



In Defense of Article 8

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Introduction and Disclaimer

Shalom, friends.

As many of you know, I have been blessed with the opportunity to be an active participant in events hosted by a group called “B’ney Yosef.” First, I attended the B’ney Yosef National Congress following Shavuot of 2015– an event in which 135 “Ephraimite” delegates from 12 countries around the world gathered together to discuss the national redemption and restoration of the House of Joseph. (Read my report of this event [here](#).) Forty weeks later in March of 2016, I was very fortunate to watch the movement take root on the North American continent, and to witness the birth of BYNA, (B’ney Yosef North America) to represent Ephraimites in North America. (Read my report of this event [here](#).)

Now before going any further, I must make it known that I am nothing more than an individual who has been blessed to attend these events. I am not part of any portion of the B’ney Yosef leadership, nor am I qualified to speak on behalf of the organization in any capacity. So what I share here, on my blog / website, are purely my own thoughts, and do not represent B’ney Yosef.

That having been said, I have publicly thrown my 100% support behind this organization. I know that the leadership team has been selected from some of the godliest and most humble men and women on the planet, and I believe wholeheartedly in the mission they are endeavoring to pursue.

What is Article 8, and why does it need to be defended?

At the BYNA Summit meeting in March, the leadership had put together a proposed “Articles of Declaration” to explain the history of who we are as a movement, and to give clarity and direction for where we need to be going in the future. In addition to a preamble, a main text, and a closing paragraph, the Articles of Declaration also included nine specific bullet points, all of which were welcomed with open arms– except for one, which was Article 8; and that is the subject of this short blog post.

Article 8 of the BYNA’s Articles of Declaration reads as follows:

“We will stand ready to give an answer for the hope of our calling, willing to share what we believe with anyone who desires to hear; this is our responsibility. Yet we acknowledge there is a difference between giving answers to questions asked and trying to convert another to our way of understanding and practice. Therefore, B’ney Yosef North America cannot and will not support or defend any attempts to evangelize the Jewish people.”

It is the thought expressed in the last sentence of Article 8 that has been the subject of much discussion and dissension, not only amongst followers of B’ney Yosef such as myself, but among the “two house” movement as a whole; for in saying that we “...cannot and will not support or defend any attempts to evangelize the Jewish people,” some within this movement feel as if we are opening up a theological can of worms, and going so far as to say that either the Jewish do not need salvation, or that the Jewish people cannot possibly be saved. Friends, I believe this boils down to extremist thinking.

Article 8: What it is, and what it isn't.

Before we move on to a defense of Article 8, let us first establish what this statement is saying, and what this statement is not saying— because I guarantee that much of the objection to it has been based largely upon a misconception of the simple message of what the text is attempting to convey.

Article 8 is not saying:

- That we back down on our faith that Yeshua is the Messiah.
- That we cannot share, individually, our perspectives and faith with our Jewish brothers and sisters, when it is appropriate to do so.
- That the Jewish people do not need Messianic redemption.

On the other hand, Article 8 is saying:

- That our faith in the Messiah does not need to be forced upon others.
- That we respect, on a personal and intellectual basis, the beliefs of our Jewish brothers and sisters, and their fundamental right to freedom of religion.
- That BYNA is simply not going to engage in active missionizing of the Jewish people.

Now that these objective bullet points have been identified, I will give three short defenses of Article 8.

In Defense of Article 8, Part I: Self Correction

First and foremost, what I take home from the message behind Article 8 is a subject which is very near and dear to my heart, and that is the concept of self-correction— that we, as men and women, leaders and servants, Jews and Ephraimites, are responsible for the conduct of our own selves, and those— if applicable— whom we are set in authority over. As members of the Body of the Messiah, we are not responsible to “fix” the greater body, but rather, to “fix” ourselves. Of course, this does not preclude the responsibility to help others in their own course of self-correction when the time is appropriate to do so, but when all is said and done, our focus and responsibility at fixing the greater body needs to be from the ground level up. In short, we can't have a strong, healthy nation if we don't first have strong, healthy families.

Now this concept of self-correction seems to be a very difficult thing for many within the Hebrew Roots Movement to grasp and implement, because we seem to be plagued with a compulsive need to be “right,” often at the expense of unity and brotherhood with the greater body. And in all fairness, I sense this compulsion comes from a healthy place of not wanting to repeat the same denominational darkness that many of us were brought out of. But we cannot— we must not— allow our passion for the truth to cloud our compassion for others.

When it comes to our interactions with Brother Judah— that is, the Jewish people— this fervor to correct the doctrinal misunderstandings of others seems to be amplified. But is this position justified? Friends, I suggest this exactly what our Master Yeshua taught against when He said, *“Why do you observe the straw in your brother's eye, and do not regard the beam that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Allow me to pluck the straw from your eye;’ and behold— a beam is in your own eye! You hypocrite! First pluck the beam from your own eye, and then you will see clearly, to pluck the straw out of your brother's eye.”* (Matthew 7:3-5) In my opinion, the brothers Yeshua speaks of here are none other than Judah and Joseph; and believe me, the growing nation of Joseph has plenty of beams which need to be removed before we dare approach the speck in the eye of our brother Judah.

One of the keynote speakers at the BYNA Summit meeting, Batya Wootten, summed this up very succinctly when she said, “For myself, there will be commitment without compromise. But for others, there will be mercy without measure.” Next to my own wife, she is undoubtedly one of the wisest women I have ever had the pleasure of meeting, and if we all took her advice to heart, we could singlehandedly correct every problem in the Hebrew Roots Movement.

In Defense of Article 8, Part 2: Cultural Sensitivity

The second reason I support Article 8 is because I believe, very strongly, that we must approach our relationship with the Jewish people with a limitless degree of cultural sensitivity. Although there have been exceptional cases to the contrary, we Christians / Messianics / Ephraimites have nearly two thousand years of categorically “bad” treatment of the Jewish people to overcome. From Justin Martyr and Marcion of Sinope in the second century to the “Great Reformers” Martin Luther and John Calvin in the sixteenth century, our “Christian history” is chalk full of some of the “greatest minds” of the church publicly calling for the forcible conversion of the Jewish people to belief in our Christian Messiah; and, if they would not convert, then they called for their execution.

Now granted, on this side of the family, we understand that there is a difference between the hatred from the Roman church of years past, the relative indifference (or distant support) from the later Protestant church, and the outright love felt toward them from the modern Messianic movement. We understand that the Messianic attempt to evangelize the Jewish people is an outreach of love and concern, and not a throwback to the hatred from the church. But the Jews, on the other hand, do not recognize any such distinction between Roman Catholics who wanted to execute them only a handful of centuries ago, the Nazis who wanted to exterminate them from the face of the planet only a handful of decades ago, and Messianics who want to love them and support them today. To them, we are all operating under the banner of “Christianity,” and to them, we have all had “Jesus” as our “mascot” this whole time. For centuries, they saw us roaring about Jesus, and killing them, in His name; and now we are coming at them in this same Name, and we want them to accept our message? First, we came at them with a knife; and now, we come at them with open arms— but they suspect we still have a knife! Before we build up the audacity to ask them to follow a Messiah in whose name they have been killed and oppressed for two thousand years, we need to recognize and respect that the Jewish opposition to “Jesus” is deeply rooted in our own Antisemitic past, and approach current and future relations with the Jewish people with nothing but care and tenderness.

In Defense of Article 8, Part 3: From the Scriptures

The third and final reason I support Article 8 is because of God’s prophetic timeline. I do not believe that it is the right prophetic time for the Jewish people to recognize Yeshua as the Messiah and king over all Israel, and I believe I have four clear proofs from the Scriptures for this assertion.

First of all, it is found in Yeshua’s own words that His ministry was 100% directed toward the House of Joseph, and not the House of Judah, as He Himself said, *“I am not sent, except to the sheep that have strayed from the House of Israel.”* (Matthew 15:24) Yeshua here refers to the wayward House of Joseph as “lost sheep” in direct reference to Jeremiah 50:6, *“Israel is a scattered sheep.”* Now it was not the Jewish people who were referred to as these “lost sheep,” but Joseph! As it is written, *“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You that leads Joseph like a flock...”* (Psalm 80:1) Yeshua said, speaking of His own calling, that *“A physician is not sought after for the well, but for those very sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”* (Luke 5:31-32) He said, this indicating that there were some He considered to be “well” and “righteous,” in comparison with others who needed to be called back to repentance. I would suggest He is speaking here of Judah and Joseph. The story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) likewise conveys this truth, if one looks at the older and the younger sons as Judah and Joseph, respectively. The father rejoiced at the return of his younger son; but what did He say to the older son? *“My son, you have always been with me, and all that I have is yours.”*

Second, it is strongly implied that there would be a time in which the Messiah would lead Joseph while he was separated from Judah. We read in John 4:39-40, *“Many Samaritans (exiles of the Northern Kingdom) of that city believed on Him... And when these Samaritans came to Him, they requested Him to tarry with them; and He remained with them for two days.”* Now if we follow the prophetic principle that *“One day, to the Lord, is as a thousand years,”* (2 Peter 3:8) then certainly, we can see very clearly, from a historic perspective, that Yeshua has been with the church— i.e. the exiles of the Northern Kingdom— for two thousand years. I would suggest that it is not until these “two days” are completed that Yeshua will be revealed to the whole nation. Next, we read in John 11:54, that *“Yeshua did not walk openly among the Jews; but retired from them to a place near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim; and there He abode with His disciples.”* Although it is a separate instance from the first, I would humbly suggest that it carries with it the same line of thought, that Yeshua would be hidden from the Jewish people while He “abode with His disciples” among the people of Ephraim for the previously mentioned two thousand years.

Third, it is explained that there will be a time in which Judah does recognize the Messiah— but this revelation has clearly not yet occurred! It is written in Zechariah 12:10, *“I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look to Me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”* In the context of Zechariah 12, this is very clearly an event which has not yet been fulfilled; hence, the time for them to recognize the Messiah simply is not here yet. And there is a prophetic precedent for this pattern, established in the Torah. We read in Genesis 45 that Joseph revealed himself to his brothers not once, but twice; the first time, his brothers reacted in shock and disbelief, but the second time, they wept at his revelation.

Fourth and finally is Ezekiel 37:19, a passage which many of us are familiar with, in which the prophet witnesses two sticks (representing the two kingdoms of Judah and Joseph) come together— not by the will of man, but by the hand of the Father Himself. As it is written, *“Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions; and I will put them to him together with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in My hand.”* This is very important to understand, because God goes on to say in verse 22, *“I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel, and one King shall be King to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.”* It is not until after our two peoples— Jews and Ephraimites— are brought back together that the one True King over all the earth, whom we profess unashamedly to be Yeshua the Messiah, will reign over both houses. Until then, He is truly the *“Shepherd of Israel,”* who *“leads Joseph like a flock;”* but when our two houses are restored, then Yeshua shall be fully known by both houses.

In Conclusion

In closing, I wish to express that I have not written this position paper “against” any individual or group within the movement, but rather, in response to a series of general thoughts which have come forth from a number of different sources. I have laid out, in my opinion, several very good reasons as to why I stand in proud solidarity with BYNA, why I fully support Article 8, and why I wholeheartedly disagree with any attempt to evangelize the Jewish people.