



Understanding Israel -

a United Kingdom

by Tim Kelley

As we ended last time, we saw Moses warning the new generation of Israelites, those who would be crossing the Jordan and taking the land, that if they would continue to walk in Yahweh's ways, He would bless them and they would enjoy peace and prosperity, but if they didn't, they would suffer at the hands of neighboring countries and would eventually be driven from the land of Israel, BUT. . . if they turn again to God's ways and (truly) repent, Yahweh would forgive their sins and bring them back to their land. Sandwiched between the *blessings and curses* and the *promise of return*, we find this strange statement –

NKJ Deuteronomy 29:29 "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

A somewhat hard to understand statement, but a springboard for understanding the scripture, especially those pertaining to Israel, because to truly understand Israel, and to understand the entire Bible for that matter, you must have firm foundations, that being *firmly grounded in the Torah* and the prophecies found within it. Thus I submitted this paraphrase of that verse –

The concealed plans of YHVH are always revealed to us and our sons as we apply the words of this Torah.

Thus, to truly see what is happening in the remainder of the Bible, the prophets, writings, and especially, the New Testament, we must be willing to accept that what is written about Abraham, Jacob, and their descendents is really true and not try to work around them for our satisfaction. We must accept as fact the things written about Israel and connect the dots in order to begin to understand this *mystery*.

When the children of Israel crossed the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua, the Ephraimite, they began immediately to conquer the inhabitants of the land. The first conquest was Jericho. Because they acted upon the Yahweh's instructions, the double walls fell down and, quite interesting, out so that the Israelites were able to use the fallen bricks and stones as a ramp leading directly into the city.

Conquest after conquest resulted in Israel taking much of the land within a span of about 50 years. During this time, the Israelites pretty much followed God's ways, primarily as a result of Joshua's leadership.

NKJ Joshua 24:31 Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

But this did not last long. After Joshua died and the generation that had experienced the exodus and the early conquest of Canaan died, the Israelites quickly turned to Baal worship. Along with turning to other Gods, the Israelites started fighting amongst themselves. At one point, the tribe of Benjamin was practically wiped out! It seems that when Israel had a good leader, the people were joined together and they worshipped YHVH, but when they didn't they turned to other gods.

By the time we get to the days of the first kings of Israel, we find that there has become a clear distinction between the northern tribes and the southern tribe of Judah. This is where a lot of confusion develops because Bible students fail to see two nations emerging out of one. As we recall back in the book of Genesis, Jacob told Joseph that his (Jacob's new name "Israel") would be upon Joseph's sons. That means that those tribes that would eventually align themselves with Joseph's sons, especially the leading son Ephraim, would go by the name Israel. On the other hand, the tribes that did not become known as the "House of Judah".

A good example of this fact is that just prior to Saul being made King over Israel, the nation had two standing armies – the army of Israel and the army of Judah. We see this when Saul is preparing to rescue the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead –

ESV 1 Samuel 11:8 When he mustered them at Bezek, the people of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

Another example is when the Israelites were being harassed by the Philistines, so they took the Ark of the Covenant from its place in Shiloh and carried it into battle. Of course, as the story goes, they lost the Ark to the Philistines. Never-the-less, what we see is a distinction between Israel and Judah –

NKJ 1 Samuel 17:52 Now the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted, and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance of the valley and to the gates of Ekron . . .

There are numerous examples of Judah being distinct from Israel throughout the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. Thus, it would be inconsistent with the Biblical record to consider Israel as one people at any time after the time of the Judges.

We talked about King David and King Solomon at the beginning of this series. To bring out a couple of highlights, we found that David was chosen to be king over the House of Judah for 7 years prior to being chosen as king over the House of Israel. Even though the people from both houses loved David, the northern kingdom of Israel maintained allegiance to Saul's son, Ishbosheth, until he was murdered. Then the elders of the House of Israel met with David in Hebron and anointed him king over the House of Israel.

So David became the king over two distinct peoples, the House of Israel and the House of Judah, but under the leadership of David they worked together as one people, though they still maintained their Judah / Israel status.

I want to talk a little about this term "House of Judah" and "House of Israel". The term "House of Judah" first appears in the passage where David is anointed King of Judah -

NKJ 2 Samuel 2:4 Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah . . .

On the other hand, "House of Israel" is used all the way back in Exodus 16 to apply to Israel and Judah – all 12 tribes collectively, but when we get to the time of King David, we see "house of Israel" applying exclusively to the northern tribes. This first happens in YHWH's indictment against David for the sin with Bathsheba –

NKJ 2 Samuel 12:8 'I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!

From this point on, the term is used rather loosely and thus can be quite confusing. Many have slipped into thinking that the Bible prophecies for the "House of Israel" pertain to all Israel. Since most people today consider the Jews to be all Israel, they think these prophecies pertain to them. Obviously, this is not the case. In order to understand who's being spoken when we see the term "house of Israel", a person must consider the context. In many cases when YHVH is speaking of Israel and Judah, He'll use the phrase "House of Judah and House of Israel", but not always. There again, context, context, context!

There are many events in David's life that are Messianic in nature. Using the "there's no new thing under the sun" concept, a person could produce a lot of speculation concerning end time events based on events that happened to David. We're not going to get into these necessarily, but I do want to spend a few moments talking about one event that has ramifications for understanding portions of the New Testament, and that's the Tabernacle of David.

Shortly after David became king over all Israel (Israel and Judah) he was moved to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. If we remember, shortly before Saul became King, the Israelites were losing a battle with the Philistines, so they got this idea that they could use the Ark of the Covenant, that was in the Tabernacle at Shilo, as sort of a good luck charm in order to defeat the Philistines. As we know, this didn't work, the Ark was captured and eventually ended up in the home of Abinadab where it remained for several years.

Now David is King, and Israel is united in a federation of nations under one king. Together, they defeat the Jebusites and take the ancient city of Jerusalem where David sets up his headquarters on a ridge in the southwest portion of the city. David calls this the City of David, or Mount Zion. David was at the pinnacle of his career. He had united Israel and God was with him. The text says –

ESV 2 Samuel 5:10 And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him.

YHVH, the commander of the army of Israel, was with David, and for the foreseeable future, David was undefeated in battle because he called on God to help him direct the battle. Now David wanted to establish Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and the first step was to retrieve the Ark of the Covenant. As we know, David's first attempt failed due to his lack of knowledge of the Torah, but later he succeeded and placed the ark in a tent he erected for it in the City of David.

NKJ 2 Samuel 6:17 So they brought the ark of the LORD, and set it in its place in the midst of the tabernacle that David had erected for it. Then David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

The Hebrew word for tabernacle in this passage is (אהל "ohel" – Strong's 168). An *ohel* is a Bedouins tent. It's the same word used to refer to the tent of Abraham or Sarah, and it's sometimes used in the Torah to refer to the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. Basically, it's a temporary dwelling in the wilderness. It would be nearly forty years before the Ark would be moved to a permanent dwelling in Solomon's Temple.

By virtue of the circumstances surrounding David's placing the Ark in the tent in the City of David, we can come to a pretty clear understanding of what the term "Tabernacle of David" should convey to us.

- Israel had become a united federation under one king . . . the tribes were working together, not against each other as in the past.
- The people of God, Israel, were walking with God by virtue of a good king.
- The God of Israel was fighting their battles
- Israel was establishing itself as a great kingdom

Now, there are many views of what the Tabernacle of David means. Some believe it's a change in worship from that of animal sacrifices to a worship of praise. Other's believe it's the church. But if you look at the context of what we see here, I believe it can more correctly be defined as "the establishment of the unite Kingdom of Israel under one king".

Why is this important to us? Because understanding the Tabernacle of David will help us understand a specific prophecy in the book of Amos that is used to explain a major event that took place in the early days of the messianic community in Jerusalem - - the Acts 15 conference. I don't want to discuss the Acts 15 conference now, but I do want to spend a few moments discussing the Amos 9 passage while the thought of the events that coined this term are still fresh on our minds.

The book of Amos is a series of prophecies and indictments against all Israel, the house of Israel and the house of Judah. After a series of warnings to both houses, God begins in chapter nine to talk about how He will destroy Israel. Picking it verse nine, YHVH shifts His focus to the northern tribes, referred to here as the House of Jacob.¹

NKJ Amos 9:8 "Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, And I will destroy it from the face of the earth; Yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," Says the LORD.

We're getting a little ahead of ourselves in discussing this passage, but as we'll see when we go over it in the next few weeks, because of Israel's (and in this case, the House of Jacob's - - the northern kingdom's) refusal to walk in the commandments, and because of their proclivity to be like the nations, the gentiles, and worship the gods of the gentiles, Yahweh decides to destroy the northern kingdom. But notice, by destroying the kingdom, He's not necessarily destroying the people. What's He going to do with the people?

ESV Amos 9:9 "For behold, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall to the earth.

Like in a sieve, the grain falls out of the sieve, but the big pieces, the pebbles stay in it, to be discarded later. So Yahweh is saying that He's going to shake Israel as if they were in a sieve. Israel is going to be scattered through the nations, but there are some, apparently the ringleaders among the people, the ones who say to ignore the prophets, they are pebbles that will be discarded (see verse 10). We'll see this more when we get into the book of Hosea. Now let's move on to verse 11 -

NKJ Amos 9:11 " On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old . . .

Here's the reference to the Tabernacle of David. The first thing we want to see is that this is an end-time prophecy. The term "in that day" is a Hebrew idiom for the end times. Now notice, the tabernacle had

¹ We know that this term refers to Israel and not Judah because Amos uses this phrase earlier (Amos 3:13) in regards to Samaria and Bethel, both cities in the northern kingdom.

fallen and it remains fallen at the beginning of the end times. Does the church still want to claim that they're the Tabernacle of David if that tabernacle is fallen at the beginning of the end times? If the Tabernacle of David is a different type of worship than the sacrifices, does this mean that this new type of worship has fallen? Obviously, neither of these can claim, or should they want to claim, to be David's Tabernacle.

No, what had fallen was the Davidic Dynasty. Israel and Judah were separated from each other as they were before David united them . . . and they still are today. Today's Jewish people are not all of Israel. If they were, there would be no need for the Tabernacle of David to be restored. Instead of the Jews being all Israel, they are two distinctly different people. Israel and Judah split up and became separate nations just 73 years after David had united them. To claim that all Israelites are Jews would require us to consider Amos' prophecy as irrelevant since the Davidic dynasty still stands.

Moving on in the passage . . . where it says "repair its damages", in the KJV it says "close up the breaches", a translation of the Hebrew words "gadar perets (Strong's 1443 and 6556). It means "close off the gaps" or "seal up the breaks in the wall". Perets comes from the word "parats" which is the same word used in Genesis 28:14 where God tells Jacob that his children will "spread abroad to the west, the east, the north, and the south". In other words, God's going to stop the spreading out of Israel. In fact, the word "gadar" also means a fence or a hedge. He's going to hedge Israel in. As we'll see when we discuss the breakup of the kingdom, Israel did spread abroad when foreign nations overran Samaria and the Israelites were carried off to other nations, but now YHVH will begin to draw them back.

The key point in this verse is the fact that it will be rebuilt as in the days of old. What will be rebuilt? The tabernacle of David, the Davidic dynasty which was created when Israel and Judah both agreed to serve the same king.

One last point on this verse. In the 2 Samuel passage where the Tabernacle of David is introduced, the tabernacle is a *tent*. In the Amos passage, the tabernacle is a *Sukkah* (סֹכֶת). Now we're talking millennial kingdom. In essence, God is likening David's kingdom to the Messianic kingdom, and in order to do this, He has to restore key aspects of David's 10th century BC kingdom.

The next verse tells why God's going to restore the Tabernacle of David –

NKJ Amos 9:12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name," Says the LORD who does this thing.

From this translation, it appears that YHVH is raising the Tabernacle of David so that Israel (see verse 9) can possess the remains of Edom, the Muslims? Though this is what ultimately might happen, I think there's a better understanding.

If we recall our Hebrew, the word *Edom* (אֱדוֹם) and the word *man* (אָדָם) all come from the same three letter root *adam* (אָדָם). Considering that there were no vowel points in the original text, the passage could just as easily read " . . . the remnant of men . . . " and that's just the way we see it in the Septuagint.

LXE Amos 9:12 that the remnant of men, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, may earnestly seek me, saith the Lord who does all these things.

God's doing this so that the remnant of men can seek Him. But who are the Gentiles that are called by His name, and why are they separate from the remnant of men? Here again we're getting ahead of ourselves . . .

We saw earlier in this passage that Israel would be sifted through the nations. The Hebrew word for *nations* is *goy* (גוי), and *goy* is also the Hebrew word from which we get *Gentiles*. So, when Israel is scattered amongst the nations (as we see in verse 9), they don't cease to be Israelites, but they are considered by others to be Gentiles since there is no longer a kingdom of Israel. Because they are still Israelites, they are still the same people who were called by Yahweh's name. How do we know Israel was called by His name? Because God said they were –

ESV 2 Chronicles 7:14 if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

If you recall this passage, it was YHVH's response to Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple during Sukkot very early in Solomon's reign as King of all Israel. In that prayer Solomon spoke of Israel being scattered. He asked God to bring them back to the Temple if they repented while in the places wherein they were scattered. So Israel is the people called by God's name.

We also see in this passage that the rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David, the re-establishment of the Messianic Kingdom of Israel, will allow these returning Israelites, and the non-Israelite Gentiles, to begin to earnestly seek God. They will no longer be blinded, they will be able to see the light.

And finally, the last phrase reads ". . . says the LORD who does these things." In the Tenakh it reads ". . . declares the LORD who will bring this to pass." God will make this happen. He has to . . . He has no choice. Why? Because He's a covenant-keeping god, and He promised it via a covenant with Abraham. We don't have to force our way back to Israel, YHVH will draw us. It's His job.

With a clearer understanding of the Tabernacle of David, we can better understand what has become focal point of confusion in Messianic circles, the Acts 15 conference.

Shalom Alecheim!