

The Book Of James (Part 3) – The Opening Statement

November 22, 2025

The following text is a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph. The original presentation can be viewed at <https://www.cornerfringe.com/media/7r2jhhy/the-book-of-james-part-3>

*Portions of this document have been edited from the video message to better present a comprehensive, written document. Special attention was given to preserve the original context, but this document is not verbatim. Scripture verses are in the red text with other quotes in blue. Therefore, it is recommended that this document is printed in color. The Hebrew words are generally accompanied by the transliteration into the English alphabet. In most cases, the Hebrew is to be read from right to left.

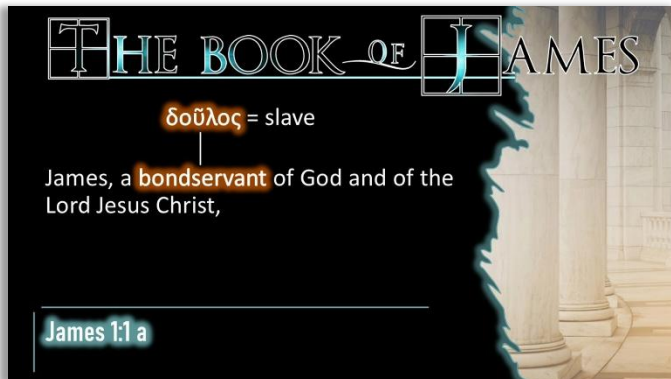
Apostolic Identity: Bondservants and Israel's Prophetic Unity

This text is a transcript from a sermon titled "**The Book Of James (Part 3)**" delivered by **Pastor Daniel Joseph** of **Corner Fringe Ministries**. The primary focus is an **in-depth analysis of James 1:1**, which is divided into two distinct parts: James' identity and the audience of the epistle. Daniel heavily emphasizes James identifying himself as a "**bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ**," using this statement to argue for the **unity and deity of the Father and the Son (echad)**, drawing connections to the Shema and other scriptures. Furthermore, the discussion of the audience, "**the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad**," is used to explain the prophetic revelation of the Messiah's work in unifying the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, as foretold in Ezekiel and demonstrated by Yeshua's (Jesus') ministry as the one King and Shepherd who lightens the heavy yoke.

Shabbat Shalom, everyone. Well, today is going to be a milestone in this series. We're in our third week of James, and today we're actually going to break into the epistle, and so this is good news. All right, we're going to be looking at Verse 1, and we're not going any further, and I'll tell you there are a hundred and eight verses, so after today, you can check the box; Verse 1 will be done, and then we can move on. So, I don't know what that means, but what I can tell you is this: let me preface today's message.

You know, what we're going to be looking at is that many people, as they open the book of James and read his greeting, which doesn't even take three seconds to get through, blow by it. And I'm going to tell you right now, this thing is packed with revelation. This is not something we're going to blow by; we're going to step back. We're going to absorb this introduction and the magnitude, the weight of what's actually being conveyed; it is an awesome thing. And so, we're going to take this into two parts because there are two explicit and distinct statements that he makes. So, with that said, let's jump in.

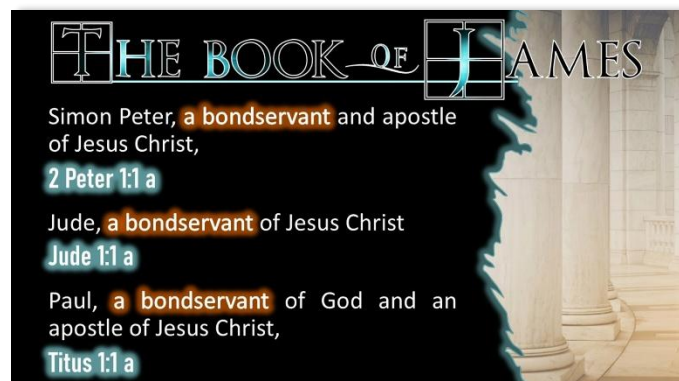
James 1:1—This is the front part of the statement. James, remember, the first word he introduces is his name. In Greek, *lakōbos* (Ἰάκωβος) comes from the transliteration of *Yaakov* (יעקב) in Hebrew. He drops



his name and says, **James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ** (emphasis added). Now think about this: the first thing James does in this epistle is not just about understanding who he is by name; he establishes identity. And what is his identity? He is a *doulos* (δοῦλος). He is a slave, and who's he a slave to? He says he is a slave to God, as in God the Father, but he's also a slave to the Son. Isn't that interesting?

And one thing I can tell you right off the bat is that you start combing through the New Testament, and you start looking at the identity of the disciples. What was the identity of the Apostles? Well, let me give you some examples. Peter, in his Second Epistle, opens up the same way as James. He drops his name in 2 Peter 1:1—**Simon Peter, a *doulos*, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ** (emphasis added). He's a slave.

Moving to Jude, who, by the way, is James' brother. Jude drops his name just like James. Then he says in Jude 1:1—**Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ** (emphasis added). "I'm a slave of Messiah Yeshua." Paul throws his hat into the ring. He says in Titus 1:1—**Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ** (emphasis added). A bondservant of God, a slave, a *doulos*, and an apostle of Messiah Yeshua.



And so, as we go back to James 1:1—

James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ (emphasis added)—and we look at what James does, this is the apostolic declaration of identity. This is an authentic identity. It's so profound.

Where things begin to get interesting is when you juxtapose Yeshua's words from Matthew Chapter 6 and what we're reading here. What does Yeshua say in Matthew 6:24? **"No one can serve two masters ..."** Okay, now take this in: James says he is a slave; he is a *doulos*; he is a bondservant. If he is a slave, that means God the Father is his master, but he doesn't stop. Then he says Yeshua is his master. Now, how does that work? A man cannot serve two masters. Yeshua clears this up for us in John 10:30, and He says, **"I and My Father are *echad*, One."** We are one. And the Jews wanted to kill Him for this statement. They wanted to put him to death because they knew exactly, from the time they were able to speak and their fathers were teaching them the most prolific Jewish prayer of all time, the Shema, that they knew what he was doing.

Because what does the Shema say? Deuteronomy 6:4— **"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is *echad*, one!"** Yeshua comes on the scene and says, **"I and My Father are One."** This is why they wanted to kill Him. Bringing out the clarity of the most important declaration in the faith is right there, in

Deuteronomy 6:4; there's no greater declaration. *Shema Yisrael Yahweh Eloheinu Yahweh Echad*. And isn't it interesting that the crescendo, the revelation of that declaration of identity, is in Messiah? And we are to understand; you can see this coming out in James' statement; they are *echad*.

You know, we have covered ad nauseam the concept of the deity of the Messiah. But for the point of where we're at right now, let me just reiterate a couple of things. Number one, Yeshua said things only God can say, and He did things only God can do. So, Yeshua comes on the scene, and He makes the statement to Philip (John 14:9), "**He who has seen Me has seen the Father.**" My goodness, who can say that? Are you going to walk around and throw your arms up? Hey, if you've seen me, you've seen God. That's blasphemy for anyone else but Yeshua. Amen? How is it that Yeshua comes on the scene and says (Luke 6:5), "**The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath**"? Only God alone is the Lord of the Shabbat; nobody else. Yet Yeshua comes on the scene and says, "I'm the Lord of the Shabbat." He comes on the scene and looks at a paralytic in Matthew 9:2 and Luke 5:20 and He says, "**Your sins are forgiven you.**" And his audience looked at this and said, **Who can forgive sins but God alone?** Indeed, you're right; who can forgive sins but God alone?

You look at the statement that Yeshua makes in Revelation 22:13— "**I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.**" God-only statement. Only God can say that. Yeshua's entire ministry is filled with it. What I love is when you go to the Tanakh, you go to the Old Testament, and all the times you see Yeshua being called God. And I've had these conversations; I've had the opportunity to really spark, to get the sparks going when you're talking to non-believing Jews, so that when you go back, for example, you'll see this pattern; it just comes to the surface. In Isaiah 7:14, it says, **The virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel**. This is the name you were to call Him—"God with us." And Yeshua goes out in John 6:45 and says, "**And they shall be taught by God.**" I mean, God was in their midst. This is Yeshua saying (John 14:9), "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father."

The same point is reiterated a couple of chapters later (Isaiah 9:6). This is the name by which He will be called: *Pele, Yo'etz, El Gibbor, Avi'ad Sar Shalom* (פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ אֱלֹהִים גִּבּוֹר אָבִי־אֵד שַׁר שָׁלוֹם). *El Gibbor*. He's called **Wonderful, Counselor, El Gibbor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**, and the *Sar Shalom*. And what's fascinating is that it says this is the name you will call Him. A chapter later, God the Father is being called *El Gibbor*.

It gets better. You go to Jeremiah 23:6, and it says, "**Vezeh shemo asher yikre'o, Yahweh tzidkenu**" (וְזֶה שְׁמוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִקְרְאוּ, יְהוָה צִדְקֵנוּ): **Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, Yahweh Tzidkenu**. This is not a general title for God; this is called the ineffable holy tetragrammaton. It is the personal name of God. This is the one who said the Mashiach was to come, and this would be His name, literally called *Yahweh*. I mean, this is incredible to me.

But then we go to Psalm 138. This is probably one of my favorite mind-blowing passages as to what God did. We read in Psalm 138:2, **For You have magnified Your word above all Your name**. Now I've told you before, I had to go to the Hebrew. I studied this explicitly because I'm like, there's no way it's that clear. This is a Christian, Anglicized version of the Hebrew. The Hebrew doesn't really say that literally; this is the JPS translation as well. This is consistent with the Hebrew.

He has exalted; God the Father has exalted His Word above all His name. What does that mean? It means all the glory, all the honor, and everything that is due to the Father would be given to the Word. Oh, the Word that became flesh, that Word that John spoke of in his prologue (John 1:1), *En archē ēn ho*

Logos (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος). In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He exalted His *Memra*, His *Davar*, and His *Logos* above all His name, to the point where Yeshua comes on in John 5:23 and says this: that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. What kind of glory, what kind of honor and prestige, is the Father worthy of? That's what the Son is worthy of.

What does that look like in a practical way? Well, go to Revelation Chapter 5. I didn't put it up here—all heaven and earth; it's one of the most intense moments, in my opinion, in all the Scripture. Revelation 5:13—And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Take this identity in. It is a *doulos* of God the Father and the Son. This is the proclamation of the Shema: "Hear, O Israel, *Yahweh Eloheinu, Yahweh Echad*." This is identity. This is the identity we're called to bear today. Amen?

To show you how important this is, John says this in 1 John 2:22-23—²² Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either. Does this seem pretty important now? If you don't have the Son, you do not have the Father. He who has the Son has the Father. This identity is a bulwark against the spirit of Antichrist, which, by the way, is covering the land.

The spirit of Antichrist is going forth, and one of the greatest expressions that we have today is Islam. Islam, the spirit of Antichrist. What does Islam proclaim? They proclaim this right out of the Quran. Koran, Surah 19:88-89— They say: "(Allah) Most Gracious has begotten a son!" Indeed, when they say this part, they say it means you Christians, you believers, and you Messianic Jews; indeed, ye have put forth a thing most monstrous! In other words, you are blasphemers for saying God has a son.

It goes on—Koran, Surah 19:92— "For it is not consonant with the majesty of (Allah) Most Gracious, that he should beget a son." And today, on the Temple Mount, the very place that Kohen Gadol (כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל) went in on *Yom Kippur* and brought the blood into the Holy of Holies, now inscribed in the walls, the inner walls of the Dome of the Rock, is "God has no son." It's the spirit of Antichrist. And I'm going to tell you, if you're looking for the abomination of desolation, what more do you want? Sitting on the Temple Mount, declaring God has no son. That is blasphemy against the Holy God of Israel. And the sad thing is, God's not willing; He's not wanting even one person to perish, not one Muslim to perish. And the devil is sending them to hell because he's taken away the source of life. He's taken away the Son. James 1:1 is a bulwark against the spirit of Antichrist—powerful.

And then we think of this, Abraham and Isaac. You know, it's interesting when you go back to the Torah, Genesis Chapter 24; we read this story. Now, let me back up to Genesis Chapter 22; we have the *Akedah* (עֶקְדָּה), we have the binding of Isaac. And it's no mystery that typology is a significant thing in the Torah, right? The *Ma'aseh Avot Siman LaBanim* (מעשה אבות סימן לבנים), the deeds of the fathers, are assigned for the children. We know, in other words, even historically, Judaism has read the Torah as prophetic. We look at the stories, and we understand there's prophecy embedded within, all right? Abraham, very much so, is the typology of our Father in Heaven, the one who's called the father of many nations. And *Yitzhak*, Isaac, is the typology of His Son.

It's fascinating to me that when you go to Chapter 24, Abraham commands his servant, "Go get a bride for my son. Not from this land; go to my family." Get, go, and get a bride; go get Rebecca. And what's interesting is that as the man comes into town, this servant of Abraham describes Abraham as master. He calls him "master" in Genesis Chapter 24. When he takes Rebecca and brings her home, she says,

"Who is this guy coming to me?" "Oh, it is my master, Isaac." And you can't make this stuff up. Abraham, the father, Abraham, is called master. His son, Isaac, is called master. Abraham, we're told, gave everything to his only begotten, to *Yitzhak*. And Yeshua makes the very same claim in John 16:15, "**All things that the Father has are Mine.**" Powerful realities.

And we could go on. As I said, I've done this ad nauseam, but Psalm 110:1, **The LORD said to my Lord**, right? *Ne'um Yahweh, ladoni* (נְאֻם יְהוָה לַאֲדֹנָי). Or I like the Septuagint version, *Eipen ho Kyrios tō kyriō mou* (εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου). Kurios, speaking to Kurios. My LORD, Kurios, said to my Kurios, the name that is typically used to translate the tetragrammaton. You have Kurios talking to Kurios, my LORD talking to my Lord. Absolutely mind-blowing. This introduction blows the whole Scriptures up in just an incredible way. This is not a mundane greeting; this is identity.

Moving to the second half of James 1:1, he says this: **To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.** The first thing I want to say here is that the statement reflects the ministry of James the Just. James the Just's mission field was to the circumcision, which was to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and we can support this in Scripture.

We read this in Galatians 2:9—**and when James, Cephas, or Peter, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised** (emphasis added). This is James, Peter, and John; their mission field was explicitly where, you know, we're going to go to the Jews. It doesn't mean they didn't bring the gospel to the Gentiles, but their primary objective was, "Yes, we're going for the Jewish people." We're going for the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And so, as we look at this introduction, **To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings** (emphasis added), he's writing to his fleshly brethren. This is his mission field, okay? But there's one thing that I want to draw out here that is huge, and this is where we get into a radical prophetic revelation. It's how he addresses them. How does he address them? **"To the twelve tribes."** You want to talk about a prophetic revelation. Let me begin with this: and please notice, he doesn't say, "And to my fellow Judeans." He doesn't say, "To the tribe of Judah" or "To the Kingdom of Judah." He says, "To the twelve tribes, as in Israel." Do you understand that this is his unified statement? Do you understand what he's declaring? He's telling you where he was in Bible prophecy—absolutely mind-blowing.

And to help you understand this, I'm going to take you back to Ezekiel. Because really, what's being described here, as James is telling you, are those two sticks we read about in Ezekiel. Yeah, they've become one. And I'm going to peel this back many layers. We read this in Ezekiel 37:15—**Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying**, and I have to tell you right now, I think more people are reading Ezekiel 36, 37, and 38 in this generation than at any other time in history. I just believe that. That's my opinion. It is unbelievable how much time we're spending in this area.

Ezekiel 37:15-16—¹⁵ **Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,** ¹⁶ **"As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself**, and we covered this not long ago. When it's talking about a stick, go to the Hebrew; it's a tree; this is interesting. Actually, it's *etz* (עץ); it's a tree. **Take a stick for yourself, and write on it: 'For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.'** Then take another stick and write on it, **'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.'**

Ezekiel 37:19— **Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick**

of Judah, and make them one stick, one etz, tree, make them one tree, and they will be one in My hand.” (Emphasis added).

So, the prophecy here is that these two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom, which, keep in mind, were divided. It was just the Kingdom of Israel. Israel doesn't come in as two kingdoms; it comes in as one kingdom, Israel. And then, because of the sins of Solomon, when his son, Rehoboam, comes to reign, the kingdom is divided. And here you are with the prophecy saying God is going to do something radical, and He's going to reverse that curse, that division. He's going to reverse it, and they're specifically going to be one in whose hand? His hand.

And so, I want to take you to John Chapter 10, a chapter we typically call the Good Shepherd chapter. We read the following in John 10:27-28—**“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand** (emphasis added). What's amazing is you go back and look at the verbiage used in Ezekiel Chapter 37, and oh, it's about sheep and shepherds. It's about sheep and a shepherd. And here Yeshua is coming on the scene as the Shepherd and says, No one is going to take them out of My hand.

Continuing, we go back to John 10:16—**And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd** (emphasis added). Now let me take you to Ezekiel Chapter 37 and show you what it says in Ezekiel 37:24—**“David, a term used for the Messiah, My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd”** The prophecy is that the *Mashiach ben David* is going to come on this scene, the one whose kingdom will never end. He will come, one shepherd. And here you have, in John 10, Yeshua saying, “I'm here, and no one is going to take them out of My hand.” The prolific work of the Messiah.

It goes on in Ezekiel 37:24—**they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them.** This is a prophecy of the New Covenant. This isn't a mystery; Ezekiel is very heavy on the New Covenant. And just to help unfold this, we'll pull the thread a little more. Ezekiel 36:26—**²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.** Ezekiel 37:22—**And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel—listen to this: and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations,** meaning the northern tribes of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, **nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again** (emphasis added).

Now this is amazing because when the Messiah comes on the scene, the work that the Messiah accomplishes cannot be undone. Because no one can destroy the work of anything that Yeshua puts His hand to. And you can't take His sheep out of His hand. He is the King. There is one King right now; there is only one Shepherd. And Yeshua made this statement at His first advent. That was the point of why He came. Do you remember what Yeshua said? He's very specific. He came for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Do you ever think about that? Yeshua is a Jew. And certainly, when He comes, do you think that He is excluding Jews now? Keep in mind that the kingdom was still divided as Yeshua was coming into His days. Israel is carried off. We have the Kingdom of Judah. But as He comes, He says (Matthew 15:24), **“I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”**

He's not excluding his Jewish brethren. He is declaring what He came to do, according to prophecy. I'm gathering all of them. I'm the one, King. There's only one Shepherd. I'm going to restore what was destroyed. It's absolutely profound to me as we dig into this.

Moving ahead to Ezekiel 37:23—**"They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them..."** This is one of the most important parts of the entire prophecy—forgiveness. I'm going to cleanse you from all your filthiness, from all your sin. This is the beauty of the *B'rit Chadashah* (בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה). The New Covenant was the forgiveness; that's the key piece. And look at the result; it's this: **... Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.** That is the New Covenant declaration. That is the beauty of the New Covenant; we become His people. Why is that significant? Because His people will never be destroyed—never. No one can take His people out of His hand—no one.

Moving to Ezekiel 37:26—**Moreover I will make,** I love this, a *berit shalom* (בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם), **a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant,** *berit olam* (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) **with them;** and actually, in Hebrew, it's just simply *berit shalom*, *berit olam*; that's the text. I'm going to bring a covenant of peace; it's forever. This covenant is eternal. It is because the Messiah accomplished it. It is the New Covenant that is being spoken of—I **will establish them and multiply them** (emphasis added).

In fact, go to the end of Hebrews, in Chapter 13, and look at what the writer says. He literally draws this out. He plucks it out in regard to what Yeshua accomplished through His blood. It is an everlasting covenant. The *B'rit Chadashah*. And there's a reason when we read these words by Yeshua in John 14:27: **"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you."** This is where it's coming from. The Prince of Peace, the *Sar Shalom* (שַׂר שָׁלוֹם) had come. He's declaring to them when He's saying, "I'm giving you my peace." Welcome to the *berit shalom* (בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם), the covenant of peace. Yeshua brought it. The Prince of Peace brought what was prophesied of.

And then we continue in Ezekiel 37:26—**... and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore.** Now, how, pray tell, does the Lord accomplish that on this side of Heaven? In the fallen generation, in the fallen age, how does this happen? Ezekiel actually tells us. This is amazing. Ezekiel 11:16—**"... yet I, this is the LORD, shall be a mikdash** (מִקְדָּשׁ). He's going to be a *mikdash*, **a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone."**

Do you know what's so profound? Here's the deal: up to the time of Yeshua, what we discovered is that all the tribes of Israel would go up. They would go to the Lord in *Yerushalayim*; there they would meet with Him at the appointed times. Under the New Covenant, this is what is just incredible: God goes to His people. Think about that: He goes to His people. He came for the (Matthew 15:24) **lost sheep of the house of Israel.** He will leave the 99 and go get the one lost. This is an amazing covenant where He's coming, and the Torah prophesied it. Even when you sin, and you're scattered to the farthest ends of the earth, you turn to Me. He will regather you. I mean, that's the promise. This is so powerful.

And think of Joel 2:28. I mean, we could spend an entire series going down this road of the prophecies. I'm going to **"pour out My Spirit on all flesh."** That doesn't mean you have to wait until you get to Jerusalem. It's interesting; the Lord began the anointing—the birth of what we call the Messianic age, the Messianic church, was with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Luke 24:49—**"... tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."** And then go to the ends of the earth, because He went and got His sheep. The Gospel of Yeshua would go to the ends of the earth, and it was proclaimed (Romans 1:16) **for the Jew first and also for the Gentile, Greek.** Awesome thought.

Yeshua says this in John 14:23—**Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him”** (emphasis added). I don't care how far the people have been scattered. If you turn to Yeshua and (Romans 10:9) **confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** And out of that comes the *mayim chaim* (מַיִם חַיִּים), comes the living water by which we will drink and (John 4:14) **never thirst** again.

And the Father and the Son—isn't that interesting because isn't that the identity of James? Yeshua says, "My father and I," they're *echad* (אֶחָד). —Deuteronomy 6:4— **"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."** They will come and make their home through the Spirit of God.

Jeremiah 31:31— **“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant, a B'rit Chadashah, with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”** (emphasis added). The LORD has in mind the New Covenant; He's looking at a divided kingdom. He's looking at Judah, and He's looking at the northern tribes of Israel. But get this: skipping over Verse 32, going to Jeremiah 31:33—**But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD.** Where, pray tell, is Judah? It's one. He's talking about when I implement the New Covenant, it's going to be Israel again, because there's one King, there's one Shepherd over His entire flock. He has restored what was broken. They're all *echad*; they're one. It's so powerful.

Jeremiah 31:33—**I will put My Torah, law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people** (emphasis added). There's that New Covenant statement again. This is the reward. I'm telling you, all that matters in life is that. I need the God of Israel to be my God, and I need to be known as His people. Then I have eternal life; that's the beautiful promise.

You think of Paul's words in Ephesians; the whole book is about one. When you get to Chapter 4, there's one Spirit, one body, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. He's obsessed with this *echad*, this oneness. Why? Because of the redemptive work of what Yeshua did. It's all about the Shema at the end of the day. I mean, that's what it's about; hear it, O Israel.

To put this into further perspective, I want to take you back to what happened at the time; this is where it all began. 1 Kings 12:1— **And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king.** Now, Rehoboam is the son of Solomon, and Solomon, towards the end of his life, did some things that were not pleasing to the Lord. He ended up taking wives who were prohibited in the Torah, joining himself. There was an amalgamation with the nations, and then he started serving all these different gods, setting up their altars. It angers the Lord, and therefore He says, "I'm going to tear the kingdom, but I'm not going to do it in Solomon's day; I'm going to do it in his sons." But I'm going to spare one kingdom, one tribe, for Rehoboam because of My servant David. David was faithful, and so you have this situation going on in that backdrop. And you know his mom, by the way; Rehoboam's mom was an Ammonite. Ammonites were not allowed to enter into this assembly of the Lord forever (Deuteronomy 23:3). Ari and I were just having this discussion.

Going to 1 Kings 12:2-4—² **So it happened, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard it (he was still in Egypt, for he had fled from the presence of King Solomon and had been dwelling in Egypt).** A little backdrop: Ahijah, the prophet, comes out and prophesies over this Jeroboam that, "Dude, you're going to become king of Israel." I mean, it's absolutely amazing. And there was a falling out between him and Solomon, so he had escaped, but now here's what's going on, and so now he's going to come back. ³ **that they sent and called him. Then Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to**

Rehoboam, saying, ⁴ **“Your father. What? Made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us (emphasis added).**

Samuel the prophet warned Israel. Do you understand what you're asking for? When you ask for a king, he's going to take the best of your sons and daughters. He's going to take the best of your vineyards, your grain, and your cattle. He's going to take all these things. And Israel's feeling it. They have felt oppressed under the reign of Solomon because of how heavy this yoke was. And they're there now begging to release this. Show mercy. Show mercy and look at what they say here at the end: **and we will serve you.”** (Emphasis added).

All Israel stands before Rehoboam, the king overall. At this point, it's all together. He's the king of all, and they're begging this king of Israel to show mercy and lighten this yoke; it's too much. 1 Kings 12:5-7—⁵ **So he said to them, “Depart for three days, then come back to me.” And the people departed. ⁶ Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived, and he said, “How do you advise me to answer these people?” ⁷ And they spoke to him, saying, “If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever”** (emphasis added). Now you think about that. What was Israel asking? I mean, here the elders are advising Rehoboam. All you need to do is serve your people, and they will serve you forever. You need to speak gently and kindly to them. This was the advice of the elders.

I think about Yeshua. Yeshua is actually called the servant, the *eved* (עֶבֶד). He's called the servant. And when He came, when we look at His ministry in John Chapter 13, He's washing His disciples' feet. Now you think about that. The King of kings and the LORD of lords, the one to whom Paul went blind, knocked off his animal just in a brief glimpse of the holiness of Yeshua. This one is washing His disciples' feet. And then we know in Philippians Chapter 2, He took the form of a *doulos*, a slave; Yeshua took that. That's relevant to our story.

Moving to 1 Kings 12:8—**But he, Rehoboam, rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him.** In other words, I want to know what my friends have to say. I'm not interested in the elders. 1 Kings 12:12-14—¹² **So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had directed, saying, “Come back to me the third day.” All Israel is gathered. This is an awesome moment. ¹³ Then the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the advice which the elders had given him; ¹⁴ and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!”** In other words, I'm going to double down. You want me to let up? I'm going the other way; I'm going to increase this yoke.

Moving on to 1 Kings 12:16—**Now when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying: “What share have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Now, see to your own house, O David!”** So Israel departed to their tents (emphasis added). This is the birth of a divided kingdom. The kingdom was divided because of what? The people asked for mercy to lighten the yoke. He refused, and the kingdom was divided. What's interesting is when Yeshua comes on the scene, what does He say? He says this: Matthew 11:28-30—²⁸ **Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”** (Emphasis added).

The very thing Israel asked for in the days of Rehoboam, "Lighten the yoke, and we will serve you forever." The King of glory comes, Yeshua the Messiah, and says, "I will give you what you ask for. I am gentle and lowly in heart." And He showed how much He would serve His people, Israel, and the entire world when He gave His life. (John 15:13) No greater act of love could have been shown than what He did. Do you understand how incredible the moment is?

I think of Paul's words to the Ephesians. He says in Ephesians 1:10—**that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times, talking about the coming of Yeshua, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.** See, that's how prolific the first Advent was: what Yeshua did, reversing the curse, destroying the division, and bringing *echad*, that nature of *echad*, to His people.

As we go to Luke 1:32-33, this is the prophecy. Gabriel, the angel, is prophesying, telling Miriam what's coming. ³² **He, Yeshua, will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.** ³³ **And He will reign. What? Over the house of Israel, Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."** (Emphasis added). Because that's what He did; He came in His ministry to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

James 1:1—**James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.** And so, as we look at James' introduction, this is not mundane. This is not something you blow by. He establishes identity. He's a bondservant of God in the Messiah Yeshua. And he's writing to not two different kingdoms. He's writing about what Yeshua accomplished, drawing Israel, because there's only one King and one Shepherd. Amen?

[Closing prayer]

Abba Father, we give You praise and glory for all Your goodness and Your faithfulness and for sending Your son, the Messiah Yeshua. And the beauty of what He accomplished, Lord, let us stand in awe at how You have reversed the curse on so many different levels, how You showed mercy to Your people, Israel. The thing they were begging for, which they didn't get from Rehoboam, was for the yoke to be lightened. To have a king who would speak kindly and lovingly to them. And Yeshua, You answered that. You answered what they asked, what Your people asked for, in the perfect time of the Father.

We stand in awe at Your faithfulness to Your people, Your people, Israel. And Lord, I think of what You say in Isaiah 49:6. You said, **'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles.** A bunch of pagan heathens, worshipping all the false gods, filling the measure of flesh beyond compare, and yet only through Your mercy You would gather them as well. And all I can say is, Lord, we are not worthy. We are not worthy, like Jacob himself said in his prayer to You (Genesis 32:10); he's **not worthy of all the tender mercies** You have shown him, nor **of all the truth.** I declare his words, Lord, before You. We are not worthy.

And so, Lord, I thank You for the Messiah, Yeshua. Yeshua, You are the Shepherd here. You are the rabbi, our instructor, and our teacher. We will follow You. The faith is not simply making confession to You and coming to the cross, but it's picking it up. And wherever You go, whatever valley, if You lead us into the valley of the shadow of death, it is a safe place as long as we are with You. And so, we exalt Your holy and blessed and faithful name. We just pray this in the mighty name of Yeshua, amen.