

THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL

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In Ezekiel we find the phrase “**the whole house of Israel**”! What does Ezekiel mean by this phrase? Tradition within the church has assumed that by this phrase, Ezekiel was referring to All 12 tribes of Israel, and that the passage in general refers to the return of all 12 tribes of Israel to the promised Canaan land in the 5th century BC. For a good many reason, we do not think that this is the proper understanding of this passage.

What then, is the proper understanding of this phrase? Did Ezekiel have something different in mind than a restoration of the 12 tribes to the promised land of Canaan?

The purpose of this Scripture study is to determine what the prophet Ezekiel meant by the phrase as well as to try to understand how his hearers or readers were expected to understand that phrase as he used it and thus to determine how we should understand the phrase “THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL”.

The first and only time that this phrase is used in the Biblical record prior to the writings of the prophets is found in Leviticus 10:6:

And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, **THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL**, bewail the burning which the LORD hath kindled. (Emphasis added)

The location (Moses and the children of Israel before the tabernacle [Lev.9:3& 5]) and the context (“all the people”) would seem to indicate that in this reference the phrase “**the whole house of Israel**” refers to all the people (of all 12 tribes) of Israel.

The next usage of the term “the whole house of Israel” is found in Jeremiah 13:11:

For as the girdle cleaves to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me **THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL** and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

Within the context of this verse we find that the phrase “the whole house of Israel” is found in juxtaposition to the phrase “the whole house of Judah” thus it is clear that in this passage of Jeremiah the phrase “the whole house of Israel” is a clear and definite reference to just the one house of the descendants of Jacob/Israel, the people of the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom that were divorced [Jer.3:8, & Hosea] by Yahweh

and sent into exile among the Gentiles [Hosea 8:8] through the Assyrian captivity/exile/Diaspora [Hosea 8:8-9].

At this point we have a tie. One writer of Scripture used the phrase “the whole house of Israel” ostensibly in reference to all 12 tribes of Jacob/Israel and one clearly used that phrase to describe only the people of the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom.

After a great deal of study within the Holy Writ, it is the conclusion of this writer that Jeremiah sets the pattern for all the prophets that use the phrase “the whole house of Israel;” however, not in Jer.13:11, but in Jeremiah 31:31ff. We will discover as we continue, that there is ample evidence which supports our conclusion.

Ezekiel is the only other prophet that uses the exact phrase “the whole house of Israel”. Within the context of the entire book it appears certain that his usage of the phrase “the whole house of Israel” is identical with that of Jeremiah 31:31ff.

In Jeremiah 31, Jeremiah is making a declaration of the new marriage covenant that will be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with **THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL**; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Emphasis added)

Before we go any further let us summarize the information we have accumulated so far. The first reference to the phrase “the whole house of Israel” is found in Leviticus 10:6. This third book of Moses is the book of the teachings (law) of Yahweh to His new wife [Ex.6 & 17; Cf. Jer. 31:32]. In the marriage covenant that was consummated at Sinai, Yahweh became the husband [Jer.31:32] of His chosen bride/people, the family of Jacob/Israel. And Israel became his wife. However, we should remember that Jacob/Israel had two wives [Gen. 29] which gave him two families [Gen.29:32-30:24] and thus Yahweh effectually married two wives [Ez.23; Jer.31:31, et al.].

From the very beginning there were rivalries and jealousies between the two wives. These showed up in the two families that came from them as well. During one of these visible expressions of the jealousies and rivalries, the eldest son of Rachel (Joseph) was sold into slavery in Egypt. Many years later the two families were united in Egypt and for a time it seemed that the jealousies and rivalries were held in check.

Just before his death Jacob/Israel divided the birthright blessings (of the Abrahamic covenant) between his two families. Judah was given the right to the scepter (royal family) and the responsibility of being the keeper of the law [Gen.49:10], however, **Joseph, and his two sons received the birthright** [Gen.48:15-22; 1Chron.5:1-2].

*It is a sad fact that in the 2nd century and thereafter the church has passed over and completely missed the radical impact that this division of the birthright blessing(of the Abrahamic covenant) **between the two families of Jacob/Israel was to have on the formation and development of the New Testament “ecclesia”**.*

In Gen.48:16 “the messenger which redeemed me” (Jacob/Israel) is Jesus Christ and in verse 16 Jacob/Israel asks Him to “bless the lads; and let my name (Israel) be named on them,...and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth” [numerous as the stars of the heavens and the sand of the seashore, Gen.22:17, 32:12; Isa. 10:22; Ho.1:10], Manasseh shall also “become a people, and he also shall be great; **BUT TRULY HIS YOUNGER BROTHER SHALL BE GREATER THAN HE, AND HIS SEED (descendants) SHALL BECOME THE FULNESS OF NATIONS/GENTILES** (see Rom.11:25) And he (Jacob/Israel) blessed them [Gen.27:28-30] that day, saying, in thee shall Israel bless saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. And Israel said unto Joseph,...God shall bring you again into the land of your fathers.”

And eventually, just as Israel had prophesied the children of Israel returned to the promised land of Canaan. On the way, at Sinai, they entered into a marriage covenant [Ex.6, the betrothal & 17, the marriage] with Yahweh. *This marriage covenant was binding on Yahweh as well as the children of Israel.*

For many years, in the land, the animosities between the two families (houses) of Israel were held in abeyance, however, upon the death of King Saul a great rift occurred between the family of Judah and the other 11 tribes [2Sam.1-3] of Israel. True to the prophetic blessing of Jacob/Israel his name, Israel, [Gen.48:16] was carried by the portion of the ten tribes that contained the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh. The tribe of Judah was known as the house of Judah and **the other 11 tribes were known as the house of Israel**.

Eventually, after 7 ½ of tribal warfare, David king of Judah, managed to reunite the 11 other tribes with the house of Judah and he became the king of a now reunited 12 tribes, the great nation, Israel. The prophet Amos referred to this great accomplishment by David as “the building up of the tabernacles of David” [Amos 9:11].

Israel remained a united kingdom until the death of King Solomon, David’s son. Then Yahweh rent the nation [1ki.11:11-13, 12:24] in twain again, however this time He left one tribe, Benjamin, with Judah [1Ki.11ff, et al.]. Thus, the once great united

kingdom had now become *two fractious kingdoms*; the house of Judah and the house of Israel and once again **the name Israel remained upon that subdivision of tribes that contained Ephraim and Manasseh**. Jeroboam, the new king of the house of Israel was a descendant of Ephraim, by Joseph of Rachel by Jacob -- While Rehoboam, son of Solomon was a descendant of Leah.

This time *Yahweh had caused a breach between the two families* (I Kings 12:24) that would remain like a festering sore until the two houses of Israel should once again be reunited (Ezekiel 37:15-28) under the reign of the greater son of David, Yahshua, Jesus Christ the Messiah of Israel. Amos refers to this reunion as the “rais(ing) of the tabernacle of David.” (Amos 9:11-15) And Peter properly applied this to the salvation of the Nations/Gentiles in Acts 15:7-18.

Through this summary of the history of the nation of Israel, we have seen that when Leviticus was written, the 12 tribes were an ostensibly united assembly of the 12 tribes of Israel.

However, when Jeremiah was written the rebellious house of Israel had already “vanished” (almost a hundred years earlier) into the Assyrian captivity/exile/Diaspora, thus Jeremiah 13, referencing the time of the great rift described above reflects that rift and identifies the two houses of Israel, however, in Jeremiah 31, he is writing about the restoration “of all the families of Israel” which Yahweh had scattered and would gather them “as a shepherd does His flock. For Yahweh has redeemed and ransomed” the descendants of Jacob unto mount Zion [see Heb.12:22; Rev.21:1-3; Is.18:7; Ez.37:15-28, et al., the Holy City, the New Jerusalem].

In Jeremiah 31:31, Jeremiah writing from YHWH states that the new covenant will be made with “the house of Israel (by the 1st cent. known simply as Nations/Gentiles, which then possessed the nations/gentiles [Amos 11:9]), and the house of Judah” coming within this messianic marriage covenant, “all the families of Israel (now including the Nations/Gentiles) will once again be united into the house of Israel [Jer.31:33] under Yahweh-Yahshua and they shall be His people [Jer.31:1; Ez.34: 11-31, 36:22-38, 37:15-28, et al.] as “the Israel of God” [Gal 6:16].

Therefore, Jeremiah establishes for us that the phrase “**the whole house of Israel**” is a clear and certain reference to the two houses of Israel, Judah (Jews) and Israel (known only as Nations/Gentiles by the time of the Messiah) **reunited within the new marriage covenant**. They had now been purchased back (redeemed), restored to Yahweh, and saved from the wrath of Yahweh with the certain promise of resurrection into the land of rest [Heb.4:9-10], the permanent (continuing city) land of Yahweh’s Israel [2Samuel 7:10; Amos 9:15; Heb.13:14; et. al.] in the Parousia of Jesus Christ, which Jesus unalterably connected to the destruction of Jerusalem in

70AD [Matt.24] although as we have explained elsewhere *the destruction of Jerusalem was not the Parousia; it was the “day of the Lord.”*

A careful examination of the context of each of the Ezekiel passages quoted below will demonstrate that each of them was written in the context of the Messianic redemption of Israel.

Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are **THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL** behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. (Ezekiel 37:11, emphasis added)

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon **THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL**, and will be jealous for my holy name; (Ezekiel 39:25)

And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy [portion]: it shall be for **THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL**. (Ezekiel 45:6)

Therefore, Ezekiel and those that properly receive his message will surely know that the phrase “**the whole house of Israel**” is a reference to the elect of Israel in mount Zion!!!!!! I.e. Jesus Christ and His followers! The purchased possession [Eph.1:14c] which are fully redeemed by resurrection out of death [Eph.1:14b] unto the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time [1Pet.1:5] in the appearing of Jesus Christ [1Pet.1:7c] where they received the end of their faith, the salvation of their ‘being’ (life) [1Pet.1:9].

Prior to that first century work of Christ described above, “no man was able to enter into the temple” [the Fourth Gospel 3:13; Rev.15:8], however, after the seven plagues were poured out upon Jerusalem in “the day of the Lord” in 70AD Christ declared that “It is done” [Rev.10:7, 16:17], the temple was opened [Rev.11:19, 15:5], and those in Christ in His parousia entered into the land of rest [1Cor.15:23; 1Thess.4:16], then it was declared that “blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth (all of those who trust in Jesus after 70 AD)[Rev. 14: 13]. Because of these events, we that are in Jesus Christ will also have the great joy of entering that land of rest when our time comes [1Cor. 15:23]. And so the blessed hope of resurrection shall become a reality for each one who trusts in Jesus Christ!

We hope it is apparent now that in the context of Scripture, particularly the context of Ezekiel, that the phrase “**the whole house of Israel**” is used by Ezekiel to designate the two houses of Jacob/Israel **only in the context of restoration unto Yahweh through the Messiah** and not in reference to any return to the promised land of Canaan.