

Nitzavim "Ye Stand" Devarim 29:10-30:20
Va'yelech "And walked" Devarim 31:1-30

From the beginning of the book of Devarim/Deuteronomy we have focused on the fact that this book is written in the form of a classic Suzerain-Vassal covenant. A Suzerain-Vassal covenant is a conditional covenant made between a sovereign or king and one of his subject kings or vassals. The great king – the suzerain or emperor – has absolute right of sovereignty, demanding absolute loyalty and servitude. In return for this loving loyalty and service, the king or suzerain promises protection of the subject king's realm and dynasty. This relationship is conditioned on the vassal's faithfulness and loyalty to the suzerain. The vassal or subject king must pledge absolute loyalty to his suzerain. The vassal or subject must "love" his sovereign and both serve him and rely upon him exclusively. There are numerous examples of this type of covenant in the Scriptures, the greatest of these being the covenant with Abraham¹ and the Sinai Covenant.²

The Suzerain-Vassal covenant was very common in the Ancient Near East. Ancient Near Eastern Suzerain-Vassal treaties followed a specific pattern: a preamble explaining whom the treaty was with, a historical prologue explaining how and why the treaty came about, the details of the provisions and conditions of the treaty, a list of curses and blessings for keeping or violating the treaty, and conditions for the continuation of the treaty from generation to generation. With this information as background, we may now look at a simple outline of the book of Devarim and see how it exhibits a very similar pattern.

- PROLOGUE 1:1-5
- HISTORICAL BACKGROUND 1:6-4:49
- MAIN PROVISIONS AND CONDITIONS 5:1-26:19
- BLESSINGS AND CURSES 27:1-30:20
- PROVISION FOR CONTINUATION 31:1-32:29³

We must understand that these chapter and verse divisions should not be seen as rigid, but as the focus of various themes within sections. In other words, we may find words of blessings and curses outside the parameters of Deuteronomy 27:1-30:20. We clearly see this reality in our Torah portions this week. Our portions begin with Moses encouraging the children of Israel to enter into and ratify the covenant that YHWH made with their fathers at Mount Sinai.

Here we must remember that the generation that came out of Egypt, walked through the Red Sea, stood around Mount Sinai, heard the voice of YHWH ELOHIM coming from the fire and smoke on top of the mountain, and agreed to do all that they heard YHWH say is not the same generation that is now preparing to enter the promised land. The generation that Moses is speaking to in our portion is the generation that came of age in the wilderness. This is the second generation of the children of Israel. At the heart of this portion is Moses' encouragement to the children of Israel to remain in and to keep the Suzerain-Vassal covenant that YHWH had made with their fathers. There are a number of important lessons to be gleaned from this portion, not the least of which is the reality that every generation needs to enter into and confirm this covenant for itself.

From the beginning YHWH has made covenants with the patriarchs and their seed after them.

Genesis 12:7 *And YHWH appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto YHWH, who appeared unto him.*

Genesis 13:15 *For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. ¹⁶And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.*

Genesis 15:5 And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

Genesis 15:13 And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; ¹⁴and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. ¹⁵And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. ¹⁷And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. ¹⁸In the same day YHWH made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.

Genesis 17:7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be an Elohim unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. ⁸And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their Elohim. ⁹And Elohim said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep My covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. ¹⁰This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

Genesis 22:17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; ¹⁸and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice.

Genesis 24:7 YHWH ELOHIM of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; He shall send His angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

Genesis 26:3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; ⁴and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 26:24 And YHWH appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the Elohim of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for My servant Abraham's sake.

Genesis 28:13 And, behold, YHWH stood above it, and said, I am YHWH Elohim of Abraham thy father, and the Elohim of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; ¹⁴and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 35:12 And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

Genesis 48:4 *And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.*

It is important to understand that nothing is to be assumed as automatic in these matters of the covenant blessings. In the covenants that YHWH made with the patriarchs He made provision for the continuation of the covenant blessings to their children and to their children's children. The mere fact that there is a provision for the continuation of the covenant relationship to succeeding generations does not, however, mean that the next generation automatically inherits the blessings of the covenant. This provision of continuation intends only to say that there is an opportunity for each succeeding generation to enter into and maintain the conditions of the previous covenant. In simple terms, the conditions of the original covenant relationship are extended to the succeeding generation. If the succeeding generation keeps the conditions of the original covenant, then they too shall inherit the blessings of the original covenant relationship.

We may witness the reality of this truth with the Abrahamic Covenant. While many teachers claim that the Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional Royal Grant type covenant, I strongly disagree. The evidence that the Abrahamic Covenant is a conditional covenant of the Suzerain-Vassal type is found in the Torah itself.

Many point to Genesis 12:1-3 as being the Abrahamic Covenant.

Genesis 12:1 *Now YHWH had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: ²and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ³and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

There is no real covenant language in this passage. There are no conditions, no sacrifices of ratification, and no sign of a covenant as is the case with every other covenant. These verses of election are merely a promise of a future covenant being made with Abraham and his descendants. The same may be said about the second reference of the promised gift of land.

Genesis 13:14 *And YHWH said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: ¹⁵for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. ¹⁶And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.*

Both of these passages simply point forward to a yet to-be-experienced event. It is not until Genesis 15 that YHWH actually makes a covenant with Abraham.

Genesis 15:7 *And He said unto him, I am YHWH that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. ⁸And he said, Adonai YHWH, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? ⁹And He said unto him, Take Me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. ¹⁰And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. ¹¹And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. ¹²And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. ¹³And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; ¹⁴and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. ¹⁵And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace;*

thou shalt be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. ¹⁷And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. ¹⁸**In the same day YHWH made a covenant with Abram**, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: ¹⁹the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, ²⁰and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, ²¹and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

Here we witness the actual "cutting" of the covenant between YHWH and Abraham. We should note the specific declaration that it was "**In the same day YHWH made a covenant with Abram.**" We should also note that there is no sign or token of this covenant given. The sign of the covenant would be given later in Genesis 17.

Genesis 17:2 And I will make My covenant between Me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. ³And Abram fell on his face: and Elohim talked with him, saying, ⁴as for Me, behold, My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. ⁵Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. ⁶And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. ⁷And I **will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant**, to be an Elohim unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. ⁸And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their Elohim. ⁹And Elohim said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep My covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. ¹⁰This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and **it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you.** ¹²And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

I firmly believe that Genesis 15 and Genesis 17 are two halves of the very same covenant. YHWH enters into the covenant between Himself and Abraham by passing through the cutting of the pieces in Genesis 15, while Abraham's seed enters into the covenant by passing through the cutting of circumcision in Genesis 17. With this said, we must understand that this covenant is only in effect as long as those who lay claim to it keep the conditions of the covenant.

In the Abrahamic Covenant, YHWH promises Abraham that his descendants will be the chosen seed and that they will be the prime candidates to inherit the chosen land. YHWH is promising that of all the many nations and peoples of the earth, it will be the chosen seed of Abraham that will be given the opportunity to inherit the chosen land. But if the children of Israel do not take this opportunity and keep the conditions of the covenant, they will not inherit the land, but will indeed be driven from it.⁴

While this covenant was made with Abraham, we witness that each succeeding generation must confirm their willingness to enter wholeheartedly into the covenant. In the Torah we witness YHWH repeating the covenant of Abraham to Isaac and again to Jacob as each patriarch's story unfolds.

Genesis 26:1 And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. ²And YHWH appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into

Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: ³sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; ⁴and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; ⁵because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws. ⁶And Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

Genesis 28:10 *And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. ¹¹And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. ¹²And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of Elohim ascending and descending on it. ¹³And, behold, YHWH stood above it, and said, I am YHWH the Elohim of Abraham thy father, and the Elohim of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; ¹⁴and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. ¹⁶And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely YHWH is in this place; and I knew it not. ¹⁷And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of Elohim, and this is the gate of heaven. ¹⁸And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. ¹⁹And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.*

What we learn from this pattern is the fact that YHWH structured the covenants in such a way that each generation is given the opportunity to continue in the covenant relationship. We are not to assume, however, that remaining in the covenant is automatic. Each generation must take upon itself the yoke of the conditions of the covenant if they desire the covenant blessings. In other words, it is not what our parents did that causes us to inherit the blessings of the covenant, but what we do.

Deuteronomy 24:16 *The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.*

Ezekiel 18:1 *The word of YHWH came unto me again, saying, ²What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? ³As I live, saith Adonai YHWH, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. ⁴Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*

While stated in the negative, we may understand from these two passages the truth that we stand before YHWH as accountable for our own behaviors. We will not be judged based upon what our ancestors did, either good or bad. We must also realize, however, that the mere fact that our ancestors entered the covenant and kept the Torah does not mean that we automatically belong to the children of Israel. According to our portion the right to continue the covenant is unconditionally given to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but enjoying the benefits of the covenant requires that we enter into the covenant ourselves. Each generation that received the yoke of Torah upon itself lived peacefully and joyfully in the land of promise, but the generation that failed to take on this yoke was removed from the land regardless of what

its parents did. This brings us to another similar truth revealed in the opening chapter of our portion.

Just as we may not assume special status based upon the past actions of our ancestors, we also may not assume special status based upon our biological DNA. Merely being a blood relative of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob does not guarantee one's place among the covenant people of YHWH. This is made dramatically clear in the fact that those who were scattered to the ends of the earth from the land of Israel were the biological descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This truth is likewise made clear in our Torah portion.

Deuteronomy 29:10 *Ye stand this day all of you before YHWH your Elohim; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, ¹¹your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water: ¹²that thou shouldest enter into covenant with YHWH thy Elohim, and into His oath, which YHWH thy Elohim maketh with thee this day: ¹³that He may establish thee to day for a people unto Himself, and that He may be unto thee an Elohim, as He hath said unto thee, and as He hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. ¹⁴Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; ¹⁵but with him that standeth here with us this day before YHWH our Elohim, and also with him that is not here with us this day: ¹⁶(For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by; ¹⁷and ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them:)*

Here Moses encourages the second generation to embrace the yoke of Torah and enter into the covenant that their fathers entered into at Mount Sinai. We should note that no one is to be excluded from this opportunity to become a part of the people of YHWH. By including the men, the women, the children, the strangers, the wood hewers, and the drawers of water, Moses includes every socioeconomic group among the children of Israel. Moses' message is very clear – the Torah is for everyone. Keeping the Torah is not just for the religious elite. Keeping the Torah is the responsibility of everyone who claims to be a member of the children of Israel, YHWH'S covenant people.

What is also quite evident in this teaching is that keeping the Torah is NOT limited to those who claim a biological bloodline connection with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Included in this teaching are the strangers, or *gerim*. The *ger* is a Gentile who has come to live among the children of Israel. He has no inheritance at present in the land of Israel, and is therefore often included among the list of those who eat from YHWH'S provision and enjoy YHWH'S protection.

Deuteronomy 10:18 *He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.*

Deuteronomy 14:29 *And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that YHWH thy Elohim may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.*

Deuteronomy 16:11 *And thou shalt rejoice before YHWH thy Elohim, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which YHWH thy Elohim hath chosen to place His name there.*

Deuteronomy 16:14 *And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates.*

Deuteronomy 24:20 *When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. ²¹When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.*

Deuteronomy 26:12 *When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; ¹³then thou shalt say before YHWH thy Elohim, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all Thy commandments which Thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed Thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them.*

Deuteronomy 27:19 *Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.*

The *ger*, or stranger, is clearly able to embrace the Torah and enjoy its blessings. The *ger* who keeps the Torah is considered to be a part of the children of Israel, and enjoys the same blessings and benefits of the covenant people. Here we may remember who the drawers of water and the hewers of wood were. At the time of Joshua's conquest of the land, the men of Gibeon in the land of Canaan deceived Joshua and the men of Israel into believing that they were from a distant land. As *gerim*, they persuaded Joshua to enter into a covenant with them, promising that they would never war with each other. Joshua entered into the covenant, only to discover that he had been deceived.

Joshua 9:21 *And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them. ²²And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us? ²³Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my Elohim. ²⁴And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that YHWH thy Elohim commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing. ²⁵And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do. ²⁶And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. ²⁷And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of YHWH, even unto this day, in the place which He should choose.*

These *gerim* were not blood descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but it is clear that even these drawers of water and hewers of wood were given the opportunity to submit to the yoke of Torah, to enter the covenant, and to be considered the people of YHWH. We should also note that Moses states plainly that this covenant is not just for the descendants of those who stood at Mount Sinai.

Deuteronomy 29:14 *Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; ¹⁵but with him that standeth here **with us** this day before YHWH our Elohim, and also with him that is not here **with us** this day.*

It is clear that Moses is including those who are not biological descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in this opportunity to become part of the people of YHWH. The biological descendants are referred to in this passage by the pronouns "you" and "us." Those who are not biological descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are those who are referred to as "standing with" the biological descendants. This is the same image that we see at Mount Sinai. We must recall that it was a mixed multitude that came out of Egypt and stood around Mount Sinai to receive the revelation of the Torah.

Deuteronomy 29:16 *For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by.*

Exodus 12:38 *And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.*

From the beginning of the Sinai Covenant there have always been people other than the biological descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob counted among the children of Israel as the covenant people of YHWH. As other peoples saw the power of YHWH present in the events surrounding the people of Israel and the character of YHWH emblazoned upon their hearts, they were drawn to join themselves to the children of Israel and their Elohim. This truth – that the Torah is for everyone – is extremely important for us to understand, for it is at the very heart of the gospel of Messiah.

Undoubtedly the prophetic events proclaimed in our Torah portions this week have already been fulfilled in part. A generation of the children of Israel failed to keep the Torah, and YHWH scattered them to the ends of the earth.

Deuteronomy 29:24 *Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath YHWH done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? ²⁵Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of YHWH Elohim their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt: ²⁶for they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom He had not given unto them: ²⁷and the anger of YHWH was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book: ²⁸and YHWH rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.*

Deuteronomy 30:1 *And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither YHWH thy Elohim hath driven thee.*

Deuteronomy 31:16 *And YHWH said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the elohim of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake Me, and break My covenant which I have made with them. ¹⁷Then My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our Elohim is not among us? ¹⁸And I will surely hide My face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.*

Because of the failure of the children of Israel to renew the covenant, they were indeed scattered to the ends of the earth. But just as YHWH promised to scatter them, He also promised to forgive and gather them again unto the land.

Deuteronomy 30:2 *And shalt return unto YHWH thy Elohim, and shalt obey His voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; ³that then YHWH thy Elohim will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither YHWH thy Elohim hath scattered thee. ⁴If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will YHWH thy Elohim gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee: ⁵and YHWH thy Elohim will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and He will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. ⁶And YHWH thy Elohim will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love YHWH thy Elohim with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*

Here we must realize that the scattering of Israel, while a chastisement for forsaking the covenant, also serves as a means of spreading the message of the One True Elohim, YHWH. Thus just as Israel drew people out of Egypt and possibly gathered people as they passed through the nations on the way to the promise land, so we should expect that as we repent and begin living the Torah to the extent that we are able in exile, we will draw others with us. Understanding that these *gerim* may join us in the restoration of the covenant is extremely important.

It is a shame that so many believers hear the calling of the Spirit of the Holy One to embrace this covenant relationship with YHWH and to accept the yoke of Torah, and yet feel that this cannot be true because they are not Jews. There are many more within the modern Messianic Movement that are driving themselves crazy searching family histories and genealogies hoping to find someone somewhere in their genetic past that at least knew a Jew. But all of this searching is in vain. One does not need to be a biological descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be a member of the covenant; one only needs to keep the Torah. The apostle Shaul makes it very clear that it is not a matter of genealogy or biological descent.

1 Timothy 1:4 *Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.*

Titus 3:9 *But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.*

Romans 9:6 *Not as though the word of Elohim hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.*

Romans 4:16 *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.*

Romans 9:7 *Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. ⁸That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of Elohim: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

Galatians 3:6 *Even as Abraham believed Elohim, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. ⁷Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. ⁸And the Scripture, foreseeing that Elohim would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. ⁹So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

Messiah likewise emphasized the fact that becoming a part of the covenant people of YHWH is not a mere matter of biology.

Matthew 3:9 *And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that Elohim is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*

John 8:39 *They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Yeshua saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. ⁴⁰But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of Elohim: this did not Abraham. ⁴¹Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even Elohim. ⁴²Yeshua said unto them, If Elohim were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from Elohim; neither came I of myself, but He sent me. ⁴³Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. ⁴⁴Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

Here Yeshua makes it clear that merely being a biological descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not the criterion for being a member of the covenant people of YHWH; it is rather doing the works and having the heart of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As Yeshua stated quite emphatically, YHWH can raise up children to Abraham from the very stones. We should therefore clearly understand from this teaching that Israel is defined by the doing of Torah and the keeping of the covenant, not by bloodlines and genealogies. A biological descendant of the patriarchs that does not keep the covenant is no different from a heathen. On the other hand, a Gentile who keeps the covenant is no different from the children of Israel. Therefore we may take the message of the Torah as Moses received it and as Yeshua taught it, take it to the nations where we've been scattered, and invite the world with the words of Yeshua:

Matthew 11:28 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

This has been our commission in exile.

Matthew 28:18 *And Yeshua came and spake unto them, saying, All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: ²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

¹ Genesis 15:9-21, 17:1ff

² Exodus 19-24

³ Ryrie Study Bible KJV, Moody Press, Pg. 277

⁴ Leviticus 18:24-30