

The Lost Sheep

So often we quickly pass by certain passages in the Bible because they do not fit with our generally accepted beliefs. A case in point is when Yeshua Messiah told His disciples, "[Do not go to the gentiles, do not enter a Samaritan city, but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.](#)" (Matt 10:5-6).

Most of us have accepted a Replacement Theory of salvation. That doctrinal position states that, because Israel has been unfaithful and rejected her Messiah, YHWH has in turn rejected Israel and created a new covenant people which is the Church. Such a belief contradicts the many Scriptures where YHWH has sworn to never forget Israel, never cease to love her and that His covenant with her is forever. In another passage Yeshua makes it doubly clear that he did not come for the gentiles. "[I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.](#)" (Matt 15:24).

The "House of Israel" is a clearly defined term in the pre-Messianic Scriptures and well understood by Yeshua's disciples to mean the non-Judaic tribes or the so called "lost tribes of Israel". The Jews of the first century were fully aware of the Diaspora and the location of the non-Judaic tribes. The author of James wrote to them and when Paul desired to go to Spain, he knew that there were Israelites there. Indeed, but for language changes, the Iberian peninsula (Spain) would still be called the Hebrew peninsula. In the Scriptures the term "Israel" most often refers to the ten northern tribes and their whereabouts was no mystery to the Jews or to Yeshua in His time.

The northern ten tribes of Israel have never really been lost as to their location. Both from the Scriptures and from historical evidence we have a good understanding of who and where the ten tribes are today. But Yeshua knew that they were spiritually lost. Because of their unrelenting idolatry, YHWH had given Israel a certificate of divorce and used the Assyrians to scatter them among the nations. Israel no longer had a covenant relationship with YHWH and in prophetic fulfillment the northern tribes forgot who they were. Divorce under the Law of Moses was a very serious thing. A man who divorced his wife because of unfaithfulness could never take her back. If he did it would defile the land of Israel. Similarly YHWH could never take Israel back. If He did it would violate His own immutable laws. Israel, YHWH's chosen instrument for the salvation of the world, was truly lost and without hope.

Yeshua came to seek and to save that which was lost. The gentiles were not lost since they were never YHWH's chosen people. Judah was not lost because to this day she continues in her covenant relationship with YHWH. Yes, Judah is in temporary blindness to Yeshua Messiah, but in her own way has remained faithful to the Torah and to her choosiness. Israel, the ten tribes, however, needed a redeemer to renew her to a covenant relationship with YHWH. Through the death and resurrection of Yeshua Messiah, Israel could regain her citizenship and be restored to the promises of salvation. Without Yeshua

Messiah, the lost sheep of the house of Israel would have remained unforgiven and forever lost.

This is why Yeshua told his disciples not to go to the gentiles, and not to the mixed race of Samaria. He had come specifically to restore the house of Israel as the chosen people of His Father. According to prophecy the House of Israel and the house of Judah will be reunited in preparation for the millennial kingdom of YHWH. The two Houses were to become one again through Yeshua Messiah. That was the purpose for which He had come. Some translations say. "I came only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

My dear Mennonite brethren and friends, I trust that these two passages in Matthew will become meaningful to you, as well as many others as you begin to understand that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Shalom