

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF MESSIANIC CONGREGATIONS AND SYNAGOGUES
(IAMCS)

One Law, Two Sticks:

A Critical Look at the Hebrew Roots Movement

A position paper of the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and
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I.

Introduction:

Preface:

We, as Messianic Jewish leaders, have become increasingly concerned that there are a growing number of individuals and groups today promoting the idea that all the world's believers in the Messiah - Jewish and Gentile alike - ought to be keeping the Torah, particularly the Shabbat, the feasts, and kosher diet. The doctrine which is the subject of this paper has been around since the day of the Apostles, in different forms, but today it has come to be known as "One Law One People" or just "One Law," for short. It insists upon Gentile Torah observance universally. Most of those who teach it, also promote false theories about Israel identity as well. Recently, some of the more prominent One Law teachers have banded together and begun using the label "Hebrew Roots" to describe themselves as a movement. This nomenclature is regrettable from our point of view, since it causes confusion.

Obviously, the roots of the biblical faith are Jewish. Thankfully, many non-Jewish believers worldwide recognize the fact that their faith is rooted in a Jewish Messiah, Jewish Apostles, and a Jewish gospel. We note that many precious, well-meaning Gentile believers are drawn to Messianic Judaism because they wish to connect with Israel; they want to understand the Bible in historical context, or they simply have a desire to enrich their faith by acquiring a more Jewish understanding of the Lord.

Therefore, we wish to be clear up front that not everyone who uses the label "Hebrew Roots" is necessarily part of that "Hebrew Roots" camp which is the cause for our concern. Since we don't invent the names for these movements, we are resigned to have to use the names and labels which they apply to themselves.

One Law Doctrine:

One Law doctrine is based on the idea that everybody everywhere ought to be keeping the Torah given to the Jews at Sinai. In their view, the law wasn't intended just for Israel, but for everyone. Moreover, neither the coming of Messiah, nor the atonement provided in the New Covenant changes anything in terms of what they see as the universal human need to relate to God through the laws of Moses.

Accordingly, One Law teachers, as embodied today in the Hebrew Roots movement, are highly critical of what they see as the historical error of the Gentile church in not keeping the laws which God gave to Moses and Israel at Mount Sinai. Of particular concern to them seem to be the laws pertaining to Shabbat and festival observance, as well as the

dietary laws. Those Gentile Christians who don't necessarily see the need to follow such laws are considered as "pagans."

One Law doctrine holds that the true "Hebrew roots" of the faith are to be found in keeping the laws of Moses given at Mt. Sinai. Their mission, as it seems, is to promote observance of the law as the means of restoring the body of Messiah to the supposed true Hebrew roots of the faith, which are to be found in the Sinai covenant. This mission takes on particular urgency in the end-times. One Law proponents advocate, therefore, the urgent need for all Gentile believers to depart from "paganism," and to return in zeal to the "true Hebrew roots" of their faith, which is supposedly to be found in the legal observance of Torah.

In recent years, they have bombarded the internet with their teachings. Some of them are very savvy when it comes to this.

The Issue:

Followers of "One Law One People" insist that everybody ought to be keeping the Torah. Since everybody does not keep the Torah, they typically see their Torah observance as some kind of evidence of their chosen-ness. Not only does this breed a sense of legalistic pride, but there are deeper concerns.

Almost inevitably, "One Law One People" teaching is associated with the idea that people who keep the Torah given to Israel actually ARE Israel. This idea is usually advanced by myths about the "lost tribes." The followers of "One Law" typically begin to identify Israel in Bible prophecy as somehow pertaining to them. Most of them think of themselves as belonging to the northern kingdom of Israel, as represented in the prophecy of the two "sticks" referenced in Ezekiel 37. Thus, they see Torah observance as their duty as members of the people Israel.

The question of Israel identity always seems to be related to this doctrine of One Law. Thus, not only is it wrong on its face, theologically, but it is deeply and intimately intertwined with replacement theology.

Obsession with the Torah, and with Israel identity, has caused many Hebrew roots groups to take on the external look and feel of being Jewish. In Hebrew roots conferences and in local congregational groups, for example, it is commonplace to hold meetings on Shabbat and during the Levitical feasts. In their meetings, they typically employ traditional articles of Jewish worship like davidic dancing, Jewish liturgical prayers, and shofar-blowing. It is common for people to be wearing kippot and tzitzit, using Hebrew slogans on their banners, displaying the Magen David, and even processing Torahs.

We don't disagree generally with the use of Jewish symbolism and expression by non-Jews. However, such usage by legalistic, non-Jewish groups, many of whom think they

are the true Israelites, and who are often critical and divisive toward the Gentile church, can cause much offense and/or confusion in both the Jewish and Christian community. Both the Jewish and Christian communities may not be able to see the distinction between the Messianic Jewish community and the Hebrew Roots camp. Due to their external appearance, and the imitation of Jewish expression, there is potential that the practices and beliefs of these Hebrew Roots groups could wrongfully be attributed to Messianic Jews.

Our Purpose in This Paper:

By issuing this paper, we wish to identify and describe One Law theology and the related Hebrew Roots movement, both historically and today, and to give an informed opinion as to the errors as well as the inherent dangers of it.

We in the messianic Jewish movement also wish to make clear the fact that we are opposed to One Law theology, and to any doctrine which advocates, as One Law does, the idea that New Covenant faith among the Gentiles is to be fulfilled by embracing the Sinai covenant. We do not seek the fulfillment of God's plan for the salvation of Israel through the Sinai Covenant, but rather, through the gospel. If our own Jewish people have not been reconciled unto God by the Sinai covenant, then this must also certainly be true for the Gentiles, who were not given the Sinai covenant to begin with.

While many aspects of Torah are found in messianic Judaism as a unique expression of our Jewish faith in the Messiah, we do not believe that the Gentile church, or Gentile Christians universally, are called to the same expression as us. In fact, it is the unity of Jew and Gentile in Messiah, *in spite of* our cultural diversity, which glorifies God in the body of the Lord, via the one new man. (Eph. 2:15). In our view, therefore, it is wrong to admonish Gentile believers universally to think that they need to observe the Torah. It is clear, furthermore, that the Apostles dealt with this precise question of Gentile Torah observance and answered it on point in Acts 15. All of this will be discussed further in this paper.

At this point, we wish to be clear about our purpose and our heart's intent: In what we say in this paper, we are not in any way speaking against the many precious Gentiles who fellowship in messianic synagogues in response to a call from the Lord. Many non-Jews come into the messianic Jewish fold with the desire of knowing the Lord through the Jewishness of the scriptures, and in the ancient way of life, which was Yeshua's own culture and heritage, as preserved in the life of the Jewish people. We, in Messianic Judaism, have always welcomed and encouraged non-Jews to fellowship with us, to celebrate Messiah together, and help us restore Israel to faith in Yeshua. Our concern is with those who advocate legalism.

II.

Definitions

What do they mean by “Torah”?

In addressing the errors of One Law theology, it will be necessary to frequently refer to the term “Torah.” At times, this can be rather ambiguous, as the term “Torah” (law), of course, has different meanings depending on context. For example, there is not just the law given at Sinai. But there is the law which tells us how God created mankind and the universe in Genesis. There are the testimonies in the Torah of how Joseph was reunited with his brothers, how God fought with Israel against the Canaanites, how Aaron’s rod budded, or how God split the Red Sea through Moses. Even when we talk about the actual legal part of Torah, there are 613 commandments. Many have to do with the service of the Temple.

Generically, the term “Torah” is often thought of as a set of laws providing a moral code for right living. Although there are such commandments in the Torah, the moral law is a very limited part of Torah, and is not a good basis for understanding what Torah is. While the Torah does contain certain moral laws given to Israel, it was not in fact, given in order to be the ultimate moral statement and standard of God to humanity for ethics and basic right v. wrong living. The Torah does not purport to be such a statement. While there clearly are universal moral laws in the Torah, there are many aspects of the Torah that have nothing to do with morality, and which therefore are not intended to be universal. For example, the commandment to Israel to wear tzitzit (Num. 15:38), or to be circumcised (Lev. 12:3).

The Torah does not approach being an exhaustive, all-encompassing, moral code. In fact, Paul’s assertion in Romans 2:14 states:

“Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law.”

The scripture acknowledges that there is at least a basic sense and assertion of morality in all of the world’s cultures. Most societies eschew murder, stealing, adultery, rape, abuse of the weak and helpless, et cetera. There is a moral sense in the conscience of man that to some extent parallels that of scripture, but is able to discern right and wrong even in spite of never having read or heard the Torah which God gave to Israel.

The gift of the Torah to the Jewish people at Sinai, therefore, was not revelatory in the sense of the moral aspect of it. Noah was an “ish tzadik” or “righteous man” (See Gen. 6:9); and Abraham obeyed God’s statutes and commandments (Gen. 26:5), even long before the law at Sinai was even given.

Torah is not a revelation of morality. Nor is the moral aspect of it unique in any way. A basic understanding of moral law is already embedded by God in the understanding of mankind. God did not appear to Israel at Sinai to present a moral code.

God gave the law at Sinai, creating a unique nation. There are things given in the Torah which are unique to Israel. Above all, the actual revelation at Sinai was not the law, but rather, the lawgiver. In fact, God not only gave the law at Sinai, but God revealed Himself unto the people Israel. (See Ex. 19 and 20). The Jews from the most ancient times have understood this.

Hence, the controversy over “Torah observance,” as engendered by One Law teachers, does not involve questions of defining moral and ethical commandments. No one would argue whether moral laws, such as those found in Torah or anywhere else, are universal in application. Of course, prohibitions against murder, sexual immorality, theft, coveting, etc., are universal. Morality, as expressed in the Torah, is universal. It is incumbent upon all mankind to be moral. But one need not learn morality from the Jewish Torah in order to be moral. Morality as a standard is not the unique revelation of the Torah.

In the context of “One Law” theology, the “One Law” teachers have established a presence on the internet, where they often publish condemnations of the Gentile church for its alleged failure to keep “Torah.” The implication is that failing to “keep the Torah” is a moral failure, which renders the Gentile church either unrighteous, unholy, or both, in the eyes of God. If in fact we were talking about breaching moral laws, then such accusations might hold water. However, that is not the case.

In fact, there are three major areas of the Torah in which the “One Law” teachers seem to feel that the Gentile church is at fault for failing to obey God: 1) The Sabbath, 2) the Levitical feasts, and 3) the dietary laws. To a lesser extent, some would also find fault in Gentile believers who do not obey ceremonial laws such as circumcision and wearing tzitzit (fringes). These Torah commands, which do not pertain to issues of morality, are the main focal point of the “One Law” controversy. Why these?

We note that the commandments in Torah which tend to be the main topic of controversy with One Law teachers are the laws which stand out as being uniquely identified with Israel. Not only the church today, but all civilized cultures, even going back to Egypt and Rome have had laws against murder and theft, but only the Jews have had laws pertaining to Yom Kippur or Passover. Thus, the issue is not with laws that are clearly universal, but with those that are Israel-specific.

“One Law” as Replacement Theology:

The idea behind “One Law” theology, whether stated or implied, is that he who keeps the law given to Israel, therefore IS Israel. Accordingly, “One Law” theology is simply a

form of replacement theology. By keeping the laws which are specific to Israel, one thereby presumes to be Israel. This incorrect desire to “keep Torah” in order to become Israel is a deception that dates back to the time of the Apostles. (1 Tim. 1:4, Titus 3:9).

III. History and Background:

“One Law” doctrine of the 21st century has been greatly popularized in recent years by the emergence of the Hebrew Roots movement. But it is important to point out that the Hebrew Roots movement and its accompanying legalistic doctrine is not something new. We find in Paul’s warning to Timothy, that in their time, too, there were Hebrew roots teachers who taught myths about Jewish genealogy and sought to promote themselves as expert Torah teachers, even though they had no idea what they were talking about. (1 Tim. 1:4-8). Paul describes the doctrine of such teachers as “meaningless talk.” He further describes them:

“They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.” (1 Tim. 1:8)

In order to understand and explain the errors of the Hebrew Roots camp of today, it is necessary to consider its historical predecessors. While the whole matter can be traced back to the day of the Apostles, for our purposes here, we will go back to the 19th century, and mention a few key religious movements in America which are most clearly the parents and grandparents of the modern Hebrew Roots movement. This will include the Millerite and Sabbatarian movements of the 19th century. From that came forth the 20th century Sacred Name movement, and the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), of Herbert W. Armstrong.

The Millerites – Origins of legalistic, end-time fanaticism:

William Miller was a Baptist lay preacher who began preaching in the 1830’s that the return of the Messiah was imminent. Up until that time, there was little teaching or discussion about the return of the Messiah or end-time prophecy in American churches. Most Christians never thought about the idea of Messiah literally coming back to set up a Kingdom and reign on earth. What we know and believe to be biblical fact today regarding the Lord’s return was not being preached in America’s churches. With the rise of new mediums of communication, like the high speed printing press, and the telegraph, a free marketplace of religious expression arose, independent of the mainstream church. This allowed for biblical expression that might otherwise not have been taught in church, but it also opened the door to fanaticism.

Miller not only insisted that Messiah would return to earth to set up a Kingdom, but he insisted that such return was imminent, and even narrowed it down to a date certain in 1844. Based on a combination of the Karaite Jewish calendar and the 2300 days of

Daniel (Dan. 8:14), Miller and his followers were expecting the Messiah to return specifically on Yom Kippur, Oct. 22nd, 1844.

In 1840, Miller's end-time prophetic doctrine was transformed from being an obscure, local teaching to a national religious movement known as the "Millerite" movement. It was also referred to as "Adventism," since it was characterized by a certain obsession with the idea that the Messiah would return to earth a second time. The impetus for this change occurred mainly due to the help of Miller's alliance with a Boston Pastor who was an able and experienced publisher. Miller's magazine, *Sign of the Times*, soon began appearing in major cities all over America and Canada. During the 1840's alone, millions of copies were distributed.

The fanaticism created by the Millerites spread all the way to Great Britain and Australia. We note that Miller's Adventist theology was one of the first national religious movements in America to effectively make use of the mass media in widely disseminating fanatical beliefs based on a false interpretation of prophecy.

Adventists and Sabbatarianism:

Thousands of Millerite followers were literally waiting in the fields to see the Lord return on Oct. 22nd, 1844. When it did not occur, this resulted in what came to be known as the "Great Disappointment," in which countless Millerites were discouraged and disillusioned. Though the Lord did not return on schedule, the fanaticism created by the Millerites continued, and it found a new outlet of expression.

In the aftermath, many Millerite leaders began to proclaim that it was necessary for Christians to start keeping the Sabbath to be prepared for the final return of the Lord. Not the Sunday Sabbath, but the Sabbath of Israel.

The hook for the Sabbatarian idea is the belief that there is an end-time crisis at hand, in which a great controversy is brewing over God's concern with mankind not keeping the Sabbath. As it is presented, the implication is that those who keep the Sabbath of Israel, ARE Israel. And those who do not, are outside of the covenant people. They are under condemnation for their unbelief and disobedience to God.

Accordingly, it should be understood that there is a strong connection between Sabbatarianism and Adventism. Those who insist upon the need to keep the Sabbath (and other laws), will typically motivate their followers thru fanaticism, obsession, and false claims related to end-time prophecy.

In the wake of the fanaticism created by the Millerites, many people were already primed and ready to accept the idea that God was separating the "true Israel" from the rest of humanity over the issue of Sabbath-keeping. The acceptance of this belief gave rise to

the Sabbatarian church movement of the latter part of the 19th century, which is based in a form of “One Law” theology and more closely resembles the modern Hebrew Roots movement in terms of its belief that Gentiles must keep the law of Moses to please God.

Seventh Day Adventist Church:

One Millerite who became a key advocate of the need to keep the Sabbath was Ellen White, one of the founders of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church. White wrote:

*“I saw that the holy Sabbath is, and will be, the separating wall between the true Israel of God and unbelievers; and that the Sabbath is the great question to unite the hearts of God’s dear, waiting saints.”*¹

The SDA church today, which continues to preach Sabbath observance as the mark of a true christian, boasts a membership of over 16 million members worldwide. Under “fundamental beliefs,” it states the following on its website:

*“(The Sabbath) is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God’s kingdom. The Sabbath is God’s perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people.”*²

Since SDA sees Sabbath-keeping as a sign of both salvation and of holiness, it further considers itself to be the “covenant people.” Consequently, SDA has no vision whatsoever for the salvation of Jewish people or the birth of the Jewish State. It sees the State of Israel today as if it is in no way connected to anything in scripture. For example, in a major SDA publication, entitled “How Should Christians view Israel,” it states:

*“The 1948 establishment of the State of Israel, an outgrowth of the Nazi Holocaust in which 6 million Jews were killed, is viewed by Adventists as a political, not a prophetic event.”*³

It should be understood that those who would compel Gentile Christians to keep the Sabbath, and other such laws given specifically to Israel at Sinai, will typically assign

¹ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 33, : www.gilead.net/egw/books2/earlywritings/ewindex.html

² <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>

³ Mark Kellner, “How Should Christians view Israel?” (2007), <http://www.adventistreview.org/article/1456/archives/issue-2007-1531/how-should-christians-view-israel>

unto themselves the identity of being the “chosen people.” This is necessary in order to provide their followers with a motive to think it necessary to keep the law. Their “chosen-ness” is thus confirmed by their presumed keeping of the commandments of God. Accordingly, they will challenge the true identity of Israel, and replace it, theologically, with themselves.

Hence, in this skewed, legalistic approach to the prophetic scriptures, Israel has nothing to do with the Jewish people, but it has everything to do with Gentiles observing laws that were once given to the Jews. The Jews, of course, broke those laws, and incurred God’s wrath. Therefore, the Jews are replaced by one more worthy to be God’s nation. Thus, Israel is no longer the Jewish nation, but rather, it is an end-time remnant of Gentile Sabbath-keepers. These Sabbatarian Christians are the true “Israel of God.” Or so they seem to think.

In this Sabbatarian model, we see not only a poor understanding of prophecy but obvious replacement theology too. For the unfortunate gentile christian who is deceived by Sabbatarian teaching, the message comes across loud and clear: Salvation is not only by grace through faith, but also by the law; for the sign of the true gentile believer is seen in the keeping of the Sabbath.

By the 20th century, and still today, SDA grew to become the largest Adventist/Sabbatarian denomination in America, and in the world, spreading their beliefs and practices among Christians in every country.⁴ But there were many others that arose in the wake of the Millerite fiasco of 1844, which did not accept the prophetic claims of Ellen White, and instead, founded their own Sabbatarian groups. Most non-SDA Adventist/Sabbatarian groups, which rejected Ellen White, came to be known as “Church of God”, in one form or another.⁵ Two of the “Church of God” denominations which shall be discussed in this paper are “Church of God (Seventh Day), and also the “Worldwide Church of God.”

The impact of SDA and related Sabbatarian groups through the late 19th and early 20th century, particularly in America, was quite significant. The widespread promotion of the idea of Gentile Torah observance set the stage for what was to come later.

Sacred Namers:

By the early 20th century, many Sabbaterean Christians began to concern themselves not only with keeping the Sabbath, but also with the Lord’s name. A new movement thus

⁴ J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, Infobase Publishing, (Jan. 1, 2005), p. 478

⁵ Richard Nickels, *History of the Seventh Day Church of God*, Giving and Sharing Publications, (1999), pp. 11-12.

emerged within Sabbatarianism that came to known as the “Sacred name” movement. It arose particularly during the 1930’s.

Based on the premise that true Christians must return to their Hebrew roots by keeping the law, Sacred-namers insisted that it was necessary to keep not only the 4th commandment (the Sabbath), but also the 3rd commandment (You shall not take the Lord’s name in vain). In their view, the mainstream church was in error, and out of favor with God, not only in regard to their non-observance of the Sabbath, but also because they pray to God in the wrong name.

The problem with praying to God by His so-called “sacred name,” was that nobody was really quite sure what it was. Some said it was “Jehovah,” while others decided it was “Yahweh,” and there were other forms as well. Some Sacred-namers also advocated keeping the feasts of Lev. 23. The unifying factor among them was this abiding concern over using the “correct” Hebrew name of the Lord.

Origins of the Sacred Name Movement:

Although there were various contributing persons, the rise of the Sacred Name movement seems to have emerged largely out the efforts of key pioneer, Clarence Orvil Dodd.⁶

Dodd was an elder in a particular Church of God Sabbatarian church known as Church of God (Seventh Day). The Church of God (Seventh Day) was one of the major Millerite/Sabbatarian churches that arose during the 1850’s, after “the Great Disappointment”. Church of God (Seventh Day) actually arose at the same time as the SDA church, but remained separate from SDA because its leaders rejected the writings of Ellen White.⁷

The Church of God (Seventh Day) made its mark on the Adventist/Sabbatarian movement beginning in 1863 when it began publication of its official magazine called *Hope of Israel*. The same is known today as *Bible Advocate*. (See: <http://baonline.org>).

A colleague of Dodd’s in the Church of God (Seventh Day) was one Herbert W. Armstrong. Both Dodd and Armstrong were dis-fellowshipped from the Church of God

⁶ J. Gordon Melton, *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*, McGrath Publishing Company, (1978), p. 476.

⁷ Richard Nickels, *History of the Seventh Day Church of God*, Giving and Sharing Publications, (1999), pp. 10-12.

(Seventh Day) based on their dispute with the church over doctrinal issues, although for different reasons. In Dodd's case, the dispute was over the issue of the feasts of Lev. 23.⁸

Many Sabbatarian churches, including SDA, in spite of their insistence on keeping the Sabbath, did not believe it was necessary to keep the feasts of Lev. 23. But for a growing body of Sabbatarians in the 1930's, keeping the Sabbath wasn't enough. Now they wanted to keep the feasts too. Dodd was one of them.

In 1937, Dodd began publishing a magazine called "*The Faith*," in which he advocated not only use of the Sacred name, but also keeping of the feasts of Lev. 23. His ideas were widely published through the magazine. It has been said that no single force in spreading the Sacred Name movement was as important as *The Faith* magazine.⁹

Also important in advancing the movement was publication of the Sacred Name bible, by Angelo "A.B." Traina. A disciple of Dodd, Traina published Sacred Name editions of the scriptures. First, Traina published the *Holy Name New Testament* in 1950, and then the *Holy Name Bible* in 1962. These bibles were a major contribution to spreading the Sacred name doctrine and legalistic mindset.

Other sacred name groups which shared the same theology, such as the Assemblies of Yahweh, began to organize and help Dodd to promote the Sacred-name movement.

Problems with Sacred-name Beliefs:

Sacred-namers claim that it is wrong for people to pray in the "pagan" Greek-influenced name of "Jesus" or "the Lord." They insist upon using the "correct" Hebrew name. As previously mentioned, they do not agree universally on what that name should be. However, most Sacred-namers generally claim it is "Yahweh" as the presumed Hebrew name of the Lord in the Old Testament. They add to that, the name "Yahshua" as the supposed Hebrew name for "Jesus." This interpretation continues today even though in both cases their Hebrew is wrong.

Yet, Sacred-namers stubbornly insist upon the need to use these two names, staking their claim based on the third commandment:

"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain." Ex. 20:7.

⁸ *Sacred Name Movement History*, Yahweh's Assembly in Yahshua (2008) p. 1, available at: <http://www.sacrednamemovement.org>

⁹ J. Gordon Melton, *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*, McGrath Publishing Company, (1978), p. 476.

The correct way to pronounce the tetragrammaton (יהוה), remains a mystery even to Jewish scholars to this day. There are varying ideas about how to pronounce the name, what it may mean, or if it is even meant perhaps to be an acronym. The reality is that nobody knows. Yet, if anyone did know, it would likely be the Jewish people.

In fact, among the millions of indigenous, Hebrew-speaking Jews, both in Israel and in the diaspora, no one knows definitively how to pronounce the name. Among the Jewish people, therefore, the common accepted practice is to say “Adonai,” which means “Lord,” rather than build a theology of speculation on how to pronounce the tetragrammaton.

The error of the Sacred-namers is far more serious than simple ignorance and misconstruction of the Hebrew language. The gist of the sacred name movement was to stake their claim upon the use of the name as evidence of their being “chosen.”

Sacred-namers suggest that people who use the “true name” are part of the true Apostolic congregation, in fact, a continuation of the tradition of the first century congregation. Their mission, therefore, was to restore the body to its true roots, as it once was in the day of the Apostles, as if the mystery of the Holy Spirit, and the power in which the Apostles ministered the gospel, was connected to their knowledge and use of the true Hebrew “sacred name.”

Sacred-namers insist not only upon use of the name “Yahweh,” but they further insist that one must also use the Messiah’s correct Hebrew name, which according to them is *Yahshua* (יהשע). This is another error. It was obviously created to try and conform to a theology, that “YAHshua” is the son of “YAHweh.” However, the name “Yahshua” (יהשע) makes no sense linguistically in Hebrew. Nor is such a name anywhere to be found in the Old Testament.

Hebrew version New Testaments, created for the purpose of reaching Hebrew-speaking Jews with the gospel, typically use the name “Yeshua” (ישוע). Thousands of Hebrew-speaking Messianic Jews are living today in Israel who pray in the name of Yeshua (not Yahshua). Before them, Hebrew-speaking missionaries and Jewish Christians living in the land used the name “Yeshua,” as it is written in Hebrew New Testaments.

Of course, there are no known original books of the New Testament written in Hebrew. All Hebrew versions of the New Testament are translated from the Greek. However, the correct Hebrew translation of the Greek “Jesus” is not a mystery. It is well-established by Jewish and Christian scholars, historians, and linguists that the correct Hebrew name of the Messiah was “Yeshua” (ישוע), which means “Salvation” or “He saves.” If you read a Hebrew New Testament, the name of the Lord as written therein is Yeshua (ישוע). Simply put, “Yahshua” is a fabrication popularized in the 20th century by the Sacred-namers.

Unfortunately, a number of Hebrew roots adherents to this day still use the name “Yahshua,” with insistence that it is the correct Hebrew name of Jesus. It is another example of a false theology being popularized through the use of mass media in the modern era of communications. The Sacred-name errors were widely published not only by Dodd’s magazine *The Faith*, but also in a host of different Sacred Name version Bibles that have been in circulation since the 1950’s.

The error of the Sacred-namers was not simply a linguistic one. The bigger error of the Sacred Name movement, and its successors who follow their traditions today, is in its legalistic insistence that using a little Hebrew is somehow going to improve a person’s relationship with God. Using Hebrew is not indicative of a person’s chosen-ness, nor does it increase righteousness, holiness, or intimacy with God. The fact that they use incorrect Hebrew only serves to highlight the error, and exposes the inaccurate nature of the Sacred Name movement.

Herbert W. Armstrong:

As previously mentioned, one of the early disciples of the Church of God (Seventh Day) was Herbert W. Armstrong, who came into it at the prodding of his wife in the late 1920’s. Like Dodd, Armstrong identified not only with the Sabbath, but with the idea of keeping the feasts. Armstrong began his Worldwide Church of God (WCG) in 1934, after being dis-fellowshipped from the Church of God Seventh Day. The reason that Armstrong was kicked out was because he had become a proponent of a controversial doctrine which at the time was known as “British Israelism.” An explanation of that doctrine is as follows:

British/Anglo-Israelism:

“British Israelism,” also known as “Anglo-Israelism,” is the theological belief that the Anglo-Saxon and associated cultures of northwestern Europe, and in particular Great Britain, are the actual racial descendants of the tribes of Israel. Thus, by extension, North Americans, including both the U.S. and Canadians, are supposedly composed of the same descendants of the ancient Israelites.

The theology is based on the myth that the 10 northern tribes of Israel wandered into the lands in northwestern Europe and settled there, after being exiled by the Assyrians in the 8th century B.C.. Though there is zero historical, archeological, biblical or any other kind of evidence in support, the theory became quite popular in the 18th and 19th century, as Great Britain became the leading world power.

For many of its proponents, the theory has had a broader application to include not just England, but the people of Germany, who have an historic blood kinship with the British.

Others expand it to include most of Protestant northwestern Europe, including the Netherlands and Scandinavia as part of the presumed Anglo-Israelite fold. The great national successes of Britain and Germany as leaders of post-Industrial Revolution Europe in the 19th and early 20th century, was often heralded as a kind of confirmation that the people of northwestern Europe were in fact of Israelite descent, and therefore the chosen people of God, destined to rule the earth.

False doctrine based upon genealogical myths is nothing new. Paul apparently dealt with similar myths in his day. He warned Timothy to take care to teach no doctrine rooted in genealogical speculation:

Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith. (1 Tim. 1:4).

Anglo-Israelism is not only based on genealogical myth and false prophecy, but it is also a kind of replacement theology that is heavily-laced with racism and, in particular, anti-Semitism. Anglo-Israelism in the extreme cases is the driving vision of certain anti-Jewish hate groups such as the ultra-right wing “Christian Identity” movement in America. Christian Identity is a neo-Nazi and white supremacist movement, basing its dogma on classic Anglo-Israelite theory. The Christian Identity movement is listed as a dangerous, anti-Semitic hate group on the website of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The ADL says the following about the Christian Identity movement:

“Christian Identity is a religious ideology popular in extreme right-wing circles. Adherents believe that whites of European descent can be traced back to the "Lost Tribes of Israel." Many consider Jews to be the Satanic offspring of Eve and the Serpent, while non-whites are "mud peoples" created before Adam and Eve. Its virulent racist and anti-Semitic beliefs are usually accompanied by extreme anti-government sentiments. Despite its small size, Christian Identity influences virtually all white supremacist and extreme anti-government movements. It has also informed criminal behavior ranging from hate crimes to acts of terrorism.”¹⁰

In its more subtle, mainstream forms, Anglo-Israelism tones down the rhetoric against the Jews. It maintains the claim that the tribes of Israel can be traced to European descent, however, it concedes that the Jews are the descendants of at least one of the twelve tribes, that being Judah. However, mainstream Anglo-Israelism maintains that the fault for rejecting the Messiah is squarely upon “Judah” (the Jews). Of course, the 10 northern tribes of Israel had nothing to do with it, since they were living in Europe at the time, and were not present when Messiah came. Furthermore, in Anglo Israelism, it is Jewish Judah who still remain blind to the Messiah today, and are in need of salvation, while the 10 northern tribes are the true Christian church of our day.

¹⁰ http://archive.adl.org/learn/ext_us/Christian_Identity.asp?xpicked=4&item=Christian_ID

Worldwide Church of God (WCG) of Herbert W. Armstrong:

By the 1930's, many Gentile Christians in America were ready to embrace Herbert W. Armstrong's Anglo-Israelite message. Armstrong, who first called his church the "Radio Church of God," later changed to "Worldwide Church of God," made full use of the mass media available to him, especially including radio, but also TV and print journalism, to get his message out there loud and clear. And the message was: It is time for American Christians to reclaim their "birthright" as natural-born Israelites. The subtext of this message was that it was therefore necessary for "Israel" to return to the law of the Sinai covenant as the mark of the true church.

Accordingly, Anglo-Israelism is necessarily connected, and inevitably intertwined, with "One Law" theology. Though Armstrong did not become an advocate of the use of the "Sacred Name," he taught the same basic core theology as them, namely, that Gentile Christians need to return to their roots by observing the biblical laws of the Torah. For in Armstrong's world, the true Gentile believer is to consider himself physically descended from Israel. Not just grafted into the olive tree by faith. Not just the seed of Abraham by faith in the Messiah. But, rather, they are the actual, physical descendants of Israel. And if Israel, then they must live as Israel – by the Torah.

Armstrong even claimed that his Torah-keeping Anglo-Israelite followers were the true heirs of the land of Israel. For example, just one month after the State of Israel declared independence and was in the midst of the war for its survival, Armstrong wrote in his June 1948 edition of his magazine *The Plain Truth*:

"The dying Jacob passed the birthright, and possession of Palestine on through the tribes of EPHRAIM and MANASSEH, sons of Joseph (Gen.48:4-5, 15-16). He names HIS NAME (Israel) on them - Ephraim and Manasseh. It is their descendants today, the American and British people, therefore, who are truly the national Israel. The Jews come from Judah, and belonged to the nation Judah, not the nation Israel . . . the Jews want (the land of Palestine) because they come from Jacob but through JUDAH. Yet it belongs to none of them by divine right. It belongs to Great Britain and America, into whose hands God placed it, but who have been so valiantly trying to get rid of it." ¹¹

Thus, after the holocaust, as Jews poured into the land of Israel, WCG followers saw this event not as a fulfillment of divine will according to Bible prophecy, but rather, some kind of deception. Armstrong's followers had the idea that the right to possess the land of Israel belonged not to the Jews, but to the Gentile nations of Britain and America, under the banner of Ephraim. They were urged to observe the Sabbath, the feasts, and the biblical dietary laws, as a condition of fulfilling the right to be heirs to the land. This is

¹¹ Herbert W. Armstrong, *Plain Truth*, Vol XIII, No 02, June 1948, page 8.

exactly on all fours with what is currently still being taught today in much of the Hebrew Roots movement by proponents of “One Law” theology.

In both Sacred Name churches and Armstrong’s WCG, observance of three major aspects of the Torah was emphasized: the Sabbath, the feasts, and the dietary laws. Keeping those three biblical commandments of the Torah seems to have been a kind of mark of distinction from other Gentile Christians who are, in their minds, still under the “pagan” influence of the church because they meet on Sundays, don’t keep the feasts which God gave to the Jews at Sinai, and because they eat “unclean” foods. The controversy over whether Gentile believers should feel compelled to keep the Sabbath, the feasts, and the dietary laws is the exact same controversy that Paul, as the Apostle to the Gentiles, addressed with the Colossians:

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.” (Col. 2:16).

From Paul’s day, to the Sacred Namers and the WCG, right up to today, we find these Hebrew roots groups “judging” over the exact issues that Paul warned not to judge.

Armstrong’s ministry was also characterized by an obsession concerning end-time prophecy. This kind of fanaticism is typical of legalistic groups who seem to think they are separated, chosen, or on a higher plane of holiness with God on account of their observance of the Sabbath, etc.

The eschatological views of legalistic groups such as Armstrong’s, often seem to be rooted in the fact that they see their legal observance as somehow indicative of their “chosen-ness” among all others in the end of times. In the wake of the fanaticism, Armstrong declared himself to be a prophet of the Lord, and also God’s true apostle. This harkens back to Miller and to Ellen White.

The Hebrew roots version of end-time prophecy, as presented by Armstrong, replaces the Jews with Torah observant Gentiles. Thus, all scripture concerning Israel’s prophetic rebirth is applied to Gentiles that keep the law. Instead of the Jews returning to the land, and instead of the salvation of Jewish people as a sign of the end-time (See, e.g., Ez. 39:27), the Hebrew roots message is that the Lord is preparing the way for His return by restoring Gentile believers to observance of the law. Only then will a “bride” be made ready to be redeemed by the Lord.

By the 1970’s, Armstrong’s use of television enabled him to publish his messages to millions of people worldwide. Armstrong’s broad influence greatly contributed to setting the stage for the kind of legalistic thinking we see today in the modern Hebrew Roots movement. Armstrong’s version of the Hebrew roots “true church” message spread more than any other because he made English-speaking white protestants believe that they

were the physical descendants of Israel, and therefore entitled to inherit the land of Israel as a matter of race. All they needed to do to perfect their claim was to observe the law.

Hence, by the latter part of the 20th century, the stage was set for a great apostasy in the Gentile church as people embraced the lie that their great hope for deliverance from the upcoming tribulation and final judgment of mankind rests not in their faith in Messiah, but rather, in keeping the Sabbath, festivals and dietary laws of the Torah. This is what Sacred Namers, Armstrong, and their modern day Hebrew Roots successor preach. It is not the gospel handed down by the Apostles. It is a different “gospel.”

It should be noted that after Armstrong’s death in 1986, his Worldwide Church of God repudiated all of Armstrong’s teachings, including Anglo-Israelism, Sabbath and feast observance, etc.¹² What was essentially a religious cult for over 50 years, continues today under the name “Grace Communion International” (GCI), under former elders and former associates of Herbert W. Armstrong, who repented of his teachings. Their own words tell so much about what is wrong with that which we are describing herein:

*“We have worked hard to inform our members about where we went wrong — and we say “we” honestly, for the current leaders of the church once believed and taught these erroneous doctrines. We have criticized other Christians as false, deceived, children of the devil. We have much to apologize for. We are profoundly sorry that we verbally persecuted Christians and created dissention and disunity in the body of Christ. We seek forgiveness and reconciliation.”*¹³

This move, no doubt, came at great cost to the organization, in terms of loss of members and finances. The GCI nevertheless continued to renounce and repudiate Armstrong’s core teachings, and removed all of his writings from publication by the church. In fact, GCI has moved into line theologically with mainstream evangelical Christianity, and has even become a member of the National Association of Evangelicals. As of 2009, GCI is reported to have 42,000 members in 900 congregations in about 90 countries.¹⁴

IV. The Post-Armstrong era: The Two-House of Israel Movement

After Herbert W. Armstrong passed away in 1986, and with his church having repudiated British Israelism and Torah observance, and having characterized its former founder and Senior Pastor as a cult leader, a great void was formed. The countless masses of people influenced by over 50 years of Armstrong’s messages were now looking for new leadership and direction. The barn door was left wide open for others to step into the

¹² <http://www.gci.org/prophecy/usb>

¹³ <http://www.gci.org/aboutus/history>

¹⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWAtvE1xiRk>

void left by Armstrong's departure. Thus, a new cast of characters quickly arose on the scene, to carry the baton of Anglo-Israelism through the 1990's and into the 21st century.

From British Israelism to Messianic Israelism - a Change of Name:

After Armstrong's passing, instead of "British Israelism," which was the term favored by Armstrong, the teachers and followers of British Israelite doctrine in the post-Armstrong era began to use a different name to express their vision. Considering the stigma attached to all things associated with Herbert W. Armstrong, this new name may have arisen out of a desire to avoid such associations. Certainly, the doctrinal beliefs did not change.

Consequently, beginning in the late 90's, instead of "British Israelism" or "Anglo Israelism," most folks who followed British Israelite doctrinal beliefs in the post-Armstrong era, began using the name "Messianic Israel" and/or "Messianic Israelites" to describe themselves. That name seems to have been coined by **Batya Wooten** who, as a writer of books, preached in essence the same doctrine as Armstrong in terms of the identity of the northern tribes of Israel. Wooten had a profound impact on carrying British Israelism through the 1990's and into the 21st century. Another major proponent was **Marshall "Moshe" Koniuchowsky**. Both Wooten and Koniuchowsky will be discussed further below.

Followers of British Israelism after Armstrong also became known as "Ephraimites," or, as we generally refer to them, the "Two House" movement.

The Two-house Movement:

In spite of the best efforts of some Two-housers to deny it, there can be no doubt of the direct historic link between the Two-house movement and Herbert W. Armstrong. It is a different name, but it is essentially the same foundation of false theories about the identity of Israel, together with the legalistic message concerning the need to keep the law.

In our official position paper entitled, *The Ephraimite Error*, released by the International Messianic Jewish Alliance in 2000, endorsed and published by the MJAA and IAMCS, Dr. Kay Silberling Smith examined the writings of Batya Wooten in exhaustive fashion, and exposed the errors as well as the connections to Herbert W. Armstrong and British Israelism.¹⁵ Dr. Silberling Smith concisely and accurately describes the Two-house movement as follows:

¹⁵ Kay Silberling Smith, Ph.D., *The Ephraimite Error*, 2000, available at: www.mjaa.org/site/DocServer/EphraimiteError.pdf

“Proponents of this (Two-house) 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.

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.”¹⁶

We do not at this time, by any means, intend to revisit, nor rehash the theological issues which have already been addressed in *The Ephraimite Error*. However, there are a few developments with the Two-house movement that have occurred since 2000, which need to be mentioned herein.

While Armstrong made use of mass communications available through radio and TV, the Two-housers today are extremely savvy at promoting themselves through the internet. Quite recently, internet TV and video has become the main vehicle of expression for Two-housers.

Other than the name change, and the use of different media for promotional purposes, the Two-housers continue today where Armstrong left off. In spite of slight stylistic differences, and other subtleties, the Two-housers espouse the same British Israelite doctrine as Armstrong, claiming that the Gentile believers are actually the physical descendants of the ten northern tribes of Israel.

Sacred Name meets the Two-Housers:

Two-house groups are also well-known for use of the “sacred name.” Among Two-housers, the common language is “Yahshua” and “Yahweh.” For Two-housers, the issue of the “sacred name” is part of its repertoire of complaints against the mainstream evangelical church. Many Two-housers see the evangelical church as “pagan” because, among other reasons, it uses the “Greco-Roman” names of “Jesus” and “Lord.”

Moreover, the Two-housers insistence upon using the name “Yahshua,” instead of the correct Hebrew “Yeshua,” has often been used as a way for the Two-housers to distinguish themselves from Messianic Jews. Apparently, because they pray in the true “Sacred-name,” they assume to have more favor with God than we do.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.1

The Sacred-name issue is just one of many issues about which the Two-housers find fault with us. The main reason, however, is because we don't recognize their core theory, specifically, their claim to be the physical descendants of Israel.

A Strange kind of “Zionism”:

Zionism is one of the great ideals of the Jewish people. Few things in the Jewish mind and heart are as sacred as the belief in the basic right of the Jewish people to return to Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel). This dream of the Jewish people, which came at great cost, is at last being realized today, as post-holocaust Jewry has returned to the land.

Two-housers have a warped view of Zionism. As proponents of “One Law One People” theology, they presume to be under a calling to observe the law given to Israel at Sinai. Keeping the law, they believe, serves as confirmation of their identity as Israelites. But, moreover, they presume an even greater incentive to keep the law. For Two-housers, keeping the law of Moses not only proves that they are the true Israel, but they seem to think it confirms a “biblical” right to possess the land which God promised to Israel.

Hence, for Two-housers, as it was for their predecessor, Herbert W. Armstrong, the modern miracle of the Jewish State is not something to be celebrated. Zionism is redefined as pertaining not to just the Jews, but to the Gentile “Israelites” as well. Thus, the imperative of keeping the law is in every way connected to this absurdly skewed misunderstanding of Zionism, which seems to think that Gentile believers have the same relationship to Eretz Yisrael and even the same inherent right to possess and live in the land as do the Jewish people. This doctrine is not only strange, but it is also anti-Semitic.

In the official paper entitled, *The Ephraimite Error*, released by the International Messianic Jewish Alliance in 2000, Dr. Kay Silberling Smith quite accurately characterizes the Two-House movement's concept of Zionsim, as follows:

*“It is now incumbent upon these members of Ephraim, they argue, to accept their birthright and live as members of Israel. They urge Gentile Christians to keep the Torah 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.”*¹⁷

The bottom line is this: The ultimate goal of “One Law One People” theology, as embodied today in the Two-house movement, is replacing the Jewish people as Israel. With Two-housers, replacement theology goes so far as even to the extent of possessing the land.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Thankfully, there are millions of Christians in the world today who feel they have a biblical calling to bless the State of Israel. This Christian love shown to Israel is a powerful witness of the gospel to Jewish people. Because of it, thousands of Jews are turning to Messiah Yeshua. However, needless to say, a Gentile group which claims it has some kind of biblical right of its own to possess the ancient Jewish homeland, is not a blessing to Israel. Such a claim is not well-received by Jews. It is nothing but an offense to Israel.

Pioneering the Two-House Movement: Wooten, Koniuchowsky and the MIA

In the late 1990's, Batya Wooten and Moshe Koniuchowsky were the key pioneers of the organized, mainstream post-Armstrong form of British Israelism. There were others who were involved, but we can't possibly address all of them in this paper. A few key players will therefore be discussed herein.

The core of the Two-house movement began with its organization, by Wooten and Koniuchowsky, into a body which they called the Messianic Israel Alliance (MIA). This occurred in about 1998. At that time, Batya Wooten, along with her husband Angus Wooten, were closely allied with Koniuchowsky. Working together, both the Wootens and Koniuchowsky were co-founders of the MIA. The name obviously sounded a lot like the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America.

The MIA was an umbrella organization for a network of Two-house congregations. Through the use of the emerging forum of the internet, the MIA quickly made a splash and became the leading voice for Two-housers at that time. Its rhetoric against the Messianic Jewish movement, and against established organizations such as the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America, as well as the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, was often quite vitriolic.

Wooten wrote and published books addressing the topic of Israel's identity with a foundation clearly based in British Israel theology. Her writings, with the help of Koniuchowsky, greatly helped to inspire and organize the Two-house movement during the 1990's.

In *The Ephraimite Error*, it was mainly the teachings of Wooten and Koniuchowsky which were examined and refuted. In spite of their refusals to admit it, their teachings regarding the identity of Israel were practically identical to Armstrong's, as described by Dr. Kay Silberling Smith:

*“The parallels between their (Wooten and Koniuchowsky's) teachings and those of Anglo-Israelism are uncanny”*¹⁸

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 24.

“Both Wooten and Koniuchowsky share many theories with traditional Anglo-Israelite teachings, although they acknowledge no dependence upon them.”¹⁹

Dr. Silberling Smith also quite accurately described the teachings of Wooten and Koniuchowsky as anti-Semitic, and a form of replacement theology.²⁰

The errors of Two-house theology have been fully addressed on behalf of the Messianic Jewish movement in Dr. Silberling Smith’s excellent paper. *The Ephraimite Error* addresses and exposes a multitude of errors with the Two-house theology. For a full discussion of those errors we would refer the reader to that paper.

We reiterate, there is no need to further address and delineate those theological errors in this paper, nor is it our intent to do so in this paper.

Ralph Messer:

At the time that Wooten and Koniuchowsky were founding and forming the MIA, another key figure in the Two-house movement, who was closely allied with them, was Ralph Messer. In an article critical of Messer, which was published by Batya and Angus Wooten via the Messianic Israelite Alliance website, they describe the relationship with Messer as follows:

“As for the MIA and Messer, when we were forming the Alliance in 1999, we invited him to speak at some of our early conferences. As a pastor, Messer offered to help us. Being a fledgling organization, we were happy to receive an offer of help. But, in our opinion, he soon began to try to take over the MIA. When it became apparent that we were not going to yield to his ways, he left and took whoever he could with him. We have not had a relationship with Ralph Messer since 2002.”²¹

Aside from being a Two-house teacher, who apparently is ostracized by his own colleagues in the Two-house movement, Ralph Messer is also widely-known for bizarre religious showmanship that has caused great offense to Jewish people. One of Messer’s best-known tactics is a ceremony in which he uses a Torah scroll to wrap a fallen church leader as a symbol of redemption.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 25.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 30-31

²¹ Angus and Batya Wooten, *Jewish Leaders Offended by Ralph Messer’s Ceremony*, (Messianic Israelite Alliance, 2012). Available at: http://www.messianicisrael.com/m/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1921:offended&catid=13&Itemid=35

Most widely known of Messer's Torah-wrapping ceremonies was the one which he performed upon Bishop Eddie Long of Atlanta. The ceremony was heralded by Messer as not only a sign of Long's restoration, but also a kind of "coronation" of Long.

As media outlets reported the story, it quickly circulated across the internet, causing an outcry from Jewish leaders.²² Many Jewish leaders, who are not familiar with the antics of the Two-house movement, at first believed that Messer, who claims to be a "Rabbi," was somehow connected to Messianic Judaism. In response, the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA) and Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) collaborated in issuing a joint statement condemning Messer's antics.²³

Koniuchowsky:

By 2002, the Wootens had a falling out not only with Messer, but also with their close ally and MIA co-founder, Koniuchowsky. After the break up with Koniuchowsky, the MIA continued under the Wootens. Meanwhile, Koniuchowsky went on his own path.

In 2003, Koniuchowsky formed a new alliance with another controversial character in the Two-house movement, **James Trimm**. Since the break-up with Batya Wooten, Koniuchowsky and his followers were no longer calling themselves "Messianic Israelites." Instead, together with Trimm, they became the "Nazarene Yisraelites." Koniuchowsky also made another change. Originally a user of the so-called sacred names of "Yahshua" and "Yahweh," Koniuchowsky switched to the new sacred names: "Yahushua" and "Yahuwah."

At the time that *The Ephraimite Error* was published as a position paper of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America in 2000, Marshall "Moshe" Koniuchowsky was the most vocal of the Two-house leaders. For several years, his bombastic rantings over the internet made him somewhat of a comical figure. His brash, confrontational style caused him to be considered as the mouthpiece of the Two-house movement during the time that he was allied with Wooten.

The RAMYK:

Like Herbert W. Armstrong, Koniuchowsky has begun calling himself "the Apostle." He also uses an acronym for himself - the RAMYK (Rabbi Apostle Moshe Yoseph

²² Associated Press, *Jewish Leaders Offended by Ga. Preacher's Ceremony*, Feb. 2nd, 2012. Available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2012/02/02/jewish-leaders-offended-by-ga-preachers-ceremony/>

²³ Joel Chernoff, Paul Liberman, Russ Resnik, et al., *UMJC and MJAA respond to Messer Video*, (Feb. 3rd, 2012), available at: http://www.mjaa.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=7533&security=1&news_iv_ctrl=1581

Koniuchowsky). Moreover, Koniuchowsky has authored a book entitled *The Rebirth of Yisraelite Marriage – Sexual Freedom of Torah*. The subtitle promises that the book will “turn generational hangups into spiritual truths.” As one might imagine from the title of the book by the “RAMYK,” Koniuchowsky plainly advocates polygamous marriage as the sacred way of life for true believers living by the Torah.²⁴

In addition to his book, Koniuchowsky also advocates polygamy in voluminous papers he has published on his website.²⁵ This advocacy of polygamy apparently has resulted in a split from his “Nazarene Yisraelite” comrade, James Trimm. Trimm responds to Koniuchowsky in a 2008 article entitled *Wolf in the Fold*:

“Over the last week we have been flooded with emails, many from persons who had, until now, studied under the teaching ministry of Moshe K. (Koniuchowsky). The common denominator of these emails is that they were all shocked and dismayed by Moshe K’s recent actions and teaching. Just this last week, Moshe K. sent out an email soliciting single women to match into polygamous marriages. And all of this is being done in the names of “Messianic” and “Nazarene” ...

... My friends, fear not! The “Nazarene” movement will endure this latest trial...

... In seeking to promote polygamy, Moshe K. has only succeeded in relegating himself and his ministry to the position of “obscure polygamist cult” and thus to a position of irrelevancy to the movement...

... This last week Moshe K. announced an “Emancipation Proclamation of Plural Families” with the following BYSW “Rabbis” overseeing the proclamation: Rabbis’ Jenkins, Nolan, Altaf, Aguilar, Thompson and Koniuchowsky and then soliciting “single women” for these polygamous marriages.”²⁶

By all appearances, Koniuchowsky’s work has degenerated into what would be considered an outright cult by most standards. None of this, however, should come as much of a surprise, considering the same patterns seen now in Koniuchowsky were already established in the forebearer of the Two-house movement, Herbert W. Armstrong.

Eddie Chumney:

²⁴ Koniuchowsky, *The Rebirth of Yisraelite Marriage – Sexual Freedom of Torah, A manual that will turn generational hangups into spiritual truths, by the RAMYK-Apostle to Yisrael Moshe Yoseph Koniuchowsky*, 2010. The book can be accessed for free in pdf at: <http://www.yourarmstoisraelglobal.com/the-rebirth-of-yisraelite-marriage.html>

²⁵ <http://www.yourarmstoisraelglobal.com/scriptural-marriages.html>

²⁶ James Trimm, *Wolf in the Fold*, (July 20, 2008).

One key figure in the Two-house movement beginning in the late 90's was Eddie Chumney. Though he does not appear to be a formal affiliate with the MIA, Chumney has been a regular speaker at their events. On his own behalf, Eddie Chumney has used the internet to broadly publish his writings, proclaiming the Two-house theology. He has thus succeeded to become a major voice in the Two-house movement, somewhat independently of the MIA. Chumney has published voluminous materials, including articles, books, as well as videos espousing the Two-house doctrine, most of which can be found on his website at: www.hebroots.com.

Even though he calls his ministry "Hebraic Heritage Ministries," and even though the terminology "Hebrew Roots" is found all over Chumney's website and materials, Chumney's teachings are heavily focused on Two-house theology. He is unmistakably, and unabashedly, dedicated to preaching and promoting Two-house theology. Other Two-house teachers have also leaned on Eddie Chumney to promote their work and make their voice known in the Two-house movement.

In fact, Chumney uses his website to promote not only himself and his own materials, but several other teachers and their materials. These are individuals who apparently are worthy, in Chumney's view, of being promoted on his Two-house website. As of the date of this writing, featured on Chumney's website as fellow teachers are: **Monte Judah, Bill Cloud, Rico Cortes, Brad Scott, and Avi Ben Mordechai.**

Monte Judah:

Monte Judah is another figure who has made his mark as a key teacher of Two-house theology and a major voice in the Two-house movement. In 2003, Eddie Chumney teamed up with Monte Judah, in an effort to defend Two-house teaching. As a result, Chumney and Judah published a letter that attempted to explain the basic tenets of Two-house theology as being biblical:

*"Monte Judah of Lion and Lamb Ministries, and Eddie Chumney, of Hebraic Heritage Ministries International, actively teach that Yeshua / Jesus, the Messiah, died on the tree (John 10:14-17, 11:49-52) to redeem and restore both houses of Israel (Ephraim and Judah)."*²⁷

Monte Judah has definitely made his mark as a vocal teacher of Two-house theology, and has quite a significant following via his Lion and Lamb Ministries. Monte Judah has also become known for his controversial teaching which proclaims that the book of Hebrews is not the word of God. In his 2005 ministry newsletter, Monte Judah proclaims:

Why do we believe that the book of Hebrews is the authoritative Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and inerrant? It appears that the answer is primarily because it is

²⁷ Monte Judah and Eddie Chumney, *Report to the Body of Messiah*, (2003), available on Eddie Chumney's website at: www.hebroots.org/twohousemeeting.htm

*already printed in the Bible, it speaks for the Messiah, and because of the Paradigm. As presently printed in our Bibles, the book of Hebrews in a side-by-side comparison does not accurately reflect the Law of Moses. It appears to misrepresent Hebrew definitions and concepts by willfully substituting Greek definitions and concepts.*²⁸

On Sept. 9th, 2005, Monte Judah reportedly gave this statement in one of his teachings, aired publicly over the internet, in regard to the book of Hebrews:

*“The book of Hebrews is written against every messianic believer there is. If you’re a messianic believer, the book of Hebrews is intentionally your enemy and against you . . . We’ve been bullied into this. This is false teaching. Passed off as the word of God.”*²⁹

Why the attack on the book of Hebrews? Monte Judah, like all Two-house leaders, is a “One Law One People” teacher. They advocate that all people, Jew and Gentile alike, should equally be keeping the Torah. The attack on the book of Hebrews is necessitated by the fact that it is a portion of scripture which totally contradicts “One Law One People” teaching. In fact, the book of Hebrews is a book specifically telling the Jewish people to seek righteousness through the Son of God and not through the Sinai covenant. It presents the Messiah as the Great High Priest, not descended from the Aaronic order, but associated with David, who is not designated a Priest according to the Law of Moses, but according to the order of Melchizedek. As it says in Hebrews 7:11-12:

“If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also.”

Hebrews presents a way in which not only the Jewish people, but all people, may come to God. It is not through the law given at Sinai, but rather, it is through the Messiah, whose blood cleanses from sin, a Messiah who “ever lives to make intercession” (Heb. 7:25). He is the mediator of “a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb. 8:6). He did not come to bring people under the Sinai covenant, as the “One Law” teachers say, but rather, He came to pay the penalties of our sins, and thereby to reconcile people unto God. The book of Hebrews is clear: The New Covenant is not like the covenant made previously at Sinai. The book of Hebrews thus presents peculiar problems for those who advocate, in one form or another, adherence to the Sinai Covenant. In any case, we wish to make it clear that Monte Judah’s rejection of the book

²⁸ Monte Judah, *The Paradigm of Hebrews*, Yavoh Magazine, Nov. 2005. Available at: <http://lionlamb.net/v3/YAVOHArchives/Volume11/11>

²⁹ Boaz Michael, *Answering the Questions regarding the Epistle of Hebrews, A Response to Monte Judah’s Questions of Canonicity*, First Fruits of Zion, Oct. 5th, 2005.

of Hebrews is wrong. Needless to say, in our view, Hebrews is in fact the inerrant, authoritative word of God.

From 2007 – 2013, Monte Judah has organized an annual Feast of Tabernacles conference, held in Chandler, Oklahoma, in which the following persons have been regular speakers at the event: **Rico Cortes** and **Eddie Chumney**.³⁰

Recorded teachings of both Cortes and Chumney are featured on Monte Judah's website at www.lionlamb.net in the link called "messianic marketplace." These two seem to be Judah's closest associates in the Two-house movement, at least in terms of participating in events sponsored by him. **Brad Scott** also has appeared as a speaker at Judah's 2011 Tabernacles event, and his messages are also available on Judah's website.

Scott Diffenderfer: The MIA after Koniuchowsky:

Considering the vast amount of in-fighting and division within the Two-house camp, it is not so easy to keep up with who's who among them, nor what they are teaching from day to day.

However, soon after the split with Koniuchowsky, the Wootens brought in Scott Diffenderfer. Diffenderfer was soon identified by the MIA as their "Executive Director" and "CEO," as well as a member of what they called the "Shepherd's Council," which operated as sort of a steering committee of the organization. He also was the publisher of a magazine which he called "Messianic Home Magazine," which featured articles written by the Wootens, and other key Two-house teachers, including Diffenderfer himself.³¹

Diffenderfer's commitment to Two-house doctrine goes back to the 1990's. Scott Diffenderfer was the founder of a Hebraic roots fellowship in the Nashville area in 1994, which uses the name "LAMB" (Lighthouse Assembly of Messianic Believers). Here is an excerpt from one of Diffenderfer's articles from 1998:

"What a joyful time it will be as YHWH's redeemed people come into the fullness of who they are. As the House of Judah (Jews) and the House of Ephraim (former Gentiles) unite through the power of our Torah observant Messiah Yahshua. They will come running out

³⁰ Available at Judah's website at: https://lionlamb.net/cgi-bin/lion/search.html?fi=products&st=db&sp=results_b&co=1&sf=category&se=MP3-Events&op=rm&nu=0&sf=prod_group&se=Audio%20Sets&op=&nu=0&ml=50&tf=description&to=r

³¹ See, an archive of articles published by Messianic Home Magazine at: <http://messianichome.com/alpha.htm>

of the Churches and Synagogues looking for a better way. A way that is unencumbered by the doctrines of man. A way that leads to the Father.. Yahshua and His Torah.”³²

The fact that Diffenderfer is a teacher of Two-house doctrine is well-established by his teachings and by his long history of leadership and involvement with the MIA. Along with Diffenderfer, other key MIA staff members were Daniel Botkin, who was a member of the “Shepherd’s Council;” and Ed Harris, the “Director of Community Relations.”

In 2012, Diffenderfer split off from the MIA, leaving the Wootens to carry on the MIA without him. Diffenderfer created his own organization, which he calls “Messianic Covenant Community.” The name provides no hint of being Two-house in theology. This is a new trend among the Two-house movement, to use names and labels that don’t sound Two-house at all. By no means has there been a renouncing of the Two-house doctrine.

Ed Harris and Daniel Botkin, who were Diffenderfer’s co-workers in the MIA, both of whom have a long history of teaching Two-house doctrine, have joined Diffenderfer in his new endeavor as the “Messianic Covenant Community.” The website lists Diffenderfer as the President and Elder; Ed Harris as Vice President of Community Relations; and Daniel Botkin as an Elder.³³

Moreover, Diffenderfer is currently listed as the “Director” of an organization called “B’nai Ephraim” (children of Ephraim). The mission and vision of B’nai Ephraim is classic Two-house:

“B’nai Ephraim International (BEI) serves as a global advocate and educational resource for the sons of Ephraim, descendants of the ancient tribes of Israel...”

“... to achieve global presence as the premier advocate and resource center for education and community for the returning sons of Ephraim, once dispersed to the nations but now nearing the end of their biblical punishment of exile from Israel...”

“We believe that ultimately, this will lead to the foretold restoration of both kingdoms, Judah and Ephraim/Israel, back into the reunited House of Israel as the end of the age approaches.”³⁴

³² Scott Diffenderfer, *Redeemed Israel*, Messianic Home Magazine, Fall, 1998, available at: <http://messianichome.com/articles/1998/fall/redeemedisrael.htm>

³³ See, www.messianiccovenant.com/homepage/our-leadership

³⁴ See, www.bnaiephraim.com/about-us

We note that B'nai Ephraim was initially a vision of the MIA, which it referred to as “the initial steps toward Ephraim’s nationhood.”³⁵ B'nai Ephraim lists as its President, Hale Harris, who was the General Secretary of the MIA during Diffenderfer’s reign as CEO. Like Diffenderfer, and the others mentioned, Hale Harris also seems to have left the MIA at this point and is no longer listed as an officer.

Another Name Change – the End of the MIA :

With the departure of Diffenderfer and many other key staff members of the MIA, in 2013, Batya and Angus Wooten changed the name of the Messianic Israel Alliance to the “Redeemed Israel Alliance.” Though the name has changed, the preaching of Two-house doctrine clearly has not.³⁶

Now that the Wootens are no longer the “Messianic Israel Alliance,” certain questions naturally arise. What is the reason for this name change? As Batya and Angus explain it in an article posted on the homepage of their website:

“Now is the time for a change in the Messianic Israel Alliance – it is time for a new name that will better depict our renewed call and purpose. We are changing our name to the Alliance of Redeemed Israel – because we feel a need to refocus on our Divine Redeemer.”³⁷

Notwithstanding the allusion to a “new call and purpose,” the article then goes on to explain how this change somehow is connected to “Ephraim’s jealousy of Judah.” They claim that Ephraim is destined in the last days to be delivered of this jealousy when he at last “sees the truth of his own Israelite roots.”³⁸ As far as the Wootens and their name changes, it’s plain to see: New name, same rhetoric.

³⁵ Batya Wooten, *Celebrating Ten Years of Restoration*, The Herald, July-Aug 2008, Messianic Israel Alliance, available at: <http://www.messianicisrael.com/m/pdfs/herald/08julyaug.pdf>

³⁶ See, www.redeemedisrael.com

³⁷ See, www.messianicisrael.com/m/

³⁸ Ibid.

“One Law” Carries On:

In most recent years, with the MIA having split apart and reformed, a new movement has arisen out of the Two-house movement, which carries on the “One Law One People” tradition. This new movement calls itself “Hebrew Roots.”

What has happened is that Two-house leaders seem to have made the decision to soften the emphasis on the Two-house message. Indeed, in many cases, it seems, they even try to deny or conceal their identity as Two-house teachers. Though not disavowing or renouncing the Two-house doctrine by any means, they are keeping it on the “down low,” presumably in an effort to avoid the great controversy often associated with that teaching, which was the subject of Herbert W. Armstrong’s ministry.

Accordingly, it is commonplace today for Two-house leaders to use names and descriptions which do not specifically designate them as Two-house. Whereas, in years past, the architects of the Two-house movement used descriptive names for what they believe such as “Messianic Israelite,” Ephraimite, and even “Two-houses of Israel,” now these same pioneers are specifically avoiding such overt names and labels. They have found a more subtle way to appeal to the same crowd.

Today, Two-housers are moving and operating under the broader label which they have dubbed: “Hebrew Roots.” Whatever names and labels they use, there can be no mistake about it: Hebrew Roots teachers are mainly Two-housers. There has not been an ideological change, it is merely a change of strategy for promoting the same beliefs in regard to Israel identity and the need to keep the law.

The Hebrew Roots Message:

The essential, unifying message of the Hebrew Roots movement is the mistaken belief that all people everywhere – Jew and Gentile alike - should be keeping the law of Moses. This overarching message of “One Law One People” finds perfect favor among those who have an agenda concerning Israel identity issues. This is why the core leadership of the Hebrew Roots movement was formed by, and is occupied by, Two-house teachers.

The Hebrew roots movement of the 21st century is the culmination of years of erroneous teaching concerning Israel’s identity, combined with the “One Law” creed, that Torah observance is mandatory for the Gentiles. It is propelled by the common misconception that one law was given at Mt. Sinai for all people, and that the law is the way for people to be reconciled unto God. It holds that all people everywhere should be keeping the Torah. The idea, whether stated or implied, is that if a person keeps Torah, then this confirms their identity as Israelites.

A Gospel of Law, an Angry God:

Hebrew Roots teaching suggests that the only hope for the Gentile believer is to get out of the church, and start keeping the Sabbath, the Levitical feasts, and eating kosher along with other Sabbaterean Hebrew Roots “believers.” This kind of legalistic message is necessarily connected to a mistaken belief about the identity of Israel. It presumes that the Jews are either not descendants of Israel at all, or that Jews are a people who constitute just one tribe among Israel. In either case, therefore, the only way we can know if a person is Israel or not, is if they are keeping the Torah. Hence, by keeping the law, a person proves that they *are* Israel. This is the Hebrew Roots premise.

Furthermore, as opposed to the gospel of scripture which proclaims the good news of forgiveness of sin, the Hebrew Roots message is a gospel of law; to wit, that man is to be reconciled unto God not by faith in God, but by keeping the Law of Moses. Accordingly, no person can hope to be in a healthy relationship with God unless he or she is keeping the weekly Sabbath, the appointed feasts, and the dietary laws. The scriptures testify otherwise. (Col. 2:16).

In Hebrew Roots, the message is that God is supposedly angry at the Gentile church because they have not kept His law. As if, in their skewed view of the coming judgment, God is going to judge the world, not just because of inhumanity, wickedness, injustice, violence and immorality; but, rather, because the world is eating the wrong foods, and because humans are failing to gather on the correct appointed days.

From the Hebrew Roots perspective, God is presented not as a loving and forgiving God who gave His only Son to die for the sins of all people. But rather, an intolerant God, who rejects all Gentile cultures, and only loves His own Hebraic culture. As if there is no way that a person can be in good standing with God as a Gentile. As if a Gentile must become culturally Jewish in order to come into the fullness of a healthy relationship with God.

The Hebrew Roots message to the Gentiles is that the reason Messiah died on the tree was not to deliver the Gentile from sin, but to deliver the Gentile from being a Gentile. As if being a Gentile would somehow be unacceptable to God. The gospel message therefore, for the Hebrew Roots enthusiast, is that God has sent His son into the world in order to conform people to the image of a Jew. After all, Yeshua is Jewish, so all people must be like Him – not just in character, but in culture. He won’t have it any other way, or so they say in Hebrew Roots. In our view, this is entirely wrong. It is the very antithesis of the gospel.

In Messianic Judaism, we believe God loves all people. We believe God accepts people from every tribe and tongue, and that He loves people as they are, and without regard to

their culture. While we do welcome all people in messianic synagogues, we do not believe that everybody needs to be in a messianic synagogue, or that everybody needs to become a Messianic Jew, or become culturally Jewish, in order to please God. Nor do we see the Messianic Jewish movement as the model for all.

Hebrew Roots and “One Law”:

In Hebrew Roots, whether one is considered physically descended from Israel or not, there is a presumed duty upon every “true believer” in the Messiah, to observe Torah. And if one keeps Torah, then this verifies a person’s “chosen-ness,” and that means, he or she is an Israelite. In this manner, the Jews are not Israel, but rather, the Jewish people are replaced by a remnant of end-time Torah-keeping Gentiles. Any way you slice it, this is none other than replacement theology.

As in the days of the Millerites, and 19th century Sabbaterean Christianity, the Hebrew Roots movement is fueled by an obsession with end-time events concerning Israel. Much of the teaching has to do with prophecies concerning Israel in the end-time. The most popular Hebrew Roots teachers are often held out as people who have answers regarding end-time prophecy due to some exceptional knowledge or skill they possess, which enables them to reveal “mysteries” that the average Christian Pastor could never see, on account of his non-Hebraic, Greco-Roman orientation. This exceptional skill or knowledge, which is often grossly exaggerated, could be in regard to Hebrew language; Jewish liturgy, Talmud or mystical studies; training from an orthodox Rabbi; lots of trips to Israel; or some special study having to do with the secrets of the Temple.

Although Hebrew Roots groups are characterized by a certain fanaticism about Jewish *stuff*, they have little to no interest in Jewish *people*. Their “vision” is not for Jewish people to come to Messiah, but rather, to push Torah on the Gentiles. They employ Jewish cultural expression in the Hebrew Roots movement merely as a mask to bolster their claim that they are in fact Israel – which is the premise of what they believe.

As has been previously discussed, oftentimes Hebrew Roots has elements that seem anti-Semitic. This can be very subtle. How can people obsessed with Jewish things actually be prejudiced against Jews? What happens is that people who think they are Israel, see actual Jews as the threat to their core beliefs. What stands between them and their “rightful” claim to be Israelites is the Jews. Therefore, though we embrace them as brothers in the Messiah, they reject us, finding fault in us, for not acknowledging them specifically as Israel.

Hebrew Roots is rooted in legalistic, end-time Sabbatereanism, and British Israelism. The spirit of Hebrew roots, as well as the actual meaning of their doctrine, is simply to replace Israel. That is what “One Law One People” doctrine is ultimately all about, and

this is why Two-house and British Israel believers are necessarily associated with “One Law”.

The Two-House Connection:

In the so-called “Hebrew Roots” movement, most of the key figures are in fact Two-house teachers with a long established history of preaching that doctrine. Some of them seem to want to conceal the fact that they are Two-house teachers. But their presence is overwhelming and unmistakable. There are a few leaders who are not Two-house teachers, but they are definitely the exception.

We will discuss a few of the key players to show definitively how the Hebrew Roots movement is a legalistic, “One Law” movement which grew out of the Two-house movement, and which is both organized and led by Two-house teachers.

Key Players:

The Hebrew Roots movement of today consists of various popular teachers. It is not possible to discuss all of them. But there are a few of the key players in the Hebrew Roots movement of today that have made their presence known. Some of them have already been discussed herein in the section on Two House leaders – **Batya and Angus Wooten, Moshe Koniuchowsky, Ralph Messer, Eddie Chumney, Monte Judah, Scott Diffenderfer, Ed Harris, Daniel Botkin, and Hale Harris.**

All of these are in one way or another now using the label “Hebrew Roots” to describe themselves. None of them are any more using the once popular moniker of their movement: “Messianic Israelite.” It is not to be found in their ministry names or in any of their current literature. But, rest assured, Hebrew Roots is in essence a new name for an old song. Thus many of the lead characters are the same. However, new characters have also arisen, and new organizations. Some of the people and organizations which form the mainstream of the Hebrew Roots movement will be discussed as follows:

Hebraic Roots Network:

If one is looking to find the teachings of many key leaders in the Hebrew Roots movement of today, the easiest way to do that is to connect with the Hebraic Roots Network (HRN), which is found online at their website: www.hebraicrootsnetwork.com.

HRN was founded in 2011. It is designed to be an internet TV site, where many of the popular Hebrew Roots teachers have networked together in order to broadcast their “shows” over internet TV. It features nearly 24/7 live-streaming of video programs, as well as programs on demand, which are recorded by these popular Hebrew Roots

teachers. The “shows” can be viewed online just like watching television. Many of the videos seem to be produced specifically for HRN.

For example, one of the most prominently featured teachers on HRN is well-known Two-house teacher, **Eddie Chumney**. The website features “**The Eddie Chumney Show.**”

Another popular show promoted on HRN is “**The Bill Cloud Show.**” For each of the shows, the website offers quite a smorgasbord of teachings available on demand or for purchase on DVD.

As of the date of this writing, the following are currently listed under the “Teachers” link on the Hebraic roots network website, which means their teachings are being aired by HRN, and their materials are being promoted and sold on the website:

Eddie Chumney, Bill Cloud, David Rives, Mordecai Silver, Richard Rives, Brad Scott, Daniel Botkin, Ed Harris, Holissa Alewine, Diana Dye, Rico Cortes, Tony Robinson, and Valerie Moody.

A brief bio is provided for each of the listed teachers by simply clicking on their name.

Under the “Products” link, HRN also provides for each of the featured Hebrew Roots teachers to make available their teaching materials for purchase. This includes CD’s, DVD’s, books and other items. In addition to the listed teachers, there are other teachers who are not necessarily producing videos to be aired on HRN, but whose materials are nonetheless promoted and made available, including **Scott Diffenderfer**. In fact, Diffenderfer was one of the founding “teachers” involved in the organization of HRN at the outset in 2011.

Most of the “teachers” whose shows are aired over the Hebraic Roots Network are well-known figures from the Two-house movement, with a substantial, established history as teachers of the Two-houses of Israel doctrine. Eddie Chumney, for example, has been discussed already at length. We have also discussed Diffenderfer, Botkin and Harris, who are now promoted as “Hebrew Roots” teachers by HRN, and all of whom have a significant history as former officers of the Messianic Israel Alliance, and years of serving as co-laborers with Batya Wooten in the promotion of the Two-houses of Israel doctrine through the MIA.

It is not possible to evaluate and discuss every one of the individuals listed as “teachers” on HRN. Some of them will be discussed further below, though certainly not all of them. We note first, however, that nowhere on the HRN is there any mention of Two-house teachings or anything associated with it. This clearly seems to be deceptive on the part of HRN. In spite of all the Two-house teachers on board with HRN, there is no mention of the controversial doctrine which they actually teach, and have been teaching for many

years. Even Eddie Chumney, nowhere in his bio is there a mention of the Two-house doctrine which he regularly teaches. It is difficult to imagine that this is an unintentional oversight.

The only exception to be found is in the bio of Michael “Mordecai” Silver. Silver’s bio tells the story of how he came to be a teacher of Two-house theology. It says of Silver:

“... several years back he came across the teaching of the two houses of Israel. Finally he saw some of the truth that (had) been hidden away and entered into a new phase in his spiritual walk as part of Judah and as part of Israel. God has been blessing the congregation and drawing in those who are becoming part of those who are one in Messiah and Torah observant. Mordecai views the two house teaching as that, a Biblical teaching, that speaks to the equality of all Believers in Messiah and Torah.”

Other than this blurb about Silver, none of the other bios make any mention of the Two-houses of Israel doctrine or movement in spite of strong affiliations, if not overt teachings, associated with many, if not all, of the HRN teachers. (That is not to say that there has been any renunciation or repudiation of the Two-house doctrine by any of the individuals in question).

Revive Conference:

Another key feature of the Hebraic Roots Network website is that it promotes an annual Hebrew Roots conference called “Revive.” Since the launching of HRN in 2011, the Revive conference has quickly become an important venue for Hebrew Roots followers. In fact, it is the annual main event for Hebrew Roots at this time. Many of the more prominent advocates of Two-house / Hebrew Roots teachings are at the “Revive” conference. Most of them are the same persons which are featured teachers promoted on the HRN website.

For example, the line up of speakers for the “Revive” 2012 and 2013 conferences has included as follows: **Eddie Chumney, Scott Diffenderfer, Bill Cloud, Brad Scott, Daniel Botkin, Ed Harris, Holissa Alewine, Rico Cortes, Tony Robinson, and Valerie Moody.**

Essentially, it is the same cast as those appearing on the Hebraic Roots Network. There are a few key figures in the Revive conference who are not listed on HRN. One of them is an individual named **Ephraim Judah**, who is a family member of Monte Judah, and is on staff with his ministry. Ephraim Judah is the director of youth ministry for Revive conferences.

There are certain key worship leaders at the Revive conference who have been regulars in providing the worship in the events of the Hebrew Roots movement. **Lenny and Varda Harris** have led worship at Revive conferences. The Harris’ are well-known Two-

housers, as reflected by the subject matter of their music, which is heavily Two-house, not to mention their years of appearing at major events sponsored by the MIA.

Other key worship leaders at the “Revive” conferences include **Steve Manning**, who is currently the worship director for Scott Diffenderfer’s Messianic Covenant Community. An emerging figure is **Mason Clover**, who was a producer and performer, along with Lenny and Varda Harris and Steve Manning, on an album recorded live at Batya Wooten’s 2009 MIA conference, and has become quite a regular appearing at Revive conferences and at major Hebrew Roots gatherings over the last couple of years. Like the Harris’, over many years, both Manning and Clover have regularly made appearances as worship leaders at Two-house conferences of the Messianic Israel Alliance, organized by Batya Wooten and Scott Diffenderfer. Now they have become key worship leaders at these “Revive” conferences being organized under the new label, “Hebrew Roots.”

Many of the teachings, activities and events occurring at the “Revive” conferences are filmed and made available for purchase on HRN’s website. Much of it is also plastered all over the internet video sites, including on YouTube. The first Revive conference was held in Jacksonville, Fl. from June 29th – July 1st, 2012. The second was in Dallas, Texas, from June 21st – June 23rd, 2013. Another conference is currently scheduled for June 27th – June 29th, 2014.

Torah Services:

Video footage of a “Torah service” held at Revive 2012, is a pretty good example of what the Hebrew Roots movement is about. When a Torah is displayed and processed in a non-Jewish setting, from our point of view, this raises a “yellow flag” of concern. For one thing, it can be a cause of great offense to Jewish people.

The Sefer Torah (Torah Scroll), which is typically dressed in elaborate covers and decorated with jewels, symbolizes the age-old struggle of the Jewish people to stand committed to Jewish ideals and Jewish calling, even in the face of generations of suffering and persecution. Obviously, the Bible as a whole has meaning and purpose for all people. But the Sefer Torah is a very Jewish symbol that is unique and has been cherished and guarded for generations by people who risked their lives to do so.

Processing the Sefer Torah inappropriately, for the wrong reasons, and/or in the wrong context, or even by people who don’t really know what they are doing, can be a source of re-opening wounds for the Jewish people. Ralph Messer’s vulgar misuse of a Torah scroll is a good example of the kind of offense that can be caused in the minds of Jewish people in the mainstream.

So why is this being done? What is the message here except to say: “You are Israel!”

Furthermore, from a scriptural point of view, there are other warnings that come to mind, such as 1 Tim. 1:7:

“They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.”

By way of comparison, Torah services have a special place in the history and tradition of the Jewish people and that is why they are to be commonly found in Messianic Judaism. In our own Messianic Synagogues and Messianic Jewish conferences, we continue to use much Jewish tradition which comes from the synagogue. We know that the Jewish community often objects to this, but we do it for one simple reason – because we are Jews. We train children to learn Jewish religious customs and we train them to have bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies, not because we believe everybody should be doing the same, but simply because we are Jewish and it is part of our heritage and culture as Jews.

In Messianic Judaism, we have no aversion or objection to Gentiles being involved in Torah services or in Jewish liturgical services. But when these things occur in the setting of a Messianic Synagogue it is an entirely different matter. A messianic synagogue consists of both Jews and Gentiles together in Messiah. Messianic Judaism is a Jewish movement, a messianic synagogue is Jewish, and the revival of Israel, is a Jewish revival. Both Jew and Gentile understand, in messianic Judaism, God is using us together, as One New Man, as a joint witness, *in a Jewish context*. Together we are a light and witness to the Jewish community, to publish the gospel to the Jewish people. That is the calling from God in Messianic Judaism. There is no agenda among us to see the rest of the world’s believers holding Torah services or otherwise worshipping and behaving as Jews. It is what we do because it is who we are.

The “Revive” conference, on the other hand, is not a Jewish event. Hebrew Roots is not a Jewish movement. Therefore, when a Torah service is held in that context, in a Gentile organization, and a Gentile worship setting, certain natural questions arise: Why are they doing this? Why are they processing Torahs? Why, in a non-Jewish setting, are they performing the cherished religious traditions of Jewish people? Why are they doing things which are historically done by Jews in the synagogue? Why are they saying Hebrew liturgical prayers for which the people have no traditional relationship?

The natural answer is: Because they think themselves to be Israel. And that is exactly what is going on in Hebrew Roots. The message is: “You are Israel.” It is nothing more than a continuation of the Two-house creed. People are being told to keep the law, because, after all, they are the chosen remnant; they are indeed the people Israel.

Rico Cortes, Torah Reader:

The Torah service at Revive 2012 and 2013 was led by **Rico Cortes**. As mentioned previously, Cortes was a regular speaker at conferences sponsored by Monte Judah, going back to 2007. He has also been a key speaker at conferences held by the Messianic Israel Alliance. Rico Cortes' bio, listed on HRN's website, heralds him as a Torah teacher, and a person with certain expertise on the hidden truths of the Temple, and the services in the Temple. Cortes is also held out as a person knowledgeable in Jewish liturgical worship and practices. In addition to being Two-house in ideology, he also is clearly a "One Law One People" advocate. The bio states:

"Rico Cortes will challenge you to keep the Commandments that Yeshua/Jesus kept. He specializes in uncovering spiritual truths hidden within the Holy Temple and the services that took place there. His knowledge of the Tabernacle, Holy Temple, priests and procedures combine to bring an incredible prophetic message to us today regarding how we are to reverently approach and be true servants of our Creator YHVH!

... Rico's vision is to see all who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob return to the Torah and to be a set apart people who serve our Creator as He has instructed. He travels around the globe sharing the hidden truths that he has uncovered, encouraging believers in the Messiah to keep the Commandments that Yeshua (Jesus) kept."³⁹

Before processing the Torah at the "Revive" 2012 Torah service, Cortes apparently finds it necessary to address the question – "Why are we doing this?" In other words, why is a traditional Jewish Torah service being held in a non-Jewish event, hosted by a non-Jewish organization? Good question. Cortes then explains why Jewish liturgical prayers such as the Amidah are important for all people to recite. Cortes makes reference to the Jewish people as "Judah." Before processing the Torah, Cortes says:

"I am going to do my best to try to entice you to understand why we do what we do. Are we trying to learn from our brother, Judah? Absolutely. Because he took from the essence from the Temple and he basically encapsulated it in a little prayerbook, that if you don't have any concentration or meditation on the words, it means nothing. In Hebrew it's called "kavanah." But if you put your heart and your soul and your mind and everything that you have into a prayer or a protocol or a blueprint of how to approach, how to praise, how to exalt, how to uplift, how to handle yourself in the presence of the King of the universe, ladies and gentlemen. Now today, you will have the opportunity, that as one out of seven billion people on the face of the earth, you are a remnant that the Father has

³⁹ <http://www.hebraicrootsnetwork.com/teachers/rico-cortes>

called from among the nations to lift, to uphold, to exalt, to praise, to worship, to revere, to exalt the name of the living Elohim.”⁴⁰

Obviously, Cortes wants the people to believe that they are the end-time remnant of Gentile Torah keepers, members of the northern tribes of Israel, soon to be united with their “brother Judah.” Aside from the Two-houses of Israel message, what Cortes and his colleagues are doing is problematic in other ways as well. It is symptomatic of what is wrong in the Hebrew Roots movement. It is a movement based on pretense and supposition about Israel identity. It is led by teachers who assume they are Israel, and teach others to believe likewise, even though they aren’t Jewish. Hebrew Roots is founded, built, and programmed by Two-house leaders who, whether they admit it or not, are teachers of replacement theology.

We note that after the procession of the Torah, the main speaker at the Revive 2012 Torah service was **Bill Cloud**. In June 2013, in Dallas, Texas, a similar Torah service was held at “Revive” 2013, led by Rico Cortes, with **Tony Robinson** as the speaker. **Bill Cloud** was the Friday evening speaker at that 2013 conference. Another “Revive” conference is currently scheduled for June 2014, in Jacksonville.

MIA Conferences:

Beginning in 1999, Batya Wooten and her colleagues in the Messianic Israel Alliance (a/k/a Redeemed Israel Alliance) have been organizing Two-house conferences. These MIA summer conferences have been the main event for Two-housers and have served as a platform for Wooten and colleagues to promote the Two-house ideology. The MIA conferences typically have featured most of the same speakers that are now speaking at “Revive” Conferences and are listed as “teachers” on the Hebrew Roots Network. These same so-called Hebrew Roots teachers have been the regular speakers at Wooten’s MIA conferences for many years.

Wooten and Diffenderfer have advertised the MIA conferences in various ways, including their own monthly MIA newsletter called “The Herald.” Although these MIA annual conferences go back to 1999, and although there are regional and other specially organized conferences of the MIA, we will only go back as far as 2009, and will only discuss the annual summer conference which has been the main MIA event. We will list some, but not all, of the prominent speakers which are regular speakers for each of these MIA conferences, as advertised by “The Herald”:

2009, MIA Tenth Anniversary conference, Orlando, Fl., Sept. 4th - 7th :

⁴⁰ Rico Cortes, Revive Conference 2012, Torah Service, at video timecode 00:30. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mX855srWJTM>

- Speakers: **Bill Cloud, Brad Scott, Daniel Botkin, Scott Diffenderfer, Ed Harris, Angus and Batya Wooten.** ⁴¹

2010: Maryville College, Knoxville, Tn., July 26 - Aug. 1.

- Speakers: **Bill Cloud, Brad Scott, Holissa Alewine, Rico Cortes, Daniel Botkin, Scott Diffenderfer, Ed Harris, Angus and Batya Wooten** ⁴²

2011: Maryville College, Knoxville, Tn., June 28th – July 4th

Speakers: **Bill Cloud, Brad Scott, Holissa Alewine, Scott Diffenderfer, Ed Harris, Angus and Batya Wooten** ⁴³

By the year of 2012, the MIA did not hold any more conferences because the organization ceased to exist. The Messianic Israel Alliance that year changed its name to the “Redeemed Israel Alliance.” This name change coincided with the advent of HRN, the departure of Diffenderfer and others from the MIA, and the first “Revive” conference held in 2012.

Under the new name, Wooten has held two conferences in Orlando, one in 2012 and another in 2013. These events have actually featured onsite DNA testing, conducted by Dr. Alex and Georgina Perdomo. This is presumably to try and prove biological connection to the people Israel.

Wooten’s 2012 and 2013 conferences have not featured the usual speakers, who are now appearing on HRN and in the “Revive” conferences. Has Wooten’s organization been trumped in popularity by the Hebraic Roots Network? Has the “Revive” conference surpassed Wooten’s annual gatherings as the main event for Two-housers / Hebrew Roots enthusiasts? It would appear so. The only HRN “teacher” to appear at Wooten’s 2013 Redeemed Israel Alliance conference, held during Labor Day weekend in Orlando, was **Bill Cloud.**⁴⁴

⁴¹ The Messianic Israel Alliance Herald, April, 2009, available at: www.messianicisrael.com/m/pdfs/herald/09april.pdf

⁴² The Messianic Israel Alliance Herald, July, 2010, available at: <http://www.messianicisrael.com/pdfs/herald/10july.pdf>

⁴³ The Messianic Israel Alliance Herald, Jan. 2011, available at: <http://www.messianicisrael.com/m/pdfs/herald/11jan.pdf>

⁴⁴ <http://www.redeemedisrael.com/events-2/>

Bill Cloud:

One of the most, if not the most, popular of the Hebrew Roots teachers currently is Bill Cloud. He is not only a featured teacher on HRN, but he seems to make his presence known at every major gathering billed under the title of Hebrew Roots or Two-houses of Israel.

Cloud calls his ministry “Shoreshim” (Roots). The idea is that he is bringing people back to their Hebrew Roots. Cloud, who hails from south Georgia, claims to have studied under a Rabbi, through which Cloud claims to have become an expert on Hebrew language. Whether or not Cloud has actual expertise in Hebrew language is indeed arguable. He is known, however, for using a few key words and phrases in Hebrew in order to build upon in his teachings.

Cloud’s claim to have “prolific” Hebrew skills, is a major part of Cloud’s teaching style in terms of understanding prophecy. He holds himself out as a revealer of prophetic mysteries in the Bible, which the average English-speaking Christian wouldn’t be able to see on his own, due to lack of Hebrew skills. His bio on HRN, which is posted verbatim on his own website as well, states:

“Bill began studying Hebrew under the tutelage of a local rabbi and has since become quite prolific at reading and writing the Holy Tongue. He has spent many hours studying, not only the Hebrew text, but the Hebraic roots of Christianity as well. This research has been rewarded with a keen insight into Biblical Judaism and its relationship to Christianity.

This interest is tied to Bill’s desire to unlock the deep secrets of the Word of God and to teach them, along with our Hebraic roots, to believers in Messiah. Furthermore, this insight has allowed Bill to better understand the prophetic element of Scripture. As a result of this study, Bill has developed a variety of media resources dealing with prophetic themes as well as teachings related to our lost Hebraic heritage.”⁴⁵

As far as what Bill Cloud believes and teaches, one of the popular episodes of the Bill Cloud Show currently promoted and made available for purchase on DVD at the HRN website, and also at Bill Cloud’s own ministry website, www.shoreshim.org, is a two-part teaching called *The Joseph Factor*.⁴⁶ This video consists of about 80 min. of teaching from Bill Cloud, and provides a good example of what Bill Cloud is about.

⁴⁵ At HRN website: <http://www.hebraicrootsnetwork.com/teachers/bill-cloud> , also at Shoreshim Ministries website: <http://billcloud.org/about-bill>

⁴⁶ At HRN website: <http://www.hebraicrootsnetwork.com/shop/teachings/bill-cloud> , and at Bill Cloud’s website: <http://www.goestores.com/catalog.aspx?storename=shoreshiministries&DeptID=243301&ItemID=10053419&detail=1>

In *The Joseph Factor* teaching part I, Bill Cloud addresses the meaning of Gen. 48:19, in which Jacob blesses the two sons of Joseph. That verse is typically a key subject matter in Two-house teachings.⁴⁷ It is also typical to do what Cloud does here, which is to try and connect that verse to Paul's words concerning the salvation of Israel in Rom. 11:25-26. Cloud says:

“And he places his right hand on Ephraim’s head, and he says, and in you, Ephraim, shall be the multitude of nations. The Hebrew phrase is ‘m’lo hagoyim’, and it, what that means, ‘m’lo’ – completion or fullness. ‘Hagoyim’ – the nations, or the Gentiles. In other words, it’s the same phrasing that Paul uses in Romans 11. He says, in essence, that in you shall be the fullness of the Gentiles. In other words, when you who have come to Israel looking like pagans, if you will, those of you who have been outside of this family, but who now have been adopted in this family, when you come into the realization that you are part of this family, and consequently should begin to act like part of this family, and you begin to understand that, and how did we come into this family? Because the Messiah made it possible. When you begin to see the fullness of these things, then, it says, that’s the completion of the Gentiles, that’s that fullness of the Gentiles, that is the key that leads to all Israel being saved.”⁴⁸

So, according to Cloud, Ephraim becoming a multitude does not refer to the Jewish people multiplying, it refers to Gentile believers being the descendants of Israel. This is the premise of British Israelism and Two-houses of Israel theology. Cloud continues, making clear his view that Joseph in prophecy is the Gentiles, and Judah is the Jews:

“You and I who are believers in Messiah, perhaps some of us are coming into trying to understand the Hebraic roots of our faith, perhaps asking why is it that just now I am beginning to see these things. Why is it that I didn’t see these things long ago, or why is it that generations before me didn’t see these things? Because ultimately ladies and gentlemen, it’s all part of God’s plan. Because there has to be a Joseph. There has to be a Joseph whose Hebraic identity is concealed, for such a time as this. And what is the purpose of it all? So that all Israel might be saved. Because there is coming a day when Joseph - who I believe represents the

⁴⁷ Kay Silberling Smith, Ph.D., *The Ephraimite Error*; p. 2, www.mjaa.org/site/DocServer/EphraimiteError.pdf

⁴⁸ Bill Cloud, *the Joseph Factor part I*, Time code 35:25 - 36:31, available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yv53zui4o5A>

*body of Messiah at large. And Judah - the Jewish people at large. There is coming a day when these two trees, these two groups, are gonna be reconciled and are going to become one, and thus, all Israel shall be saved.”*⁴⁹

Cloud’s teaching here is classic Two-house teaching. The whole context of Romans 11 is about the salvation of the Jewish people. It foretells how the gospel will go to the whole Gentile world, and Israel will be provoked to jealousy. If the Gentiles coming to faith are actually Israel, then is Israel to provoke Israel? Obviously not. The whole world will hear the gospel, and as Gentiles come to faith, at an appointed time, the Lord will turn his face back to Israel. The Jews brought the gospel to the world, yet, blindness has come upon Israel until the designated time, in which that blindness shall be removed. Messianic Judaism is the living truth and the fulfillment of that scriptural promise of the salvation of Jewish people found in Romans 11.

Yet, Cloud’s teaching here tows the party-line for the Two-house movement: He teaches that the salvation of “Israel” spoken of by Paul in Romans 11 is not about Jewish salvation, but it is about the restoration of the houses of Judah and Joseph (Ephraim). He suggests that the salvation of Israel can only occur when the house “Joseph” (Ephraim) at last realizes its hidden identity among the nations where they have become a “multitude,” not as Jews, but as Gentiles. Only then can Israel be saved. So, it isn’t about the Jewish people coming to Messiah, it is about Gentiles discovering that they are Israel. This is Two-house doctrine. The hope of the Gentiles is in discovering at last what has otherwise been “hidden” – that they are Israelites. And having discovered it, as Cloud says, they must stop being pagan and start “behaving” as Israelites, which means keeping the law.

In part 2 of *The Joseph Factor*, Bill Cloud elaborates on his view that Americans are actually the house of Joseph:

“I’m going to suggest to you that the reason that you and I, and Americans, enjoy so much luxury, so much wealth, is not for the sake of the wealth itself, it’s not because we’re Americans. It’s because all these different nations, this multi-colored coat, is congregated, by and large, in this country, and God is blessing Joseph, because Joseph has a role to play as it relates to our brethren, who are living in the land of Canaan, and who, along with all of us, are one day going to

⁴⁹ Ibid, time code 38:00 – 39:00.

*be threatened with something that is going to originate in the deserts of Saudi Arabia.”*⁵⁰

So, America is Joseph? How can Gentile believers in America constitute the northern kingdom of Israel? This teaching is straight off the pages of Herbert W. Armstrong and British Israelism. But Bill Cloud builds on it. He continues with his claim that America is Joseph, citing a verse from the book of Obadiah which says:

“And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD has spoken it.” (Obadiah v. 18)

So according to Cloud, American Gentile believers are actually the “house of Joseph,” which will ultimately consume the “house of Esau” on behalf of all of Jacob. He continues:

*“And so who is God going to use primarily to bring about the destruction of the house of Esau? According to His word, the house of Joseph. Now who is the house of Joseph? If we put all these things together, ladies and gentleman, that we’ve been discussing, I have to come to this conclusion, the house of Joseph is referring to people like you and me. And if I’m correct, if the largest portion of Joseph is living in this nation, perhaps this is an allusion to the United States.”*⁵¹

As Cloud continues, as further evidence for his claim of America as Joseph, Cloud turns to his Hebrew skills. He claims that the Hebrew word “busha” (bet, vav, shin, hey) found in Obadiah v. 10, which is translated into English as “shame,” is in fact a prophetic allusion to America. Cloud claims that since the masculine form of “busha,” is “bush,” that this word is a prophetic allusion to President Bush. He offers this to make the point that America is the house of Joseph in prophecy, which is destined, according to Cloud, to destroy Israel’s enemy, the house of Esau.⁵² Of course, all of this reeks of British Israelism and Two-house theology.

⁵⁰ Bill Cloud, *the Joseph Factor part II*, Time code 32:20 - 32:60, available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=InNCeS4tXmM>

⁵¹ Ibid, at timecode: 36:15 – 36:44

⁵² Ibid, at timecode: 37:55 – 38:48

Cloud wraps up part 2 of the Joseph Factor with a summation that hammers his point home. According to Cloud, American Gentile believers, being the house of Joseph, can look forward to the promise of being united with the Jews in the land:

“You and I have been hidden among the nations. You and I, we’ve been hidden so well, we didn’t even know we were hidden. The reason we were, is so that somebody would come looking for us. And by that I mean our brethren who live in the land of Canaan, because one day there is going to be this restoration of all things that Peter describes in Acts chapter three. There one day is going to be this great reconciliation where these two become one, in the land.”⁵³

Jim Staley:

Though Jim Staley is not one of the teachers promoted by HRN, he has made his presence known through the internet, and is clearly one of the most prominent Hebrew Roots teachers at present. Staley’s ministry, headquartered in St. Charles, Missouri, he calls “Passion for Truth Ministries.”⁵⁴ Staley has organized Hebrew Roots conferences of his own, which he called “Final Return” in 2010, and “Final Restoration” in 2011. These events have featured as speakers some of the usual Hebrew roots teachers, including: **Bill Cloud, Rico Cortes, and Tony Robinson.**⁵⁵

In addition to using livestream internet videos to promote himself, Staley is quite savvy at marketing his recorded teachings through DVD’s and CD’s. Staley’s website is replete with materials carrying the “One Law” and Two-house message, authored by both Staley and others whom he promotes. Staley makes clear in most of his teachings that he believes every Gentile believer ought to consider it their obligation to keep Torah, especially the Shabbat, the feasts, and the dietary laws.

Not only is Staley an avid “One Law” teacher, but he is also a Two-houser. We note that similar to the current trend of most Hebrew Roots teachers, Staley does not describe himself or his ministry with any labels that might indicate his Two-house doctrinal beliefs. However, even a cursory glance at some of his teaching materials indicates quite plainly that he is in fact a devoted Two-house teacher.

⁵³ Ibid, at timecode: 38:52 - 39:21

⁵⁴ See Staley’s website at: www.passionfortruth.com

⁵⁵ Promo for conference available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EWjUe4McNw

The best example of what Staley teaches is found in one of his popular DVD teachings called “*Identity Crisis – Discovering Your True Identity*.”⁵⁶ Having been produced in 2011, as of the date of this writing, Staley’s website lists the *Identity Crisis* DVD under the subheading “number one teaching.”

Hence, it’s pretty clear that “*Identity Crisis*” quite vividly represents the heart of what Staley and his ministry stand for. The teaching is 120 minutes long, so this short review is not intended to be a full rebuttal by any means. In any case, there is nothing new in it that hasn’t already been addressed in *The Ephraimite Error*. Staley in essence has made his mark by preaching the same points that Batya Wooten has written, the difference being that it’s a different medium. What Wooten put in books, Staley is preaching in front of the camera, as Herbert W. Armstrong did.

For our purposes here, we will review a short portion of the *Identity Crisis* DVD, not as a full rebuttal, but simply to reference it, and record it herein, as proof positive of what Staley believes and teaches. Staley is undeniably a part of the Hebrew Roots crowd which in fact is an extension of the Two-houses of Israel movement. While the entire Two-house position is anti-Semitic in nature, many of the Hebrew Roots teachers have tried to tone down the anti-Semitic rhetoric that inheres in the Two-house position. Not so with Staley. Jim Staley, in particular, stands out as one who comes across, quite unabashedly, as anti-Jewish. The promo on the jacket of the DVD states:

“For two thousand years we have all been taught that Israel is the Jewish people and the Jewish people are Israel. This misunderstanding has crippled our ability to truly glean from the scriptures all that was originally intended.”

As the promo makes clear, the entire “Identity Crisis” teaching is about the identity of Gentile believers as Israel. It is typical Two-house teaching. Staley, who delivers the entire message standing at a pulpit flanked by two tall banners – one of Judah, the other of Ephraim - begins by listing what he claims are “myths” about the Jewish people. Two of those “common myths” according to Staley are:

- The Jewish people were the chosen people in the Old Testament
- The Torah and the law was given to the Jews⁵⁷

These are actually “myths” about the Jews. According to Staley, another misconception is that the Jews were the people at Mt. Sinai. Staley says:

⁵⁶ Jim Staley, *Identity Crisis*, available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTx5tjNQEvw>

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, at time code 8:44.

“How many tribes were at the base of Mt. Sinai when the commandments were given? All twelve tribes. Next question, logical to be asked, is how many were Jewish? One tribe. One tribe was Jewish, which begs the question, where are the other ones? Because if they were given to all of Israel, all the twelve tribes, then they can’t possibly be Jewish, or that’s just not fair. The Jewish people cannot own the holidays. They’re just one tribe.”⁵⁸

True to form as a Two-house teacher, Staley makes a big deal about the reference in Genesis 48:19 to Ephraim as a “multitude of nations.” He argues just like Bill Cloud, and Batya Wooten, and all other Two-house teachers, that the Hebrew from that verse, “m’lo hagoyim,” actually means “fullness of the Gentiles,” and therefore it is a reference not to the Jews, but to the Gentile believers. Staley says:

“So the ten tribes were taken into captivity and disbursed all across Assyria, over time they assimilated into the nations and became exactly what the prophecy said of Ephraim, the m’lo hagoyim, the fullness of the nations, they became as Gentiles.”⁵⁹

The “m’lo hagoyim” teaching, which cites Gen. 48:19 as supposed evidence that the Gentiles are physical descendants of the ten northern tribes, is classic Two-house. Whether British Israelite, Herbert W. Armstrong, Batya Wooten, or Jim Staley, the teaching is the same. As expected, Staley goes on to try and connect it to Romans 11:26, which, according to their view is a reference to the salvation of the Gentile descendants of Israel.

“That blindness in part has happened to Israel, speaking of the local Israel of that day, in context, the only Israel that existed, the house of Judah, until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. I told you I would come back to this verse. Do you think that Paul is just making this up by some stroke of genius? He’s quoting from the Tanakh. The blessing that went on Ephraim. The fullness of the house of, excuse me, the fullness of the Gentiles. This is what he’s talking about. The northern kingdom coming home. Until they all come home. This is what he’s talking about. Continuing, and so all Israel will be saved. How many, like me, have always thought at some point all those Jewish people will finally understand, and they’ll all get saved? Cause we’ve defined Israel as the Jewish people. But the reality is that it’s all Israel, ladies and gentleman, all twelve tribes will eventually come

⁵⁸ Ibid, at time code 9:32 – 10:08

⁵⁹ Ibid, at time code 28:00 – 28:15.

*back, that's what he's talking about. (applause). When the fullness of the Gentiles comes home, that's when all Israel will be saved."*⁶⁰

Like most every other major figures in the Hebrew Roots movement, obviously Staley is a Two-house teacher, whose message to the Gentile believer is loud and clear: You are the true Israel. Therefore, you should be keeping the Torah.

Michael Rood:

Of all the figures currently operating under the label of "Hebrew Roots", Michael Rood is in a class of his own. Although Rood does not presently appear to be connected with any of the major figures or events in the Hebrew Roots movement, yet he has made quite a significant impact on the Hebrew Roots movement on his own behalf. He has done this mainly through the use of the internet. In particular, he has used video and internet television.

Based in Charlotte, N.C., Rood's teachings are currently aired, promoted, and marketed through his website at: www.aroodawakening.tv. Similar to the Hebraic Roots Network, Rood also uses a 24/7 internet TV site of his own which he calls "Messianic TV." That site, which is linked to his main website, is found at www.messianic.tv.

Michael Rood's preaching appeals to the typical Sabbaterean Christian in America. Sporting a long, white beard, Rood commonly dresses in robes and head pieces which resemble the garments of Israelite priests in Temple times. The way he dresses, though comical indeed, does not appear to be in jest. It is very much a part of the character which Rood has created for himself. He has cast himself into the role of a doomsday prophet, who has come to decry the sins of the Gentile church in America. To be a Moses or Elijah, one must look and act the part, and Michael Rood does exactly that.

Nearly all of Rood's teachings, which he often refers to as "A Rood Awakening," are about end-time prophecy. His teachings seem to always focus upon inevitable thermonuclear war with Russia, impending judgment upon America, the anti-christ, economic collapse, the beast of Revelation, global conspiracies, the New World Order, etc.. These are all topics of interest to believers today, and many preachers, at times, delve into the same. But in Rood's case, end-time prophecy provides the basis for his urging Gentiles to believe there is a need for them to be keeping the law of Moses, in order to escape God's wrath. In particular, the feasts, the Sabbath, and the dietary laws are promoted by Rood - because God is angry with the "pagan" church, which has failed to keep these things. Rood's style of playing on people's fears concerning real issues such as nuclear war, terrorism, Arab-Israeli conflicts, recession, and global politics, as a backdrop for promoting legalism, is highly reminiscent of Herbert W. Armstrong.

⁶⁰ Ibid, at time code: 50:36 - 51:41

Rood makes lots of trips to Israel, and many of his videos are shot on location there. He clearly endeavors to produce his videos in a way which associates himself with the land of Israel, and which implies to his followers that he is an Israelite, and so too are they if only they follow his teachings.

Rood insists upon a Karaite version of the biblical calendar which he calls the "*Astronomically and Agriculturally Corrected Biblical Hebrew Calendar*." Rood makes a big issue about the correct calendar being connected to the ripening of the barley harvest in the Spring. He suggests that those who keep Passover at the "wrong" time, following the mainstream, modern Jewish calendar, are not keeping the commandments of God concerning appointed feast days.

Rood's impact upon the Hebrew Roots movement is quite significant, as is his name recognition all over the internet. Unfortunately for the messianic Jewish movement, Rood often refers to himself as a "Rabbi" or even a "Messianic Rabbi," though he is not Jewish by birth, and has absolutely zero history with Messianic Judaism.

Although Rood has mainly used video to make himself known, he has also written books which document his teachings. One of Michael Rood's key writings is a book called, *The Mystery of Iniquity*. This book is in essence the Michael Rood manifesto. It documents the bulk of what he teaches concerning end-time prophecy. The *Mystery of Iniquity* is promoted for sale on his website as of this date.⁶¹ One of the issues Rood presents in that book is his theory of Israel identity. He refers to the end-time remnant of 144,000 from each tribe of Israel, as described in Revelation 7. Who are these 144,000? According to Rood:

"These are not 144,000 Jews. The tribe of Judah comprises only one twelfth of those who will be sealed by God. There are 11 other tribes, ten of which have been lost since the carrying away of the northern tribes by Shalmanassar the Assyrian Emperor. That carrying away and dispersal helped to fulfill the prophecy of God to Abraham that from his loins would come many nations. The prophecy of Israel over his twelve sons was also expedited by this dispersion. The lost tribes of Israel have been traced all over northern Asia and Europe. Modern archaeological finds in Europe show the migration of the Hebrew people throughout the continent. Many of the royal families of Europe can still trace their roots back to their forefather, Israel. The ten lost tribes of Israel may not have

⁶¹ Michael Rood, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, Bridge-Logos (2001)

much, if any, pure blood left in their families. The vast majority of them do not even know who they are. Yet!”⁶²

It's plain to see from his book that Michael Rood is a believer and teacher of Two-house theology. The claims about the Royal families of Europe and the supposed “modern archeological finds” about Israelite tribes settling in Europe are unmistakable evidence of Rood's British Israel ideology. Rood's orientation in British Israelism is further delineated as he drones on about Britain and America:

*“When one analyzes the prophecies that were spoken over Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Mannaseh, there are only two nations that fulfill **any** of these prophecies. In fact, those two nations fulfill **every** prophecy concerning the promises to those tribes in the last days. The two nations are Great Britain and the United States. When one realizes that the Oracles (Words) of God were committed to his people Israel, one can understand why the Bible houses of England and America have published over 90% of all the Bibles in the world. The promises of God have been fulfilled right under the noses of those who do not even know their ancient origins.”⁶³*

When one reads these words in his book, there can be no doubt that Michael Rood is a proponent of British Israel / Two House theology.

Another example of what Rood teaches is a teaching he calls “*Israel, Judaism and Christianity: Apostasy in the Church, and the Time of Jacob's Trouble.*” Here we get a pretty good idea of what Rood is about. In this video, Rood discusses his belief that the “time of Jacob's trouble” (Jer. 30:7) is an historical event, still yet to come, which ultimately causes both Jew and Gentile to return to the land of Israel.

Rood begins the video by appearing in costume at the Kotel (Western Wall) in Jerusalem. Then he cuts to Yad Vashem (one can only wonder how he got permission to film there), where he claims that Islamic nations which hate the Jews are going to start a thermonuclear war, which will destroy the world's economy, and then, this will somehow result in “Israel” at last returning to the land. Rood says:

Jeremiah speaks of the day when the Lord God will bring Israel back into the land that he gave unto our fathers. Even though the nation of Israel was born in one day, May 15th, 1948, in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, the multitude of the dispersed Israelites has not even considered returning to the land. Zachariah said

⁶² Ibid, p. 213. Note – an earlier edition, pdf version of this book is available at : <http://markswatson.com/moi.pdf> , p. 128.

⁶³ Ibid.

*(quoting Zech. 1:17) that because of prosperity, the tribes would be dispersed for an extended period. But the time of Jacob's trouble will put an end to that prosperity, and force the return of the dispersed sons of Israel.*⁶⁴

Rood then continues, with a background of still photos depicting graphic holocaust images. He cuts from one image to the next, explaining how the atrocities which the Nazis committed against the Jews in Europe were actually done in fulfillment of God's word in Jer. 16:16, regarding fishers and hunters, which he claims were the Nazis. The video goes on to show an array of holocaust images: As we see Hitler and the Nazis, scenes of Jewish businesses destroyed, and pathetic figures of Jews in the death camps, etc., a caption suddenly appears at the bottom of the screen which says: "*please consider donating at michaelrood.tv*".

Then, as we see scenes of the crematoriums, and piles of starved Jewish bodies being tossed into mass graves, Rood explains why all this had to happen. He says:

*In the end, the modern state of Israel was born out of the labor pains of Judah's great tribulation....*⁶⁵

Hence, the suffering of the Jews in the holocaust, which resulted in the Jews returning to the land of Israel as a consequence, was an event involving only the one tribe of Judah? Not the rest of Israel? Ok, so where was the rest of Israel, who apparently escaped suffering in the holocaust?

Like nearly every other Two-house teacher who operates under the label "Hebrew Roots," Rood teaches that the Jews are Judah, and the Gentiles are Israel. In this skewed view, it was the Judah alone, the "Jewish tribe," which suffered the holocaust. The rest of Israel was living in the cushy empires of America or England, unaware of their descent from the lost tribes – but soon to rediscover their heritage as Israelites.

In fact, according to Rood, Judah is going to have to go through yet another holocaust before being reunited to the Gentile Israelites. Yes, says Rood, the "Time of Jacob's Trouble" (Jer. 30:7), as if the holocaust wasn't enough, is coming again, but to Judah's consolation, this time it will happen to all Israel.

Rood continues:

⁶⁴ Michael Rood, *Israel, Judaism and Christianity: Apostasy in the Church, and the Time of Jacob's Trouble*, at timecode : 3:07-3:43. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWZeEnuHHPQ&list=PL3Oc6f4BdE5D4seUz-6EOtL7EPVCHDXB6>
Also available at : <http://natzrim.blogspot.com/2010/12/time-of-jacobs-trouble.html>

⁶⁵ Ibid, at timecode: 4:32 – 4:39.

...in the last days it will not be just the time of Judah's trouble, but all of Israel will be tried in the crucible of tribulation, in the time of Jacob's trouble. And just as in days of long past, all of Israel will be saved by the hand of the Almighty."⁶⁶

Rood's teaching resonates of all the same theories which are typical of Two-house teachers who claim that the only way "all Israel will be saved" (from Romans 11:26), is when the Gentile believers reconnect with their heritage by keeping the law. Only then will they be reunited to their "brother Judah." But in Rood's case, it will take global thermonuclear war to at last cause Gentile believers to wake up to their Israelite descent and come back to their Hebrew Roots. The ones who follow Rood's teachings are ahead of the gang, and getting a jump on the preparations.

Christian Zionism – True Friends of Israel:

As mentioned in the introductory comments of this paper, it is unfortunate that the label "Hebrew Roots" has been used by proponents of the "One Law" message. We wish to make it clear that "Hebrew Roots," "Hebraic Roots," "Jewish Roots," and similar labels do not always mean what is meant by "One Law" proponents. We wish to make this clear because it is not our intent to discourage any believer in Yeshua from searching out and discovering the Jewish character and culture of the Lord.

Hebrew Roots is not to be confused with the growing number of Christians in the world today who have a sincere heart for Israel. Though not really an organized movement, there is a modern-day phenomenon of Gentile Christians who love Israel, often-referred to as "Christian Zionism." This is a work of the Lord.

Whatever it is to be called, there is in fact a biblical, prophetic, Spirit-led response happening today among millions of Gentile Christians worldwide who see Israel's restoration as a promise of God. These are Christians who believe in the right of Jewish people to possess the land of Israel, and who believe in promoting the salvation of the Jewish people. These are Christians who love Israel and want to see Jewish people come to know Yeshua. Many go on tours to Israel, visit Messianic Synagogues, join in prayer for the peace of Jerusalem, and encourage their respective national political leaders to stand with Israel.

Individually, many Christians who support Zionism also seek to enrich their own personal faith by learning the culturally Jewish roots of Christianity. Such Christians, even though planted firmly in evangelical churches, are great friends of Messianic Judaism, and faithful supporters of Messianic Jewish ministries.

⁶⁶ Ibid, at 4:39-4:56

By comparison to what calls itself “Hebrew Roots,” Christian Zionism has no agenda to bring anyone under the law, nor cause division in the church. The agenda is to enrich the Gentile Christian’s understanding of the Jewish Messiah, and to unite the body into a common bond of support in order to advance the salvation and restoration of Israel.

We note also that some Gentile believers identify with Messianic Jews, and see their congregational home in a messianic synagogue, which we welcome and encourage. These precious brethren who come to us from among the masses of Gentile believers in the world are the exception, not the rule. We do not see Messianic Judaism as the final destiny for all believers in Messiah. We are not the model for the whole world to follow. We are simply who we are in the Body because of the unique calling. Among the masses of Gentile believers in the world, though many are devoted friends of Israel, most do not belong to a Messianic Synagogue, nor do they identify with the calling of Messianic Jews to orient our lives in a Jewish expression of faith in Messiah. Nor do we believe that they necessarily should.

Indeed, many Christians who love Israel simply see their home in the evangelical church. They do not think it necessary to become Torah observant in order to perfect any calling they may have to connect with Israel. Many Christians see God’s biblical plan for Israel, and therefore support Messianic Jewish ministries, but they do not necessarily identify the messianic synagogue as a congregational home for themselves and their families. They are perfectly content to be Gentile Christians, serving God as Gentiles, in a Gentile Christian setting. They are confident in who they are, and feel they have the freedom to be whom God created them to be in the Lord. We agree.

By comparison, the Hebrew Roots movement is full of criticism toward non-Torah keeping Gentiles, and demonstrates little to no desire to see Jews come to know Messiah. Rather, their “Israel-obsession” is driven by the common idea, whether stated or implied, that they ARE Israel. The idea is based on replacing the Jews as the true Israel, through the keeping of the law given at Sinai.

VI. “One Law” Theology and First Fruits of Zion

FFOZ:

First Fruits of Zion (FFOZ). FFOZ is a publishing ministry, which has developed a significant network of customers who purchase their materials through the internet. The organization’s founder is Boaz Michael, who started FFOZ in 1992. From the outset, Michael has used FFOZ to mass distribute books, CD’s, DVD’s, newsletters, study programs for children and adults, and other materials.

FFOZ sees itself mainly as an outreach to Gentiles that have an interest in learning the Torah. At times FFOZ has worked in harmony with the Messianic Jewish movement.

However, from about 2003 – 2009, FFOZ was a major promoter of “One Law One People” teachings. We note that FFOZ was not a promoter of Two-house doctrine, not directly, anyway. FFOZ was a proponent of “One Law One People” teachings which advocate Gentile Torah observance. That approach, as we have seen, almost inevitably results in promoting Two-house beliefs, even if unintended.

In any case, to the credit of FFOZ, after initially promoting and publishing “One Law” teachings on a wide scale, leadership at FFOZ had a change of heart. This change came in 2009, after witnessing the fruit of “One Law” teaching. Consequently, under Boaz Michael’s leadership, FFOZ eventually rejected and recanted “One Law” theology.

Therefore, it is an interesting and persuasive case study indeed to review what happened with FFOZ, and examine how and why Boaz Michael came to the conclusion, based on personal experience, that “One Law One People” theology is erroneous. It is our hope that there will be other groups that recant and renounce both “One Law”, and the related Two-house theology as well.

It should also be mentioned that Boaz Michael and FFOZ as a ministry, as of the date of this writing, have formally reconciled and re-established a relationship of good standing within the Messianic Jewish movement, including with both the MJAA and UMJC.

As far as what led to the recantation, the following is what we know based on FFOZ’s own reports:

FFOZ and Tim Hegg:

In about 2003, FFOZ became allied with outspoken “One Law” advocate Tim Hegg. Although Hegg is no longer much of a voice today, during the time that he was allied with FFOZ, he was given a broad platform to publish his “One Law” teachings. In 2003, as FFOZ started broadly publishing Hegg’s materials, almost immediately FFOZ met the resistance of Messianic Jewish leadership, who voiced strong objections to “One Law” theology. The Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) published a paper which confronted Hegg’s teachings and refuted “One Law” theology.⁶⁷

Tim Hegg’s teachings so strongly stressed the need for Gentiles to observe the Torah, that it often sounded as if Hegg actually equates Torah observance to the gospel itself. To give an example of Hegg’s teaching, Hegg argues based on a comparison of two

⁶⁷ Daniel Juster and Russ Resnik, *One Law Movements*, 2005. Available at: http://www.mjstudies.com/storage/Juster_Resnik_One_Law_Movements.pdf

scriptures, Mat. 5:20 and Mat. 28:19-20 that the purpose of the Great Commission was to bring Torah to the Gentiles.⁶⁸ The two scriptures Hegg refers to are as follows:

“For I say unto you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” Mat. 5:20.

And:

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**, and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.”* Mat. 28:19-20.

Putting those two scriptures together, Hegg arrives at the following analysis:

*“The phrase ‘**teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**’ makes it clear that Yeshua’s teaching in Matt. 5:17-20 was to form a core aspect of the curriculum the disciples were commissioned to teach the Gentiles.”*

Thus, according to Hegg, the Great Commission is to bring the world into Torah observance. This is the major error of the “One Law” teachers. They preach a “gospel” of obedience to law, the very antithesis of the true gospel.

The Break with Hegg:

From about 2003 – 2009, FFOZ published the message of “One Law” far and wide. Then, in its Summer 2009 edition of its quarterly publication called *Messiah Journal*, FFOZ suddenly announced its formal recantation of “One Law” theology in an article entitled *One Law and the Messianic Gentile*.⁶⁹ This effectively ended the working relationship between FFOZ and Hegg.

In its Summer, 2009 magazine, *Messiah Journal*, in an article written by Boaz Michael and D. Thomas Lancaster, FFOZ tells the story of what went wrong with “One Law” theology.

After years of publishing Hegg and mass distributing “One Law” materials, FFOZ soon began to take notice of not only the theological problems with “One Law” teachings but the real-time mess which they had created. As Michael and Lancaster describe it:

⁶⁸ Tim Hegg, *An Assessment of Divine Invitation Teaching* (Aug. 2009), p.6, available at: http://www.torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/DivineInvitation_Response.pdf

⁶⁹ Boaz Michael and D. Thomas Lancaster, *One Law and the Messianic Gentile* (Summer 2009), pp. 46-70.

“Not only do the One-Law Torah observant Gentiles find it difficult to maintain relationships with other Christians, they also find it virtually impossible to maintain relationship with one another.”⁷⁰

One of the key claims that “One Law” teachers often make is that Torah Observance will bring about the final unity between Jew and Gentile. But in fact, what happens is precisely the opposite. The fruit of “One Law” teaching, as mass-promoted by FFOZ and Tim Hegg, was further described by Michael and Lancaster as follows:

“The result is a state of anarchy disguised under the name of Law. Congregations split over calendar arguments. People are embittered toward one another. Close friends are separated. Communities shrink . . . there are no other Messianic believers in the area with whom they can sustain a relationship. The program is not working . . . they reject Judaism and Jewish tradition, and they reject Christianity and Christian tradition. As romantic as such a hyper-protestant, sola scriptura purity may sound, it breeds arrogance and is unsustainable.”⁷¹

Going back to the days of the early Sabbatereans and the Millerites, it is well-proven by now that those who teach there is some urgent need for Gentile Torah observance always seems to breed a spirit of arrogance, legalism, and basic weirdness. In that regard, today’s Hebrew roots movement is no exception.

Gentile Torah Observance, Our View:

Paul circumcised Timothy, whose mother was Jewish, (Acts 16:3); but did not circumcise Titus, who was Greek. (Gal. 2:3). Paul saw that circumcision was right and good for the Jewish believer in Yeshua, but made no sense for the Gentile. The fact is, Paul did not see the Torah as having the same application to Gentiles as to Jews under the New Covenant. Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles. If One Law One People had any doctrinal validity, Paul would have been the one to preach it. He preached no such thing.

We do not believe the Gentile church is called necessarily to observe Shabbat, the Levitical feasts, the laws of kashrut, and other Mosaic laws that are specific to Israel. We don’t forbid anyone from doing those things, but we do not fault the church for not keeping them. Nor do we believe in urging Gentile believers worldwide to observe commandments other than the ones the Apostles commanded in Acts 15.

Indeed the Apostles in Acts 15 dealt with the issue of Gentile Torah observance squarely on point. As Peter said to the “One Law” proponents of his day in Acts 15:10:

“Why do you test God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the (Gentile) disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”

⁷⁰ Boaz Michael and D. Thomas Lancaster, *One Law and the Messianic Gentile*, (Summer 2009) p. 52.

⁷¹ Ibid.

When it comes to the issue of Gentile Torah observance, our approach is simply to follow the advice of the Apostles. They determined not to put a yoke of law upon the Gentiles. Neither would we. And like the Apostles, we would oppose those who do.

Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council:

The controversy over Gentile Torah observance in our time is exactly the same one addressed by the Apostles. As Paul preached the gospel among the Gentiles, certain men were insisting that the Gentiles must be instructed to keep the law. For this very reason, *“It was determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and Elders about this question.”* (Acts 15:2)

When they came to Jerusalem, and declared all the wonderful things that God was doing among the Gentiles, there were certain Jews who were believers in Yeshua, who were Pharisees, that rose up saying: *“It is necessary to circumcise them and command them to keep the law of Moses,”* (Acts 15:5). Peter was the first to dispute the point, having already seen how God poured out His Spirit upon non-Torah observant Gentiles. (Acts 10:44-45).

For the Apostles, though the laws of Moses were an important part of their Jewish way of life, they knew that the power of the gospel was not based in legal observance, it was based upon faith in the Messiah, and was as equally available to the uncircumcised Gentile as to the circumcised Jew. This at first seemed to contradict the law given at Sinai.

Yet, the Apostles were quite clear on answering the question brought before them. The Gentiles need not be instructed to be circumcised, nor do they need to be instructed to keep the law of Moses. They determined that *“we trouble them not which from among the Gentiles are turned unto God”* (Acts 15:19). As today’s Messianic Jewish leaders, we fully agree. It is not our calling to bring the Gentile world into Torah observance.

As the Apostles said later, referring to their own decision recorded in Acts 15:

“As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, except that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.” (Acts 21:25)

The decision which the Apostles made as recorded in the scriptures is perfectly applicable to the issue of Gentile Torah observance today. And we choose to honor and abide by it.

VII.

Conclusion:

Messianic Judaism has a unique calling of God as witnesses to the Jewish people, and the Torah occupies an important place among us. While we recognize there are many doctrinal errors made historically by the church in terms of its views on Israel and the Torah, we do not believe that the Gentile church is called to live by the same Jewish expression of faith as we are. Our hope is that the Gentile church, and Gentile believers everywhere, will see their calling to bless Israel, pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and help messianic Jews to reach the Jewish people with the good news. Thankfully, this is already happening to some extent. The power of the One New Man is not in our relationship to the law, and not in our observance of ordinances or statutes; but, rather, in the fellowship that we enjoy as both Jew and Gentile, cleansed by the blood of Messiah, and immersed by One Spirit into the same body. Together we are the “seed of Abraham” by faith in the one God, and joint heirs of a Kingdom that will never fade.

Blessings to you in the name of Yeshua (Jesus) our Messiah.