

The New and Everlasting Covenant

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Yeshua:

I often hear Christians say, "we are no longer under the Law." True, I reply. You're a Gentile. You were never under the Mosaic Law, to begin with. So, if the Gentiles have nothing that legally binds them to the Old Covenant, why do they make such a big deal about *not* being under it? The answer might surprise you. Let's find out.

The Lord declared His future promise to Israel that He would one day make a New Covenant with them; as it is written:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34, NKJV).ⁱ

On the night of the Last Supper, considered to be a Passover Seder, Yeshua officiated this New Covenant with His disciples, saying: *"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28)*. All twelve of these men were Jews, affirming Yeshua's statement when He said, *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24)*.

The Apostle Paul made this supportive declaration regarding the New Covenant for Israel when he said, *"For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God" (Romans 9:3-5)*.

Yes, according to this verse, to Israel belong *all* the promises, and I mean 100-percent of everything that is of God's Kingdom. *"Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).*

And to the Gentiles belonged how much of these promises? Paul said, *"At that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).*

This raises a serious question. If the New Covenant is explicitly called out in scripture for Israel, and Yeshua was only sent to gather the lost sheep of Israel, then wherein do we find that God has entered any covenant with the Gentiles?

During my time serving the Lord as a Christian Jew, I have frequently been asked questions about Gentile identity in Christ. Some have asked, "Are we second class citizens in the Kingdom?" Others have asked me, "Are we not equal with the Jews?" If so, why does the entire bible seemingly talk only about Israel as the chosen ones and God's special possession?

My brethren, no, you are not second-class citizens, and yes, you are equal with the Jews. But let me say this. If you must ask these questions, is it possible you are confused about your identity in Christ? After all, I have never asked another Jew, "Hey Shmuley, do you think I'm a second-class Jew?" Of course not.

I am finding another growing problem in the Christian community. Quite a few Gentile Christians tell me they now believe they are Jewish because they have accepted Jesus, who was a Jew. Or worse, they tell me they have decided to keep the Law of Moses, some even trying to keep kosher. Ouch! After I was born again, the Lord spent several years stripping away the legalism of the law that had been programmed into my brain. Paul said, *"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4).*

None of us are under the Law of Moses as a means of salvation. No, not one jot or tittle. Of course, we know that God's grace is not a license to sin. But our salvation is secure in knowing that Christ's work on the cross is finished. We have been cleansed from our sin, not covered, cleansed, purified, and sanctified for eternal life in Him.

But isn't God's law eternally binding on the Jewish people, including the law of circumcision? Yes, for it is written, *"And the statutes, the ordinances, the law, and the commandment which He wrote for you, you shall be careful to observe forever; you shall not fear other gods" (2 Kings 17:37).* However, I am not speaking to the Jews. I am speaking to the Gentiles.

So, why all the confusion surrounding the Old Covenant and the Law of Moses? I think the answer comes from an improper understanding of New Covenant terminology. Let me explain.

In scripture, the Lord refers to Christ as the "everlasting covenant."ⁱⁱ It is written, *"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3).* "He was in the

world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him" (John 1:10). Because creation was made through Christ, all humanity is born with the natural law of Christ on their hearts.ⁱⁱⁱ However, to Israel, God further gave His written law—the Torah.

And because we have *all* fallen short of both God's natural and written law,^{iv} He declared, *"The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, Because they have transgressed the laws, Changed the ordinance, Broken the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24:5).* Yes, the earth has broken the everlasting covenant, who is Christ, *"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).*

Therefore, the Lord has declared that He will make a new *everlasting* covenant with all His creation. To the Jews, He declared, *"For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery for burnt offering; I will direct their work in truth, And will make with them [Israel] an everlasting covenant. Their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles, And their offspring among the people. All who see them shall acknowledge them, That they are the posterity whom the Lord has blessed" (Isaiah 61:8-9).*

And to the Gentiles, the Lord declared, *"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price... Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—The sure mercies of David. Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people. Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations who do not know you shall run to you, Because of the Lord your God, And the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you" (Isaiah 55:1-5).*

I love this. The Gentiles were promised nothing under the Old Covenant. And now the Lord is saying, come and buy what I promised to Israel, and without any cost, I might add. In other words, this gift of God is completely free. *"Even so through one Man's [Christ] righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life" (Romans 5:8); "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6).*

And this is the most important piece to understand. The everlasting covenant, which is Christ, is the same and equal covenant that was promised through Abraham to both Jew and Gentile, allowing God to establish this covenant independently with each. As it is written, *"As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you [Abraham], and you shall be a father of many nations" (Genesis 17:4); "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, In you all the nations shall be blessed" (Galatians 3:8).*

In other words, the covenant with the Gentiles does not have to be administered through the nation of Israel, nor does it make the Jewish people, intermediaries to God's covenant with the Gentiles.^v No, God has made his everlasting covenant with each—His sovereign work of

salvation amongst the nations. And for this reason, there is now full equality between Jew and Gentile.

It also does not require the Gentiles to become Jewish to enter the covenant, and surely, does not require the Jews to relinquish their unique identity either. We have each been uniquely created in the image of Christ, one people of God comprised of every tongue, tribe, nation, and people on the face of the earth, to worship Him with the diversity of culture, language, and ethnicity He has given each of us. The early Apostles recognized this uniqueness at the Council of Jerusalem and did not put a yoke on the neck of the Gentiles, which our Jewish fathers were not able to bear.^{vi}

Christ is the mediator of this new everlasting covenant to both Jew and Gentile. However, because the Jewish people were under the bondage of an Old Covenant, the Lord had to officiate a New Covenant with Israel to free us from the condemnation of the old; as it is written, *"Your covenant with death will be annulled" (Isaiah 28:18), "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).*

And so, to the Jew, we are under the *new* everlasting covenant (emphasis on new), free from the condemnation and judgment of the Old Covenant—the written law. And to the Gentiles, you are under the new *everlasting* covenant (emphasis on everlasting), free from the condemnation of the natural—unwritten law of sin and death.

I believe the error of the church has been in teaching that the Gentiles are under the New Covenant as a dispensational replacement for the old, i.e., what is called supersessionism or replacement theology. By somehow believing that the church is the replacement for Israel, the Gentiles have tried to find their identity in Christ either inclusively through a Jewish lens (trying to become Jewish), or exclusively through a Gentile one (trying to fully separate from their Hebraic foundation). Neither is accurate.

The church is not comprised of just the nation of Israel. The church is Israel, plus the Gentile nations joined to her. Paul refers to this as the "commonwealth of Israel."^{vii} And he uses the analogy of a cultivate Olive tree to illustrate this great mystery. The tree is comprised of natural branches (Israelites), and wild ones (the Gentiles), who have been grafted in contrary to nature.

The tree is Christ, and the root is the fathers, the foundation of the church, connecting both the Jew and Gentile to Abraham—the father of many nations. As it is written, *"Foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed'" (Galatians 3:8).*

"Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all" (Romans 4:16). "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).

Now you begin to see why there is full equality between Jew and Gentile. God has sovereignly established his everlasting covenant with each. Paul said it like this, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:28). Paul was not saying that we lose our identity in Christ. He was declaring that we will discover it, the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham, that we would become one new man and one people of God comprised of every tongue and tribe. This is the church.

Dear brethren. There are no second-class citizens in the Kingdom. Only equal sons and daughters of God. Therefore, *"Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent"* (John 17:1-3).

Amen!

ⁱ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Bible (NKJV) unless otherwise noted, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.

ⁱⁱ Isaiah 42:6.

ⁱⁱⁱ Romans 2:14.

^{iv} Romans 3:10.

^v Acts 10:44.

^{vi} Acts 15:10.

^{vii} Ephesians 2:12.