

Ezrach' – Our new identity

A man who is physically uncircumcised, but who fulfills the law, will judge you who are a lawbreaker in spite of having the letter [of the law] and circumcision. For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, and [true] circumcision is not something visible in the flesh. On the contrary, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart—by the Spirit, not the letter. His praise is not from men but from God. - Romans 2:27-29 HCSB

Allow me to ask you a question that occurred to me years ago. I was reading in the book of Hebrews and I came across this passage.

- [Hebrews 2:14-15 HCSB](#) Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, He also shared in these, so that through His death He might destroy the one holding the power of death--that is, the Devil-- (15) and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.

Of what is the author speaking if not of salvation? The entire book of Hebrews deals with the superiority of Jesus. He is made out to be superior to Moses, superior to angels, superior to Melchizedek etc. So, the context is Jesus coming to save us. My question came from reading the next verse:

- [Hebrews 2:16 HCSB](#) For it is clear that He does not reach out to help angels, but to help Abraham's offspring.

The question that I asked myself was “Did the Messiah reach out to only the Jews with an offering of salvation or did He reach out to all who will believe? If salvation is offered to any human, regardless of race, then why did the author of Hebrews say that Christ reached out to Abraham’s offspring?”

The attempt to answer this question turned out to lead me into a whole new way of thinking about theology and about my own relationship with the Lord. I came to believe that one of the principle problems that many Jews and Gentiles have is that they have forgotten that Hashem can make a son of Abraham out of anyone He chooses! Listen to the message of John the Baptist:

- [Matthew 3:8-10](#) cp [Luke 3:8-9 HCSB](#) Therefore produce fruit consistent with repentance. (9) And don't presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones! (10) Even now the ax is ready to strike the root of the trees! Therefore every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Did you notice that John prefaced and ended this remarkable statement by pointing out that God was not looking for genetic lines but for spiritual fruit? The Jews in Jesus’ day (and unfortunately to this very day) forgot that they had not always been Jews! It was the Lord’s decision to approach our father Abraham and to teach Abraham the ways of the Lord that made the idea of Israel even possible!

- [Ezekiel 16:2-3 HCSB](#) "Son of man, explain Jerusalem's abominations to her. (3) You are to say: This is what the Lord GOD says to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth were in the land of the Canaanites. Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.

Abraham was not a Hebrew until God got hold of him. The Jews were not a people until God got hold of them. The Pharisees forgot that important fact. It is Adonai, not Abraham, who is the true primordial Jew. Adonai taught all the spiritual and ethical concepts we hold so dear to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. If the Jewish people, as a genetic tribe, have any advantage, it is only because Yah granted it.

In frustration with His recalcitrant people, Adonai cried out,

- **Ezekiel 16:4-6 HCSB** As for your birth, your umbilical cord wasn't cut on the day you were born, and you weren't washed clean with water. You were not rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. (5) No one cared *enough* about you to do even one of these things out of compassion for you. But you were thrown out into the open field because you were despised on the day you were born. (6) "I passed by you and saw you lying in your blood, and I said to you *as you lay* in your blood: Live! Yes, I said to you *as you lay* in your blood: Live!

In essence, He asserted, "You were nothing before I came along. I MADE you and you turned against me!"

If we examine the Torah we quickly ascertain that "Jewishness" was NEVER a biological but a spiritual imperative. For example, the same laws, including those regarding Passover, applied to both native Israelis and goyim (a Hebrew term for non-Jews).

- **Exodus 12:48-49 HCSB** If a foreigner resides with you and wants to celebrate the LORD's Passover, every male in his household must be circumcised, and then he may participate; he will become like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat it. (49) The same law will apply to both the native and the foreigner who resides among you.
- **Numbers 15:13-16 HCSB** "Every Israelite is to prepare these things in this way when he presents a fire offering as a pleasing aroma to the LORD. (14) When a foreigner resides with you or someone else is among you and wants to prepare a fire offering as a pleasing aroma to the LORD, he is to do exactly as you do throughout your generations. (15) The assembly is to have the same statute for both you and the foreign resident as a permanent statute throughout your generations. You and the foreigner will be alike before the LORD. (16) The same law and the same ordinance will apply to both you and the foreigner who resides with you."

Goyim who desired to serve the Lord and were willing to abide by Hashem's commandments were to receive the same consideration as a native-born Jew.

- **Leviticus 19:33-34 HCSB** (33) "When a foreigner lives with you in your land, you must not oppress him. (34) You must regard the foreigner who lives with you as the native-born among you. You are to love him as yourself, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.

Did you notice the reason Yahweh stated the foreign convert should be treated as a native-born Jew? It was because of who our God is. He is the source of "Jewishness." Those who follow Him are by definition Jews.

Let me give you a practical example. Do you remember Ruth? She was a Moabitess, a nation against which a curse had been laid! And yet when she vowed...

- **Ruth 1:16 HCSB** But Ruth replied: Do not persuade me to leave you or go back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.

...our merciful God did not merely allow her to live as a second-class citizen in the land, but according the Matthew 1:5 actually included her in the Messianic line! Even Israelis who refuse to admit the Messianic status of Jesus of Nazareth have to admit that Ruth became part of the royal line because by marrying Boaz she became the great grandmother of King David.

However, this principle cuts both ways. This is where the real sticking point is for Judaizers. This is the implication that they simply cannot abide. Just as a goy who chose to obey Hashem's commands could be considered a native Jew, a native Jew who rebelliously disregarded Hashem's mitzvot was cut off from the people. Just as a Goy who submitted to the laws could become a Jew, a Jew who stubbornly refused to obey could become a Goy.

- [Numbers 9:13-14 HCSB](#) "But the man who is ceremonially clean, is not on a journey, and yet fails to observe the Passover is to be cut off from his people, because he did not present the LORD's offering at its appointed time. That man will bear the consequences of his sin. (14) "If a foreigner resides with you and wants to observe the Passover to the LORD, he is to do so according to the Passover statute and its ordinances. You are to apply the same statute to both the foreign resident and the native of the land."
- [Numbers 15:29-31 HCSB](#) You are to have the same law for the person who acts in error, whether he is an Israelite or a foreigner who lives among you. (30) "But the person who acts defiantly, whether native or foreign resident, blasphemes the LORD, that person is to be cut off from his people. (31) He will certainly be cut off, because he has despised the LORD's word and broken His command; his guilt remains on him."

Note: For a more complete study of what it meant to be cut off and what it took to be cut off from the nation see Genesis 17:14; Exodus 12:15, 19; 30:33, 38; 31:14; Leviticus 7:20-21, 25, 27; 17:4, 9-10, 14; 18:29; 19:8; 20:2-3, 5-6, 17-18; 22:3; 23:29; Numbers 19:13, 20; Proverbs 2:22 cp 1 Kings 9:7 and Jeremiah 44:8; Ezekiel 5:11; 14:8; Romans 11:22

Clearly, because the laws we've looked at so far deal with the Passover, a religious act of grateful worship, we are not speaking merely of moral codes or civic laws designed to maintain order within society. Many people today would accept that we should follow the Ten Commandments or say that we should obey the moral dictates of the Old Covenant (with a few notable exceptions). However, we are saying that there is something far grander, far more worthwhile available. We are talking about an intimate, spiritual relationship with the Lord that in Hebrew is called *d'vekut*. So let's be clear on this issue. What do the Scriptures say are the direct consequences of a gentile, a goy, becoming a bondservant of the Lord?

First, consider the fact that Adonai will receive the petitions of the adopted Jew who by faith directs his prayers toward the Solomonic temple as surely as He will those of a born Jew.

- [1 Kings 8:41-43 cp 2 Chronicles 6:32-33 HCSB](#) Even for the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of Your name-- (42) for they will hear of Your great name, mighty hand, and outstretched arm, and will come and pray toward this temple-- (43) may You hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and do according to all the foreigner asks You for. Then all the people on earth will know Your name, to fear You as Your people Israel do and know that this temple I have built is called by Your name.

Isaiah, one of the most important and most highly regarded of Israel's prophets, predicted this principle would be amplified in the future. He predicted that when Israel would be reestablished (with Gentile nations aiding them as we saw at the end of World War II) foreigners would be united with the house of Jacob.

- [Isaiah 14:1 HCSB](#) For the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will choose Israel again. He will settle them on their own land. The foreigner will join them and be united with the house of Jacob.

Hashem gave a word of comfort and assurance to the goyim who desire to become adopted into His strange and glorious nation. He said, "If you desire to convert, I will not exclude you."

- [Isaiah 56:3 HCSB](#) No foreigner who has converted to the LORD should say, "The LORD will exclude me from His people"; and the eunuch should not say, "Look, I am a dried-up tree."

He went on to say that adopted Jews will be allowed to pray on the holy mountain and rejoice in God's house of prayer. Their sacrifices of praise and their burnt offerings will be just as accepted on the altar as those of the born Jew.

- [Isaiah 56:6-8 HCSB](#) And the foreigners who convert to the LORD, minister to Him, love the LORD's name, and are His servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it, and who hold firmly to My covenant-- (7) I will bring them to My holy mountain and let them rejoice in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar, for My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." (8) *This is the declaration of the Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel: "I will gather to them still others besides those already gathered."*

In fact, besides the honor of being part of God's people, besides the honor of being able to worship in the Lord's house of prayer, some of us adopted Jews may actually get to serve as priests in the Messiah's Millennial temple!

- [Isaiah 66:18-21 HCSB](#) "Knowing their works and their thoughts, I have come to gather all nations and languages; they will come and see My glory. (19) I will establish a sign among them, and I will send survivors from them to the nations--to Tarshish, Put, Lud (who are archers), Tubal, Javan, and the islands far away--who have not heard of My fame or seen My glory. And they will proclaim My glory among the nations. (20) They will bring all your brothers from all the nations as a gift to the LORD on horses and chariots, in litters, and on mules and camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring an offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. (21) I will also take some of them as priests and Levites," says the LORD.

Isaiah predicted that the goyim would be given the opportunity to be a part of the priesthood. He predicted that the Jews would suffer a Diaspora, a scattering, and that during that time they would proclaim Adonai's glory to all the nations (can anyone say "New Testament", or "Apostle Paul"?). Then, later, the Gentiles would bring "your brothers" (their Jewish descendents) back. It's clear that it's goyim doing this because it compares them to the Israelites (i.e. "just as the Israelites bring an offering"). Referring to those fortunate Gentiles, the Lord said through Isaiah "I will also take some of them as priests and Levites."

It was the prophet Isaiah who penned a verse that is truly the prayer of the Adonaist, those grafted onto the branch of Israel!

- [Isaiah 63:16 HCSB](#) Yet You are our Father, even though Abraham does not know us and Israel doesn't recognize us. You, LORD, are our Father; from ancient times, Your name is our Redeemer.

According to Ezekiel, adopted Jews will even receive an inheritance of land from whatever tribe in which he has chosen to reside.

- [Ezekiel 47:21-23 HCSB](#) "You are to divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. (22) You will allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the foreigners living among you, who have fathered children among you. You will treat them like native-born Israelites; along with you, they will be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. (23) In whatever tribe the foreigner lives, you will assign his inheritance there." *This is the declaration of the Lord GOD.*

The good news that anyone may be adopted into Adonai's family and become, along with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, one of God's people was continued in the Brit Hadashah, the New Covenant. The Master reiterated that it was "whoever does the will of the Father", not whoever is born to a certain genetic line, that formed His family.

- [Matthew 12:50 HCSB](#) **For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven, that person is My brother and sister and mother."**

This principle sheds light on what our brother Paul meant when he said that Jews are not necessarily biological descendents of Israel. According to him our citizenship is based on our willingness to, by faith, follow God and obey Him.

- **Romans 9:6-8 HCSB** But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. (7) Neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants. On the contrary, in Isaac your seed will be called. (8) That is, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but the children of the promise are considered seed.
- **Romans 2:28-29 HCSB** For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, and *true* circumcision is not something visible in the flesh. (29) On the contrary, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart--by the Spirit, not the letter. His praise is not from men but from God.

Or, perhaps listen to the Lord Himself as He spoke through the Apostle John in the book of Revelation.

- **Revelation 2:9 HCSB** I know your tribulation and poverty, yet you are rich. *I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*
- **Revelation 3:9 HCSB** Take note! I will make those from the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews and are not, but are lying--note this--I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and they will know that I have loved you.

Out of His infinite mercy and grace, Adonai has chosen to make a nation out of a people who are not otherwise related.

- **Romans 9:23-26 HCSB** And *what if* He did this to make known the riches of His glory on objects of mercy that He prepared beforehand for glory-- (24) on us whom He also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? (25) As He also says in Hosea: I will call "Not-My-People," "My-People," and she who is "Unloved," "Beloved." (26) And it will be in the place where they were told, you are not My people, there they will be called sons of the living God.

Immutable God has once again proven that He does not change. This adoption process has ALWAYS been a matter of faith and grace. Salvation came just as surely by faith through grace in the Old Covenant as it did in the New.

- **Galatians 3:6-7 HCSB** Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness, (7) so understand that those who have faith are Abraham's sons. Paul told us that there is no difference between Jew or Gentile among believers.
- **Galatians 3:27-28 HCSB** For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29)

Many Gentiles have presumptuously taken that to mean that we are all Gentiles! But if we carefully consider the very next verse along with the preponderance of the Scriptures we realize that it is the opposite! We are all God's people if we have been adopted into His nation. To be a believer is to be a Jew.

- **Galatians 3:29 HCSB** And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

One cannot claim to have Yahweh as his father, the Messiah Jesus as his brother and state "I am not a Jew." If you are not a Jew then you are not one of God's people! You are not saved!

We may have once been disparate nations, but no longer. We may have once been foreigners, but no longer. Hashem has taken born Jews and adopted Jews and made of them one sovereign nation.

- **Ephesians 2:11-19 HCSB** So then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh--called "the uncircumcised" by those called "the circumcised," done by hand

in the flesh. (12) At that time you were without the Messiah, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, with no hope and without God in the world. (13) But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah. (14) For He is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In His flesh, (15) He did away with the law of the commandments in regulations, so that He might create in Himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. (16) *He did this* so that He might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross and put the hostility to death by it. (17) When *Christ* came, He proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. (18) For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. (19) So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household,

I bring you the good news that Goyish believers are co-heirs, members of the same body and partners of the promise extended to the House of Israel.

- **Ephesians 3:4-6 HCSB** By reading this you are able to understand my insight about the mystery of the Messiah. (5) This was not made known to people in other generations as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: (6) the Gentiles are co-heirs, members of the same body, and partners of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.
- **Revelation 1:5-6 HCSB** and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has set us free from our sins by His blood, (6) and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father--to Him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Since it is God who makes one a Jew, it is not the one who is outwardly circumcised but the one who has conformed his heart inwardly who becomes the true Jew (Romans 2:27-29). Just as in Abraham's case, this is done by simple faith (James 2:23) which can be credited to us as righteousness (Galatians 3:6-9).

This deceptively simple act necessitates "circumcision of the heart" rather than of the flesh. This was as true in the Old Covenant...

- **Deuteronomy 30:6 HCSB** The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants, and you will love Him with all your heart and all your soul, so that you will live.
- as it is true in the New...
- **Jeremiah 31:31-34 HCSB** "Look, the days are coming"--*this is* the LORD's declaration--"when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. (32) *This one will not be like the covenant I made* with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt--a covenant they broke even though I had married them"--the LORD's declaration. (33) "Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days"--the LORD's declaration. "I will place My law within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. (34) No longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying: Know the LORD, for they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them"--the LORD's declaration. "For I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sin."

Becoming a true son of Abraham involves repentance of sin, baptism by the Holy Spirit, baptism by water and the production of fruit that is consistent with our repentance. It also involves receiving a new spirit and transforming our outer lives to reflect the new man within us through careful observance of God's ordinances.

- **Ezekiel 11:19-20 HCSB** And I will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove their heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of

flesh, (20) so they may follow My statutes, keep My ordinances, and practice them. Then they will be My people, and I will be their God.

- [Ezekiel 36:25-27 HCSB](#) I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. (26) I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (27) I will place My Spirit within you and cause you to follow My statutes and carefully observe My ordinances.

According to that last verse, the difference now is that with the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and empowering us to produce healthy spiritual fruit, we can actually observe those ordinances.

What am I saying? Am I saying that “Fiddler on the Roof” must be our favorite movie? Am I saying that we all need to start wearing kippot and beards or eating gefilte fish? No. I’m saying that we need to carefully examine the implications of being Jewish and allow ourselves to explore that culture, only adopting those aspects which are biblical, relevant and useful.

For example, we can practice many of the feasts that Adonai instituted in the Old Covenant. Obviously, we don’t need to make sacrifices for our sins. The Messiah was the perfect, once-for-all sacrifice. However, there were many feasts that had nothing to do with sin. Many of us will soon be observing Rosh Hashanah, a festival that celebrates the fact that God created us, invited us into His nation and wants to be our King. Can anyone provide me with any biblical reason why any of that is wrong? Ten days, later we will observe Yom Kippur. We will spend a day in fasting and mediation on our sinful natures, confess our sins to the Lord and ask for His mercy. What is scripturally wrong with that? Nothing.

Am I saying that EVERYONE has to observe these and other feasts? No. But anyone may if they choose to. Those who observe the feasts should not criticize those who do not. Those who choose a more Gentile culture should not criticize those who embrace their Jewishness. I would encourage them to consider Romans 12’s admonition to not be conformed to this world’s culture but instead to be renewed by the transforming of their minds. Listen to the apostle Paul as he specifically addresses this issue.

- [Romans 14:4-7 HCSB](#) Who are you to criticize another's household slave? Before his own Lord he stands or falls. And stand he will! For the Lord is able to make him stand. (5) One person considers one day to be above another day. Someone else considers every day to be the same. Each one must be fully convinced in his own mind. (6) Whoever observes the day, observes it to the Lord. Whoever eats, eats to the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; and whoever does not eat, it is to the Lord that he does not eat, yet he thanks God. (7) For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.

If we are firmly convinced that a particular kabbalah or tradition is useful and does not contradict the Scriptures, we are free to observe it as long as we consider one more stricture – we must not cause our brother to stumble. Listen to Paul as he continues:

- [Romans 14:13-17 HCSB](#) Therefore, let us no longer criticize one another, but instead decide not to put a stumbling block or pitfall in your brother's way. (14) (I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. Still, to someone who considers a thing to be unclean, to that one it is unclean.) (15) For if your brother is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer walking according to love. By what you eat, do not destroy that one for whom Christ died. (16) Therefore, do not let your good be slandered, (17) for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Jewishness is a matter of the heart. It is about submitting one’s self to the dictates of the Sovereign King of the universe. It is about obeying the ultimate command of loving God and

loving one's fellow man. How could such a condition allow us to get involved in schism and foolish debate?

- **1 Timothy 1:3-8 HCSB** As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach other doctrine (4) or to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies. These promote empty speculations rather than God's plan, which operates by faith. (5) Now the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. (6) Some have deviated from these and turned aside to fruitless discussion. (7) They want to be teachers of the law, although they don't understand what they are saying or what they are insisting on. (8) Now we know that the law is good, provided one uses it legitimately.
- **Titus 3:9-11 HCSB** But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. (10) Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning, (11) knowing that such a person is perverted and sins, being self-condemned.

The term ezrach' is Hebrew for citizen. Because of Hashem's grace and mercy we can become citizens of this new country. Brothers and sisters, to be a believer, an Adonaic Christian, someone who takes the Messiah not only as Savior but as Sovereign King – IS TO BE A JEW! Do not pull back from your new identity, but relish it for the honor it is.