

"IT IS MY BROTHERS WHOM I AM SEEKING"

The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel are Returning Home

We, the Jewish Nation that lives in Israel, have a surprise coming. Individuals from all over the world, in growing numbers, are waking up to the possibility that they might belong to the People of Israel. Are they Jews? Are they descendants of Jews? The answer is "not necessarily". How is it, then, that they assume some kind of relatedness to the People of Israel? Well, these individuals view themselves as belonging to that part of the Nation of Israel which has assimilated, and supposedly has been lost among the nations of the world for thousands of years. *That*, however, will not always be the case...



“Thus says Yahweh of Hosts, in those days ten men from all the languages of the nations will grasp the corner of the garment of a Jew saying, ‘we will walk with you because we have heard that Yahweh our Elohim is with you’.” Zechariah 8:23

When they read the biblical descriptions and accounts of the Israelite dispersion that was rejected and scattered among the nations, they discover their own identity which glares back at them, as though looking into a mirror. It should be noted that often those who are party to such experiences are not at all aware of this growing phenomenon. This world sweeping movement has not been directed by a central body of any kind, and is been growing “organically”. Above all, all those who participate in this awakening feel love toward their Jewish brethren and the land of Israel, try to keep the Torah of Moses and are, of course, followers of the Elohim of Israel. This discovery brings about a drastic lifestyle change and thus keeping the feasts, Shabbat, kashrut, niddah and other of the torah commandments, become an integral part of the life of this dispersion.

Here, for example is the story of R.A. F.

Crossing the Lines

In 1976, when I flew from California to Israel with a group of 15 friends for a 2 week trip, I had no idea what was awaiting me... However, already before landing, when I caught a first glimpse of the strip of land from the plane window, and while the passengers were singing (yes, in those days that was common) “Heveinu Shalom Aleichem” [“we come bearing peace”], I was astonished at the flood of emotions that engulfed me and at the feeling which echoed in my heart with, “I’m home, I’m home”. The flood of tears increased, as did my surprise at my own response. In the next two weeks every site and place we visited felt familiar. Upon my return to the US, I wondered if the visit and the accompanying feelings were a dream or if, conversely, while in Israel I had awakened from sleep into a more authentic reality. About a year later I bade goodbye to my friends in California, turning eastward to my birth town and home of my parents. After staying there for a few months, I took off to the place where I had left my heart. This time, it was to be a six-week journey during which I had various and sundry experiences; some hair-raising adventures while others were quite humorous. Additionally, I discovered that the Holy Land is not so holy.

Nevertheless that homey feeling of familiarity did not leave me. By the time I came on my third visit, although I still did not quite grasp the reason for the deep connection and love for the land and its inhabitants, I knew one thing – this time I came home hoping that I would not have to leave. After a stay in Jerusalem, where I attended Hebrew language school, I moved to a kibbutz in the Galilee. After 1 year of volunteering and 2 of being a candidate for membership, I became an integral part of the kibbutz when I was accepted as a member. At that time, I had an opportunity to study Hebrew again, in Ulpan Akiva in Natanya. One Friday we read the weekly Parasha in class. When my turn came to read it was the passage in which Jacob blesses Ephraim saying, “but his younger brother will be greater than he” that is, younger Ephraim will be greater than Manasseh the older, “and his seed will be the fullness of the nations”. Genesis 48:19.

The words jumped out at me, and when I returned to my room and checked the English translation, it confirmed that I did indeed understand these words properly. Ephraim's seed was to become the fullness of the nations. My emotions, and the experiences that accompanied me for the past 4 years, have now been illumined with the light of understanding; The "fullness of the nations/gentiles"; seeming foreigners and strangers but in reality the sons of Ephraim, the sons of Joseph, the sons of Jacob, the sons of Israel! Those who, like me have forgotten their identity and had assimilated among the nations, are now, again like me, about to wake up from their sleep and rise up as the People of Israel to the sound of the calling voices of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I have crossed the lines; *avarti* - I have made it to the other side, I have returned to my Hebraism and to my home and to the covenant with the Patriarchs. (*end of story*)

Let's go back a few millennia. In the bible there are foundational promises. Which of these promises have been fulfilled and which ones are still shrouded under mist? The promises to the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and to their descendents included: the establishing of a nation, an inheritance in the form of a land, being a blessing to the nations and multiplying their seed as the dust of the earth, the sand upon the seashore, and as the stars in the heaven. Let us take a look at these promises and their fulfillment.

Examination of the past and observing the present prove that most of the promises have been fulfilled. But have they been fulfilled completely or only partially? These are great questions that encompass a long and complex history. Doubtlessly, the promise of a nation stemming from the seed of the Patriarchs has been fulfilled. And even though throughout its existence this nation has gone through many trials, changes and wanderings, now, about 4000 years after the promises were given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the very existence of the People of Israel proves the consistency and credibility of the bible. But what about the Promised Land? Setting aside technical details regarding the dimensions and borders of the Promised Land, the very existence of this piece of real estate in the present (as a home to the Jewish People) proves once again that this promise has also been fulfilled in one way or another. The promise that the people of Israel would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth has also materialized, although sometimes in unexpected ways. Yet, the presence of the Israelites/Jews among many nations and peoples was at most times a stimulating agent, promoting prosperity and progress.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE NATION WHICH IS TO BE GREATER IN NUMBER THAN THE STARS OF THE HEAVEN, THE DUST OF THE EARTH AND THE SAND UPON THE SEASHORE? Throughout thousands of years of history whether in the land or in the various dispersions, it seems that the demographic promise has never been made fully manifest. Should we be waiting for some future multiplicity, or is it taking place right in front of us, but still covertly? Hence, where are all the multitudes of the House of Israel hiding? Are they still beyond the mythical River Sambatyon? Was the numerical promise directed to the entire Nation of Israel, or was it a promise given to one particular tribe which has been fulfilling it (though inadvertently)? The blessing of Jacob to the sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim reads: "And he blessed Joseph, and said, Elohim, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the Elohim which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me

from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude (like fish) in the midst of the earth...he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall be the fullness of the gentiles.” Genesis 48:15, 16 & 19.

This clearly indicates that the blessing of multiplicity was given specifically to the tribe of Ephraim. Later on in biblical history, this tribe headed ten of the tribes of Israel who were named after him, the House of Ephraim. What then does the bible say about the future of this part of the nation, and what do the prophets say about its dispersion, its destiny and what is their (the prophets’) description of Ephraim in the latter days?

A LITTLE TOUCH OF HISTORY

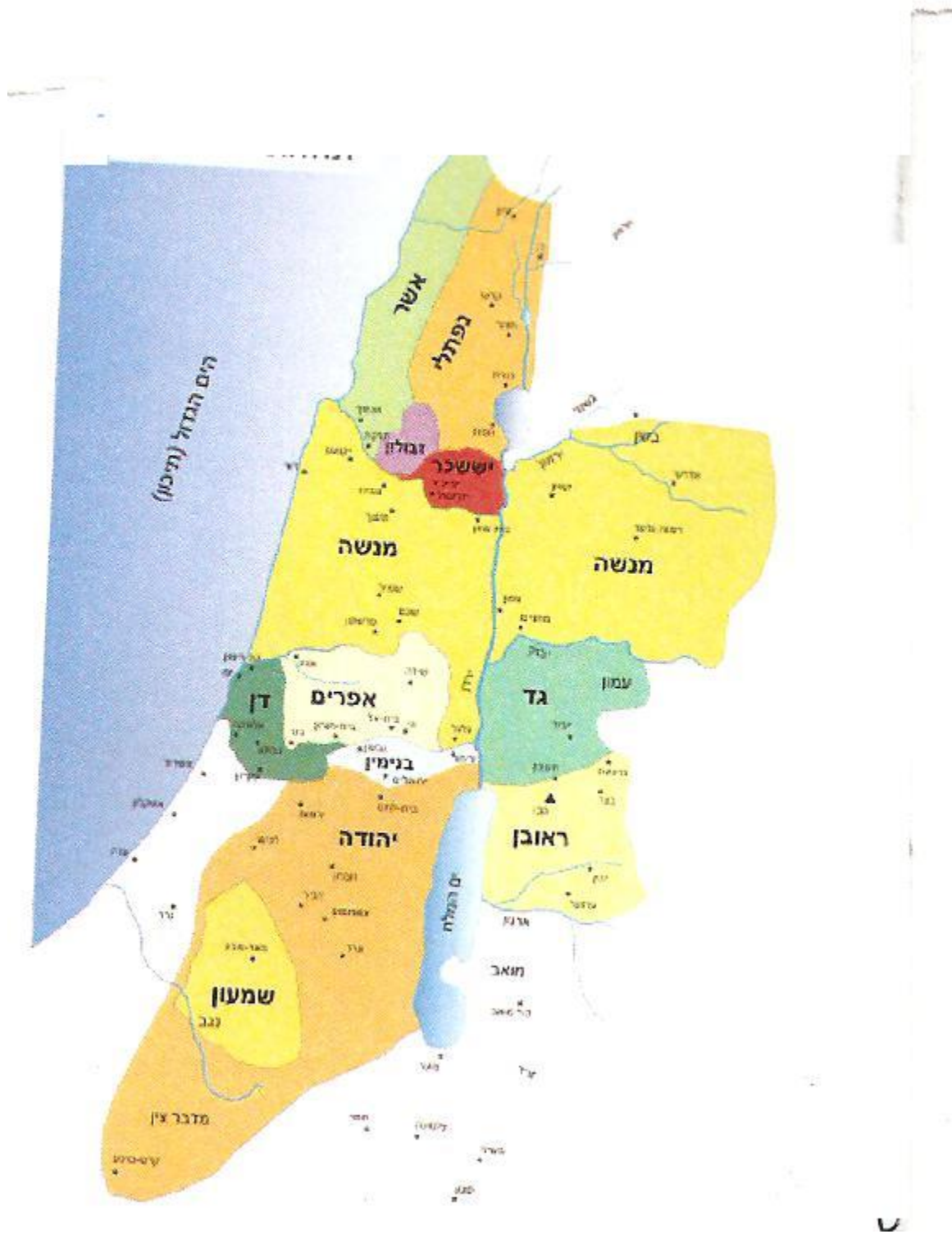
After the reign of David and Solomon, the kingdom was split into the Kingdom of Israel, made up of the northern tribes, and the Kingdom of Judah which also encompassed Benjamin, Simeon and many from the tribe of Levi. The division was political, and also spiritual.



“And it came about at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had clothed himself with a new cloak; and both of them were alone in the field. then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes. (but he will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel)'" 1 Kings 11:29-32

But in spite of this tragic division, it says in 1 Kings 12:24 that “this thing was from Elohim” himself. Jeroboam, Israel’s first king immediately switched the center of worship from Jerusalem to Dan and Beth El and erected two golden calves there. Without exception all the successions of Israelite kings followed suit. In contrast to the Kingdom of Judah, the northern dynasties changed frequently. Throughout its approximately 200 years of existence, 19 kings reigned over the Kingdom of Israel. In fact, the reign of some of them did not last but a few days, a few weeks or months. (In

the booklet the map of the tribes is much smaller.)



Being weak internally made for geographical vulnerability and thus enabled infiltration of enemies from the outside. Spiritual weakness was also a contributing factor to the capture of the Kingdom of Israel in the 7th century BC by the Assyrians. Sargon II, King

of Assyria, exiled the inhabitants to remote parts of the Assyrian Empire, and in their place brought others from Babylon, Chuthah, Hamath, Sepharvaim and Ava. These cities were located in the northern parts of modern day Iraq, Iran, eastern Turkey and Afghanistan. According to Assyrian records, in which Hebrew names are mentioned, the Children of Israel were also exiled to the Assyrian capital. Population exchanges or transfers were part of the Assyrian's policy. Even though quite a few of the Ephraimites did remain in the land even after the expulsion, the kingdom itself was no longer extant. Assyrian records declare that the "Land of Omri" (as they called it, after Israel's king by that name) was destroyed. Some of the populace moved to the south and were absorbed amongst the Judeans, while others assimilated amongst the other people groups that the Assyrians transported to the Land of Israel. Many historians determine that "within several generations the exiles lost their national uniqueness and were integrated in the cultural and political fiber of the Assyrian and Aramaic culture without leaving any traces"

However, throughout history Jewish men of renown as well as rabbis did not put to rest the issue of the 10 tribes and their restoration to the People of Israel; Amongst them were Rambam (Maimonides), Rabbi Manasseh Ben Israel who went looking for them, Malbim, Rabbi Yehudah Leon Ashkenazi, Rabbi Kook, Rabbi David Shloosh and other Torah scholars who discuss the lost ones, emphasizing the need to look for them while viewing their return as part of the full redemption. The Tanach, particularly the books of the prophets, deals quite extensively with the topic of the two parts of the People of Israel. It describes their backsliding and the severe ensuing results, distinguishing the destinies of the House of Judah from that of the House of Israel, and foreseeing that in the latter day the two parts will be reunited to each other and to Elohim.

In view of the promises to the Patriarchs, what does the Tanach have to say about the future of these lost and rejected ones? Before we can answer this question we have to follow the historical path from its beginning and look at the predictions regarding their future.

The sins of the Kingdom of Israel, the House of Ephraim, and the sins of the House of Judah, and their results

"Now this came about, because the sons of Israel had sinned against Yahweh their Elohim, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom Yahweh had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. And the sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right, against Yahweh their Elohim. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. And they set for themselves sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations did which Yahweh had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking Yahweh...And they rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers, and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which Yahweh had commanded them not to do like them. And they forsook all the commandments of Yahweh their Elohim and made for themselves molten

images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal.... So Yahweh was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah....And Yahweh rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight....until Yahweh removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day. 2 Kings 17:7-11, 15-16, 18, 20, 23.

"And Yahweh said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel... Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And Yahweh said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I should ever forgive them. Hosea 1:4, 6.

Ephraim mixes himself with the nations; Ephraim has become a cake not turned. Hoshea 7:8

Judah was also told concerning this matter

"And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brothers, all the offspring of Ephraim." Jeremiah 7:15.

In spite of this, the House of Judah has a different promise

"But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by Yahweh their Elohim, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses, or horsemen." Hosea 1:7

Judah brags and even rejoices at the fall of the House of Israel/Ephraim

"Son of man, your brothers, your relatives, your fellow exiles, and the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those to whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'Go far from Yahweh; this land has been given us as a possession.'" Ezekiel 11:15

The call to Israel to repent, a call which in our day is starting to be responded to

"Go, and proclaim these words toward the north and say, 'Return, faithless Israel,' declares Yahweh; 'I will not look upon you in anger. For I am gracious,' declares Yahweh; 'I will not be angry forever. 'Only acknowledge your iniquity, That you have transgressed against Yahweh your Elohim and have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree, And you have not obeyed My voice,' declares Yahweh. Jeremiah 3:12-13

"And there is hope for your future," declares Yahweh, "And your children shall return to their own territory. "I have surely heard Ephraim grieving, 'Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, Like an untrained calf; Bring me back that I may be restored, For Thou art Yahweh my Elohim. Jeremiah 31:17-18

The call to return to the source, or to the root

"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, Who seek Yahweh: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, And to the quarry from which you were dug. "Look to Abraham your father, And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; When he was one I called him, Then I blessed him and multiplied him." Isaiah 51:1-2

The words of the returnees who are aware that they have been lost to Abraham and Israel

Look down from heaven, and see from Thy holy and glorious habitation; Where are Thy zeal and Thy mighty deeds? The stirrings of Thy heart and Thy compassion are restrained toward me. For Thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us, And Israel does not recognize us. Thou, O LORD, art our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Thy name. Isaiah 63:15-16.

Elohim forgives Ephraim, expresses love towards him, gathers him and brings him to the land as a humble and submissive 'entity'

For thus says Yahweh, "Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, And shout among the chiefs of the nations; Proclaim, give praise, and say, 'O LORD, save Thy people, The remnant of Israel.' "Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, And I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth, Among them the blind and the lame, The woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together; A great company, they shall return here...'For after I turned back, I repented; And after I was instructed, I smote on my high; I was ashamed, and also humiliated, Because I bore the reproach of my youth.' Jeremiah 31:7-8, 19.

Then it will happen on that day that Yahweh Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea. And He will lift up a standard for the nations, And will assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, And those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, And Judah will not harass Ephraim. And they will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west; Together they will plunder the sons of the east; They will possess Edom and Moab; And the sons of Ammon will be subject to them. Isaiah 11:11-14

And it will come about in that day, that Yahweh will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel. It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown; and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship Yahweh in the holy mountain at Jerusalem. Isaiah 27:12-13

"But now listen, O Jacob, My servant; And Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus says Yahweh who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you,' Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen. 'For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants; and they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water.' "This one will say, 'I am Yahweh's'; And that one will call on the name of Jacob; And another will write on his hand, 'Belonging to Yahweh,' And will name Israel's name with honor. Isaiah 44:1-5.

"In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance. Jeremiah 3:18

*"Therefore behold, the days are coming," declares Yahweh, "when they will no longer say, 'As Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,' **[they will forget the exodus from Egypt because of the great, dramatic return from 2700 years of exile]** but, 'As Yahweh lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.' Then they will live on their own soil." Jeremiah 23:7-8*

I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am Elohim, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not come in wrath. They shall walk after Yahweh, who will roar like a lion; for he will roar, and the children shall come trembling from the west. Hosea 11:9-10

Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah. Contend with your mother, contend; for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband; and let her put away her whoredoms from her face, and her adulteries from between her breasts; lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. Hosea 2:1-3

And here is a prophecy whose first part has been and is being fulfilled for the last 100 years here in the land, but what about its second part?

*Mine anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the he-goats; for Yahweh of hosts hath visited his flock, the house of Judah, and will make them as his goodly horse in the battle. From him shall come forth the corner-stone, from him the nail, from him the battle bow, from him every ruler together. And they shall be as mighty men, treading down (their enemies) in the mire of the streets in the battle; and they shall fight, because Yahweh is with them; and the riders on horses shall be confounded. And I will strengthen the house of Judah, **and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them back; for I have mercy upon them; and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am Yahweh their Elohim, and I will hear them...I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them; and they shall increase as they have***

increased. And I will sow them among the peoples; and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and shall return. Zechariah 10:3-6, 8-9

The land itself also has to prepare for the returning of the lost son

But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people Israel; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn into you, and ye shall be tilled and sown; and I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited, and the waste places shall be builded; Ezekiel 36:8-10.

The Grand Finale and its continuation in the vision for the end times

"And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, 'For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.' "Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand...."And say to them, "Thus says Yahweh Elohim," Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms. Ezekiel 37:16-17, 21- 22.

The central role of the servant of YHWH is to restore the tribes of Israel and to cause them to return to the land, and only then be a light to the nations

And now says Yahweh, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, in order that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of Yahweh, And My Elohim is My strength), He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Isaiah 49:5-6

In Conclusion

In the course of thousands of years of assimilation among the nations, and becoming the fullness of the nations/gentiles, the sons of this hidden section of the nation of Israel have multiplied. So much so, that today their numbers cannot even be estimated. It should not come as a surprise to us, therefore, that from among this vast multitude there is today a remnant, which is growing all the time; that is, it is starting to wake up from the years of forgetfulness ("Menashe") and to recognize its deep connections to the People of Israel. Since the People of Judah and their companions have never lost their identity, and have continued to exist as the Jewish nation through whom some of the promises of restoration and redemption have been fulfilled, in order for the chronology of the history of the future to continue, it is necessary to identify the second part of the nation. It seems,

therefore, that the biblical descriptions that we have examined, (which relate to the renewal of the identity of the sons of the lost tribes), fit this growing number of people in the entire world. Those people who are discovering their Israelite identity also thirst and hunger for the Torah of Israel, for the homeland, for the people and for the renewal of the covenants.

Here is B.'s personal story, which is just one of many.

My Personal Sinai Experience

About 10 years ago I committed myself to Elohim, promising that I would do everything that He would tell me. I didn't know then that this event was going to be like a personal Mount Sinai experience. (i.e., "we shall hear and we shall do.") Looking back, I now understand what I had experienced because it says in Parashat Nitzavim..."Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; But with him that stands here with us this day before Yahweh our Elohim, **and also with him that is not here with us this day**". From here on a series of events that has ensued brought about a marked change in my life.

One day I found myself visiting a Jerusalem Internet site, and it was love at first sight. My interest in Israel, the news and events, and their scriptural context started growing. The deeper I got into this, the more my affiliation grew for the Torah and the Prophets. My world view started altering, and I began looking at things from the Hebraic context, while identifying myself with the People of Israel. Studying Torah was very refreshing. The meaning of the Shema, to hear, understand and do, was compatible with my own "Mount Sinai" experience. Thus the Torah studies reflected what was going on in my heart. The words of Elohim became a living reality in my life and moreover, that very deep feeling that I had for the word of Elohim I also started feeling toward Israel, the nation, and the Land.

I desired to experience Israel, but living at that time in New Orleans, Louisiana, hurricane "Katrina" knocked on my door in more ways than one. God "showed" me that if I would stay in my home and weather out the storm that He would teach me how to trust Him under all circumstances. I obeyed. Indeed, throughout the event I experienced peace and tranquility within the eye of the storm. I know that I will stand by the strength of this experience in every other situation in the future. At that time I had lost all my worldly possessions and with them all obligations that bound me to my home and profession. Within a few months, I arrived in Israel knowing that I had returned home on a path of "walking" (lech lecha), "serving" (as Moses had said in the name of Yahweh to Pharaoh, "send my people and they will serve me"), with the last phase being that of "settling".

In the course of that year, the 2nd Lebanon war broke out and my heart went to all those that suffered and were hurt by this war. I volunteered with Sar-El (overseas volunteers for the IDF organization) and within a short time I found out that my place was in Jerusalem. The success of my becoming rooted here is completely dependent upon the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and it is clear that if I will obey Him with gratitude,

He will fulfill the vision that He put in my heart. This vision is to be at one with “Home”; that is with Israel - Israel the Land and Israel the people which is my brothers and sisters, the Sons and Daughters of this Land.

Food for Thought

Could the restoration of many of the sons of Israel back to their own people, be the solution to some of the challenges that face us here in the land? Could it possibly help us in solving the demographic problem which threatens the Jewish population in Israel?

More information (in **Hebrew**) is on blogspot:

“The Lost Ones are Returning Home”

<http://10israel.blogspot.com>

www.israelitereturn.com

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