

# “ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED”: The Restoration of the Twelve Tribes in Romans 9–11<sup>1</sup>

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## **I. Introduction**

The meaning of Paul’s enigmatic statement, “And so all Israel will be saved,” in Romans 11:26a has been and continues to be a major point of contention among Pauline scholars. Just who is included in the group “all Israel”? How, specifically, will “all Israel” be saved? When will this momentous event occur?

Biblical interpreters have provided three general answers to the first question, the identity of “all Israel.”<sup>2</sup> *First*, many modern biblical scholars interpret “all Israel” to mean all or most of the biological descendants of Jacob/Israel (*Ethnic Israelism*). The *second* main interpretive approach identifies “all Israel” as the Church composed of both Jews and Gentiles (*Ecclesial Israelism*). *Finally*, some interpret “all Israel” to mean a remnant of the descendants of Israel chosen by God (*Elect Israelism*).

Turning to the second and third questions, the questions of “how” and “when” all Israel will be saved, the overwhelming majority of modern commentators answer in one of two ways: either (1) the salvation of Israel has been ongoing throughout history via the mission of the Church (*progressivism*), or (2) a mass conversion of Israel will take place at or just before the *parousia* of Christ (*futurism*).

The secondary literature on this subject is unmanageably large.<sup>3</sup> In seeking satisfying solutions to the above questions, I will engage two recognized

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1 An earlier version of this essay was presented to the International Society of Biblical Literature meeting in Rome in 2001.

2 See Jason A. Staples, “What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with ‘All Israel’? A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25–27,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 371–390, at 372–374, and Pablo T. Gadenz, *Called from the Jews and from the Gentiles: Pauline Ecclesiology in Romans 9–11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 275–276, for a review of contemporary positions.

3 Here is just a sample of the scholarly resources consulted in the preparation of this article: Stanislaus Lyonnet, S.J., *Quaestiones in Epistulam ad Romanos, Series Altera: Rom 9–11*, 3rd ed. with supplement (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1975); Krister Stendahl, *Final Account: Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979); Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*,

contemporary scholars who have come to opposite opinions. The first opinion is represented by N. T. Wright, who has recently attempted to reinvigorate the (currently unfashionable) *Ecclesial Israelism* interpretation: “all Israel” in Romans 11:26 is the same group as “the Israel of God” in Gal 6:1, namely, the Church of Jews and Gentiles saved progressively by the operation of the Holy Spirit down through history (*progressivism*). The second opinion is represented by James M. Scott, who has argued that, on the basis of OT and Second Temple texts, “all Israel” means “all [twelve tribes of] Israel” (*Ethnic Israelism*), a majority of whom will be saved at the *parousia* by the direct intervention of the returning Christ (*futurism*). By means of a dialogue with these two thoughtful and articulate Pauline scholars, I will propose a mediating position that is consistent with the best insights from both of them.

## II. Who is “All Israel”?

### *Ecclesial Israel* (N. T. Wright)

From the mid-to-late patristic era to the time of the Reformation, the majority view of the fathers, doctors, and early reformers identified “all Israel” simply

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Intepretation Bible Commentary (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985); R. David Kaylor, *Paul's Covenant Community: Jew and Gentile in Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988); C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Harper's New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper & Row, 1957); Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromily (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); John Paul Heil, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Reader-Response Commentary* (New York: Paulist, 1987); Johannes Munck, *Christ & Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9–11*, trans. Ingeborg Nixon (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 35 (New York: Doubleday, 1992); James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, Word Biblical Commentary 38B (Dallas: Word, 1988); Peter Gorday, *Principles of Patristic Exegesis: Romans 9–11 in Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 4 (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983); C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Collins, 1959); Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed., trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933); Judith M. Ryan, “The Faithfulness of God. Paul's Prophetic Response to Israel: An Exegesis of Romans 11:1–36,” (PhD diss., Fordham, 1995); Brian J. Abasciano, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9.1–9: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis*, Library of New Testament Studies 301 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2005); Charles H. Cosgrove, *Elusive Israel: The Puzzle of Election in Romans* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997); Richard H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9–11*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2nd ser., vol. 63 (Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1994); James R. Lowther, “Paul's Use of Deuteronomy 30:11–14 in Romans 10:5–8 as a Locus Primus on Paul's Understanding of the Law in Romans,” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001); Shui-Lun Shum, *Paul's Use of Isaiah in Romans: A Comparative Study of Paul's Letter to the Romans and the Sibylline and Qumran Sectarian Texts*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2nd ser., vol. 156 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002). I wish to thank my esteemed colleagues, John Bergsma, William Bales, Michael Barber, Curtis Mitch, Jeffrey Morrow, and Mark Reasoner for their invaluable input.

with the Church, that is, the *Ecclesial Israel* interpretation. This identification has diminished in popularity with the onset of modernity, especially since the mid-twentieth century. Wright is probably correct in identifying two causes for this: (1) the rise of dispensationalism, first an American, but now a worldwide movement, which tends towards literalistic interpretation of prophecies of Israelite restoration in both the Old and New Testaments, and (2) the impact of the Holocaust on New Testament scholars, who have subsequently sought ways to avoid “supersessionist”<sup>4</sup> interpretations of the relationship between the Church and Israel. Wright’s recent defense of “*Ecclesial Israelism*” bucks both these trends, and thus places him, as he readily admits, “in a minority even among my friends, let alone among the guild of New Testament scholars.”<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, Wright’s position is carefully argued and deserves consideration.

Wright frames the discussion of Romans 11:26 as a choice between two alternatives. Either “all Israel” is the Church and is saved progressively throughout history (*Ecclesial Israelism*), or “all Israel” is the majority of ethnic Jews who will be saved (somehow) at or just before the parousia (*Ethnic Israelism*, in one of its current popular or scholarly forms). Wright argues for his *Ecclesial Israelism* partly on positive grounds, by building a case for interpreting “Israel” as the Church, and partly negatively, by criticizing the arguments used to support *Ethnic Israelism*.

For Wright, the main arguments for *Ecclesial Israelism* are based on continuity and context.<sup>6</sup> *Ecclesial Israelism*, Wright argues, fits the context of Romans 11 and is in continuity with Paul’s argument throughout the letter. Forms of *Ethnic Israelism* are decontextual and discontinuous. Paul has been consistently arguing throughout Romans, both in chapters 1–8 and especially in chapters 9–11, that, on the one hand, “Jewish” identity must be redefined non-literally (“He is a Jew who is one inwardly . . .” 2:29; “Not all from Israel are Israel . . .” 9:6), and that, on the other, there is *one means* of salvation for both Jew and Gentile, namely, faith in Christ (1:16; 3:20, 30; 4:11–12; 10:4, 12). Any interpretation of Romans 11:26 that takes “all Israel” in a literal and ethnic sense and proposes a different means of salvation for “all Israel” other than faith in Christ—whether it be a *Deus-ex-machina* intervention

4 The notion that the New Covenant “supersedes” and replaces the Old Covenant: the Church replaces Israel as the spiritual supersedes the ethnic.

5 See N. T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 10, *Acts, Introduction to Epistolary Literature, Romans, 1 Corinthians*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 393–770, at 689.

6 *Ibid.*: “The principles of sound exegesis include reading short phrases in their contexts. . . . The weight of the whole argument of Romans is on the side of the reading I propose.” Also: “Paul does not intend to say something radically different in 11:26 from what he has said already” (*Ibid.*, 690).

at the Parousia<sup>7</sup> or some other *Sonderweg* (special or alternative means of salvation)<sup>8</sup>—seems to Wright to violate the coherence and consistency of Paul’s presentation.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Wright takes “all Israel” as the Church. The “*kai houtos*” [“and so”] introducing Romans 11:26 indicates manner or method, not temporality.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, for Wright, the incoming of the Gentiles is the *means* by which “all Israel” is saved, for “all Israel” is the Church composed of both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>11</sup>

### *Assessment of Wright’s Position*

Certainly Wright is to be commended for advancing a currently unpopular interpretation, challenging the guild to re-think commonly accepted opinions. Moreover, Paul’s use of terminology associated with Israelite identity in non-literal ways in other parts of his epistles lends plausibility to Wright’s argument—certainly one cannot simply dismiss the possibility that by using the phrase “all Israel,” Paul means “the Church.” There are, however, several problems with Wright’s argument.

First, he relies too much on criticism of his foil—*Ethnic Israelism*—in order to establish his own position. He frames the discussion in such a way as to imply that the only alternative to his own interpretation (*Ecclesial Israelism*) is a form of *Ethnic Israelism* involving a *Sonderweg* or a supernatural eschatological intervention to save the Jews. Later in this article I hope to show that “all Israel” may be taken in an ethnic sense without supposing that Paul is describing an alternative mode of salvation for them as opposed to the Gentiles. This should satisfy Wright’s objections to *Ethnic Israelism*.

Second, the main difficulty for *Ecclesial Israelism* has been and continues to be that it involves taking “Israel” in Romans 11:26a in a sense that it does not bear immediately preceding or immediately following, in all of Romans 9–11, or, for that matter, in all of Romans. As many have pointed out, the phrase in 11:25 “a hardening has come on part of *Israel*” almost certainly points to

7 Where God or Christ dramatically shows up at the end of history and somehow brings salvation to Israel.

8 That is, a “special way,” where God arranges some sort of extraordinary way for ethnic Israel to obtain salvation other than that offered through the Church.

9 See Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 690: “We must stand firm against the irresponsibility that would take the phrase out of its context and insist it must mean something he has carefully ruled out over and over again.”

10 See *ibid.*, 691: “In every other occurrence in Romans *houtos* obviously means ‘in this way,’ and never comes close to meaning ‘then’ or ‘after that.’”

11 See *ibid.*, 690: “‘Israel,’ as in 9:6 and Gal 6:16, now refers to the whole people of God, Gentile and Jew together. . . . The phrase ‘all Israel,’ then, is best taken as a polemical redefinition, in line with Paul’s redefinitions of ‘Jew’ in 2:29, of ‘circumcision’ in 2:29 and Phil 3:3, and of ‘seed of Abraham’ in Romans 4, Galatians 3, and Rom. 9:6–9. It belongs with what seems indubitably the correct reading of ‘the Israel of God’ in Gal 6:16.”

*ethnic* Israel. Likewise, 11:26b, using *Jacob* as a poetic variant of ethnic Israel, most likely has an ethnic sense: "The Deliverer . . . will banish ungodliness from *Jacob*." Then, in 11:28, Paul says, "as regards the gospel *they* are enemies of God." The antecedents of "they" are "Jacob" and "Israel" from v. 26. Since "they" in v. 28 refers to ethnic Israel ("enemies of God") and not to the Church, then "Jacob" and "Israel" in v. 26 must likewise refer to *ethnic* Israel.

Third, Wright points to Romans 9:6, "Not all from Israel<sup>a</sup> are Israel<sup>b</sup>," as proof that Paul is redefining Israel in a non-ethnic sense.<sup>12</sup> Certainly Paul distinguishes Israel<sup>a</sup> from Israel<sup>b</sup> in 9:6. A closer look, however, strongly cautions against understanding Israel<sup>b</sup> as the *Church*. Israel<sup>a</sup> is best understood as indicating Israelites who are so by virtue of their physical descent. Israel<sup>b</sup> indicates those who are of physical descent *and* elect and faithful. All the illustrations Paul cites fit this schema: Ishmael vs. Isaac; Esau vs. Jacob; even (the majority of) Israel vs. the Remnant (of 7,000; 11:2–5). In all these cases a contrast is made between those merely of physical descent (Israel<sup>a</sup>) and those who are *also* faithful to the covenant and promise (Israel<sup>b</sup>). Therefore, the distinction of these "Israels" in 9:6 does not advance the cause of identifying "all Israel" as the *Church* in 11:26.

#### *Ethnic Israel (James M. Scott)*

James M. Scott's approach to the meaning of "all Israel," could not be more different from Wright's. The one aspect of the issue most neglected by Wright—the use of the phrase "all Israel" in the Old Testament and Second Temple literature—comprises the main focus of his argument:

Even a brief survey of the usage of "all Israel" in the OT and the early Jewish literature presents us with options that have seldom, if ever, been seriously considered for the exegesis of our passage. . . . The very fact that [*pas Israel*; "all Israel"] is clearly a Hebraism requires us to begin with the OT usage of the expression.<sup>13</sup>

Scott then presents a careful review of the use of "all Israel" in the OT and Second Temple literature, which need not be repeated here. What follows is a brief digest of OT/Second Temple material that confirms Scott's basic conclusion.

The phrase *pas Israel* (all Israel) is widely recognized as a Semitism (or better, Hebraism), a Greek reflection of the term *kol-yisrael* (all Israel). It is

<sup>12</sup> For purposes of clarity, the discussion in this paragraph will refer to the first occurrence of "Israel" in Rom. 9:6 as Israel<sup>a</sup> and to the second occurrence of "Israel" as Israel<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> James M. Scott, "All Israel Will Be Saved," in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish & Christian Perspectives*, ed. J. M. Scott, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, vol. 72. (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 489–526, at 498.

employed 154 times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>14</sup> The distribution of *kol-yisrael* (all Israel) is instructive. Of the 154 occurrences, 95 (62%) are in Deuteronomy (14 times) or the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua–2 Kings; 81 times), 46 are in Chronicles, and 8 are in Ezra–Nehemiah. Outside of these works, the term only occurs in Exodus 18:25, Numbers 16:34, Daniel 9:7 and 9:11, and Malachi 4:4 (3:22 MT; 3:24 LXX).

What does *kol-yisrael/pas Israel* mean in these OT settings? In most of the instances from Deuteronomy to the divided kingdom (1 Kings 12), *kol-yisrael* (all Israel) indicates either (1) the entire nation of Israel composed of (all) the twelve tribes or (2) a body representative of the entire nation, such as a sacred assembly (1 Kings 8:65) or the army (1 Sam. 4:5).<sup>15</sup>

After the kingdom divided, when Judah and (northern) Israel (1 Kings 12–22) split, the term *kol-yisrael* (all Israel) is employed in the Deuteronomistic History to indicate only the northern kingdom (the ten tribes) or a representative body therefrom, but never the southern kingdom of Judah.<sup>16</sup> Thus, when Israel and Judah are together, “all Israel” refers to all twelve tribes. When they are split, “all Israel” refers only to the northern tribes.<sup>17</sup>

14 See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University, 1993), 623. Fitzmyer claims it occurs 148 times in the OT; my own figures are 154 times in 149 verses, analyzing the MT using *Accordance* bible software for Mac. The LXX reliably translates the phrase as *pas Israel* (all Israel), which occurs 144 times in 140 verses in the LXX.

15 In this second case, that is, texts such as 1 Kings 8 and 1 Sam. 4, the sense is probably “all Israel there present.” In later OT literature, this concept of *the ones present* is sometimes explicitly articulated:

**Ezra 8:25:** “And I weighed out to them the silver and the gold and the vessels, the offering for the house of our God which the king and his counselors and his lords and all Israel *there present* had offered.”

16 This was also true during the civil war between Judah and Israel (2 Sam. 3–5; see also 1 Sam. 18:6).

17 This pattern is largely followed in Chronicles as well, with a few exceptions. In two cases “all Israel” refers to the population of the southern kingdom, Judah, although it is limited by qualifiers:

**2 Chron. 11:3** “Say to Rehoboam the son of Solomon king of Judah, and to all Israel *in Judah and Benjamin*.”

**2 Chron. 12:1** When the rule of Rehoboam was established and was strong, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel [that was] *with him*.

Another instance that may refer to the southern population is ambiguous (2 Chron. 28:23). In two cases, “all Israel” refers to the laity present in the southern kingdom of Judah (2 Chron. 24:5; 35:3). These two texts may, however, simply be indicative of the Chronicler’s view that faithful Yahwists from the northern tribes relocated in Judah after the kingdom split (1 Chron. 11: 13–17), and therefore Judah is really a representative body

In sum, “all Israel” in the Hebrew Bible, without qualifiers, usually (70–75% of instances) refers to the twelve-tribe nation or a representative body therefrom, but when Judah and Israel are distinguished, it refers to the northern kingdom/ten tribes (about 20% of instances).<sup>18</sup>

The point is, as Scott observes, that Paul uses the phrase “all Israel” in Romans 11:26 to mean what it usually means throughout the OT:

We have seen that the OT and Jewish usage of “all Israel” normally recalls the twelve-tribe system of ancient Israel. In Romans 9–11, Paul obviously thinks in terms of this tribal system, for he presents himself as an “Israelite” . . . “from the tribe of Benjamin” . . . who is a prime example that God has not rejected “his people” . . . Israel (Rom. 11:1). For as a Benjamite who has believed in Jesus Christ, Paul already participates in the remnant of restored Israel.<sup>19</sup>

For Scott, then, “all Israel” means “all [twelve tribes of] Israel,” but not every single individual Israelite, for “all Israel” never did have such a comprehensive meaning in the OT. In fact, it is frequently applied to assemblies that are representative but not necessarily inclusive of all twelve tribes.

For Scott, when Paul speaks of the salvation of “all Israel,” he invokes the hope of the restoration of the twelve-tribe unity of the nation that is frequently expressed in the prophets, Second Temple literature, and NT itself (Rev. 7; Acts 26:7).

### ***III. Scott’s Position Confirmed and Strengthened***

It is our conviction that Scott is essentially correct in both his *methodology* (as he remains contextually aware of the OT and Second Temple usage of “all Israel”) and in his *conclusion* (that “all Israel” means “all [the tribes of] Israel” in Rom. 11:26). Moreover, Scott’s conclusion is supported by a number of different arguments that he either overlooked or did not have space to explore in detail. It is to these arguments that we now turn.

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of “all Israel.” In Ezra-Nehemiah the usage is similar to Chronicles: in three instances the historic twelve-tribe unity is in view (Ezra 6:17; 8:35; Neh. 13:26); in one instance the phrase is qualified (Ezra 8:25: “all Israel *there present*”); and in four instances “all Israel” refers specifically to the laity of the returned exiles of Judah (Ezra 2:70; 10:5; 7:73; 12:47).

18 In a handful of instances in 2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, “all Israel” indicates the population of Judah in the Persian period. See also Staples, “What Do the Gentiles,” 375–376.

19 Scott, “All Israel,” 515–516.

*Argument #1: The Abrupt Shift in Terminology from the Term “Jew” to the Term “Israel” or “Israelite” in Romans 9–11*

The term “Jew” (*Ioudaios*) occurs eleven times in Romans 1–8, but only twice in chapters 9–11 (9:24 and 10:12). In 11:14 some English translations (for example, the RSV) read “Jew,” but the Greek text actually reads “those of my flesh.” In contrast, Paul employs the term “Israel” twelve times and “Israelite” twice in chapters 9–11, but nowhere else in the Romans. Pablo Gadenz ably underscores this point:

The concentration of the terms *Israēl* and *Israēlitēs* in Romans 9–11 is noteworthy. Indeed, a distinctive feature of these chapters is the shift in vocabulary from *Ioudaios* to *Israēl* and *Israēlitēs*. In Romans 9–11, whereas the term *Ioudaios* occurs only twice, the words *Israēl* and *Israēlitēs*, which are not used at all in the rest of the letter, occur a total of thirteen times.<sup>20</sup>

Because of the long-standing practice—often incorrect and anachronistic—of equating the terms “Jew” and “Israelite,” such that scholars both ancient and modern will, for example, speak of God, “delivering the law to the Jews at Sinai,” the terminological shift from “Jew” to “Israel” and “Israelite” in Romans 9–11 is frequently overlooked or trivialized.<sup>21</sup> For that reason the ethno-geographic terms “Jew” and “Israelite” and the parent terms “Judah” and “Israel” are not equivalent expressions anywhere in the Old Testament or in Second Temple literature. In sum, not all Israelites are Jews. Technically and classically, “Jews” are a subset of Israelites, that is, Israelites of the tribe of Judah.<sup>22</sup> Even

<sup>20</sup> Gadenz, *Called from the Jews*, 73.

<sup>21</sup> Almost the only modern commentator to observe the phenomenon is James Dunn, who, in my opinion, misinterprets its significance. As noted above, Gadenz recognizes this shift (*Called from the Jews*, 73), but he eschews any reference to Gentiles as belonging to Israel: “the collective term Israel carries with it richer associations of the people’s salvation history and privileges. I would add, however, that the term also carries with it the people’s hopes and expectations. Paul uses the term Israel not only because he has the saving deeds of Israel’s past in mind, but also because he is thinking about the promises of Israel’s future. . . . Paul’s use of the term ‘Israel’ says something about ‘inside’ identity. . . . I . . . take the view that in Romans Paul never includes the Gentiles in the category of ‘Israel’” (ibid., 74–75).

<sup>22</sup> See Staples, “What Do the Gentiles,” 375; Gadenz, *Called from the Jews*, 64–69; Calvin J. Roetzel, “Ioudaioi and Paul,” in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune*, ed. John Fotopoulos (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 3–15; Daniel Boyarin, “The Ioudaioi in John and the Prehistory of Judaism,” in *Pauline Conversations in Context: Essays in Honor of Calvin J. Roetzel*, eds. Janice Capel Anderson, Philip Sellew, and Claudia Setzer (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 216–239, at 221–232; Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E.—640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2001), 33–37; Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of*



in late literature, when the terms are applied to the same individual or group, there is always at least a difference in connotation.<sup>23</sup>

In the Hebrew Bible, the term “Israel” usually has one of three referents: (1) the patriarch who is also called “Jacob”; (2) the nation composed of his descendants, that is, all twelve tribes of “Israel,” including Judah; and (3) the northern kingdom, composed of the ten northern tribes, *to the exclusion of Judah*.<sup>24</sup>

This last meaning, in which “Israel” denotes the northern kingdom as opposed to the southern kingdom (“Judah”), predominates in the period of the divided kingdom. Thus, “Israel” is frequently *contrasted* with “Judah.” In Ezekiel 4:4–8, the prophet is told to lay on his left side 390 days for the “House of Israel” and on his right side forty days for the “House of Judah.” Even the term “all Israel” does not always include Judah. For example, in 1 Kings 12:20 Jeroboam is made king “over all Israel” meaning only the northern ten tribes.<sup>25</sup>

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*Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 69–106; and Shemaryahu Talmon, “The Emergence of Jewish Sectarianism in the Early Second Temple Period,” in *King, Cult, and Calendar in Ancient Israel*, by Shemaryahu Talmon (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1986), 165–201.

23 Indeed, Jason Staples explains that, “The waters are considerably muddier by the first century c.e., when the term [*Ioudaios*] often carries the geographic/political sense (i.e., ‘Judean’) but also often carries the ethnic or religious sense in reference to non-Judean ‘Jews,’ typically as an ‘outsider’ term to distinguish non-Gentiles from Gentiles” (“What Do the Gentiles,” 375 n. 20). See also John H. Elliott, “Jesus the Israelite was Neither a ‘Jew’ Nor a ‘Christian’: On Correcting Misleading Nomenclature,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 5 (2007): 119–154; and Steve Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007): 457–512.

24 There are exceptions to these three uses. Some argue that in a few instances in Chronicles, “Israel” refers to the southern kingdom of Judah (2 Chron. 24:5; but compare 2 Chron. 10:19). I would argue that the Chronicler’s use of “Israel” in relation to the kingdom of Judah reflects his view that Judah had within it a (northern) Israelite population (see 2 Chron. 10:17), consisting in part of devout Yahwists of all twelve tribes who relocated to the south after the division of the kingdom (2 Chron. 11:13–17). Thus, the population of Judah is representative of “all Israel.” See, for example, Scott W. Hahn, *The Kingdom of God as Liturgical Empire: A Theological Commentary on 1–2 Chronicles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 148–149. In Ezra-Nehemiah, “Israel” frequently refers to the post-exilic community in Judah (e.g., in Ezra 6:16; Neh. 7:73, etc).

25 The exact equivalent of the term “Israelite” (*yisraeliy*) is actually quite rare in the Hebrew Bible, occurring only in Lev. 24:10–11 and possibly 2 Sam. 17:25. Otherwise, a different ethno-geographic phrase is used, most commonly “sons of Israel” (*b’nay yisrael*). “Israelite” may denote (1) any descendant of Israel, including those from Judah (for example, Exod. 1:17) or (2) a descendant of the northern ten tribes, excluding those from Judah (for example, 1 Kings 12:24). Likewise, the term “Judah” in the Hebrew Bible usually denotes either (1) the patriarch of that name (Gen. 29:35), (2) the tribe composed of his descendants (Num. 1:7), or (3) the southern kingdom under the House of David (1 Kings 15:1), which included both Levites and Benjaminites (1 Kings 12:21, 23).

The ethno-geographic term “Judah” (*yahudiy* in the singular, *yehudim* in the plural), is rare and late in the Hebrew Bible. Most of the biblical occurrences (seventy-seven of

From the Greek *Ioudaios* through the Latin *Judaeus* we derive the English word “Jew.” Shaye Cohen, however, warns that “Jew” in English has become an exclusively religious term—one is a Jew rather than a Christian, Muslim, Hindu, etc.<sup>26</sup> It should be used with great care when translating the Hebrew *yahudiy* and Greek *Ioudaios*, because in antiquity these terms more commonly mean a “Judaean” in an ethno-geographic or political sense, not a “Jew” in the religious sense.<sup>27</sup> After analysis of the relevant ancient texts Cohen concludes the following:

All occurrences of the term *ioudaios* before the middle or end of the second century BCE should be translated not as “Jew,” a religious term, but as “Judaean”, an ethnic-geographic term.<sup>28</sup>

Cohen argues that the term *Ioudaios* begins to be applied to non-Judaean as either a description of religion or politics only with the rise of the Hasmonean dynasty.<sup>29</sup> It is significant for our study of Paul that the LXX, for example, *never* translates the ethno-geographic “sons of Israel” as *Ioudaioi*, but reserves this term exclusively for rendering *yehudim*.

Given his familiarity with and use of the LXX, it is certain that Paul’s restriction of the term “Israel/Israelite” to Romans 9–11, as well as the near absence of “Jew” within the same section, must be intentional. In light of the

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about ninety-two) are in Esther and Ezra-Nehemiah. There is little doubt that all of the texts in which *yahudiy* (Judahite) occurs were composed in the exile or afterward, and with one exception (1 Chron. 4:18) all purport to describe events in the very late Judaean monarchy, the exile, or the post-exilic period. Outside of Esther and Ezra-Nehemiah, the term occurs in 2 Kings 16:5; 25:25; Jer. 32:12; 34:9; 38:19; 40:11, 12; 41:3; 43:9; 44:1; 52:28; Zech. 8:23; and Dan. 3:8, 12. Josephus asserted the exilic origin of the term:

From the time they went up to Babylon they were called by this name (*Ioudaios*) after the tribe of Judah. As the tribe was the first to come from those parts, both the people themselves and the country have taken their name from it. (*Antiquity of the Jews* 11.173)

26 On this, see Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 69.

27 Ibid., 69–70. See also E. P. Sanders, “The Dead Sea Sect and Other Jews: Commonalities, Overlaps, and Differences,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in their Historical Context*, ed. Timothy H. Lim (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 7–44. Sanders gives a rich theological discussion, but he would benefit from being informed by Cohen’s work on the etymology and sociology of the term *Ioudaios*.

28 Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 70.

29 In late Second Temple literature, *Ioudaios* is employed differently by different authors. Josephus, Philo, and the authors of *Letter of Aristeas* and 1–2 Maccabees use the term at times indiscriminately and anachronistically to describe any Israelites of any time period, or even patriarchs like Abraham. On the other hand, the Qumran scrolls (with three exceptions in minor fragments), *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, *Psalms of Solomon*, *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, *Sirach*, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Testament of Levi*, and *Testament of Moses* never use the term.

heavy density of OT quotations (see below) and Paul’s adoption of an (OT) prophetic posture in this discourse, it seems likely that Paul’s use of “(all) Israel” is influenced by the Old Testament’s use of the same term. Therefore, in determining the meaning of “all Israel” in Romans 11:26, the most important interpretive background should be the Old Testament, in which the use of “Israel” to denote either the twelve-tribe nation or the northern kingdom is statistically overwhelming.

*Argument #2: Romans 9–11 Has the Highest Concentration of OT Quotations Anywhere in Paul*

Romans 9–11 contains the highest concentration of Old Testament citations for any part of Paul’s writings—indeed, for any New Testament book. Daniel Chae comments: “Nearly 40% of Romans 9–11 is composed of OT quotations. . . . and more than half of the OT citations in Romans appear in Romans 9–11, and 66% of all Pauline quotations are found in Romans. That means more than one-third of the OT quotations in the authentic Pauline letters are found in Romans 9–11.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, in this section of Pauline discourse—more than any other—the primary dialogue partner(s) and the privileged context for understanding Paul’s rhetoric and theology is the Scriptures of Israel.

The unprecedented density of scriptural citations in Romans 9–11 may be its most distinctive feature. James Aageson, in his frequently cited study, “Scripture and Structure in the Development of the Argument in Romans 9–11,” points out that Paul’s extensive quotation of Scripture is not superficial proof-texting for his theological points, but part of the very fabric of his argumentation:

It is perhaps overdue, but students of Paul must now consider the possibility that scholarship on Romans 9–11 has reached an impasse and that this has been the result of too little attention being devoted to Paul’s method of developing a theological statement and, in particular, to his technique of scriptural argumentation.<sup>31</sup>

Aageson proceeds to demonstrate how “Paul’s use of Scripture and the literary structure of the discussion in Romans 9–11 are inseparable and that together they form the interlacing that binds the discourse into a unity.”<sup>32</sup>

30 Daniel J-S Chae, *Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles: His Apostolic Self-Awareness and its Influence on the Soteriological Argument in Romans* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997), 217–218, n. 18.

31 James W. Aageson, “Scripture and Structure in the Development of the Argument in Romans 9–11,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 265–289. Aageson further developed much of this study in *Written Also for Our Sake: Paul and the Art of Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993).

32 Aageson, “Scripture and Structure,” 288.

Aageson then moves from the whole to the parts by showing how Paul's use of Scripture reveals the manner by which he develops his argument "according to a pattern of verbal links, thematic associations, and connecting interrogatives, as well as theological convictions."<sup>33</sup>

If there is a defect in Aageson's formal analysis, it would be his relative neglect of the material content of Paul's scriptural citations. This imbalance is offset by recent studies. For example, Bruce Chilton analyzes how deliberately Paul cites from both the Law and the Prophets: "The fundamentals of his scriptural reasoning are drawn from the Torah, but the nature of his reasoning, he claims, is in line with that of the prophets."<sup>34</sup> Chilton further supplements Aageson by pointing out how "the references to scripture are not only keyed to major developments of the argument, they contribute to those developments. It is not a matter of discursive thought merely being illustrated from scripture. . . . Rather, logic and interpretation here interpenetrate to a remarkable degree, and give Romans 9–11 a unique character."<sup>35</sup> In other words, Paul does not simply cite scripture texts to bolster specific arguments. Rather, he expects the cited scriptures to *do* some of the arguing themselves. The scriptures he evokes (both explicitly [quotations] and implicitly [allusions]) provide elements in his argument that he may not express elsewhere in his own words, but that are nonetheless important or even essential for the flow of his argument.

What difference should the unprecedented use of scriptural quotation and its integration into the fabric of the argument make for Paul's interpreters, particularly when they approach the interpretation of "all Israel" in Romans 11:26? It means that, to reiterate a point brought up at the beginning of this article, the Old Testament forms the privileged hermeneutical context for understanding Paul's argument and terminology, and thus the use of "all Israel" in the OT is of primary consideration.

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33 Ibid. Arguably, the literary unity and manner of Paul's argument may be determined with greater penetration by this sort of careful inductive analysis than by the more common approach that starts by identifying the major theological theme(s) and divisions.

34 Bruce Chilton, "Romans 9–11 as Scriptural Interpretation and Dialogue with Judaism," in *Judaic Approaches to the Gospels* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 203–231, at 209.

35 Ibid., 216–217. Simply labeling Paul's scriptural argumentation as Midrash, for Chilton, "obscures more than it discloses" (218). Later he shows why he considers it "misleading" (220).

*Argument #3: The Hope of the Restoration of All Twelve Tribes of Israel Is Pervasive in the Old Testament, the Second Temple Literature, and the New Testament Itself*<sup>36</sup>

THE RESTORATION OF THE TWELVE TRIBES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

All the major prophets foresee the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel in the eschaton, sometimes phrased as such, sometimes described as the reunification of “Israel” or “Ephraim” (the northern kingdom and ten tribes) with “Judah” (the southern kingdom and two tribes). Thus Isaiah prophesies:

*Isa. 11:10* In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious. <sup>11</sup> In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant which is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. <sup>12</sup> He will raise an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the *outcasts of Israel*, and gather the *dispersed of Judah* from the four corners of the earth. <sup>13</sup> The jealousy of *Ephraim* shall depart, and those who harass *Judah* shall be cut off; *Ephraim* shall not be jealous of *Judah*, and *Judah* shall not harass *Ephraim*. <sup>14</sup> But they shall swoop down upon the shoulder of the Philistines in the west, and together they shall plunder the people of the east. They shall put forth their hand against Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites shall obey them. <sup>15</sup> And the LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt; and will wave his hand over the River with his scorching wind, and smite it into seven channels that men may cross dryshod. <sup>16</sup> And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant which is left of his people, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt (emphasis added).

Here we see the restoration of all the tribes of Israel described as the reunification of the two kingdoms, “Israel/Ephraim” and “Judah” in 11:11–12, in language that indicates a “new exodus” (11:11, 15–16). This is accompanied by the rising of a new Davidic king (Isa. 11:11:10; Rom. 1:3–4) who attracts

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<sup>36</sup> The ubiquity in this literature of the hope in the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel is handled ably by Brant Pitre (*Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 41–129, 399–417, 505–507, 510, and 512–516).

the nations to himself (Isa. 11:12). This vision of both Israelites and Gentiles gathered together under the leadership of a spirit-filled Davidide (Isa. 11:1–3) obviously has a great deal of resonance with Paul’s themes in Romans.

A similar confluence of restoration concepts appears in Jeremiah:

**Jer. 23:5** “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>6</sup> In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’ <sup>7</sup> “Therefore, behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when men shall no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ <sup>8</sup> but ‘As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.’ Then they shall dwell in their own land.”

Here again, the restoration is described in v. 6 as encompassing both the northern kingdom/ten tribes (“Israel”) and the southern/two tribes (“Judah”). The reunification is accompanied by a new Davidide (v. 5) and a new Exodus (vv. 7–8), particularly for the *northern kingdom* “Israel” out of the “north country” (Assyria).

Ezekiel testifies similarly:

**Ezek. 37:19** Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (which is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him; and I will join with it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand. . . . <sup>21</sup> then say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all sides, and bring them to their own land; <sup>22</sup> and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. . . . <sup>24</sup> “My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. . . . <sup>28</sup> Then the nations will know that I the LORD sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is in the midst of them for evermore.”

Again, we see the distinction between Israel/Ephraim and Judah, and a new exodus of (northern) Israel from the lands of their dispersion, associated with a Davidide, and a revelation of the LORD to the nations (v. 28, "Then the nations will know . . .").

Many other examples of the expectation of the reunification/restoration of "all Israel" could be cited, both from the major and minor prophets. However, it would be more relevant to examine this theme in the books that Paul explicitly cites in Romans 9–11, starting with his favorites, Deuteronomy and Isaiah.

The canonical addressees of Deuteronomy are the twelve tribes gathered on the plains of Moab just outside the promised land. The phrase "all Israel" is employed frequently in Deuteronomy, introducing the entire book (Deut. 1:1) and its exposition of the law (Deut. 5:1), and recurring at key points thereafter:

**Deut. 1:1** These are the words that Moses spoke to **all Israel** beyond the Jordan in the wilderness . . .

**Deut. 5:1** And Moses summoned **all Israel**, and said to them, "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I speak in your hearing this day, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them."

**Deut. 31:1** So Moses continued to speak these words to **all Israel**.

**Deut. 32:45** And when Moses had finished speaking all these words to **all Israel**.

In all these instances the referent of "all Israel" is the assembled twelve tribes. The same phenomenon can be observed in many other passages throughout Deuteronomy (to list a sampling):

**Deut. 1:13** 'Choose wise, understanding, and experienced men, according to your **tribes**, and I will appoint them as your heads.' (see 1:15) . . .

**Deut. 1:23** The thing seemed good to me, and I took twelve men of you, one man for each **tribe**.

**Deut. 5:23** And when you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire,

you came near to me, all the heads of your **tribes**, and your elders.

**Deut. 16:18** “You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns which the LORD your God gives you, according to your **tribes**; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.”

**Deut. 29:10** “You stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; the heads of your **tribes**, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel.”

**Deut. 31:28** “Assemble to me all the elders of your **tribes**, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and call heaven and earth to witness against them.”

**Deut. 33:5** Thus the LORD became king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people were gathered, all the **tribes** of Israel together.

The hope of the restoration of all Israel is present in the portions of Deuteronomy from which Paul quotes (chapters 29, 30, and 32). Chapters 29–30 of Deuteronomy are literarily connected, describing in sequence the apostasy, curse, exile, and then repentance and *regathering* of Israel (Deut. 30:3–10), with scattered references to the tribal structure of the nation (Deut. 29:10, 18, 21). Chapter 32, whose influence on Romans 9–11 is strong and indisputable, describes the apostasy and judgment, but also the eventual vindication of God’s people over their enemies (32:40–43). The song is recited in the ears of “all Israel,” and immediately followed by the blessing of the twelve tribes.

In Isaiah, the theme of the restoration of the twelve tribes/two kingdoms is found in chapter 11 (quoted in Rom. 15:12).<sup>37</sup> The unity of the two kingdoms, or “houses,” of Israel is also found in the near context of the passages of Isaiah that Paul explicitly quotes in Romans 9–11. Romans 9:33 is a composite quotation concerning the “stumbling stone of Zion” composed from Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16. Isaiah 8:14 states that the LORD of hosts will

<sup>37</sup> Pitre comments that Isaiah 11 is “a text which became an important locus for late Second Temple messianism because of its depiction of the Davidic king (the ‘shoot from the stump of Jesse’) whose coming would precede the restoration of all twelve tribes, a New Exodus, and the ingathering of the Gentiles to Mount Zion” (*Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile*, 83).



become "a stone of offense, and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel," that is, to the northern and southern kingdoms. Isaiah 28:16 gives a further reference to a "stone in Zion," this time after oracles that rebuke first the leadership of the northern kingdom, Ephraim (Isa. 28:1–13) and then the southern kingdom (Isa. 28:14–15). In Romans 9:27–29, two quotations occur concerning the survival of a remnant of Israel. The first, from Isaiah 10:22–23, refers to the return of a remnant of the northern Israelites from Assyrian exile (see Isa. 10:12, 24). The second, from Isaiah 1:9, refers to a surviving remnant in Jerusalem, capital of Judah (see Isa. 1:8). Is Paul intentionally citing texts to prove that a remnant from "both houses" or "all" of Israel will be restored?

In Romans 10:21 Paul quotes Isaiah 65:2 concerning "Israel":

**Isa. 65:2** I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices.

Who are these rebellious people? Later in Isaiah 65 the LORD promises not to destroy them all (Isa. 65:8) but rather to bring forth survivors from both "Jacob" and "Judah" (Isa. 65:9). That these names denote the northern and southern kingdoms, respectively, is confirmed in the very next verse (Isa. 65:10), which predicts that both "Sharon" and the "Valley of Achor" will become pasturelands, these being two prominent agricultural valleys in the territories of northern Israel (Sharon) and Judah (Achor, near Jericho) respectively. Thus, the rebellious "nation" and "people" of Isaiah 65 is "all Israel."

Finally, we turn to another of Paul's favorite prophetic books, Hosea.<sup>38</sup> Hosea was a prophet primarily to the northern kingdom, "Ephraim." In Romans 9:25–26, Paul quotes from Hosea 1:10 and 2:23, two similar verses promising a future in which God will restore his love and paternity for the unloved and disinherited Israelites in exile who have become so assimilated to the nations that they have become "not my people." We will discuss below whether Paul is misreading Hosea 1:10/2:23 in Romans 9:25–26 by applying the verses to the Gentiles. For present purposes, it suffices to observe that the near context of Hosea 1–3 reflects the restoration vision of "all Israel." For example, Hosea 1:10–11 reads:

**Hos. 1:10** Yet the number of the people of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which can be neither measured nor numbered; and in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Sons of the living God." <sup>11</sup> *And the people of Judah and the people of Israel*

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38 Especially helpful here for understanding Paul's use of Hosea is Staples, "What Do the Gentiles," 380–383.

*shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head; and they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.*

Who is the “head” whom they shall appoint for themselves? A later chapter of Hosea provides an identity: “Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and *David their king*; and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days” (Hos. 3:5). Later in this article the relevance of Paul’s strategic references to Jesus’ Davidic lineage for his vision of the restoration of “all Israel” will be explored.

#### THE RESTORATION OF THE TWELVE TRIBES IN THE SECOND TEMPLE LITERATURE

The anticipation of the twelve-tribe restoration is widespread in the Jewish literature of the last centuries BC and the first century AD.<sup>39</sup>

Tobit, self-identified as a Naphtalite exiled in the Assyrian conquest (Tob. 1:1–2), expresses confidence that God “will show mercy, and will gather us from all the nations among whom you have been scattered” (Tob. 13:5). Afterward, “all the Gentiles will turn to fear the Lord God in truth, and will bury their idols. All the Gentiles will praise the Lord, and his people will give thanks to God, and the Lord will exalt his people (Tob. 14:6–7).<sup>40</sup>

Even such a staid author as Ben Sirach prays to God to “gather *all the tribes of Jacob*, and give them their inheritance” (36:11) and remarks, concerning Elijah, “you who are ready at the appointed time, it is written, to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury, to turn the heart of the father to the son, and to restore *the tribes of Jacob*.” (Sir. 48:10).

The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* by their very structure testify to the hope of the restoration of the twelve-tribe unity of Israel. Explicit statements are as follows:

**T Simeon 7:1–3** “And now, my children, be obedient to Levi and to Judah. Do not exalt yourselves above these two tribes. . . . For the Lord will raise up . . . from Judah someone as king. . . . He will save all the gentiles and the tribe[s] of Israel.”

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, *ibid.*, 377.

<sup>40</sup> Commenting on Tob. 13:1–6, Pitre highlights that, “although Tobit does not use any clear Exodus typology in the cited text, he is still describing the same basic series of eschatological events: the ingathering of the exiles, the conversion of the Gentiles and their pilgrimage to the new Jerusalem, and the building of a new Temple (Tob. 13:5–10, 16–18; 14:5–7). To this extent, Tobit’s vision for the future is rooted in the same concept of the new Exodus found in the prophets” (Brant Pitre, “The Lord’s Prayer and the New Exodus,” *Letter & Spirit* 2 [2006]: 69–96, at 75).

**T Naph 5:8** "And I looked . . . and behold a sacred writing appeared to us, which said, 'Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Elamites, Gelachians, Chaldeans, Syrians shall obtain a share in the twelve staffs of Israel through captivity.'"

**T Asher 7:2–7** "For I know that you will sin and be delivered into the hands of your enemies; your land shall be made desolate and your sanctuary wholly polluted. You will be scattered to the four corners of the earth; in the dispersion you shall be regarded as worthless . . . until such time as the Most High visits the earth. . . . He will save Israel and all the nations. . . . For this reason, you will be scattered like Dan and Gad, my brothers, *you shall not know your own lands, tribe, or language. But he will gather you in faith through his compassion and on account of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*"

**T Benjamin 9:2** "But in your allotted place will be the temple of God, and the latter temple will exceed the former in glory. The twelve tribes shall be gathered there and all the nations, until such time as the Most High shall send forth his salvation."

**T Benjamin 10:8–11** "Then shall we also be raised, each of us over our tribe, and we shall prostrate ourselves before the heavenly king. Then all shall be changed, some destined for glory, others for dishonor, for the Lord first judges Israel for the wrong she has committed and then he shall do the same for all the nations. . . . Therefore, my children, if you live in holiness, in accord with the Lord's commands, you shall again dwell with me in hope; *all Israel* will be gathered to the Lord."

Although the present form of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* has Christian interpolations, there is no good reason to doubt the originality of the statements quoted above, all of which are compatible with Jewish eschatological views known from other Second Temple documents. Of particular note is the repeated association of the salvation of all twelve tribes of Israel with the salvation of the Gentiles (nations), much like that in Romans 9:26–26. *T. Benjamin* 10:11 uses the very term "all Israel" to refer to the holy descendants of the twelve patriarchs who will "dwell again in hope" with those patriarchs

when they are raised again over their various tribes. Here “all Israel” refers not to every ethnic Israelite but only to those who “live in holiness, in accord with the Lord’s commands,” but nonetheless include representatives of all twelve tribes. Also of significance is the testimony of *T. Asher* 7:2–7, which envisions the northern Israelites losing their self-identity and becoming assimilated to the Gentile nations, yet still being subject to God’s gracious re-gathering in the future.

2 *Baruch* and 4 *Ezra* share much of the eschatological worldview of the Testaments:

**2 Bar. 78:1–6** Thus saith Baruch the son of Neriah to the brethren carried into captivity: “Mercy and peace. <sup>2</sup> I bear in mind, my brethren, the love of Him who created us, who loved us from of old, and never hated us, but above all educated us. <sup>3</sup> And truly I know that behold all *we the twelve tribes* are bound by one bond, inasmuch as we are born from one father. . . . <sup>6</sup> For if ye so do these things, He will continually remember you, He who always promised on our behalf to those who were more excellent than we, that He will never forget or forsake us, but with much mercy will *gather together again those who were dispersed.*”

**4 Ezra 13:39** These are the ten tribes which were led away captive out of their own land in the days of Josiah the king, which (tribes) Salmanassar the king of the Assyrians led away captive; he carried them across the River and (thus) they were transported into another land. <sup>40</sup> But they took this counsel among themselves that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a land further distant, where the human race had never dwelt. . . . <sup>45</sup> There they have dwelt until the last times; and now, when they are about to come again, <sup>46</sup> the Most High will again stay the springs of the River, that they may be able to pass over. Therefore thou didst see a multitude gathered together in peace.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> A remarkably similar (indeed, nearly identical) outlook on a pan-Israelite restoration for a believing remnant representing all twelve tribes is found in 4 *Ezra*: “The author of 4 *Ezra* maintains that only a few out of all the people are righteous. Like Paul, he too argues that this does not negate God’s righteousness; the fault lies not with God but with the people them-selves. . . . Nonetheless, the author expects salvation to be enjoyed by an innumerable group consisting not only of the few but also of the ten tribes who were preserved in another land (13:39–47). The final constituency of eschatological Israel, then, is not just the ‘remnant’ from within the two tribes but a magnificent twelve-tribe con-

The *Psalms of Solomon* anticipate the same eschatological vision found in the major prophets, namely, that the latter days will witness the coming of a Davidide who will rule over the regathered twelve tribes of Israel and the nations as well:<sup>42</sup>

**Pss. Sol. 17:21** Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David, At the time in the which Thou seest, O God, that he may reign over Israel Thy servant . . . 26 And he shall gather together a holy people, whom he shall lead in righteousness, And he shall judge the tribes of the people that has been sanctified by the Lord his God. . . . 28 And he shall divide them according to their tribes upon the land . . . . And he shall purge Jerusalem, making it holy as of old. 31 So that nations shall come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, bringing as gifts her sons who had fainted, 34 And to see the glory of the Lord, wherewith God hath glorified her. . . . 43 His words (shall be) more refined than costly gold, the choicest; in the assemblies he will judge the peoples, the tribes of the sanctified. His words (shall be) like the words of the holy ones in the midst of sanctified peoples. Blessed be they that shall be in those days, in that they shall see the good fortune of Israel which God shall bring to pass in the gathering together of the tribes.

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glomerate. . . . The salvation of a twelve-tribe entity offers no reprieve to 'all the people,' who remain in their ignorance, destined for destruction. In this regard, the author's description of the twelve-tribe entity of eschatological salvation is somewhat feeble, transparent and unconvincing. . . . Paul too may be guilty of posturing somewhat in Rom. 11.11–32, but he does seem to have integrated his argument there more successfully into his larger case than does the author of 4 Ezra at 13:39–47." (Bruce W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1–11* [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991], 275–276; see *ibid.*, 125 and following: 1) "the Messiah stands on Mt Zion . . ." [125]; 2) "The interpretation then identifies the peaceable multitude . . . as the ten tribes of Israel who had been led into exile in another land [13.40–41]" [126]; 3) "Despite the fact that the exiles of the northern (722 BCE) and southern kingdoms (587 BCE) wreaked havoc upon the tribal ordering of the Hebrew people, the concept of a twelve-tribe structure outlasted the reality (as is evident from the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*). So, after reviewing the pertinent literature of Early Judaism, E. P. Sanders writes, ' . . . in the first century Jewish hopes for the future would have included the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel' [E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985, 98)]. . . . Apparently, then, the author considered those who will be saved to constitute a twelve-tribe entity" (129). Pitre explains that, "4 Ezra drives home the point that the End of the Exile and the restoration of Israel could only be fulfilled by the *messianic ingathering of the lost ten tribes*, and hence the true end of the *Assyrian Exile* (cf. 2 Kings 15–17)" (*Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile*, 347).

42 See Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile*, 78–84.

THE RESTORATION OF THE TWELVE TRIBES IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS  
(QUMRAN)

The Qumran community viewed itself as the seed and beginning of the eschatological restoration of Israel. This is clear from the terms they used as self-identifiers. The Qumran community showed a marked preference for self-identification as “Israel” or “Israelite” rather than as “Judahites” (“Jews” or “Judeans”).<sup>43</sup> In fact, the term *Yehudim* occurs only three times in the scrolls, and never as a self-identification of the community. While the claim is frequently made that the Qumranites viewed themselves as “the true Judah,” the texts used to support this claim—a half-dozen passages from the Damascus Document and various *pesharim*—are ambiguous and open to different interpretations. By contrast, there are hundreds of places in the sectarian scrolls where the Qumran community identifies itself as “Israel” by means of various phrases such as “the repentant of Israel,” the “men of Israel,” or “the majority of Israel.” By “Israel” the Qumranites meant the twelve tribes. For example, the governing structure of the community is based on the ideal of tribal Israel:

**1QSa 1:13** When he is thirty years old, he may begin to take part in legal disputes. <sup>14</sup> Further, he is now eligible for command, whether of the *thousands of Israel*, or as a captain of hundreds, fifties or <sup>15</sup> tens, or as a judge or official *for their tribes and clans*.

**1QS 8:1** In the Council of the *Yahad* there shall be *twelve laymen* and three priests who are blameless in the light of all.

According to the War Scroll, the eschatological battle will be fought between the assembled twelve tribes and the hostile nations:<sup>44</sup>

**1QM 3:12–13** Rule of the banners of the whole congregation according to their formations. On the grand banner which is at the head of all the people they shall write, “People of God,” the names “Israel” and <sup>14</sup> “Aaron,” and the names of the *twelve* tribes of Israel according to their order of birth.

43 See especially John S. Bergsma, “Qumran Self-Identity: ‘Israel’ or ‘Judah?’” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 15 (2008): 172–189, and Bergsma, “Qumran and the Concept of Pan-Israelite Restoration,” *Letter & Spirit* 8 (2013): 145–159.

44 See comments in Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile*, 112–116.

**1QM 5:1** and on the sh[ie]ld of the Prince of the Whole Congregation they shall write his name, the names "Israel," "Levi," and "Aaron," and the names of the *twelve* tribes of Israel according to their order of birth, <sup>2</sup> and the names of the *twelve* chiefs of their tribes.

The Temple Scroll gives instructions about how the ideal temple is to function. The performance of the temple liturgy presupposes the active participation of all twelve tribes:

**11QT 23** [1 before the Lord wherever they may live; this is an eternal statute <sup>2</sup> for generation after generation. <sup>3</sup> The *twelve* tribes of the children of Israel are to contribute wood [4] for the alt[ar. Those contributing <sup>5</sup> on the first day] are to be the tribes of Lev[i] and Judah; on the [second day, Benjamin] <sup>1</sup> [and the sons of Joseph; on the third day, Reuben and] Sim[eon;] on the fourth day, <sup>2</sup> Issachar [and Zebulon; on the fifth day, Gad and] Asher; on the [sixth] d[ay, Dan].

**11QT 23:5** [whereby to atone for themselves, along with the] requisite [grain offering] and drink offering, following the us[ual regulations. Each tribe shall bring] <sup>6</sup> as a burn[t offering] one bull, one ram and [one] male go[at;] <sup>7</sup> [thus shall they do as an annual rite, tr]ibe by tribe, the *twelve* sons of Jaco[b.].

It is thus abundantly clear from the "sectarian" texts of the Qumran community, especially the "foundational documents" (Damascus Document, Rule of the Community, Rule of the Congregation, War Scroll, and Temple Scroll), that not only did the Qumran community expect the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel, but that they already saw themselves as participating in that restoration in an anticipatory or proleptic fashion.

#### THE RESTORATION OF THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Like other documents of the Second Temple Period, the New Testament writings attest to the hope of the restoration of all Israel. One of the most significant indications of this hope is Jesus' choice of the twelve apostles as the authoritative foundation of his community of disciples.<sup>45</sup> John Meier has

<sup>45</sup> See Michael Patrick Barber, "Jesus' Identity as Davidic Temple-Builder and Peter's Priestly Role in Matthew 16:16–19," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 132 (2013): 935–953;

shown that, from an historical-critical perspective, there is virtually no doubt that the Twelve existed as an authoritative body and were established as such by Christ himself during his earthly ministry.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, it is certain that the choice of the Twelve was invested with eschatological symbolism, pointing to the ingathering of the tribes of Israel:

**Matt. 10:1** And he called to him his *twelve* disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity.

**Matt. 10:5** These *twelve* Jesus sent out, charging them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the *house of Israel*.”

**Matt. 19:28** Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on *twelve* thrones, judging the *twelve* tribes of Israel.”

Meier comments as follows on this last verse as follows:

This promise to the Twelve makes perfect sense within the larger context of Jewish eschatological hopes in general and

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Barber, “The Historical Jesus and Cultic Restoration Eschatology: The New Temple, the New Priesthood and the New Cult,” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2010), 266 n. 176, 371 n. 57, 415 n. 186, 537, 607, 626 n. 159, 628 n. 162, 677; Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship By Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God’s Saving Promises* (New Haven: Yale University, 2009), 219, 230, 232–233; Hahn, “Liturgy and Empire: Prophetic Historiography and Faith in Exile in 1–2 Chronicles,” *Letter & Spirit* 5 (2009): 13–50, at 49; Brant Pitre, “Jesus, the Messianic Banquet, and the Kingdom of God,” *Letter & Spirit* 5 (2009): 125–153, at 145–146; Hahn, “Christ, Kingdom and Creation in Luke-Acts,” in *Creazione e salvezza nella Bibbia [Creation and Salvation in the Bible]*, eds. Marco Valerio Fabbri and Michelangelo Tabet (Rome: Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, 2008), 185–187; Pitre, “Jesus, the New Temple, and the New Priesthood,” *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2008): 47–83, at 78–81; Hahn, “Christ, Kingdom, and Creation: Davidic Christology and Ecclesiology in Luke-Acts,” *Letter & Spirit* 3 (2007): 113–138, at 134; Pitre, “The ‘Ransom for Many,’ the New Exodus, and the End of the Exile: Redemption as the Restoration of All Israel (Mark 10:35–45),” *Letter & Spirit* 1 (2005): 41–68, at 46–47; Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile*, 276, 283 n. 150, 368 n. 354, 393, 447–451, 463–464, 515; and Hahn, “Kingdom and Church in Luke-Acts: From Davidic Christology to Kingdom Ecclesiology,” in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation*, eds. Craig G. Bartholomew, Joel B. Green, and Anthony C. Thiselton (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 304–305, 314, 315 n. 108, 317–318.

46 See John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 3 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 125–197.



Jesus' eschatological proclamation in particular. . . . Even in OT and pseudepigraphic literature that is not itself apocalyptic (e.g., Tobit 13, Sir. 36:1–17), the hope for the regathering or reconstituting of the tribes of Israel is expressed. Such a hope fits perfectly into Jesus' proclamation of the coming of God's kingly rule, for Jesus addressed his proclamation not to the world indiscriminately but to Israel in its promised land. Reflecting his mission to all Israel in the end-time, Jesus created the group called the Twelve, whose very number symbolized, promised, and (granted the dynamic power thought to be present in the symbolic actions of prophets) began the regathering of the twelve tribes.<sup>47</sup>

Meier concludes his study of the Twelve in Jesus' ministry with these comments:

The implications of this position for our view of the mission and eschatology of Jesus cannot be overstated. If Jesus gathered around himself a group of twelve disciples, that act in and of itself most likely indicates a major thrust of his ministry. The Twelve symbolized and embodied the eschatological hopes of Israel and the eschatological message of Jesus: the restoration of all twelve tribes of Israel in the end-time.<sup>48</sup>

Other considerations clearly demonstrate a New Testament concern for the twelve-tribe restoration:

- ✦ Several scholars have argued that Jesus' ministerial activity in Galilee and Samaria indicate, among other things, a desire to restore the tribal unity of Israel, inasmuch as the inhabitants of these regions either were or believed themselves to be (at least in part) descendants of the northern ten tribes.<sup>49</sup>

47 John P. Meier, "Jesus, the Twelve, and the Restoration of Israel," in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives*, ed., James M. Scott (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 365–404, at 386–387.

48 Meier, "Jesus, the Twelve," 404.

49 See Hahn, *Kinship*, 221; Joel Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of "The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel"* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 229; Hahn, "Kingdom and Church," 304–305; David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 127–129; David Ravens, *Luke and the Restoration of Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 47, 70, 72–87, 99, 105–106; Sean Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus*

- ✦ Luke records that Anna was of the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36), probably meant as a foreshadowing of Jesus' ministry to restore Israel.<sup>50</sup>
- ✦ James (Jacob in Greek) addresses his epistle to "the twelve tribes in the Diaspora" (James 1:1).
- ✦ The author of Hebrews, referring to the new covenant, quotes Jeremiah's famous prophecy indicating the reunification of the northern and southern tribes: "The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with *the house of Israel* and with *the house of Judah*" (Heb. 8:8).

The twelve-tribe restoration is quite evident in the text of the Apocalypse:

**Rev. 7:4** And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed, *out of every tribe of the sons of Israel*,<sup>5</sup> twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand of the tribe of Gad.

**Rev. 12:1** And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of *twelve stars*.

**Rev. 21:10** And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,<sup>11</sup> having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.<sup>12</sup> It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed;<sup>13</sup> on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

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*and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 130–131, 170–171; and Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 113–132. Also see Jesus' words in Acts 1:8 "in all Judea and Samaria" in response to the question of Acts 1:6, as well as the significant narrative attention given to Samaria in Acts 8:4–25 and cities in the area of the northern kingdom in Acts 9:32–43.

50 On this, see Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 98–99.

With respect to the book of Romans, most relevant is the statement of Paul recorded in Acts while giving his defense to King Agrippa:

**Acts 26: 6** And now I stand here on trial for hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, <sup>7</sup> to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! <sup>8</sup> Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

The close association of the restoration of the tribes with the resurrection of the dead evident in Acts 26:6–8 is not arbitrary. The restoration of the twelve tribes was seen as (1) analogous to a resurrection and (2) possibly requiring a resurrection in order to be actualized. The seminal prophetic passage is Ezekiel 37:1–28. In Greek the term *diaspora* carried a sense closer to “dissolution” than “dispersion” and was most frequently used to describe the decay of a corpse.

Acts 26:6 also forms an *inclusio* with Luke 2:36–37 around the entire Luke-Acts corpus:

<p><b>Luke 2:36</b> And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanu-el, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, <sup>37</sup> and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.</p>	<p><b>Acts 26:6</b> And now I stand here on trial for hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, <sup>7</sup> to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king!</p>
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At the beginning of Luke we see a representative of the northern tribes who worships night and day in the temple; near the end of Acts, a reference to the twelve tribes earnestly worshipping night and day. It is significant that Luke-Acts, which (however one may wish to construe the relationship) has been influenced by Paul and his theology, contains this *inclusio* highlighting the theme of the restoration of the twelve tribes. It is also significant that it is specifically *Paul* who is given the narrative role of articulating it in Acts 26:6–7.

One can say with complete confidence that whether one examines the Old Testament, the Second Temple Literature, the Qumran Scrolls, or the New Testament itself, one finds evidence of a pervasive and perduring hope for

the reunification of all twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>51</sup> To read Paul's theology in light of this hope is both warranted and natural. Paula Frederiksen, commenting on Jewish apocalyptic expectation in Jesus' day, provides us with a helpful and apt summary of the evidence that we have examined in this section of our study:

A strand within traditional Jewish apocalyptic thought anticipated the Gentiles' turning to the God of Israel as one of the events at the End of Days. . . . Such traditions routinely featured Jerusalem as the center of the Kingdom. God's redemption radiates out from Zion; exiled Israel and newly pious Gentiles come to Jerusalem, to worship at God's house. And the redeemed Israel would include more than those Jews currently living in the Diaspora. It would include as well those who, centuries earlier, had been lost; not just the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, which had survived the Babylonian Captivity in the sixth century B.C.E., but also the ten lost tribes of the Northern Kingdom that had been swallowed up by Assyria after 722 B.C.E. . . . At the end, God will restore Israel to the Land—all Israel. *All twelve tribes.*<sup>52</sup>

#### *Argument #4: The Restoration of the Twelve Tribes in Romans 9–11*

The mark of a good theory is that it makes sense of data elsewhere in the field under exploration in unexpected and illuminating ways. When Romans 9–11

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51 James Dunn comments: "The salvation of Israel in the sense of the restoration of those scattered throughout the Diaspora was a common enough theme of Jewish (sic) expectation (Deut. 30:1–5; Neh. 1:9; Jer. 23:3; 29:14; Ezek. 11:17; 36:24; Mic. 2:12; 4:6–7; Zeph. 3:19–20; Zech. 10:8–10; Sir 36:11; Bar 4:37; 2 Macc. 2:18; Jub. 1.15; Pss. Sol. 17.26–28; 1QSa 1.1–6); *the closest parallels in language link the hope of Israel's salvation with the expectation of a royal messiah* (Jer. 23:5–6 and 4QFlor 1.11–13)" (James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38B [Waco: Word, 1988], 681–682).

52 Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 95. Further on, she writes, "But the Kingdom itself, the belief that it is coming, that it will particularly manifest in Jerusalem, that it will involve the restored nation of Israel as well as Gentiles who have renounced their idolatry—all these beliefs predate Jesus' death by centuries and are also found variously in other Jewish writings roughly contemporary with him (some Pseudepigrapha; the Dead Sea Scrolls)" (97); and again: "By Jesus' day, ten of those twelve tribes had long since ceased to exist. If, nonetheless, Jesus did commission a core group of twelve disciples, and saw them as spreading the good news of God's coming kingdom, then he, too, was thinking symbol-ically. . . . And if Jesus indeed taught that ultimately these twelve would judge the twelve tribes, then he was thinking eschatologically. To assemble the twelve tribes so many centuries after the Assyrian conquest would take a miracle. But that, I think, is what Jesus was expecting" (98).

is re-read against the backdrop of the hope of the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel (and not just Judah), several passages resonate with greater meaning.

ROMANS 9:1–5: PAUL EVOKES THE CONTEXT OF THE TRIBES AT SINAI  
UNDER MOSES

At the beginning of Romans 9–11, Paul states the point of his concern, albeit indirectly. He has great sorrow for his "brethren," who are Israelites. Here, "Israel" is defined *ethnically* ("according to the flesh"), and with only one possible instance of ambiguity (9:6), "Israel" is always used ethnically throughout Romans 9–11. Paul expresses a desire to become "accursed" and "cut off" for the sake of his "brethren." This is a clear allusion to the narrative of Exodus 32:31–32, where Moses pleads on behalf of the people of Israel after the golden calf incident. Paul is adopting the posture of Moses, offering himself as atonement to God on behalf of his people (see Exod. 32:30).

Thus, at the beginning of his discourse on the salvation of Israel and the nations, Paul evokes the context of Sinai and places himself in the role of Moses over against the people of Israel. He follows this with another evocation of the Sinaitic context by listing six prerogatives that were given to Israel at Sinai: "the sonship (Exod. 4:22), the glory (Exod. 24:16, 29:43, 40:34), the covenants (Exod. 24:8; 34:27), the giving of the law (Exod. 20–23), the worship (Exod. 25–31, 35–40), and the promises (Exod. 19:5–6, 23:20–33)."<sup>53</sup> All of these privileges were formally conferred upon Israel as a nation when the people gathered at the foot of Sinai and entered into covenant relationship with God (Exod. 24).<sup>54</sup>

For our purposes it is important to recognize that by switching from "Jew(s)" to the term "Israelite" for the first time in Romans (9:4) and evoking the context of the nation's constitutive moment (birth, so to speak) gathered as tribes around Moses at Sinai, Paul intentionally moves the discussion from merely the contemporary issue of the widespread resistance of *Jews* (Judeans) to the claims of Christ into a wider engagement of *Israel's* (not just Judah's)

53 Fitzmyer includes "the patriarchs" to reach the number seven, and says that the descent of the Messiah is an eighth added by Paul: "To such Israelites belong seven historic, God-given prerogatives, polysyndetically expressed" (*Romans*, 545); "To the seven prerogatives that sum up Israel's historic privileges Paul himself adds an eighth, the climax of them all" (547).

54 On the Sinaitic background of these prerogatives, see Brian J. Abasciano, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9.1–9: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 144: "Concerning the exalted catalog of Israel's privileges in Rom. 9.4–5, we have found that in light of Paul's allusion to Exod. 32.32, Exodus 32–34 and its broader context provides the most appropriate place to begin analysis of the background of this impressive list. Indeed, it appears as a fair summary of the blessings given to Israel in her covenant and election distinctively established at Sinai."

history of covenant infidelity, of which the current dilemma is only the most recent iteration. Paul's "Israel" is Moses' "Israel," the twelve-tribe nation descended from the patriarchs.

ROMANS 9:25–29: PAUL CITES PROPHECIES OF THE RESTORATION OF BOTH ISRAEL AND JUDAH

Paul's citations of Scripture in Romans 9:25–27 are a matter of some controversy, because some scholars hold that Paul's quotation of Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 in Romans 9:25 is a "provocative misreading" of Hosea, given the oracles' original context. It appears that Paul applies to the Gentiles an oracle of salvation originally intended for Israel.

In order to fully appreciate Paul's intentions in quoting Hosea and Isaiah in Romans 9:25–27, it is necessary to back up and follow Paul's argument starting in 9:6. There Paul states his thesis: that only some but not all of Israel has been reconciled to God through the Messiah (Jesus Christ) does not prove that "God's word has failed," because the promises to Abraham were never guaranteed to every biological descendant, but only applied to some ("Not all Israel is Israel"). To prove this, Paul points to the choice of Isaac rather than Ishmael, and Jacob/Israel rather than Esau. Significantly, he does not proceed any further to argue for a choice of one of Jacob's descendants (for example, Judah) to the exclusion of the others. While Paul argues that not every descendant of Israel is guaranteed to share in God's eschatological blessing, he does not rule out the descendants of any of the branches (tribes) of Jacob/Israel, all of whom have at least the potential to participate in the blessings promised to their nation, while on the individual level many will not. That Paul does not argue for a narrowing within the line of Jacob's descent is, in context, evidence that the phrase "all Israel" means all twelve tribes.

In Romans 9:14–19, Paul raises the issue of God's sovereign choice in electing some and not others. In 9:20–24 he uses the image of the potter and clay to elucidate the discussion. The use of this image is important: it evokes several prophetic oracles (Isa. 29:16; 45:9; Jer. 18–19), all of which—perhaps not coincidentally—are addressed to the House of Israel rather than merely to Judah.

Speaking of the clay in vv. 21–23, Paul speaks of "vessels of wrath" and "vessels of mercy" that are both made from the "same lump." Many interpret the "vessels of wrath" as non-elect Israel and the "vessels of mercy" as the (largely Gentile) Church. However, this interpretation ignores Paul's statement in v. 21 that the vessels come from "the same lump," that is, both sets of vessels—one set destined for wrath and one for mercy—are made from the "lump" that *is* Israel. Having made his point in vv. 21–23, Paul then makes a

brief and parenthetical *aside* to indicate to his largely Gentile audience that he is not slipping into any sort of Jewish exclusivism or privilege. Seeing the text using an alternative punctuation may help:

. . . in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom he has called (not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles)? As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'my beloved.'" (Rom. 9:23–25)

If one takes the statement, "not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles" as controlling the following quotation from Hosea, such that it seeks to elucidate the mention of "Gentiles," then Paul does appear to be misapplying the Hosea text. However, if one allows the Hosea quotation to be governed by the main line of the argument, which began back in 9:14, and which up to this point has concerned only the elect of Israel—those "vessels of mercy" made from the *same* lump as the rejected vessels—then the Hosea citation, speaking of a remnant of Israel "called" once again by God out of their exile to be reunited with him, makes excellent sense. Indeed, what we have then in Romans 9:25–29 are three quotations from the prophets, two from Hosea and one from Isaiah, all concerned with the remnant of Israel.

The context of each of these quotations is significant, because Paul has cited prophetic texts that in their original contexts speak of the restoration of both (northern) Israel and (southern) Judah. Hosea was a prophet to the northern tribes, and the people who are declared "not my people" and "not beloved" in Hosea 1:6, 8 are explicitly distinguished from the Judeans:

She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, "Call her name Not pitied, for I will no more have pity on the *house of Israel*, to forgive them at all. 7 But I will have pity on the *house of Judah*. (Hos. 1:6)

Nonetheless, in the future, "in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' it shall be said to them, 'Sons of the living God.'" Where was it said to them "You are not my people"? Arguably, this is in the midst of the *nations* to which they were scattered, and among whom they were Gentilized ("I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel" [1:4]; "You are not my people and I am not your God" [1:9]). Paul could surely see his own ministry, traveling among the nations, preaching first to Jew and then to Greek, as declaring to Israel-in-exile—some of whom were indistinguishable

from Gentiles at this historical point—that now, once again, in the Christ, they were called to become “Sons of the Living God.” Jason Staples explains:

. . . Paul’s connection of elect Gentiles with the motif of “my people”/“not my people” stems from much reflection on the Hosea tradition itself. The terrible message of Hosea is that God is cutting off the northern kingdom—it has “been mixed among the peoples” (Hos. 7:8), and is the chosen people of *YHWH* no longer. The house of Israel has intermingled, intermarried, among the nations, no longer having the distinction of being “elect.” Once a part of God’s elect nation, Ephraim has become “not my people,” indistinct from the non-chosen nations—that is, they have become “Gentiles.” . . . Paul appears to be subtly echoing this passage [Hosea 8:8] when he defends God’s choice to make some of the “lump” (= Israel) into worthless vessels (*skeuos*) for dishonor, leading to the inclusion of the Gentiles, citing Hosea’s promise of the restoration of “not my people” as proof. So Paul takes the radical step of identifying faithful, uncircumcised Gentiles with the “not my people” being restored to Israel as promised in Hosea. That is to say, as promised, Ephraim’s seed is being restored from among the nations, being redeemed from its cut-off, Gentile state, becoming “children of the living God” once again. Moreover, in the process, God has provided for the salvation of the Gentiles by scattering Ephraim among the nations only to be restored. In saving Ephraim, God saves the nations; in saving the nations, God saves Ephraim. Thus, the new covenant not only restores Israel but also—in the unforeseen plan of God—fulfills the promises to Abraham that all the nations would be blessed, not “through” his seed (i.e., as outsiders) but by inclusion and incorporation *in his seed* (Gal. 3:8).<sup>55</sup>

Next, in Romans 9:27, Paul cites Isaiah 10:22–23: “And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: ‘Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved.’”<sup>56</sup> In its OT context, Isaiah clearly addresses the situation of the Assyrian conquest of Israel and

55 Staples, “What Do the Gentiles,” 381–382.

56 Note that the image in Isaiah 10 of Israel being as numerous as the sand of the sea finds thematic connections with Hosea 1–2 (particularly Hos. 1:10).



the subsequent dispersal of the ten tribes. Nonetheless, Isaiah proclaims that a remnant of them will be saved.

Yet, lest the Judeans take any pride in the destruction of their northern cousins, Isaiah (and Paul) prophesies the same fate (including a "saved" remnant) for the southern kingdom: "And as Isaiah predicted, 'If the Lord of hosts had not left us children, we would have fared like Sodom and been made like Gomorrah'" (Rom. 9:29, quoting Isa. 1:9). In its historical context, Isaiah's prophecy, addressed to the rulers and people of Jerusalem, spoke of a time when only a tattered remnant—a "few survivors"—would escape destruction (see Isa. 1:8–10).

To sum up, in Romans 9:19–24 Paul uses the image of the potter and clay—associated with (all) Israel in the prophets—to speak about non-elect (vessels of wrath) and elect (vessels of mercy) Israel, both made from the same lump. Importantly, he clarifies that there are also elect among the Gentiles ("vessels of mercy" from a different lump—9:24). He then cites three prophetic texts speaking of the remnant of Israel, two addressed to the northern tribes and one addressed to Judah, demonstrating that the Scriptures support the notion that there has always been a division in Israel between the non-elect ("vessels of wrath") and the elect remnant ("vessels of mercy"). The division that Paul speaks of, however, is not along *tribal* lines, since both the northern *and* southern tribes are promised a remnant. The statement "All Israel will be saved" therefore indicates that there will be a remnant of the "saved" from all the tribes of Israel.<sup>57</sup>

#### ROMANS 11:1: EXPLICIT IDENTIFICATION OF ISRAEL AS A TRIBAL ENTITY

At the beginning of Romans 11, Paul discloses his understanding of the concept of "Israel"—an understanding that is operative throughout Romans 9–11:

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. (Rom. 11:1)

Here it is clear that what constitutes an Israelite according to Paul is descent from Abraham and tribal affiliation—in Paul's case, Benjamin. Historically, Benjaminites could be identified as *Yehudim*, "Jews" or "Judeans" (see 4Q550c: "a Jew of the Benjaminites") because they remained faithful to Jerusalem and the House of David, and thus were incorporated into "Judah" the political

<sup>57</sup> See N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1231–1252, where he writes that all Israel refers to "a hugely increased 'remnant', through jealousy/faith" and the "fullness of the Gentiles." This represents a more highly nuanced position, which is close to my conclusions.

entity, the kingdom ruled from Jerusalem by the Davidide. Nonetheless, Paul here insists on an independent tribal identity: he is not a *Ioudaios* but an *Israelitēs* (Israelite) of Benjamin. This is perhaps the clearest instance in Romans 9–11 of a continuing awareness of Israel as constituted by members of all the tribes.

ROMANS 11:2–10: REFERENCE TO ELIJAH’S REMNANT OF NORTHERN ISRAEL  
(10 TRIBES)

Pointing to himself as a representative of the saved remnant of Israel, Paul goes on to show how the concept of an elect remnant is found not just in the prophets of the late monarchy and exile, but also in the middle of Israel’s history as a divided kingdom. He appeals to the example of Elijah in the narrative of 1 Kings 18–19. The figure of Elijah and his connection to Moses, whose memory Paul evoked at the beginning of this discourse (Rom. 9:3), is worth pondering briefly.<sup>58</sup>

In 1 Kings 19, Elijah, faced with the recalcitrance and unbelief of Israel’s leadership (1 Kings 19:1–2), and despite the most astounding of public miracles (1 Kings 18:38), flees to Horeb/Sinai, the place of the original revelation to Moses, the great prophet whom Elijah so much resembles.<sup>59</sup> Hoping to meet God at Horeb, Elijah is not disappointed, although his interaction with God is far different from that of Moses. Moses heard God speak out of thunder, fire, and earthquake, but God speaks to Elijah with none of these. Faced with the wholesale rebellion against the LORD by the Israelites, Moses had interceded on their behalf (Exod. 32:32). Faced with a similar rebellion, Elijah only accuses them, or as Paul says, “he pleads [or appeals] to God *against* Israel” (Rom. 11:2). Nonetheless, there exists a remnant—known only to God but obviously not to Elijah—amounting to a number symbolizing covenant fullness (7 X 1000; Rom. 11:4; 1 Kings 19:18).

The parallels between Paul’s ministry and Elijah’s ministry are intriguing. Both are prophets who follow in the footsteps of Moses. Both are persecuted by “Israel,” prone to loneliness, and at risk for their very lives:

- ♦ “I alone am left, and they seek my life.” (1 Kings 19:14)

58 See N.T. Wright, “Paul, Arabia, and Elijah (Galatians 1:17),” *JBL* 115 (1996): 683–692; Wright refers to material in Romans 10 and 11 on pages 688–689.

59 On the parallels here between Moses and Elijah, see Jeffrey L. Morrow, “‘Arise and Eat’: 1 Kings 19:3–8 and Elijah’s Death, Resurrection and Bread from Heaven,” *Journal of the Orthodox Center for the Advancement of Biblical Studies* 3 (2010): 1–7, at 4–5; Jyrki Keinänen, *Traditions in Collision: A Literary and Redaction-Critical Study on the Elijah Narratives 1 Kings 17–19* (Helsinki: The Finnish Exegetical Society; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 149–155; and Russell Gregory, “Irony and the Unmasking of Elijah,” in *From Carmel to Horeb: Elijah in Crisis*, ed. Alan J. Hauser (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 144–146.

- ✦ “Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me.” (2 Tim. 4:9–11)
- ✦ “At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.” (2 Tim. 4:16)
- ✦ “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.” (2 Cor. 11:22–24)

Moreover, neither Paul nor Elijah minister in *Judah*. Elijah’s ministry is exclusively to northern Israel—indeed, it is striking that in his dialogue with God, neither prophet nor divinity makes mention of the possibility that in Judah there may be faithful Yahwists in addition to Elijah himself, or that perhaps Elijah should take refuge in the southern kingdom. The remnant of 7000, in the context of 1 Kings 19, is clearly a remnant of *northern* Israel.

In citing the example of the remnant (Rom. 11:5), Paul might simply be applying a typological comparison of a remnant of northern Israel in Elijah’s day to a remnant of “Jews” (southern kingdom) in his own. But could the analogy between Paul and Elijah be more direct? Since there are other OT passages that speak of a remnant of Judah, why does Paul specifically cite Elijah and the remnant of the north? It may be that, at the least, Paul anticipates that the “remnant” of *Israel*, whom he hopes to call back to divine sonship through his ministry to the Gentiles, will include the remnant of northern Israel of which 1 Kings 19:18 speaks. The other hints and suggestions of Israel as the twelve-tribe nation in Romans 9–11 invite us to consider this possibility.

#### ROMANS 11:17–24: THE OLIVE TREE OF ALL ISRAEL (JEREMIAH 11:16)

In Romans 11:17–24, Paul compares the people of God to an olive tree into which the Gentiles have been grafted.<sup>60</sup> The exact identity of this olive tree is

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<sup>60</sup> For a thorough discussion of Paul’s use of this analogy see Staples, “What Do the Gentiles,” 384–385, and Gadenz, *Called from the Jews*, 261–271. Staples (389) and Gadenz (269) agree that the Gentiles are not replacing Jews as Israel. One important respect in which they differ, however, is that whereas Gadenz maintains that, “neither, however, is there a model of ‘incorporation’ by which the Gentile-Christians become part of Israel” (270),

debated, but it is likely an image of Israel, evoking Jeremiah 11:16, the clearest passage in the OT that uses the olive tree as a symbol of the entire nation of Israel, both north and south:

“Therefore do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer on their behalf, for I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their trouble. <sup>15</sup> What right has my beloved in my house, when she has done vile deeds? Can vows and sacrificial flesh avert your doom? Can you then exult? <sup>16</sup> The LORD once called you, ‘A green olive tree, fair with goodly fruit’; but with the roar of a great tempest he will set fire to it, and its branches will be consumed. <sup>17</sup> The LORD of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced evil against you, because of the evil which the *house of Israel* and the *house of Judah* have done, provoking me to anger by burning incense to Baal.” (Jer. 11:14–17)

Thus, the olive tree image that Paul employs immediately before making the statement concerning the salvation of “all Israel” is, in the context of Jeremiah, a symbol of the entire twelve-tribe nation.

The image is often construed synchronically (as from a slice in time): the “root” of the tree represents the elect remnant of Israel, namely, the believing Jews such as Paul himself, the apostles, and many others. The branches lopped off are unbelieving Jews who have rejected the Messiah, and the grafted branches are the Gentiles. However, it is also possible to read the analogy diachronically or historically (as passing down through time). In that case, the “root” is the historic people of Israel, going back to Abraham. The lopped off branches would be those excluded from the covenant, foremost of whom are the ten northern tribes, for the most part lost to history after the Assyrian exile (2 Kings 17). The ingrafted branches would be the Gentiles, now lately joining Israel as the people of God. It is intriguing that Paul concludes by discussing the possibility of re-grafting the cut-off branches, a clear segue into his statements in 11:25–26. Again, the possibility suggests itself that Paul has in mind here the restoration of the northern tribes, for “God is able to graft them in again.” Staples aptly comments:

The metaphor [of “cutting” and “grafting”] recalls Jer. 11:16–17, where God burns up the “evil branches” from the olive tree of Israel. . . . Since Israel has not “cut off” the unfaithful as the law prescribes, God himself is cutting

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Staples demurs and argues instead that the Gentiles indeed are being added to Israel (389). My position is closer to that of Staples.

them off from Israel. . . . God is cutting off only those of Israel who have forfeited their standing through covenantal unfaithfulness—those from Judah who are indeed “inward Jews” (2:27–29) remain. . . . Chilling as this passage is, the real force is directed against the newly engrafted Gentile, who stands in danger of boasting just like the Jews whom Paul chastises in Romans 2–3. Paul warns that election is no guarantee of final salvation; one must remain faithful and dependent on God in order to be saved. In addition, he reminds his audience that even the branch that has been cut off remains elect “according to nature” and as such can easily be reincorporated into Israel. The Jewish branches are born into the tree by nature (i.e., elect from birth) and can only be cut off for unfaithfulness; the Gentiles, on the other hand, must come into the tree by an “unnatural” process (and can still be cut off for unfaithfulness). . . . The branches now being incorporated from the Gentiles are wild *olive* branches. That is, these branches are from the long-forgotten and uncultivated house of Israel, having been broken off and mixed among the Gentiles so long ago.<sup>61</sup>

#### ***IV. The Restoration Significance of the Davidic Theme (Rom. 1:3 and 15:12)***

It was noted above that in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and elsewhere the restoration of the twelve tribes/two kingdoms and the ingathering of the nations is associated with the coming of a Davidide. With that in mind, Paul’s two strategic references to the Davidic descent of Jesus, one at the beginning (Rom. 1:3) and the other at the end of the body of the letter (Rom. 15:12), thus forming an *inclusio*, take on greater significance.

In Romans 1:3 the Davidic genealogy of Jesus is one of the first elements of Paul’s gospel to be mentioned. Why? An answer is more apparent in Romans 15:12, where, at the end of the body of the letter, Paul sums up the major themes of the epistle (Rom. 15:7–12). He reinforces his message with a fourfold quotation of Scripture, beginning with a Davidic psalm (Ps. 18:49, in Rom. 15:9) and concluding with a paraphrase of Isaiah 11:10: “and further Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse shall come, he who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles hope” (Rom. 15:12). In Second Temple literature, Isaiah 11 was widely understood as describing the Davidic messiah. While many biblical and para-biblical descriptions of the Messiah portray his

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61 Staples, “What Do the Gentiles,” 384–385.

relationship with the nations in terms of conflict and dominance, Isaiah 11:10 stresses the attractiveness of the “Root of Jesse” to the nations (or “Gentiles”). Continuing in Isaiah 11 (after the verse Paul quotes) is an account of the eschatological “New Exodus,” the return of all Israel from the four corners of the earth. Particular stress is laid on both “Israel”/“Ephraim” (northern kingdom and tribes, vv. 12–13) and “Judah” being included in this regathering. In this way, “all Israel” will be saved.

One can understand, then, the significance that Isaiah 11 likely had for Paul, and its place in his theology of the unification of Israel and the nations/Gentiles under the leadership of the Davidic Messiah. Isaiah and the other prophets foresaw a Davidide who would unite both all Israel (all twelve tribes/both kingdoms) and the nations under his rule; this is what Paul sees as being fulfilled now in Jesus Christ.<sup>62</sup>

### V. *When and How will “all Israel” be Saved?*

#### *The Timing*

As with the issue of the identity of “Israel” in Romans 9–11, Scott and Wright take opposing views of the timing and manner of “Israel’s” salvation. At issue is whether *kai houtōs* in 11:26a should be understood modally (*and in this manner/way* all Israel will be saved) or temporally (*and then* all Israel will be saved).<sup>63</sup>

Against the current consensus, Scott attempts to reinvigorate the temporal interpretation of *kai houtōs*. He cites a study by Pieter W. van der Horst demonstrating that there are instances in classical and post-classical Greek in which *houtōs* seems to have temporal force. He then presents his own analysis of certain Patristic commentaries, demonstrating that in most cases (73%) the Greek fathers understood the *kai houtōs* in Romans 11:26a as equivalent to *kai tote* (*and then*). Scott concludes that “the temporal interpretation of Paul’s *kai houtōs* must be regarded not only as possible on the basis of well-established usage, but also as highly probable in light of the earliest commentaries on our text. . . . Paul indicates that the completion of the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations to Zion is the precursor to the salvation of all Israel.”<sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, Wright insists that “the Greek [*houtōs*] simply does not bear this [temporal] sense . . . in every other occurrence in Romans *houtos* obviously means ‘in this way,’ and never comes close to meaning ‘then’ or ‘after

62 See the discussion in J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 317–329.

63 See the comments in Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 719–720.

64 James M. Scott, “‘And then All Israel Will Be Saved’ (Rom. 11:26),” in *Restoration*, ed. Scott, 489–527, at 492–493.

that." Thus the "best interpretation" of Romans 11:26 is "A hardening has come upon part of Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in; and *that process is the way in which God will save 'all Israel.'*"<sup>65</sup>

What should one make of this dispute? In my opinion, the debate is not going to be resolved on linguistic grounds, because even if *kai houtōs* is taken modally, *sometimes a certain temporal sequence is considered the "mode" or manner of a certain action.* For example, the following sentence: "I made the salad *in this way*: first I chopped lettuce, then sliced tomatoes, and finally tossed them together." Thus, I am not convinced that in any of van der Horst's examples the word *houtōs* ever means simply "then" or "only then." What seems to be taking place in all of his citations is that the *manner* in which a certain action is performed is understood as "having done something else first." The upshot of all this is that even if Wright is correct about the modal use of *houtōs*, it is still possible that the *mode* or *manner* of Israel's salvation is "the Gentiles having first come in."

Even if *kai houtōs* simply means *kai tote* ("and then"), as Scott urges, *it does not exclude a progressive fulfillment.* Scott interprets Romans 11:25–26 as describing two discrete acts: first the incoming of the Gentiles, then the mass conversion of the Jews at the parousia. Paul's statement, however, even if understood as "and then all Israel will be saved," need only indicate that the salvation of Israel will not be *completed* until all the Gentiles have come in, not that it will not even *begin* until they have entered. Observe the following statement: "I will pour the entire gallon of milk into the pitcher, *and then* the pitcher will be full." Obviously this does not mean that the pitcher will remain empty until the gallon is poured out, and then instantaneously will be full. Rather, the pouring of the milk is a process leading to fullness.

### *The Manner*

The questions of the timing and manner of Israel's salvation in Romans 11:26 are intertwined. There are only two plausible interpretations: (1) either the salvation of Israel is a *process* going on now, concurrent with the incoming of the Gentiles, and will not be completed until the Gentile ingathering is complete, or (2) the salvation of Israel is an eschatological event that takes place via a divine intervention of some sort *after* the ingathering of the nations. Either of these interpretations is possible, regardless of how *kai houtōs* is translated.

The best way to decide the issue is to determine which interpretation better fits Paul's theology elsewhere. Here, Wright is on firmer ground. Paul devotes a great deal of energy not only in Romans but also in his other epistles, emphasizing that there is only *one means* of salvation for both Jew and Greek, namely, faith in Christ. A special eschatological means of salvation for ethnic

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65 Wright, "Letter to the Romans," 691.

Jews would certainly be a “bolt from the blue” in Romans 11:26, not supported elsewhere in his writings. Moreover, if Paul truly embraced a sanguine notion that his countrymen would all be saved in an imminent eschatological act, it is hard to understand the motivation for his strenuous efforts to preach to them—despite the often violent reprisals—and his construal of his ministry to the Gentiles as an indirect means of reaching his countrymen. If, then, the “salvation of all Israel” in Romans 11:26 is not to be understood as a discrete eschatological act taking place after the Gentile mission, the most reasonable interpretation of *kai houtōs* in Romans 11:25–26 is primarily *modal*, indicating that the ingathering of the nations is the *means* or *manner* by which “all Israel” will be saved, a process that culminates in Israel’s salvation because and after the nations have returned.

But how can the incoming of the Gentiles save Israel if Israel is understood in an ethnic sense? A common proposal is that Paul regards his Gentile mission as creating “jealousy” among the Jews, who will eventually emulate the Gentiles in acknowledging Jesus as the Christ.<sup>66</sup> This may in fact be one sense in which Paul sees Israel being saved through the Gentiles, and we would not want to rule it out, in light of the strong and explicit theme of Israel being provoked to jealousy in Romans 9–11, and its source in Deuteronomy 32. However, is that the *only way* in which Paul viewed Israel as coming in among the Gentiles?

Another possibility deserves consideration, especially as it arises out of a passage from Hosea that Paul cited earlier in Romans 9:25–26. Within the Book of Hosea, the LORD declares that Israel behaves *de facto* exactly like Gentiles (Hos. 4:6–10) in terms of both morality and cult (ethics and liturgy). The logic of the condemnations in Hosea 1–2, describing the disowning of Israel by God as “not my beloved” and “not my people,” may be taken in this way: “You have behaved like the Gentiles, so you will become like the Gentiles (that is, “not my people”) by being scattered among them” (Hos. 9:3; 11:5). The disowning of Israel in Hosea 1–2 is essentially an act of “Gentilization” of the people. This concept of the Gentilization of Israel is reflected in *T. Asher* 7:3–7:

You will be scattered to the four corners of the earth; in the dispersion you shall be regarded as worthless . . . until such time as the Most High visits the earth. . . . He will save Israel and all the nations. . . . For this reason, you will be

66 See Murray Baker, “Paul and the Salvation of Israel: Paul’s Ministry, the Motif of Jealousy, and Israel’s Yes,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 67 (2005): 469–484; Richard H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9–11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 39–42 and 154–167; and Johannes Munck, *Christ and Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9–11* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 123.



scattered like Dan and Gad, my brothers, *you shall not know your own lands, tribe, or language*. But he will gather you in faith through his compassion and on account of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Likewise, in *T. Naph.* 5:8 we read:

And I looked . . . and behold a sacred writing appeared to us, which said, "Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Elamites, Gelachians, Chaldeans, Syrians shall obtain a share in the twelve staffs of Israel through captivity."

The peoples listed (Assyrians, Medes, etc.) are those among whom the twelve tribes were scattered. How do these people groups "obtain a share" in the tribes of Israel? Perhaps the author of *T. Asher* and *T. Naph.* knew that assimilation had taken place in these regions and with these nations. If it was the case that the northern ten tribes, the majority of Israel, had become assimilated among the nations/Gentiles ("not my people"), then the only way remaining to restore them is to gather in the Gentiles as well. The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* show that the concept(s) of saving the Gentilized tribes along with certain of the Gentiles was at least available in Second Temple Judaism.

I am proposing that this is precisely what Paul means by "until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, *and in this way* all Israel will be saved." The scattered "Gentilized" tribes of Israel are saved as they return *with the Gentiles* via the Gospel and are gathered into the heavenly Zion, the Church.

Many commentators remark that in Romans 11:25–26 Paul seems to reverse the order of the usual Jewish eschatological expectation of (1) the restoration of Israel followed by (2) the ingathering of the nations.<sup>67</sup> But Isaiah 60 depicts a concurrent ingathering of the nations with the children of Israel borne on their shoulders (Isa. 60:4 [see Isa. 49:22]), while in Isaiah 66, the nations flock to Zion (66:18–19) and are then sent out to "declare my [God's] glory" (66:19) among the nations that are farther off, and finally they begin to "bring all your brethren [Israelites] from all the nations as an offering to the LORD" (66:20). Thus, Isaiah 66:18–21 depicts (1) an influx of the nations to Zion, (2) a mission of the nations from Zion to yet further nations, and (3) a second influx of the nations together with the children of Israel. This pattern

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<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Ernst Käsemann: "Jewish expectation is characteristically changed. Israel's redemption follows the acceptance of the Gentile world. This goes further than the scriptural proof advanced." (*Commentary on Romans*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 314). Yet the priority of the Gentile ingathering is portrayed in Isaiah 60, and even more clearly in Isaiah 66.

in Isaiah 66 is likely the basis for Paul's view of the relationship of the Gentile and Israelite ingatherings in Romans 11:25–26.

Scott recognizes this. He interprets 11:25–26 to say, “After the full number of the nations ‘come in’ (apparently referring to the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations to Zion), *then* all Israel will be saved, when the Deliverer comes from Zion (apparently referring to the Parousia).”<sup>68</sup> Thus, Scott, like Ross Wagner and others, makes the connection between Paul's vision of the conversion of the nations and Israel and the Isaianic oracles of the nations coming to Zion. The irony, however, is that *Scott's two-stage model, in which first the Gentiles come in and then Israel is saved, is not supported by the Isaianic oracles, which, as we have seen, portray the regathering of the exiles of Israel as concurrent with, not subsequent to, the Gentile pilgrimage (Isa. 49:22–23; 60:4–9; 66:18–21). Again, Isaiah speaks of how the Gentiles would carry the sons and daughters of Israel back to Zion.*

In further irony, although the concurrent ingathering of the Gentiles and Israelites in the Isaianic oracles would support Wright's position on the progressive salvation of “all Israel” in history, and although Wright is generally sensitive to the broader context of Paul's quotations of Scripture, he nonetheless denies any connection between Romans 11:25–26 and the Isaianic oracles. Speaking of the “covenant” referred to in Romans 11:27 (a quote from Isa. 59:21!), Wright comments:

Nor has it much to do with the “pilgrimage of the nations to Zion,” anticipated in some biblical and post-biblical prophecy (e.g., Isa. 2:2–3; Ps. Sol. 17:26–46). At most, it would be an ironic reversal of that whole idea.<sup>69</sup>

Wright omits citing other important passages from Scripture concerning the “pilgrimage of the nations to Zion,” for example, Isaiah 60:1–22, the oracle introduced by the verses Paul quotes (Isa. 59:20–21) in Romans 11:26–27 to bolster his claims concerning the incoming of the Gentiles and the salvation of all Israel. There is, *pace* Wright, no reversal here, ironic or otherwise. Paul understands that in Christ we have access to the heavenly Zion, the “Jerusalem above” (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22). Paul's mission and that of the Church is the gathering of Israel and the nations (concurrently) to the heavenly Zion, in fulfillment of the Isaianic oracles. That is the reality described in Romans 11:25–26 and supported by Paul's appeal to Isaiah 59–60.

As a final comment on the *manner* of Israel's salvation in Romans 11:26, we mention an interpretive breakthrough that Jason Staples has made in his

68 Scott, “All Israel,” 525.

69 Wright, “Letter to the Romans,” 692.

recent 2011 *JBL* article, "What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with 'All Israel'? A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25–27."

After reviewing the history of the different uses of "Israel" and "Jew," Staples examines the important role of Jeremiah and Hosea in Romans 11. He concludes his discussion by taking a look at Paul's use of the phrase "the fullness of the Gentiles" in Romans 11:25. He shows how Paul, in using this phrase, likely alludes to Genesis 48:19, where Jacob/Israel blesses his grandson Ephraim. Ephraim, of course, became a later designation for the northern kingdom of Israel that became assimilated among the Gentiles in the north. Staples writes that in Genesis 48:19 ". . . Jacob blesses Joseph's sons, explaining that he is placing his right hand on the younger Ephraim's head because '[Manasseh] will also become a people and he will also be great. However, his younger brother [Ephraim] will be greater than he, and *his seed will become the fullness of the nations.*'"<sup>70</sup> Staples proceeds to explain the significance of Paul's subtle allusion to Genesis 48:

By citing this prophecy at the climax of his argument, Paul has placed his cards on the table in grand style: the Gentiles now receiving the Spirit are the fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy—they are Ephraim's seed, they are Israel, restored through the new covenant. . . . God has promised to restore *all* Israel, and Ephraim—that is, "the fullness of the nations/Gentiles"—must be reincorporated into Israel and reunited with his Jewish brothers. All Israel can be saved only through the ingathering of the nations. The puzzling connection between the ingathering of *to plērōma tōn ethnōn* [the fullness of the Gentiles] and the salvation of "all Israel" suddenly makes sense, since "all Israel" must include Ephraim's seed.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, in saving the northerners, scattered among the Gentiles, Israel is saved along with the Gentiles newly incorporated into Israel.

#### ***VI. A New Synthesis: The Restoration of the Twelve Tribes of Israel via the Gentiles***

I have proposed a new way of understanding Romans 11:25–26.<sup>72</sup> "All Israel" refers to a representative body of all twelve tribes (see Rev. 7:1–8) that will be saved by means of the incoming of the Gentiles in accord with the Isaianic

<sup>70</sup> Staples, "What Do the Gentiles," 385.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>72</sup> Our position is closest to the position articulated by Staples in his 2011 *JBL* article.

oracles, not only because of the jealousy of the “Jews”, but also because the Gentilized northern tribes are assimilated among the Gentiles and come with them, although this is not visible to the human observer.

This view may avoid some of the downfalls of the usual interpretations. Though it may be considered a form of *Ethnic Israelism*, it does not involve universalism (either Israelite or general), a *Sonderweg* [special way], or a *Deus-ex-machina* intervention at the parousia.

Unlike most forms of *Elect Israelism*, Paul’s statement in 11:26 is not rendered superfluous. He asserts not merely that a remnant will be saved (already stated at the end of Romans 9), but that this remnant will be truly representative of the tribal family of Israel (again see Revelation 7), not just a “part of a part.”

Furthermore, unlike *Ecclesial Israelism*, we are not arguing that “Israel” in 11:26a should be taken in a different (non-ethnic) sense than it clearly bears both immediately before and afterward.

Finally, if my interpretation is correct, it allows us to align Pauline (realized) eschatology with the other NT eschatologies—especially in the Gospels and Revelation—that combine the portrayal of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah with the restoration of Israel (symbolically inaugurated in the Twelve) and the ingathering of Gentiles.