colonists coming into being in Galilee, as was the case in Samaria."

180: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 2," 5. 181: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4," 5. 182: Ibid.

183: Wootten, Olive Tree., 54.

184: Ibid.

185: Ibid., 36. Here her concerns for all the supposed lost "Ephraimites" among the Palestinians and Babylonians, peoples among whom one would statistically expect them to be most concentrated, is not anywhere evident.

186: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4," 8.

187: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4," 10.

188: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4," 12, 13. He contends that the greatest supporters of the Temple Mount Faithful are not traditional Christians, not Messianic Jews, but "Ephraimites."

189: Koniuchowsky, "Full Restoration: Part 4," 13. We must keep in mind, however, that the great majority of Christian Zionists do not subscribe to this teaching.

190: Ibid.

191: Wilson, Difficulty 3, 4, contended that the land is lying desolate without them and looked forward to the time when "the mountains were to shoot forth their branches, and bear their fruit for the people of Israel." Cf. also Difficulty 20, 13.

192: Cf. n. 131 above.

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