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Jewish Good News for Gentiles

As Sam Nadler relates in his book *Messianic Foundations*, we are complete in **Messiah**. Knowing **Him** brings about the transformation and satisfaction of our souls, which is true spirituality. Still, there are those stories of **Gentiles** who have converted to traditional Judaism, occasionally even using “Messianic Judaism” as a stepping-stone. Somehow, **Yeshua** was not enough for them. Decisions like this are made from poor discipleship, reflecting a lack of sound teaching in the Word of **God**. The completed work necessary for salvation and perfect fellowship with **God** has been accomplished eternally in **Messiah**, so that we might be **a praise to the glory of His grace (Ephesians 1:14)**. In **Messiah**, people who are spiritually dead toward **God**, at the moment of **faith** are, by **His** grace, made spiritually alive; not *by* good works, but *for* good works (**Ephesians 2:1-10**).

Simultaneous to that reality of salvation, **Gentile** believers are made one with **Jewish** believers in **Messiah (Ephesians 2:11-15)**. This unity of **Jews** and **Gentiles** into one new body is a spiritual revelation that was not previously known (**Ephesians 3:1-13**). Paul hopes that all believers might be strengthened in that love **that they might be filled with the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:14-21)**. This revelation of **Jewish** and **Gentile** unity is important enough to explore further; we might dare say that it *is* the testimony of **Yeshua** in our lives.

Gentiles were “without”

Paul goes on to explain how **the Gentile’s** spiritual past was grim without **Messiah**: **Therefore, keep in mind that once you - Gentiles of the flesh - were called “uncircumcision” by those called “circumcision” (which was performed by hand). At that time, you were separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Isra’el and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:11-12).**

The non-Messianic community despised **Gentiles** as uncircumcised pagans. It was unacceptable for any observant **Jew** to associate with **Gentiles**. This is why **Peter** needed a vision from **God** to minister to **Cornelius**, a **Gentile “God-fearer.”** Mixing was simply not proper or good. **Peter** would later have to explain why he would go to a **Gentile** home, or

face censure from the other **Jewish** believers (**Acts 10-11**).

Thus, **the Gentile's** spiritual condition before coming to **faith** in **Yeshua** is characterized as "**without.**" **The Gentile** is **without Messiah**, separated from **the true vine of Isra'el** (**John 15:5**). **The Gentile** is **without citizenship, excluded from the commonwealth of Isra'el**, with no benefits in the community of **God**. **The Gentile** is **without promises** because all covenants of promise were made with **Isra'el**. **The Gentile** is **without hope**. It is like trying to breathe without air. Finally, **the Gentile** is **without God Himself . . . they** are in spiritual despair.

So lost and deceived was **the Gentile** world that **they** were generally unaware of **their** own spiritual condition, with no idea of any hope or promise. Though **the Jews** did have all these things, apart from the promise they were lost as well; in reality, **all fall short (Romans 3:23)**.

Welcome to the Commonwealth

By **faith** in **Messiah**, **the Gentile's** situation changes. While most of the ways it changes have often been well understood in traditional Christian commentaries, one area on which many seem to be unclear is "**the commonwealth of Isra'el**," which includes **Gentiles**. Some have tended to spiritualize the matter, making **the commonwealth of Isra'el** equal to "the Church" in keeping with Replacement Theology (or Covenant Theology); whereas others have made it merely a political matter for the Millennial Kingdom in keeping with Dispensationalism (see the commentary on **Revelation, to see link click [Fi](#) - The Government of the Messianic Kingdom**). Some have also taken this phrase to imply that **Gentiles** become **Israelites**.

The word **commonwealth** is used a few times in the B'rit Chadashah, in **Acts 22:28** (Greek: *politeia*), and **Philippians 3:20** (Greek: *politeuma*). The idea of **commonwealth** should not be taken to refer to the nation of **Isra'el**. While the distinction may seem subtle, the Greek word for **commonwealth** is never used for "nation" (*goy* in Hebrew, *ethnos* in Greek). Thus, in **Acts 22:28** Paul and a Roman soldier had the same rights because of shared Roman **citizenship** (*politeias*), even though they were not of a shared nationality (*ethnos*). The idea of **commonwealth** is that of a community that transcends national borders.

The core issue wasn't exclusion from the nation of **Isra'el**, but from the life of the people of **Isra'el**, "the well-being of the community." As believers in **Messiah Yeshua**, **Jewish** and **Gentile** people do not share the same nationality; however, they share the same rights,

values, and relationship with the living **God**. Moreover, this is a reality that is happening now, not only when the Kingdom on earth is established at **Messiah's** return. Paul is indeed saying that in times past the **Gentiles** were not fellow citizens, but that now, along with **Jewish** believers, they are!

As a **Jewish** nation, citizenship also included the idea of community, a way of life, and national life. In the United States citizenship is a legal issue, while the cultural issues are hotly debated. However, as a spiritual theocracy, Biblical **Isra'el's commonwealth** included cultural, social, legal, religious and spiritual matters. Whereas for us, the issue of citizenship carries with it the idea of "rights and privileges," there is even more expressed here: sharing fellowship, a common set of values and a way of life: **So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household (Ephesians 2:19).**

This is **the Gentile's** true spiritual unity within the body of **Messiah** and identification with **Isra'el**; not being **Jewish**, yet **they** participate as a recipient of the promised **Covenant** (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Eo - The Days are Coming, declares the LORD, When I Will Make a New Covenant with the People of Isra'el](#)).

Consider an analogy to the modern **Jewish** state of **Isra'el**. The Law of Return is for those with Hebrew ancestry; those with at least one **Jewish** grandparent have the right to citizenship. However, in addition to this, **the Gentile** spouse of an Israeli citizen may make *aliyah* (immigrate) and receive citizenship as well. While this does not change her ethnicity, he or she might just enjoy *Yom Ha'atzma'ut* (Independence Day) and other national holidays, appreciating the state as much as, and possibly more than, those who were born in **the Land**.

In a similar way, though **Isra'el's** deliverance from bondage in Egypt is a freedom celebrated by the **Jewish** people by the **Jewish** people, **Gentile** believers can enjoy Pesach every bit as much as any **Jewish** believer. They may find it more meaningful than **Jewish** people who do not know Passover's fulfillment in **Yeshua**. How remarkably strange that **Gentiles** would be cut off, by anti-**Jewish** tradition, from remembering **Messiah** through Passover! How wonderful to see this pattern of hostility often reversed in our generation!

This inclusion in **the commonwealth of Isra'el** gives **Gentile** believers their relation to the **Jewish** people in service and witness: **I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their false step salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke Isra'el to jealousy (Romans 11:11).** The truth that **Yeshua** is **the Messiah** of **Isra'el** would be difficult, if not impossible, to communicate without showing

the Jewish Biblical relevance that **Yeshua** brings to **Jew** and **Gentile** alike. **Gentile** inclusion into the Messianic way demonstrates **God's** grace. **But now in Messiah Yeshua, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Messiah (Ephesians 2:13).**

Being **without the Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Isra'el, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12)** is considered simply as **Gentiles** being **far off**. The terms **far** and **near** being used in **Ephesians 2:13** and **17**, allude to the offerings in the Temple. The word offering in Hebrew is *korban*, from the word *karav*, which means *to approach* or *to come near* to someone. In offering the proper sacrifice through **faith** that **God** would be acceptable in **His** sight, the worshipper came **near** or approached **God**. Though **sin** separated the worshipper from **God**, the offering appeased **God's** wrath through **faith** so the one could draw **near** to **Him**. **The Gentiles** did not have the Temple and offerings to approach, so they were considered **far off**. Through sacrifices based on **faith**, **Jewish** people had "front row seats" for an audience with **the Kosher King**. **The Gentiles**, however, were not even in the building.

No Border Lines

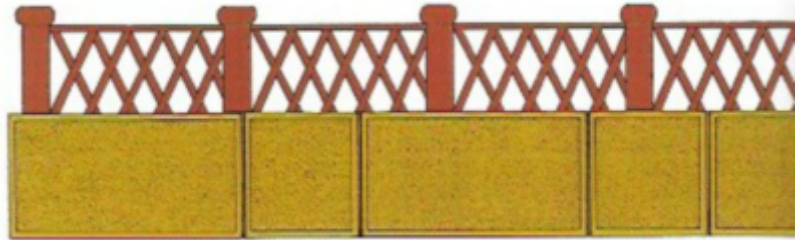
It must be stressed, therefore, that it was not ethnicity or nationality that made **the Gentiles far off**, but rather **their sin**. **Sin** makes everyone **far off**. Even for **Jewish** people it was written: **Your sins have made a separation between you and your God. Your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear (Isaiah 59:1-2).** Through the atonement foreshadowed by the sacrificial system, **Messiah** paid the price to have you close to **Him**, and not **far off**. **For He is our shalom, the One who made two into one and broke down the middle wall of separation. Within His flesh He made powerless the hostility - the law code of mitzvot contained in regulations (Ephesians 2:14-15a).**

Being **brought near** by **Messiah** makes **Gentile** believers as **near** as **Jewish** believers are to **God**; however, it also makes **Gentiles** one with **Jewish** believers! How does **God** make us one? **For He Himself is our peace. Messiah is Sar Shalom, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6); He is our peace with God (Romans 5:1), our peace of mind (Philippians 4:6-7).** How is **Messiah our Shalom** in **Ephesians 2:14**? **He** is our peace offering. In the TaNaKh, an offering was at times referred to by its distinctive name. For example, **the sin offering** may just be called **sin (Leviticus 4:20; Second Corinthians 5:21)**. **Yeshua** fulfills all of the sacrificial offerings, in that they all point to **Him** (see [Ag - The Feasts, the Isaiah Avenue, and the Romans Road](#)). Here in **Ephesians**, Paul refers to **the peace**

offering as our shalom.

The **shalom**, or **peace**, offering indicated that there was complete peace with **God** - a completeness you would share with the other worshipers. The offering was actually eaten by those offering the sacrifice, and this brought them together in fellowship, making them one. That's why the Scripture says that **the Gentiles are joint heirs and fellow members of the same body and co-sharers of the promise in Messiah Yeshua through the Good News (Ephesians 3:6; Hebrews 3:14)**. By **faith** we trust in and take part in **His** sacrifice for our **sins**.

Paul writes of several partitions that **Yeshua** removes to make us one with **Himself: the middle wall of separation, the hostility, and the law code of mitzvot contained in regulations (Ephesians 2:14b-15a)**. Outside the Holy Temple during the Second Temple period, there was a partition known as *the soreg*. It was a low wall surrounding the Holy



Temple, which served as a boundary.

Beyond this point, entry was only permitted to **Jews** where who were not impure through exposure to death. *The soreg* featured signs, in a number of languages, that warned those unauthorized people against entering the area of the Holy Temple. The signs read: No foreigner may enter with the barricade that surrounds the Sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuring death.

In the Temple area, there were actually several partitions: the outer wall, separating **the Gentile** proselytes from access to the court of **the Jews**; the inner wall, severing the **Jewish** people from entrance to the holy part of the Temple where the priests officiated; and even an inner veil that separated the priests from **ADONAI**. In **Messiah**, these have all been removed, and there is access for all into the presence of **God!** This means we are one, all together before **Him**. If, in **Messiah**, there is no dividing veil between **Ha'Shem** and man, then, if we are found in **Messiah**, there is no dividing wall between any of us as well. The grace that makes us one with **the Lord** makes us one with each other!

One New People, Reconciled and Restored

Hostility can mean *hatred, animosities, discord or feuds*. Even as *the soreg* represented the separation between **Jews** and **Gentiles**, we learn from **Leviticus 18:24** that defilement caused God to cast out the nations. The idolatrous, pagan **Gentile** nations were considered defiled; therefore, any interaction with them was ceremonially defiling for **Isra'el**. This is why we read in **Joshua 23:6-7**, **be very resolute to keep all that is written in the book of the Torah of Moses . . . so that you will not intermingle with these nations**. Association with **Gentiles** would be like stepping in mud. **The rabbis decreed that clods of dirt from Gentile lands were to be burnt on the possibility that they might ceremonially defile one's offerings (Shabbat 15b)**. Using a play on words, the Talmud connects the hatred for **the Gentile** nations to the meaning of Sinai itself: **For Rabbi Hisda and Rabbi Huna both said, "What is [the meaning of] Mount Sinai? The mountain whereon there descended hostility [*sin'ah*, literally *hatred*] toward idolaters" (Shabbat 89a)**. This mandated division between the people of **God** and the **Gentile** nations led to **hostility**.

By **Messiah's death**, **He** put an end to the **hostility** that separated **Jews** and **Gentiles** (**Ephesians 2:14**). In reconciling us to **God**, all reconciliation has been provided. To what end did **Messiah** remove the **hostility**? **He did this in order to create within Himself one new people from the two groups, making shalom, and to reconcile both to God in one body through the cross - by which He put the hostility to death (Ephesians 2:15b-16)**.

This new people relationship is only possible through the B'rit Chadashah, a spiritual unity that is beyond nationality. Even as **ADONAI** would unite the ever-wandering nations of **Isra'el** and Judah through the New Covenant (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**), so this same **God** unites **Jews** and **Gentiles**. There's a new place of unity in **Messiah**. **He** is our refuge from the wrath of **God**, on the other hand, **He** is also the place of eternal unity with **God**, and with all other believers. The ground is level at the cross.

Paul says that this work of **Yeshua** results in **making shalom**. This **shalom** is more than a mere cessation of hostilities, **it** is the true fullness of our purpose, what was desired for us when **He** created us in **His** image. By relating to **Ha'Shem** we fulfill our calling to represent **His** eternal values of love and life. It's not being transported out of the world, but living **Him** out where we are.

The death of **Messiah** restores us to **God** because **His** death removes the penalty, grief, and

separation from **sin**. Those who were **far off** because of **sin** (which is everyone), may now be brought **near to God**. The **hostility** did not begin with **the Torah**, but in the Garden of Eden; **the Torah** merely brought the Adversary to the surface. From the very first **sin**, we have had **hostility** towards our **Maker**. Moreover, **ADONAI's** righteous wrath against **sinner**s reveals **His hostility** against **sin**. Therefore, Paul states: **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of mankind (Romans 1:18a)**. From the Garden of Eden forward, restoration was needed (see the commentary on **Exodus Bz - Redemption**). In restoring us to unity with our **Maker**, **Messiah's** redemption would restore believing humanity to one another as well.

The work of the cross is the destruction of everything that has caused disunity. All has been accomplished in **Messiah**, and **in Him you** (plural) **have been made complete (Colossians 2:10)**. As Paul has written: **Therefore, having been made righteous by faith, we have shalom with God through our Lord Yeshua the Messiah (Romans 5:1)**. You are at **peace with God in Messiah**, and you are complete in **Him**. Therefore, for anyone to attempt to improve on what **God** accomplished in **Messiah**, is to demean **His** perfect salvation for you (**Galatians 5:6**).

We are reconciled to **God**, and to each other by **trusting** in **Messiah's** atoning work. Hence, there is **one body (Ephesians 4:4)**; when you came to **faith in Yeshua** you were immediately made one with every other believer on planet Earth and in Heaven. By **His** sacrifice, **Yeshua** has removed the partitions, and by **His** grace, made us one.

Accepted for Access, Aiming for a New Abode

As a result of this unity, **the Gentile** believer in **Yeshua** has new privileges that cannot possibly be overstated. **And He came and proclaimed shalom to you who were far away and shalom to those who were near (Ephesians 3:18)**. Paul notes that **Isaiah** promised this access: **Shalom, shalom to those who are far and to those who are near (Isaiah 57:19)**. **Those** who are **far** are never too **far** for **God** to save; those who are **near** are never **near** enough not to need **God's** grace and mercy. **His** message of forgiveness for **sins** and reconciliation with **ADONAI** is for both **Jews** and **Gentiles**, for **all fall short of His glory (Romans 3:23)**.

Throughout **Messiah's** ministry, **He** called people to **Himself: those who were thirsty, weary and heavy laden**, with the promise of **rest and peace (Matthew 11:28; John 7:37)**. Even after **Messiah's** death and resurrection, **He** preached this message through the apostles, as **He** does today by **His Spirit** through all who follow **Him (Matthew 28:20;**

Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8). Please note that **the three Persons of the Triune God** are involved: **for through Him (Messiah is the Door and the Way) we both have access to the Father by the same Ruach (Ephesians 3:19).**⁷