



Parasha *Chayei Sarah*

October 30, 2021

Torah: Genesis 23:1-25:18

Haftarah: 1Kings 1:1-31

Ketuvim Shlichim: Luke 9:57-62

Shabbat shalom mishpocha. Our *parasha* today is *Chayei Sarah*, the life of Sarah. It begins telling us that she died at the age of 127 years and was buried in the cave *Machpelah* in *Hevron* which Abraham purchased from Ephron the Hittite. Her son, Isaac, was 37 years old at the time of her death. Sometime later, his father Abraham determined that it was time for him to take a wife. In the custom of his people, as father and clan leader, Abraham would choose a wife for his son. He charged his chief household servant, Eliezer of Damascus, to go and get a wife for Isaac. He required Eliezer to take an oath that he would not get a wife from the Canaanites, but would get a wife from among Abraham's own relatives, the family he left behind in the area of Aram-Naharaim. Abraham's brother Nahor left Ur of the Chaldees with him and travelled to Haran. Sometime later, he settled just a little north of Haran naming the town Nahor after himself. Eliezer journeyed to Nahor and encountered Rebecca, the daughter of Nahor's son B'tuel, at the local spring. After presenting all of the gifts sent by Abraham, she consented to go with Eliezer and he took her back to the land of Canaan. Isaac took her into his mother Sarah's tent and she became his wife. Abraham took another wife, Keturah, and she bore him six more sons. He gave everything he owned to Isaac and gave gifts to these other six sons and sent them to the land in the east. Then at age 175 he died. Ten years older than Sarah, when she died at age 127, Abraham was 137. He lived 38 more years after Sarah died. Isaac and Ishmael, his sons buried him in the cave at Machpelah where Sarah was buried. ADONAI blessed Isaac and he lived near the place where Hagar found a well when she and Ishmael were lost in the desert. Isaac lived at the place which she named Be'er lahai roi, which means "the well of him that lives and sees me." The *parasha* ends with a listing of the descendants of Ishmael. He died at the age of 137 and his sons and their sons lived east of Egypt as you go toward Assyria.

By covenant, ADONAI promised the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants through ADONAI's chosen son, Isaac. Who his descendants are is fully established in the Book of Exodus as the twelve tribes of Israel, the descendants of the twelve sons of Isaac's son Jacob whose name was changed to Israel. But, things begin to get a little murky after the tribes separate into two separate kingdoms, the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah. Who are physical Israelites today has been challenged by certain modern teachings, teachings which claim that some Gentiles are physical descendants of Abraham. I am going to address that question today to attempt to refute those teachings and also to try and bring some clarity to who is a physical part of Israel, the Jews, today.

All this begins with a belief system called British Israelism. It states that the people of the British Isles are "genetically, racially, and linguistically the direct descendants" of the Ten Lost Tribes of ancient Israel. The earliest mention of this was by a Frenchman, M. le Loyer's, the author of the book *The Ten Lost Tribes* which was published in 1590. He claimed that Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Scandinavian, Germanic, and associated cultures were direct

descendants of the Northern Kingdom Israelites. There were several writings about it in the 19th century including the 1840 book by Englishman John Wilson entitled *Our Israelitish Origin*. Beginning in the 1870s there were numerous organizations favoring British Israelism set up in England as well as the United States. The claims of British Israelism have been well refuted by evidence from modern archaeological, ethnological, genetic and linguistic research.

In the 1960s, British Israelism was taught by Herbert W. Armstrong. He believed that the teaching was a key to understanding biblical prophecy and also believed that he was called by God to proclaim the prophecies to the Lost Tribes before the end times. This belief caused his separation from the Church of God, Seventh Day because they refused to adopt the teaching, leading him to found the Worldwide Church of God. After Armstrong's death, the Worldwide Church of God abandoned its belief in British Israelism and in 2009, changed its name to Grace Communion International.

Those who follow this theology today state that the bulk of Abraham's descendants today are not Jews, but descendants of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and that the Jews are the descendants of the Tribes of Judah and Benjamin and part of the Tribe of Levi. British Israelism believes that following the resettling of the tribes of Israel in the east by the Assyrians in 722 BCE that the Scythians, Cimmerians and Goths descended from these lost tribes and were the ancestors of those who later invaded Britain. To simplify this complex theology, it is said by certain groups today that the British are descended from the Tribe of Ephraim and that the Americans of British descent are descended from the Tribe of Manasseh. This belief is held by a number of Messianic congregations today, congregations not affiliated with Messianic Judaism. They adhere to a "two house" theology based upon British Israelism, believing that they are one house of Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham through Ephraim and Manasseh, and the Jews are the other. I believe that most of them are sincere followers of Yeshua, but I question the doctrine that they are descendants of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

Why is this important to us today? It's important because truth is important. Does the Scripture support this belief? Some have used Scripture to make it seem so, but all of their evidence is circumstantial. The two house theology challenges the theology of Messianic Judaism with regard to "who is Israel in the flesh today." The truth of Scripture is that the Jews of today do include within their numbers, descendants of all twelve tribes of Israel which was also true of the Israel of Yeshua's day. After the Babylonian captivity, there were other people groups in the land of Israel. The Samaritans included people descended from the mixture of Israelites and the people brought in from other lands by the Assyrians. But, the Israelites of the 1st century, lived all over the land of Israel. Yeshua's disciples that came from the north of Israel were Israelites, but not considered Judeans. The Judeans were those living in the south, the area of the former Kingdom of Judah. Sometime in the 1st century, the term Judean began to be applied to all Israelites and that is where the name Jew comes from. All physical Israelites became known as Jews but their number included some from each of the twelve tribes. *Sha'ul* provided us an example. He was from the Tribe of Benjamin, but he said: 39 ..., "*I am a Jewish man from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city.*" (Acts 21:39b TLV). Today, regardless of whether a *kohen* or Levite from the Tribe of Levi, from the Tribe of Judah or don't really know which of the other tribes they're from, all are called Jews.

The prophecy of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37 relates to this question. In a vision, ADONAI carried Ezekiel out to a valley full of dry bones. He told him to prophesy over them, for the bones to hear the word of ADONAI. *5 Thus says Adonai Elohim to these bones: ‘Behold, I will cause Ruach to enter you, so you will live. 6 I will attach tendons to you, bring flesh on you and cover you with skin. Then I will put breath in you. You will live. You will know that I am Adonai.’* (Ezekiel 37:5-6 TLV). Ezekiel prophesied over them and began to see the bones come together with tendons, flesh and skin on them. But, there was no breath in them. ADONAI told him to breathe on them so that they would live. *11 Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say: ‘Our bones are dried up; our hope is lost; we are cut off—by ourselves.’ 12 Therefore prophesy and say to them, thus says Adonai Elohim: ‘Behold, I will open your graves. I will bring you up out of your graves, My people. I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 You will know that I am Adonai, when I have opened your graves and brought you up out of your graves, My people.’ 14 I will put My Ruach in you and you will live. I will place you in your own land. Then you will know that I, Adonai, have spoken and that I have done it.’* It is a declaration of Adonai. (Ezekiel 37:11-14 TLV). In saying this, ADONAI said that He would bring the whole house of Israel, all of the tribes, back to the land.

Ezekiel was a priest, a descendant of Zadok. He was taken to Babylon in about 597 BCE eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 BCE. While in Babylon, he prophesied against the sins of his people who remained in Jerusalem. The *p’shat*, the original meaning of this prophecy about dry bones was about the approaching return of the Jews from Babylon to Israel and ADONAI’s plan to return them to the land. But, secondarily, it is also an ongoing prophecy, with Jews coming from the four winds, north, south, east and west on the earth and returning to the land of their fathers, Israel, even into the end times.

ADONAI then told Ezekiel to take a stick and write on it, “for Judah and the children of Israel. Take another stick and write on it, “for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel. Then join them together so that they become one stick in your hand. ADONAI then said: *18 “When the children of your people speak to you saying, ‘Won’t you tell us what you mean by these?’ 19 say to them, thus says Adonai Elohim: ‘Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph—which is in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel joined with him—and I will put them together with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick. They will be one in My hand.’”* (Ezekiel 37:18-19 TLV). The prophets used the names Ephraim and Israel interchangeably. In this regard, Ephraim refers to all of the tribes of the Northern Kingdom. By joining the two sticks, ADONAI indicated that He was going to put descendants of all of the tribes of Israel back into the land as one kingdom.

This happened in 538 BCE when King Cyrus granted the Jews the right to return to Israel and Jerusalem. Jeremiah had prophesied: *11 “So this whole land will be a desolate ruin, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for 70 years.”* (Jeremiah 29:11 TLV). Later Ezra wrote: *1 “Now in the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order to accomplish the word of Adonai from the mouth of Jeremiah, Adonai stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his entire kingdom, announcing in a written edict, saying: 2 “Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: Adonai, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build a House for Him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whoever is among you from all His people—may his God be with him—may go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the House of Adonai, the God of Israel—He is the God who is in Jerusalem.”* (Ezra 1:1-3 TLV). In 538 BCE when Ezekiel had been in Babylon for 58 years,

the Israelites were granted permission to return home. Their time in exile came to a total of 70 years in captivity taking into account the time that the first captives were taken, Daniel among them, which was actually slightly before Nebuchadnezzar was crowned king.

The prophecy of the dry bones was about the whole house of Israel returning to the land. All of the tribes of Israel were represented when they returned because many from the northern tribes lived in the south and went into captivity with Judah. When the two kingdoms split after Solomon's death, not all of the rebelling tribes went with Jeroboam, the new king for the north. The Tribe of Simeon was located within the tribal area of Judah and not all left. Many of the Tribe of Levi that already lived in the north left the Northern Kingdom for the south after Jeroboam became king. It was because he rejected ADONAI and set golden calves in Dan and Ephraim and appointed his own priests from the other tribes. Solomon's son Rehoboam was the King of Judah. 2Chronicles 11 says this in reference to him: *13 Moreover, the kohanim and the Levites from all their territories throughout Israel presented themselves to him (Rehoboam). 14 The Levites even abandoned their pastures and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem because Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them as kohanim to Adonai, 15 and had appointed his own priests for the high places, for the he-goats and for the calves that he had made. 16 Those from all the tribes of Israel, who had set their hearts to seek Adonai, followed the Levites to Jerusalem to sacrifice to Adonai, the God of their fathers.* (2Chronicles 11:13-16 TLV). We also see that some from all of the tribes of Israel went to the southern kingdom because of their desire to worship ADONAI. In the time of King Asa of Judah we read this: *9 He gathered all Judah and Benjamin, as well as those dwelling with them from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon—for many had defected to him from Israel when they saw that Adonai his God was with him.* (2Chronicles 15:9 TLV). During Hezekiah's reign, we read this: *6 The children of Israel and Judah who lived in the towns of Judah, also brought in the tithe of bulls and sheep, and the tithe of the sacred things consecrated to Adonai their God. They piled them in heaps.* (2Chronicles 31:6 TLV). This is another confirmation that those from the northern tribes lived in Judah.

During the destruction of the northern kingdom in 722 BCE, many of those living in the north fled to the Kingdom of Judah. This was about 136 years before Judah was taken captive to Babylon. 1Chronicles 9 speaks of Judah being carried away captive to Babylon and then states this about those returning: *2 The first to settle on their property in their towns were Israelites, kohanim, Levites and the Temple servants. 3 Those from the children of Judah, the children of Benjamin, and the children of Ephraim and Manasseh who settled in Jerusalem were:...* (1Chronicles 9:2-3 TLV). And, it goes on to name those who returned. Ezra says: *35 "Then the exiles returning from captivity sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel: 12 bulls for all Israel,..."* (Ezra 8:35a TLV). This implies that the twelve tribes were present. The prophetess Anna from the Tribe of Asher prophesied over Yeshua: *36 "Now Anna, a daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher, was a prophetess." ...* (Luke 2:36 TLV). When the Jews came back from captivity, those from the northern tribes were included in the group because they had also gone into captivity with them. It was when they returned that the two sticks of Ezekiel 37 became one stick in the Land. Their regathering is not yet complete and is ongoing today. This means that the people known as Jews and scattered all over the earth are people from all of the twelve tribes of Israel and ADONAI is continuing to regather them today. Ezekiel's prophesy continues into the time of Yeshua's return and His reign over all Israel. ADONAI said: *26 "I will cut a covenant of shalom with them—it will be an everlasting covenant with them. I will give to them and multiply them. I will set up My Sanctuary among them forever. 27 My dwelling-place will be over them. I will be their God and they will be My people."* (Ezekiel 37:26-27 TLV).

It's exciting to watch prophecy be fulfilled. And, also to be a part of it. We understand where the Jews in our congregation fit into these prophecies, but how do those of us who are Gentile fit in? It is because our calling today is to be like those Gentiles in the 1st century who became a part of Jewish congregations. They became a part of Israel, not the other way around. The *Edah* of Israel, the Congregation of Israel was established by ADONAI and Gentiles have always been called to be a part of it. From the mixed multitude with Israel in the Exodus to the new Gentile followers of Yeshua in Antioch in the 1st century, it has always been ADONAI's plan that Gentiles would come into the *Edah* of Israel. Today, the Messianic *Edah* of Israel is comprised of Jews who have trusted Yeshua and like-minded Gentiles. The followers of Jesus in the Church are also a part, but I am referring specifically to those who worship in a Messianic way. Messianic Jews are few in number and Gentiles have been called to stand alongside them. Because of this, many Gentiles have been called by ADONAI to be spiritual "Ruths." We, the Gentiles of *Beit Shalom* and the other Messianic Jewish Congregations, have been called into a Jewish ministry. Our example is *Yeshua's* Gentile ancestor Ruth. Ruth was a Moabite, but she followed the calling of ADONAI's Spirit and left her country. Her mother in law Naomi pleaded for her to return to her own country, but Ruth replied: 16, "*Do not plead with me to abandon you, to turn back from following you. For where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God*" (Ruth 1:16b TLV). The Gentiles of the Messianic Jewish Movement are modern Ruths. We have left the religion of our culture and adopted Jewish worship as well as identifying with them in Jewish culture.

How do we know that it is ADONAI's plan for Gentiles to join Israel? We know because *Sha'ul* told us so. He had a divine visitation from *Yeshua* on the way to Damascus and learned many things (2Corinthians 12:1, 1Corinthians 11:23, Colossians 1:25-27, Romans 16:25). One thing he learned was about the the mystery of the Gospel. It was revealed to him by *Yeshua* and the *Ruach*: 6 "*This mystery is that the Gentiles are joint heirs and fellow members of the same body and co-sharers of the promise in Messiah *Yeshua* through the Good News.*" (Ephesians 3:6 TLV). Fellow members of the same body. Which body is he referring to? It is the body which *Sha'ul* described in his olive tree metaphor, a description of the joining of two groups of peoples. The olive tree, the very symbol of the Nation of Israel was used as a metaphor to describe the joining of the two groups, Jews and Gentiles. The branches of the tree represent people. *Sha'ul* used the natural branches to represent Israel in the flesh, the Jews. In Romans 11 he said: 17 *But if some of the branches were broken off and you—being a wild olive—were grafted in among them and became a partaker of the root of the olive tree with its richness...* (Romans 11:17a TLV). The natural branches that were on the tree, the Jews who did not accept *Yeshua*, were broken off for unbelief when they rejected a relationship with *Yeshua*, the Messiah of Israel. But, through *Yeshua* and ADONAI's promise to Abraham, Gentiles who have trusted in *Yeshua*, the branches from a wild olive tree, were and are being grafted into Israel. The same is true for Jews who have trusted *Yeshua*. They are grafted back into their own tree. And, it is important for all to understand that the Olive Tree is a Jewish tree. In *Sha'ul's* metaphor, it is growing from the root of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the other fathers of Israel. But, G-d, Himself, is the gardener. He is the One who has tended this tree through the centuries; tended it in order to carry out His plan to bless all mankind through Abraham and his descendants.

The Messianic Jewish Movement itself is miraculously and divinely formed. It is a resurrection of the ministry of the ethnic Messianic Jews who followed *Yeshua* in the 1st century, the Messianic Judaism of that day. It is a movement which ADONAI has rebirthed almost 2000 years after it faded from history. And, it was from The Jesus Movement Revival

of the mid-1960s that modern Messianic Judaism was reborn; born again. And born again is a very prophetic way of understanding Messianic Judaism. It is life from the dead. Life from something which disappeared from history by the 4th century CE, but now in the last days has been reborn, reborn to be a witness to the Jews of today that Yeshua is their Messiah.

Another important fact about the Messianic Movement is that the seeds of this movement were planted during a time in which Israel was once again a nation, itself reborn, after not having been a nation for over 2000 years. Isaiah prophesied more than 2600 years earlier that this would happen. He said: *8 Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children* (Isaiah 66:8 TLV). And on May 14, 1948, David Ben Gurion, who would become the first prime minister, proclaimed Israel to be a nation. And she gave birth to her children who came to her from the horrors of the Holocaust and from other parts of the world where they had been scattered, this too, a continuation of the prophecy of the dry bones.

Some 19 years after the miraculous re-establishment of a nation which itself had been dead for so many years, Messianic Judaism was reborn in 1967. In the beginnings of Messianic Judaism in 1967, Israel was a young nation, only 19 years old. There was also another very significant event which took place that year of 1967. It was a fulfillment of prophecy, a prophecy spoken by Messiah *Yeshua* Himself. Just hours before He went to the stake for our sins, *Yeshua* sat on the Mount of Olives and made this prophetic statement. Speaking of His people, the Jews, He said: *24 "They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled"* (Luke 21:24 TLV). This prophecy has three parts, (1) a beginning, (2) the event which will occur, and (3) the end or fulfillment. The beginning was "fall by the sword and be led away captive into all the nations." This occurred in the year 70 CE as the Romans destroyed Jerusalem killing many Jews and taking many into slavery. The event about which *Yeshua* was speaking was: "Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles." Other Bible versions say "trodden underfoot," but both mean: "Jerusalem will be under the control of the Gentile nations." And that was true for some 2000 years. The end of *Yeshua's* prophecy is "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." The "times of the Gentiles" were fulfilled on June 7, 1967 when the Israeli army recaptured and controlled Jerusalem. The "times of the Gentiles, have been fulfilled because "Jerusalem is no longer trodden underfoot; no longer under the control of Gentiles." In June of 2022, it will have been 55 years since this prophecy was fulfilled.

So, for whatever it means, Jerusalem is no longer in the "times of the Gentiles," but is now "in the times of the Jews." After thousands of years of being dispersed among the nations, the descendants of Abraham are once again in control of the capitol city of the nation of Israel, the nation which *ADONAI* promised to them. Jews now control the place where *ADONAI* has placed His name. He said to Solomon: *6 "But I have chosen Jerusalem that My Name would abide there and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel"* (2Chronicles 6:6 TLV). *Yeshua*, Son of David, will soon return to rule and reign in Jerusalem, a Jewish city.

All of this has been done through the Jews by *ADONAI* for the benefit and blessing of the Gentiles. It was *ADONAI's* plan from the beginning. It did not just begin in Abraham's day. It was our Creator's plan from before the foundation of the earth to use Abraham's

descendants to bring blessing, to not only them, the Jews, but to all the nations of the earth. In Genesis 12:3, speaking of Abraham, *ADONAI* said: “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” The major part of this blessing would eventually be shown to be the gift of eternal life through *Yeshua*, G-d’s son and Abraham’s son. How was this to happen? It would happen through *ADONAI*’s chosen nation, Israel, from which our Messiah would be born. And, through *Yeshua* and the now revealed mystery of His Messiahship, the two groups, Jew and Gentile, would become one, one new man. That is our goal today, to become one in Messiah with our Jewish brothers and sisters who have not yet trusted *Yeshua* and also to be in unity with all who are a part of *Yeshua*’s body, the worldwide ecclesia of believers. That is our calling as Messianic Jews and Gentiles. May *ADONAI* help us to walk wholeheartedly in our calling! *Shabbat shalom!*