



Israel United in Christ

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Introduction

Israel United in Christ (IUIC) are currently the most populous group of the large and growing Black Hebrew Israelite movement, which holds that Black Americans are descendants of the ancient Israelites (on the Black Hebrew Israelite movement, see Landing 2002; Dorman 2013; Key 2014; Miller 2024). They are the most successful denomination—or “camp” in the group’s own terminology—of the militant One West form of the Black Hebrew Israelite movement which emerged in 1960s Harlem; they now have an estimated 10,000 members around the globe (New Religious Movements 2016). Based in New York City, they are led by an ex-detective of the New York Police Department, Bishop Nathanyel Ben Israel. They are distinguishable by their uniform dress, consisting of mostly purple and gold, with a regal appearance for the leaders. Their eschatology predicts the imminent “awakening” of the true Israelites, followed by a race war and the enslavement/destruction of all non-Israelites.

The Leadership and Structure of Israel United in Christ

The founder and undisputed leader of IUIC is Bishop Nathanyel Ben Israel, born Nathan Ray in 1966 (see Israel United in Christ 2025b). Nathanyel was raised in the Union Baptist Church in New York City but after exploring Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist, and Jehovah’s Witness congregations, he began searching for a more racially conscious outlook. This led to his dabbling in Kemetism (a modern form of ancient Egyptian religion) and the Nation of Islam before he was introduced to Black Hebrew Israelite thought around 1990. Nathanyel is flanked by two other bishops, who enjoy notably lower status: Bishop Yawasap and Bishop Kani (see Israel United in Christ 2025a; 2025c). Yawasap was also part of the original One West with Nathanyel, while Kani (aka Kani Gabar) became a Hebrew Israelite in 1995. Kani established IUIC’s second school, in Orlando Florida, in 2005 and currently leads the Austin, Texas branch.

Below the three Bishops are several Deacons; beneath the Deacons are Captains, then Officers, and the male rank and file are Soldiers. The hierarchy is entirely male, as all women (“Sisters”) are expected to concentrate on home and family matters.

Membership is largely Black, although they welcome anyone with patrilineal Black, Native American, or

Latino heritage. It is for this reason that the Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil rights legal advice centre, no longer uses the term 'Black Hebrew Israelites,' preferring the non-racial alternative 'Radical Hebrew Israelites' for the One West groups (see SPLC 2026).

Origins

The roots of One West can be found in Edward Meredith Bibbins (1896–1969), commonly known as Abba Bivens. Bibbins was a Philadelphia native, who, according to legend, came to the conclusion during a journey across the United States of America that Blacks and Native Americans were the true Israelites. When he settled in New York, he briefly attended the most famous "rabbinic" Black Hebrew Israelite congregation, Wentworth Arthur Matthew's Commandment Keepers (est. 1919), but could not tolerate their rejection of the New Testament and Christ (on the Commandment Keepers, see Brotz 1964). While a few concepts are traceable to Matthew, there is more in common with the teachings of F. S. Cherry (c. 1875–1963), founder of the Church of the Living God, Pillar and Ground of Truth for all Nations in Philadelphia, 1915 (or possibly earlier in Chattanooga, TN). These include some specific doctrines such as the return of Christ at the Millennium, white Jews as the "Synagogue of Satan," and a pronounced hatred of whites, which suggests that Bibbins may have first imbibed Black Hebrew Israelite teaching within Philadelphia (on Cherry, see Fauset 1944; Brotz 1964; Rubel 2009). Bibbins left and founded the Israeli Tanach School, later based at 1 West 125th St, Harlem, the address of which gave the movement its name.

Although Bibbins died in 1969, allegedly as a result of a brawl with some Black Muslims, the group was continued by three members: Moshe Ben Chareem (later known as Masha), Yaiqab (Peter Sherrod), and Yaiqab's son Ahrahyah. These were joined by four others (Laban, Yashiyah, Shar, and Chaazaq) who would together form the Seven Heads of One West during a period that Sam Kestenbaum describes as "a simmering hotbed of religious creativity" (Kestenbaum 2020, 16). This group developed a distinctive style, both of dress—which incorporated colourful cloaks, turbans, and leather—and of confrontational street preaching, which was filmed and broadcast on their local television station, an activity neatly presaging the social media-savvy approach of IUIC (Brooks Key 2023).

During this period Ahrahyah received some pivotal revelations, including that the King James Version was divinely ordained, thus it was not required to learn Hebrew or Greek to read scripture best. Hebrew is still considered a holy language, but IUIC specifically conclude that they must await the provision of the "pure language" prophesied in Zephaniah 3:8–9; until then, the corrupted languages of their conquerors may be used (Ben Israel 2025b, 126). Another crucial revelation was the precise identification of the modern descendants of each Israelite tribe. This revelation came in the form of the 'Twelve Tribes Chart,' which is used by almost all contemporary One West groups, and identifies Native peoples all over the Americas as specific Israelite tribes, and Black Americans as the Tribe of Judah (IUIC Events 2017; Miller 2024).

While Hebrew was no longer required, Ahrahyah also learned that there were numerous corruptions in modern Hebrew which had deviated from the original form Lashawan Qadash (Holy Language), absorbing many contrivances from the European dialect of Yiddish; this original form had only one vowel—short a—which must be voiced between every consonant, and all letters were treated as consonants. While IUIC have disavowed Lashawan Qadash, its influence is sometimes still perceptible (as in the name Yawasap,

which is a Lashawan Qadash reading of Joseph, and in the use of the names Yahawah and Yahawashi, for God and Jesus respectively).

The group changed its name to the Israeli (later Israelite) School of Universal Practical Knowledge but split acrimoniously in late 1995, putatively around the issue of whether Cornelius (Acts 10) was a gentile or an Israelite (because of the impact this would have on the possibility of salvation for gentiles, i.e., non-Blacks). After several different groups formed, Nathanyel became disillusioned with what he saw as a fractious spirit of infighting and promiscuity over righteousness (Williams 2017). He was particularly convinced that all of the biblical commandments were still mandatory. Thus, IUIC was founded in 2003, by Nathanyel, Kani, and Barakshar (quickly joined by Yawasap). Barakshar left when the group refused to allow his wife to teach women's classes, on the basis that only men could be teachers. He formed Future World of Israel, though Nathanyel would later seemingly rescind the decision, allowing his own wife to teach the Daughters of Sarah (discussed later in this entry) (see Israelite Social 2017; Kestenbaum 2020, 16; IUIC Saint Louis 2024). The different One West factions have a general dislike for each other, as well as for most other Black Hebrew Israelite groups (and indeed for all other religious denominations). At least one instance has been recorded of a physical brawl between factions who laid claim to a street-preaching location (Malone 2023). While almost all Black Hebrew Israelite groups descending from One West revere the King James Version above other versions, IUIC maintain that the 1611 King James Version, including the Apocrypha, is the sole divinely ordained version; the Hebrew and Greek versions are now largely inconsequential.

Beliefs

The One West form of the Black Hebrew Israelites can generally be considered a new religious movement within the African American religious tradition. This tradition has iterations which identify as Christian, Muslim, Jewish/Israelite, and smaller forms such as Egyptian or Kemetic; however, much of the theology, ideology, and intellectual/cultural background is shared in a way which displays far more unity than these terms otherwise suggest (Key 2011; Miller 2024). As such, the central concern is explaining and understanding the involuntary presence of Africans in the Americas and the experience of slavery and oppression.

One major result of this is the theorising of "Black Chosenness"—that is, that Black suffering indicates some special role or position for those who were enslaved (Moses 1993, 1–3; Adams and Bracey 1999, 53–104; Miller 2023, 99–102). This concept has taken various forms, and in the Black Hebrew Israelite movement appears as the principle that Black people (i.e., African Americans) are the biblical Israelites, whose bondage in America is simply a repetition of their bondage in Egypt and Babylon.

Israel United in Christ, like all One West camps, believe that the twelve tribes of Israel are the ancestors of Black Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos. While they originally held to Ahrayah's Twelve Tribes Chart, they appear to be increasingly developing their own human-cosmology where Israelites migrated around the globe (including, even, to Japan); little is said in recent publications about the modern identity of different Israelite tribes. Furthermore, IUIC also claim that people of African descent in other middle eastern lands, in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and Siddis and Dalits in India and Pakistan, are Israelites (Ben Israel 2025a, 12).

The Transatlantic slave trade is explained via reference to several biblical passages which threaten the Israelites with great suffering should they turn away from the Mosaic Law given by God. The most frequently cited passage is Deuteronomy 28:15–68, which contains several specific threats which can be aligned with American slavery. All Black Hebrew Israelites use these passages, which are usually presented as prophecies and utilised as proof texts for the claim of Israelite identity. As Vocab Malone (a Christian ‘Urban Apologist’ who specialises in debating One West teachings) remarked to me, it is striking that Black Hebrew Israelites use this half of Deuteronomy 28, which predicts curses, to assert their identity as Israelites, while some British Israelites use the prior half, which predicts blessings, to establish their own ‘manifest destiny’ as Israelite descendants. Because Black suffering is understood as a divine punishment, the return to the Law and reclaiming of identity is seen as the key to overcoming their dire social situation in the Americas, and as the first step toward reclaiming their rightful position as rulers in the Messianic Age. Positing the ultimate responsibility of Black Americans for their fate indicates the inherent power they hold but does not vanquish responsibility from whites for their evil conduct.

All modern peoples or nations are believed to be reducible to a people mentioned in the Bible. Most famously, Europeans are understood to be Edomites, descendants of Jacob’s brother Esau. The reasoning for this is that while Jacob is described as being smooth of skin, Esau is described as red and covered in hair (Genesis 25:25; 27:11)—qualities that for Bibbins clearly indicated that Jacob was Black African and Esau was white European. Wentworth Matthew had claimed as early as 1937 that white Jews were descended from Esau, but Bibbins appears to have radicalised this reading, both by asserting that *all* white-skinned humans come from Esau and by emphasising the biblical traditions regarding Esau’s descendants, the Edomites. This tradition may also be influenced by F. S. Cherry, who taught that white humanity descended from the leprosy-stricken Gehazi the Amalekite, a descendant of Esau (2 Kings 5:27). While it was Jacob who tricked the (fractionally) older Esau out of his birthright and blessing, Esau and his descendants became a biblical paradigm of evil (ironically, the early rabbis understood the Roman Empire to be the spiritual continuation of Edom; see Cohen 2013. See Ben Israel 2025b, 120, for an example of the way reference to this tradition is now being used as evidence of its literal truth by IUIC). Although this understanding has allowed One West to interpret the American slave trade, Jim Crow, and racism as expressions of the Edomite hatred for Israel, it also posits the strange position that Black Americans and white Europeans are cousins much more closely related to each other than either of them are to any other group (including to non-Israelite Africans, who are understood to descend from Ham); according to this reading, white Europeans are actually Semitic and can claim Abraham as their ancestor. While IUIC inherited from One West a disdain for what they consider Hamitic Africans who sold the Israelites into slavery, recent years have seen this teaching sidelined as IUIC have made inroads in locations around the African continent. Indeed, there appears to be a growing sense of Pan-Africanism in their ideology.

There are many notable similarities between the One West form of Black Hebrew Israelitism and the [Nation of Islam](#). This is most evident in the One West doctrine of Esau, which goes far beyond biblical sources in identifying his lineage with white Europeans, and ultimately in identifying these whites as the devil, a tradition which replicates the association of whites-as-devil first made by Fard Muhammad. In a series of creative exegetical manoeuvres, IUIC have managed to link the Nation of Islam doctrine of Caucasians as unsophisticated “cavemen” who had devolved from the righteous original civilisation which expelled them (for comparable traditions, see Gardell 1996, 26; Finley 2022, 32–34) with several biblical passages, including Job 30 which appears to describe an aggressive cave-dwelling people expelled from society:

They were driven forth from among men, (they cried after them as after a thief;) To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys, in caves of the earth, and in the rocks. Among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together. They were children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth. (Job 30:5-8, KJV)

Israel United in Christ interpret these verses as depicting the descendants of Esau, especially as subsequent lines establish a malicious enmity of this group for Job (supposedly representing Israel *in toto*). This is combined with explicit and putative references to Edom in Obadiah 1, Malachi 1, and other books to develop a doctrine of Edomites as resentful, uncultured, and aggressive enemies of Israel and of God, therefore deserving of the title “devil(s).” Thus, we can see how doctrines originated in the Nation of Islam have entered Black American religious culture generally and are being further developed by groups like IUIC. This is most likely due to the significant presence and influence of the Nation of Islam in urban Black communities from the 1950s onward. Many high-ranking Black Hebrew Israelites (including Nathanyel) have in the past dabbled in the Nation of Islam, and some Nation of Islam doctrines have become integrated in their subsequent organisations.

As a result of these concepts and others, and their tendency to express their disgust at any who do not fall under their definition of righteousness, IUIC and One West in general, and Nathanyel in particular, have been repeatedly accused of hatred, antisemitism, homophobia, conspiracy theories, and various other prejudices (see ADL 2020; Canary Mission 2026; SPLC 2026). The Southern Poverty Law Center consider IUIC a hate group, a designation which IUIC vociferously refute (in fact many of their videos now begin with the disclaimer “We are not a hate group,” a claim which they support by reference to the injunction in Romans 12:18 to live peacefully with all people; [their website](#) instructs members to notify the authorities if they hear of any plot to cause harm or break the laws of the land, citing Leviticus 5:1 and Romans 13:1).

Frequently repeated is the firm belief that Black Americans are at the bottom of global society, mocked and derogated by all other peoples, representing the persistence of a common trope in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African American thought.

The Bible is read entirely through the lens of the Black experience, and emphasis is laid on several prophetic predictions which describe the suffering and persecution of Israelites, as well as passages which can be used to indicate that Israelites have forgotten or would forget their identity and covenant, such as Isaiah 1:3. The IUIC method of biblical interpretation is marked by a strict (but selective) literalism and a tendency to read verses and chapters outside of the context in which they are located. This is most evident in passages used to justify the Blackness of Israelites, where statements such as “My skin is black upon me” (Job 30:30) and “Judah mourneth, and her gates languish; they are black to the ground” (Jeremiah 14:2) are taken as irrefutable proclamations regarding the skin colour of Israelites, regardless of the context indicating that these are metaphorical statements of despair (also regardless of the strangeness of a people repeatedly proclaiming the colour of their skin). This literalism is conjoined with their dependence on the King James Version and rejection of any alternative translations of the Hebrew text, meaning that great depth of meaning can be extracted from single verses, which can be “clarified” via other verses. Thus, disparate verses are applied to each other to creatively extract a new meaning not otherwise apparent in either, and without recourse to any source—or even seemingly without any explicit argument—outside of the scriptural canon. In their deep focus on the Bible, they have developed a

hermeneutic of *scripture interprets scripture* which reflects both rabbinic and Lutheran approaches: any uncertainties in a passage may be resolved by use of a second passage (Kugel 1983). For instance, in a video from 9 July 2024 (see Saved News TV 2024), the “great multitude... of all nations, and kindreds, and people,” who appear to be saved in Revelation 7:9 is read via the claim in Deuteronomy 28:64 that the Israelites would be taken into all nations, and hence Revelation is not talking about literally all peoples but only the Israelites who are scattered among them.

In distinction to other One West camps, IUIIC reject polygyny as destructive to family units (at least while Israel is under captivity; multiple wives are expected in the Messianic Age), based on 1 Corinthians 7:2, 1 Timothy 3:1, Matthew 19, and Isaiah 4:1–2. Israel United in Christ are patriarchal, emphasising the importance of gender roles. They view feminism as a plot to destabilise the Black community (as LGBTQ ideology is also understood). As such, the Daughters of Sarah was established—a women’s group within IUIIC where scripture pertaining to women is discussed, as well as personal struggles (see Daughters of Sarah 2023). The Daughters of Sarah are led by Nathanyel’s wife, indicating a change of heart given that Barakshar had previously left because his own wife had not been allowed to teach. Women must cover their head, dress modestly, and not wear trousers (Ben Israel 2015, 21, 23). Like the Nation of Islam, IUIIC view the availability of abortion as a kind of genocide.

Historical Revisionism

The Black Hebrew Israelite movement broadly indulges in conspiracy theory narratives, with the central motif of a deliberate concealment of Israelite identity, and the notion of a “Great Awakening” of Black (and sometimes Native American and Latino) people “waking up” to their true identity, a process which indicates the beginning of the end for the current world order, and the beginning of Armageddon as described in Daniel and Revelation, as can be seen on the website, [The Great Awakening International](#), co-managed by Ronald Dalton (creator of the *Hebrews 2 Negros* books and film). A second concept that is shared by many Black Hebrew Israelites since the third wave of the 1960s (i.e., those which accept the New Testament but place a distinctly non-Christian lens upon it) is that the modern West, and its apogee the United States of America, is a direct continuation of the Roman Empire. Therefore, Israelites still live under the same oppressor as the Jews of the New Testament. It has sometimes been claimed that Israel has been in captivity ever since the time of the New Testament, based on Luke 21:24, and Ben Israel (2025b, 108) explains that the seven chapters of his book, *Biblical Events from Assyria to America*, are each named after consecutive instances of captivity: Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian-Medean, Greek, Roman, Spanish, and American. This allows the Black Hebrew Israelites to effectively unify the realms of biblical myth and contemporary reality: the racial struggles of modern America are read back into the New Testament, and the Roman world of the New Testament is read immanently into the modern world.

Israel United in Christ and One West differ from previous forms of the historical narrative as they incorporate a very idiosyncratic take on European history which casts Israelites and other Black peoples (most notably the Moors, supposedly a mixed group of Muslims and Israelites) as Medieval rulers of Europe. This ended only with the *reconquista* of Iberia by Isabel and Ferdinand in 1492, a process which spread slowly through other regions and ended with the elimination of the Black elites and their removal from the historical narrative. This rulership by dark-skinned people is claimed to be the true meaning behind the term “Dark Ages.” Black rulership in Europe is traced back to the Roman Emperor Septimus

Severus, who ruled Britain in the third century CE (see Ben Israel 2025b, 108; Severus was born in Libya and was of mixed heritage, including Roman, Ethiopian, and Punic, but IUIC claim that he was Black and an Israelite). The first part of the claim is based simply on his African birthplace, but the second is not given any justification. Black rulership has supposedly ended only recently, although its traces have been covered up; King James is claimed as a Black Israelite, and the Bible translation bearing his name is considered the authoritative, divinely revealed version of scripture.

A key component of IUIC's Afro-Israelite-centric historical narrative is the work of influential Hebrew Israelite author Rudolph Windsor (his most significant work is Windsor 1969), who has spoken favourably of IUIC, appeared at IUIC events (see IUIC Events 2016), and been interviewed by Bishop Nathaniel. Their claim that the Jews of Iberia were Black appears to be drawn from Windsor's work. However, they go beyond Windsor in extending this racial ascription to a majority of Jews in Europe and, in support of this, take any reference to the relative darkness of Jews as indicating Blackness. It is not currently clear how they understand relations between the putatively Black Sephardic community with the (putatively) white Ashkenazim, the modern existence of a clearly non-Black Sephardic community, or the rabbinic nature of the Sephardic Jews even in Medieval times. Unlike Windsor, they have not claimed Maimonides or any other specific Sephardic Jew as their own as this would create deep problems in the boundary they draw between (true) Black Israelites and (fake, Edomite) white/Rabbinic Jews. Remarkably, they offer no explanation for this discrepancy while simultaneously describing the Black Jews of Iberia, who were victims of the expulsion orders in 1492 and 1497, and the white Jews who converted and became conquistadors (of lands populated by Native American Israelites) and slave traders (of Black Israelites from western Africa). However, this unclear duality allows IUIC to interpret any specific historical reference to "Jews" as meaning either *Black Israelites* or *Caucasian Edomites*, depending on which best aligns with their overall narrative and whether they interpret the reference positively or negatively.

Much is also made of seventeenth-century theories about Native American "Indians" being descended from lost Israelite tribes (see Fenton 2020). While these theories have long since been discredited and have fallen out of popular consciousness, IUIC and other One West camps discover references to such ideas in texts written in previous centuries and interpret them as evidence of a previously acknowledged truth which is now being covered up. Overall, the emphasis on a true, concealed history which has been 'covered up' by the powers-that-be establishes IUIC (along with all of One West) as purveyors of what Dyrendal, Robertson, and Asprem call "conspiracy theory *in* religion," although the narrative of conspiracy is so central that it is almost a case of "conspiracy theory as religion" (Dyrendal, Robertson, and Asprem 2018, sections 5–7, italics original). Indeed, the doctrine of conspiracy is virtually inseparable from the rest of the group's belief system to the extent that one cannot imagine what it would mean for the group to continue without it.

This centrality of conspiracy theorising cannot be separated from the work of prior generations of Black intellectuals who sought to uncover a glorious African history and role in the ancient world which had been lost or ignored by white Eurocentric historians. The Afrocentrism of the 1960s—including the work of Windsor—serves as one iteration of this, but prior generations bequeathed thinkers such as J. A. Rogers, whose texts collated much information along with some speculation and are still available to read today.

We may also perceive a similarity to the pseudohistorical fantasies of Anatolii Fomenko's "New Chronology." This system, by a talented Russian mathematician-turned-amateur-historian, argues that the standard historical narrative not only misrepresents the truth by placing too much importance on Greek

and Roman achievements and far too little on Russian ones, but has mistakenly expanded the Common Era by almost 1,000 years. Both Fomenko's and IUIIC's attempts to rewrite history paint their own culture—understandably—as the true centre but also indulge in wild speculation based on minor coincidences and other features which could find more satisfactory explanation. They collapse much of what is known about the past into an extremely simple formula, with little regard for the work of scholars or for any guardrail which might assure objectivity. The mechanism behind both appears identical: intelligent and creative thinkers with little to no training in the discipline of history and no knowledge of how to read the sources are aggressively reading the evidence through a lens which prioritises their own significance and dreams of grandeur. Both also suggest that it is rather western Europeans who have previously done precisely this, and only now is the record being set straight (on Fomenko, see Sheiko 2004).

Eschatological Expectations

Imminent eschatological expectation is a hallmark of Black Hebrew Israelites in general, and IUIIC continue this tradition albeit with their own nuances. According to the tradition, the awakening of the Israelites to their identity represents the first step toward Armageddon, when the present world order will be overturned in a violent conflagration before the Israelites are installed as the rightful rulers of the planet.

According to IUIIC interpretation of the Bible, God loves Israel and their salvation is assured, but salvation is not available for those of any other nation. Israel United in Christ predict that the soon-coming war of Armageddon will see the other nations destroyed and their remnant taken into slavery, as seen in a [live-streamed video](#) from 3 May 2025. The future enslavement of other nations discussed herein is a common One West belief, based on Isaiah 14:2 ("And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors"). There seems to be an emerging idea that, because white humanity came later, the humanity that was created in God's image is only Black (Latino, Native American) humanity. Indeed, Kani has appeared to align "all other nations" with beasts rather than man, a category reserved for Israelites alone (see IUIIC Austin 2023). Interpretations of exactly what 'slavery' will imply in the Messianic Age seem to vary: some appear to interpret it as chattel slavery, others who have spoken to me interpret this simply as the people committing to live according to the Torah, under the command of regional Israelite kings who will administer punishment for any illegality.

In contrast to other African American apocalyptic groups, IUIIC have no programme for the transformation of society; they are solely concerned with "waking up" Black America (and others) in expectation of the End Times (for a helpful comparison of IUIIC's apocalypticism with the Christian Jeremiad tradition of David Walker, see Estabrooks 2016). This passive Messianic stance is not uncommon among religious groups and represents a general belief that whatever changes are to come will be inaugurated by God. This has led the Southern Poverty Law Center to remove them and other "Radical Black Hebrew Israelite" groups from the Black Separatist category as they do not share the nationalist element or the political programme of groups like the Nation of Islam; that is, IUIIC are not attempting to oppose the realities of white supremacy in any practical way other than reforming their own community.

There appears to be a prediction of “super powers” in the future Kingdom, in which (according to one source) every Israelite will “run as fast as a gazelle, break steel with their bare hands, and be equipped with teleportation” (Malone, unpublished manuscript). Such predictions may be related to a trend in the Black religious tradition toward the divinisation of Blackness and Black humanity. This trend is evidenced clearly in the Nation of Islam offshoot, the Nation of Gods and Earths (aka Five Percenters), but is also present in the Black Coptic Church and some other Black Hebrew Israelite groups which blur the boundary between Israel and God. This sort of understanding also represents a ‘wish fulfilment’ aspect of IUIC beliefs: in casting themselves as the biblical “chosen people” who are more significant and important than any others, they seek to invert contemporary social hierarchies, fantasising about the coming age when they will vanquish their oppressors (or even those slightly higher in society than they), exact vengeance for their humiliations, and ultimately become superhuman. As such, these beliefs evidence what Leonard Cornell McKinnis calls an “assembled heroic identity” (McKinnis 2023, 15) which forms part of some Black religions’ “hermeneutic of counter-indoctrination” (2023, 156), by which they attempt to project above and beyond the regrettable contemporary circumstances.

Israel United in Christ place a particular interpretation on the prediction in Revelation 7 that 144,000 Israelites will survive Armageddon. They hold that this figure represents the leaders and there will also be a remnant of the Israelite population under their governance. The 144,000 will be responsible for setting order in the Kingdom; the rest will be citizens, ruled over—and according to one source, worshipping—the 144,000 (my initial source for this, a member who I met with regularly, told me that non-Israelites will be among the citizens, and that righteousness in behaviour is what saves rather than nationality; however, I have not heard the latter from any public IUIC authority). In addition, there will also be gentiles who are enslaved and taught by Israelites to live by the commandments.

Publications and Outreach

While Nathaniel is credited as sole author of the four official IUIC publications (Ben Israel 2006; 2015; 2025a; 2025b), the style of writing varies quite widely between and even within some texts, indicating that they may be communal compositions which are simply published under the leader’s name. With the exception of the almost travelogue-style *Island of Deception*, the texts themselves are largely quotations, either from the Bible or from an idiosyncratic selection of scholarly and pseudo-scholarly works (mostly from previous centuries), with sparse commentary when needed. In a grand act of intellectual flattening, blog posts, pseudo-scholarship, forgotten antique texts, and modern peer-reviewed journal articles are all selectively mined for quotes which run to several paragraphs and are presented on an equal footing to create the impression of a seamless narrative established via reference to generations of external sources. These are then interpreted via biblical sources. Through the framing and careful selection and ordering, the impression is given that one is simply reading the Bible and these other sources, and the guided interpretation is the natural one that needs no further explanation.

While books are occasionally published, the principal means of outreach is via street preaching, and a constant online output. Israel United in Christ have dozens of different channels on every popular social media site, including one for each regional chapter and individual channels for specific kinds of broadcast; they upload regularly to YouTube, including videos of street preaching and heated debates with passersby, planned classes on specific subjects, weekly missives from Nathaniel, and various other matters; their

uploaded content amounts to many thousands of hours. As well as being outreach, all content is monetised which provides an important source of income for the group. They also have their own subscription streaming service, [IUIC TV](#).

Israel United in Christ have recently concentrated on approaching Black Christian congregations, confronting them with arguments that Christianity is false and misleading (see, for example, a report on one such incident by Hinton, n.d.). As the largest and most prominent Black Hebrew Israelite group, IUIC are enthusiastically spreading their “gospel” across the globe; they engage in outreach in all countries where there are people of African descent, and their reception ranges from resistance (mostly from those content with the existing Church) to enthusiastic acceptance. Either way, they are bringing a radically new message of race consciousness and dignity as the Chosen People who have been oppressed by forces of evil but can liberate themselves by following the biblical Commandments. The new reading which they bring to existing scripture amounts to a striking revelation of a truth hidden in plain sight, and their thorough knowledge of the Bible and selective quotation from it allows them to articulate a convincing argument for reframing what is already familiar and recognised as sacred.

One particular tactic is the use of antiquated texts; books from previous centuries are frequently rolled out as discoveries, and specific passages are highlighted as evidence. For example, a random passage describing Jews as “Black,” which scholars understand in the context as meaning simply darker than the local population, will be read through the lens of modern racial categories. The fact that such statements are not made in modern literature is taken as evidence that a previously known truth is being covered up rather than that use of language has evolved (HaCohen 2018) or that previous generations’ speculations have been disproved. Selective and seemingly deliberate misreading is also common. In one famous example, a passage from Leonora E. Brown’s *The Negroes and the Jews* (1971, 211) is quoted, which appears to state that “The Negro’s claim to be a Jew is legitimate” (Ben Israel 2025a; 2025b). When the original text is examined, it becomes clear that this passage is actually Brown’s description of what was claimed by Abel Respes, a Black Hebrew Israelite rabbi from Chicago, when she interviewed him. In considering why this has not been obvious to those using it as support for their claims, we can note that in the first instance it appeared in Black Hebrew Israelite circles as a memed screenshot from GoogleBooks, and the top of the page begins with the phrase “the Negro’s claim.” It simply appears not to have been subjected to further examination once the initial appearance of support was noted, and as the quote spread, the original text was never consulted. Similar occurrences can be found in Nathanyel’s videos (for an example, see IUIC Events 2025) which show him reading from books such as *The Image of the Black in Western Art* (Bindman and Gates 2011) and the third edition (1834) of *Roget’s International Thesaurus*, enthusiastically highlighting a definition of Negro as “the image of God” without noticing that the phrase is in quotation marks, and the continuation of the sentence reads “cut in Ebony (Fuller)”; this is to say, it was a contemporaneously famous quote from Thomas Fuller’s *The Holy State and the Profane State* (1642) that identified Blacks as humans (being in the image of God means such), but with the characteristic of dark skin (“cut in ebony”). That this could be seen even by a casual viewer of the video demonstrates that there is not an intention to deceive or misrepresent at play, but rather a simple lack of interest in seeing anything other than confirmation of existing beliefs.

As with the Nation of Islam, there is much in IUIC that attracts people apart from the theology: the emphasis on community, the pride in self, and the ability to motivate people to improve their own lives, to become upstanding members of the community, and to commit to a family. Work is important (for men at

least) (Ben Israel 2015, 19). They also engage in community actions, such as waste cleanup, youth and crisis support, and prison outreach (Israel United in Christ 2025d). These aspects, which are bound up with a cosmic responsibility to the race and to God do not depend upon the specific Black Hebrew Israelite theology of identity or theology of revenge but are empowered by it.

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