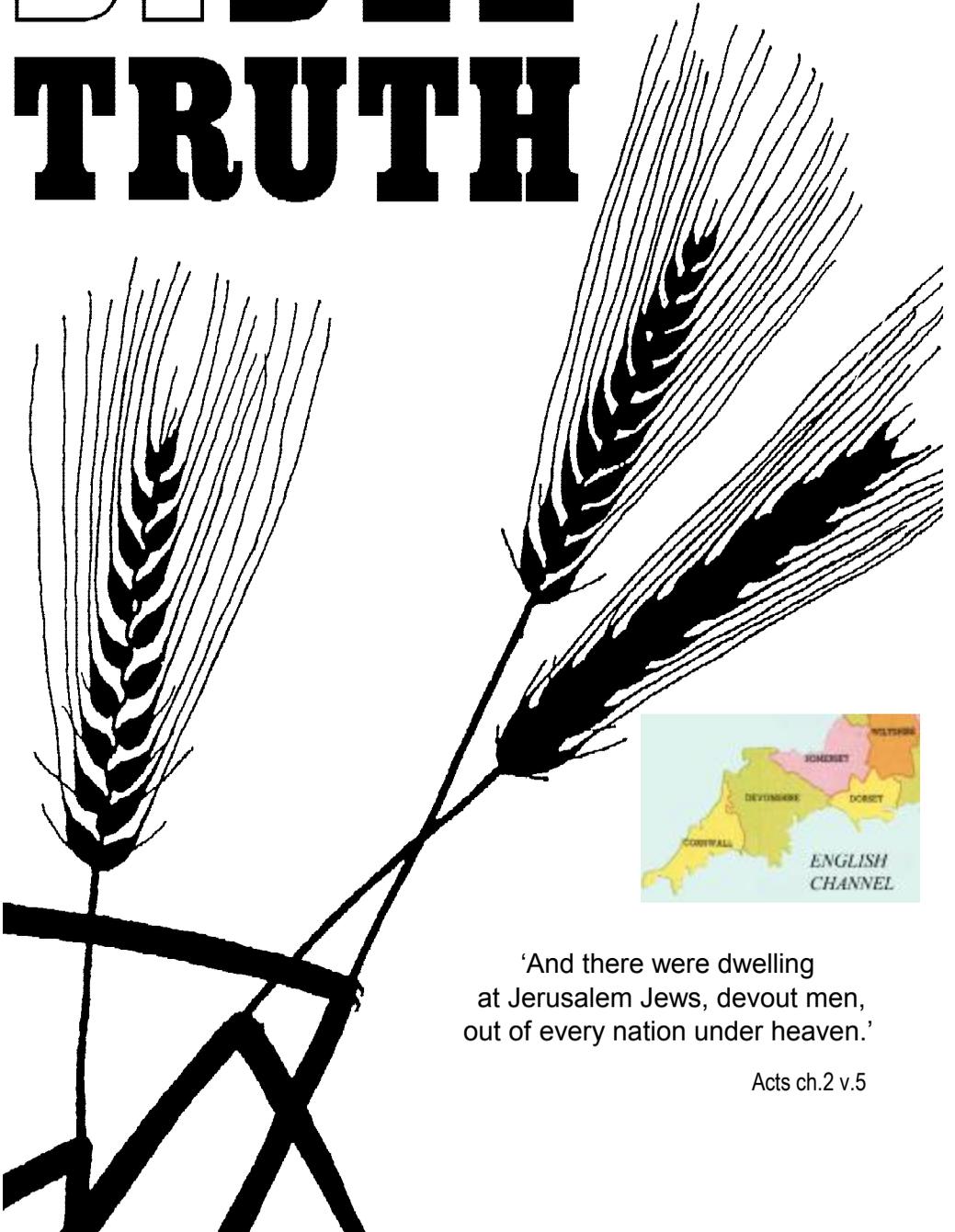


BIBLE TRUTH

No.271
July/September 2013



‘And there were dwelling
at Jerusalem Jews, devout men,
out of every nation under heaven.’

Acts ch.2 v.5

The ‘Gentiles’ In God’s Plan

by Jory Brooks



It is a widely popular view today that the word ‘Gentile’ in our *English Bible* translations can only refer to non-Israelites, yet the facts prove conclusively otherwise. The following information from leading Bible reference works proves that this word refers instead to ‘nations’, sometimes representing the dispersed House of Israel, at others non-Israelites, and at times both, as in ‘all nations’. The word ‘Gentile’ is an English language substitution for the original New Testament Greek words, ‘ethne’ (singular) or ‘ethnos’ (plural) and the Old Testament Hebrew words, ‘goy’ (singular) and ‘goyim’ (plural).

In teaching that Gentiles can only be non-Israelites, it is held by some that Christ in Matthew’s Gospel ch.10 v.5 ‘... Go not into the way of the Gentiles, ...’ was commanding against witnessing to non-Israelites! But in so doing, this makes the Bible contradict itself, for in Matthew ch.24 v.14, Christ said the exact opposite.

‘... this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations;... [ethnos/Gentiles]’.

Which is it? Are the ‘ethnos’ or ‘Gentiles’ to hear the Gospel or are they not? The answer is provided by Messianic Jewish Bible scholar, David H. Stern, in the *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, which points out that the word ‘Gentile’ has two meanings (page 531). It was used in a ‘neutral’ sense of any particular nation or nations (which ones to be determined by context), or a ‘pejorative overtone’ as ‘pagan, heathen’. Therefore, it can sometimes refer to ‘non-Israelites’, but not exclusively. Sometimes the singular form, ‘ethne’, meant the Jewish nation, and the plural form, ‘ethnos’, was used to refer to non-Jewish nations, but again not exclusively. The Jewish nation of Christ’s day included large numbers of Israelites, so if the Greek ‘ethne’, and Hebrew ‘goy’, ever refer to the Israelite tribe of Judah, one cannot say that it means non-Israelites!

Kittel's *Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament* says,

'There are 64 passages in the New Testament where we have "ethnos" or "ethne" without any special sense or characteristics. About 60 refer to a people or peoples in the general sense, and of these the following have in view the Jewish [Hebrew] people.

Luke chs 7 v.5 & 23 v.2;

John chs 11 vv 48-52 & 18 v.35;

Acts chs 10 v.22, 24 vv 2,10 &17; 26 v.4 & 28 v.19;

1 Peter ch.2 v.9.

That the expression "ethne" refers to all nations may be seen from the addition of "panta" [Greek word for "all"] in

Matthew chs 24 vv 9 &14; 25 v.32 & 28 v.19;

Mark chs 11 v.17 & 13 v.10;

Luke chs 21 v.24 & 24 v.47;

Romans ch.15 v.11;

Galatians ch.3 v.8.

(vol 2, p. 369)

Again, there is no basis for the supposition that the 'ethnos', or Gentiles, refers only to non-Israelite peoples. To take one example given by Dr Kittel, 1 Peter ch.2 v.9 speaks to Israelites saying,

'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation [ethnos], a peculiar people [laos]; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:'

Peter addresses this letter to Israelites of the 'diaspora' (Greek word used in 1 Peter ch.1 v.1), '... the chosen strangers of the dispersion ...' (1 Peter ch.1 v.1, *Fenton Translation*). This is a prophecy of the House of Israel becoming Christian in the New Testament era, and they are referred to as both 'ethnos' and 'laos', words usually translated into English as, 'Gentiles'.

Yet another example of 'ethnos' or 'gentiles' referring to Israelites is found in Romans ch.11 v.25, where the Apostle Paul spoke of '**... the fulness of the gentiles**'. The *Speakers Commentary* states this.

‘Ephraim [a prophetic name of the House of Israel] was to be cut off from being a people’ (Isaiah ch.7 v.8). It should lose the name and be scattered across the world; not, however, to perish but in accordance with that mysterious oracle, Genesis ch.48 vv 16-19, to “multiply like fish in the midst of the earth”. And to **“become the fulness of the nations”**.’

(vol. 5, p. 106)

A note in *Calvin’s Commentary* to Genesis ch.48 says,

‘The Hebrew word for fish is from the above root, because of their prolific property; and consequently the use of such a term naturally suggests the notion of an extraordinary increase’.

Through this prophesied great increase, Israel grew into a fullness of nations.

The learned Dr Henry Aldersmith stated,

‘Both Dr Delitzsch’s translation of the New Testament into Hebrew, and Ginzburg Salkinson’s Hebrew New Testament, have absolutely the same Hebrew words in Romans ch.11 v.25, that we find in Genesis ch.48 v.19 in the Hebrew Old Testament, and in these two verses only in the whole Bible. ...When the “fulness of the Gentiles” had to be rendered into Hebrew, the most eminent scholars naturally employed the phrase used in the promised birthright blessing given to Ephraim-Israel in Genesis ch.49!’

Fullness of the Nations, pp 72-73

In other words, the ‘Gentiles’ who were promised to become a ‘fulness of nations’ in the latter days were Ephraim, the ten lost tribes of Israel!

Dr Aldersmith also says,

‘It is most important to understand ... that “Gentiles” is not a translation at all, but a misuse of a Latin word which simply means “persons belonging to the same family”. The Greek word, “ethné”, commonly translated “Gentiles”, is more strictly rendered “nations” as we find it done in the margin of the *Authorized Bible* in Matthew ch.4 v.15, the place where it first occurs’.

(Ibid. p. 67)

It should be obvious that the neutral rendering 'nations', could apply to any nation including Israelite; and as we have seen, a number of specific prophecies clearly apply to the lost and dispersed House of Israel.

We read of gentilised Israel in the blessings to the patriarchs. In Genesis ch.35 v.11, the Greek Septuagint Translation of the third century BC says,

'And God said to him [Jacob], I am thy God; increase and multiply; for nations [ethne] and gatherings of nations [ethnon] shall be of thee ...'.

To render 'ethne/ethnon' as 'non-Israelites' would make God speak the following nonsense to Jacob: non-Israelites and gatherings of non-Israelites shall be of thee. We read a similar prophecy in Genesis ch.17 v.6 to Abraham,

'And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations [ethne] of thee ...'.

It is again clear that the 'ethne' or 'Gentiles' of this prophecy were Israelites!

The claim by some today that the House of Israel was not divorced, and did not become 'lo-ammi', 'not my people,' or 'gentilised', is strange in the light of clear teaching to that effect in Hosea ch.1, vv 6 & 8-9.

'And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. ... Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. Then said God, Call his name Loammi [Hebrew]: for ye are not my people [laos] ...'.

The Septuagint translation quoted here uses the Greek word, 'Laos' for these 'people' of the House of Israel. *Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, says, 'Ethnos and Laos are used interchangeably' (vol. 2, p. 369; see above comments on 1 Peter ch.2 v.9, where both terms refer to Israel). Therefore, the House of Israel was to become 'ethnos' or 'laos', that is, 'gentilised'.

This ten-tribe House of Israel must not be confused with the two-tribe House of Judah, some of which returned to Palestine after a 70 year Babylonian captivity, and from which the Israelites of Christ's

day in Palestine were descended. In contrast, Bible history and prophecy provide evidence that the Biblical House of Israel, the ten northern Israel tribes taken into Assyrian dispersion and lost to history, in ancient times became gentilised. That is, they forgot their identity as God's people and reappeared under new names. It is no coincidence that millions of Israelites suddenly 'disappeared' in northern Assyria just south of the Caucasus Mountains, at the same time in history as millions of 'Caucasians' suddenly streamed northward out of that same mountain region.

The *Pulpit Commentary* on Hosea ch.1 quotes the noted early Christian theologian, Jerome, as saying, 'Out of Israel is taken typically by Hosea a wife [Gomer]... '.

Likewise, Thomas Scott's Bible Commentary says that '... Gomer was an Israelite'. Therefore, the Bible 'Gomer' is prophetically the House of Israel. Scholars have also positively identified Gomer with the early 'Caucasian' tribes who entered Europe through the Caucasus in the 5th to 7th centuries BC, the identical time when the House of Israel was lost in the Assyrian diaspora. These then, are 'Gentiles' called the 'Ethnos', 'Goyim', or 'Lo-Ammi' of the Scriptures.

In Acts ch.28 v.28 we read,

'Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles [ethne], and that they will hear it'.

A literal rendering says,

'This salvation has been sent to the Goyim and they will hear it'.

Jewish New Testament Translation

Who were these 'gentiles'/'ethne'/goyim' who would fulfill this prophecy in the early Christian centuries by hearing the gospel and becoming Christendom? As the reader may realise by now, they were the House of Israel!

In conclusion, there is no basis for the supposition that the 'Gentiles' of the Scriptures can only be non-Israelites. In fact, there are numerous examples where it is applied to Israelites, including the ten-tribe House of Israel, who became 'gentilised' when they were divorced, scattered, and lost their identity as God's people.
