

9-28-24 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene - *Netzavim* ("you are standing")
Torah Portion: Deut 29:10 – 30:20
Haftarah: Isa 61:10 – 63:9
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Eph 4:11-24

Under the Law Part 17 – Covenant - Intro

Central question: Do you understand the progression of entering into the various levels of a covenant relationship with G-d?

Today we are in parasha *Netzavim*. It takes its name from the second word of the passage, meaning "stand."

Deut 29:10-12

10¹ "You **stand** today, all of you, before the Lord your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, even all the men of Israel, 11 your little ones, your wives, and the alien who is within your camps, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, 12 that you may enter into the covenant with the Lord your God, and into His oath which the Lord your God is making with you today,

¹ The English Bibles begin the parasha at verse 10, but the Hebrew Bibles begin at verse 9. Both verses have the same wording, however, but the numbering of the verses is different.

שְׁבֵטֵיכֶם	רָאשֵׁיכֶם	אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	יְהוָה	לִפְנֵי	כָּלְכֶם	הַיּוֹם	נִצָּבִים	אַתֶּם	9
your tribes,	your captains of	your God;	the Lord	before	all of you	this day	stand	Ye	
<u>7626</u>	<u>7218</u>	<u>430</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>6440</u>	<u>3605</u>	<u>3117</u>	<u>5324</u>	<u>859</u>	
	יִשְׂרָאֵל:	אִישׁ	כָּל		וְשָׂרֵיכֶם	זִקְנֵיכֶם			
	Israel,	the men of	all	with	and your officers,	your elders,			
	<u>3478</u>	<u>376</u>	<u>3605</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>7860</u>	<u>2205</u>			
מִחַטָּב	מִחֲנִיךְ	בְּקֶרֶב	אֲשֶׁר	וְגֵרְךָ	נְשִׁיכֶם	טַפְּכֶם			10
from the hewer of	thy camp,	in	that	and thy stranger	your wives,	Your little ones,			
<u>2404</u>	<u>4264</u>	<u>7130</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>834</u>	<u>1616</u>	<u>802</u>	<u>2945</u>		
				מִיְּמֶיךָ:	שֹׁאֵב	עַד	עֵצֶיךָ		
				of thy water:	the drawer	unto	thy wood		
				<u>4325</u>	<u>7579</u>	<u>5704</u>	<u>6086</u>		
אֲשֶׁר	וּבְאֹתוֹ	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	יְהוָה	בְּבְרִית	לְעֵבְרְךָ				11
which	and into his oath,	thy God,	the Lord	with	into covenant	That thou shouldst enter			
<u>834</u>	<u>423</u>	<u>430</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>1285</u>	<u>5674</u>			
				הַיּוֹם:	עִמָּךְ	כָּרָה	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	יְהוָה	
				this day:	with thee	maketh	thy God	the Lord	
				<u>3117</u>	<u>5973</u>	<u>3772</u>	<u>430</u>	<u>3068</u>	

As we know, Moses is giving in Deuteronomy his final “sermon” to the Hebrew people before they cross over the Jordan River and begin taking the Holy Land. Our Sages have believed, given the wording of this and the next parasha, that these words were spoken in the last day of Moses’ life with his people Israel.

One can see from the language Moses uses, that he is wishing for the people to come together in unity to reaffirm their covenant commitment

to G-d and His ways. And this emphasis on unity and covenant leads me into the next subseries of installments within my series, Under the Law.

The process of entering into the various levels of a covenant relationship with G-d is not well understood in the Body of Faith today, nor are the obligations which attend each of the different levels of covenant. I wish to begin now to explain the process of passing out of unbelief and into a true covenant relationship with G-d and His people. Once you understand the covenantal progression as set forth in Scripture, many troubling passages of Scripture suddenly become more clear. They can be seen as addressing various levels of this relationship, rather than being internally inconsistent.

The normative church has fashioned certain theological statements upon specific passages which deal with a specific aspect of the covenantal relationship, and those were created with disregard to the other levels. This has caused a significant stagnation of growth in the Body of Faith, because if you teach someone he has “arrived” by entering the most basic level of covenant, then that person is not urged to progress to another level of covenant. Thus, the Body of Faith has become somewhat stunted in its spiritual growth. And, as we have seen before, the concept of sanctification, which is the fuel of that growth, has been minimized or even discarded.

The normative synagogue as well as the normative church both have to one degree or another, lost what they once held dear.

I find it necessary to explore this topic in some detail because I see that the normative synagogue has in recent generations, and in some concrete ways, erected barriers between Jews and non-Jews in an effort to keep the pollutions of the nations from corrupting the theology and worship that the Orthodox community has adopted as a “set apart” people. This has resulted in a general abandonment of the national charter which G-d gave Israel to show His truth and His glory to all the nations.

Ex 19:3-6

3 Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. 5 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a

holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

Matt 5:14-16

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "Let your light shine before men² in such a way that they may see your good works³, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.⁴

This nation of priests is commissioned to carry the good news of G-d into all the world, and once that is accomplished, G-d will judge all mankind for their decisions regarding G-d's covenant.

Ps 96

96 Sing to the Lord a new song; Sing to the Lord, all the earth. 2 Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim good

² In context, the light is to go into the entire world through believers.

³ Heb. "Masim Tovim" which means "good works" and refers specifically to proper observance of Torah with the proper heart.

⁴ The purpose of living a holy life before the world is to testify that G-d is the true G-d, and bring others to faith.

tidings of His salvation⁵ from day to day. 3 Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. 4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. 5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens. 6 Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. 7 Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,⁶ Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. 8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts. 9 Worship the Lord in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth. 10 Say among the nations,⁷ "The Lord reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity."⁸ 11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; 12 Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy 13 Before the Lord, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness⁹ And the peoples in His faithfulness.

⁵ Heb. "Yeshua."

⁶ In context, those of the nations who have come to faith in G-d.

⁷ The good news is to go to all the nations.

⁸ G-d's judgment is based upon His rules – His Torah.

⁹ G-d's judgments are based upon righteousness, not a whim that He announces at that time that we have not been able to know.

At the end of the final ingathering, the judgment of mankind will be completed, and the only ones left will be in some level of covenant relationship with G-d.

Isa 66:18-24

18 "For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory.¹⁰ 19 "I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them¹¹ to the nations: Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan,¹² to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory.¹³ And they will declare My glory among the nations.¹⁴ 20 "Then they shall bring all your brethren¹⁵ from all the nations as a grain offering¹⁶ to the Lord, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the Lord, "just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. 21 "I will also take some of them for priests and

¹⁰ The final ingathering of all the earth.

¹¹ Those Messianic believers who survive the evil attacks of Satan are the missionaries.

¹² The grandsons of Noah, who have established the nations of the earth.

¹³ No place on earth will not hear the good news of our G-d.

¹⁴ All nations.

¹⁵ Not literal "brothers" of blood, but rather brothers by adoption into the family of G-d.

¹⁶ As it is impossible to number the grains in a basket coming on the shoulder of a Jew to be offered to the L-rd, so it will be impossible to number the harvest of souls each missionary will bring.

for Levites,"¹⁷ says the Lord. 22 "For just as the new heavens and the new earth Which I make will endure before Me," declares the Lord, "So your offspring and your name will endure. 23 "And it shall be from new moon to new moon And from sabbath to sabbath,¹⁸ All mankind will come to bow down before Me," says the Lord. 24 "Then they will go forth and look On the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me.¹⁹ For their worm will not die And their fire will not be quenched; And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind."

We Jews have allowed antisemitism to convince us to draw inward to find some degree of safety. I have heard it said that it is best for any Jew in a secular society if he is unnoticed, and "invisible." But safety is an illusion in this world today. If you are a Jew today, you are not "safe." Satan has no problem finding willing servants to torment any Jew. And Satan can clearly see the heart of a Jew, as can G-d. It is in the spiritual realm that this heart shines brightly. Satan's hatred for the Jewish people is complete. The only Jew who is truly safe from the attacks of Satan in this

¹⁷ G-d will judge the hearts of those gathered, and some will be chosen to be priests and Levites in His new Temple.

¹⁸ G-d's Sabbaths will be honored universally at this time.

¹⁹ The judgment has occurred, and the division of the wheat and tares is done. It will be for all His believers to see.

world is one who has turned his back on G-d and has joined the work of Satan.²⁰

However, when any Jew is doing G-d's work in this world, G-d seems to put His hedge of protection around him at that time so that Satan can't touch any of His anointed.

This being said, what about the normative church? I'm afraid it gets no better grade on its performance, either. The good news is that the church has clearly identified the One true G-d, and has recognized Yeshua as Messiah and Savior. But it has generally distanced itself from not only the benefits but also from the obligations imposed at the higher levels of the covenant relationship with G-d and His people.

I find that in a general way, the normative church has embraced the redemption/justification message, but has been willfully ignorant of the expectations in Scripture regarding how a justified person is to walk-out a life of sanctification.

Col 1:9-12

²⁰ A prime example is Gyorgy Schwartz, a Hungarian Jew. During the Nazi occupation, his father changed the family name to Soros (which means "next in line"). Gyorgy then became George Soros, and as a child he assisted the Nazi occupiers in inventorying and seizing the property of Jewish families who had been deported to the death camps. Satan has supported George with great wealth and status, which comfort his fleshly desires, but will provide him no refuge or solace at the judgment.

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,²¹ 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,²² to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work²³ and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

1 Thess 4:1-8

4 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.²⁴ 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification;²⁵ that

²¹ The source of wisdom and understanding is Torah.

²² Live in a manner consistent with His instructions – Torah.

²³ *Masim tovim*

²⁴ They have received instructions for walking in the way of Torah. Then he addresses specific issues that they are having trouble with at that time.

²⁵ Sanctification is achieved by living a holy life, consistent with Torah, and Yeshua's demonstrated walk.

is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.²⁶ 8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

1 John 2:3-8

3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.²⁷ 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.²⁸ 7 Beloved, I am not writing a new

²⁶ Sanctification, here is clearly a walk consistent with Torah, and not with the ways of the flesh.

²⁷ In context, this refers to Torah, which was spoken by Yeshua to the people through Moses.

²⁸ Yeshua showed us how to properly walk-out Torah.

commandment to you, but an old commandment²⁹ which you have had from the beginning³⁰; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.³¹

And at the judgment, those who have fully embraced the covenant relationship with G-d and His people, will see their vindication be the punishment of those who chose against G-d. And what are the characteristics of those who are fully in covenant relationship? A faith in Yeshua's work, and walking by the precepts of Torah.

Rev 14:9-12

9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image,

²⁹ An idiom referring to the Torah.

³⁰ Heb. *Bereshit* (beginning) – Genesis

³¹ You have heard the Torah already.

and whoever receives the mark of his name."³² 12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.³³

The normative church has built its own wall of division which is designed to keep Jews at a distance. Its hallmarks are a refusal to recognize G-d's Sabbaths, and His festival seasons as "appointed times" when we are to have close fellowship with Him.

Sunday has replaced Sabbath, and Easter and Christmas have replaced the Levitical feasts.³⁴ Churches teach that the guidelines of Torah for a life of sanctification have been done-away-with, and that believers must decide for themselves what a "Christian life" should look like (with each denomination fashioning their own particular rules of behavior).³⁵ The Christians have divided their Bibles into "Old Testament" and "New Testament" sections, following the heresy of Marcion, and have created in many ways a polytheism of two separate gods. Rarely does any Pastor speak of G-d, but rather only "Jesus." I do not wish to minimize the value of Yeshua, but Yeshua pointed all people to the Father, and so it seems to

³² Those who choose against G-d, and for Satan, will face final judgment.

³³ The "Commandments of G-d" are Torah.

³⁴ See Lev 23 for a listing of G-d's appointed times to meet with His people in covenant relationship.

³⁵ The lie of Satan repeated since the time of the Garden is still effective – "You can be like G-d." And everyone is doing what is "right in his own eyes" rather than relying upon the instructions of G-d found in Torah.

me that the church should do the same, and not ignore the Father as irrelevant, or secondary to salvation.

Some churches have adopted a theology that the modern believer has “replaced Israel” as the “chosen people” and that all the promises G-d gave to Israel alone now belong to Christians.³⁶ And probably the worst offense of all is that they have fashioned a “Christian Jesus” who is neither Jewish, nor bears any reasonable resemblance to Yeshua, the true Messiah of Israel and Redeemer of the Nations. Many churches use a misinterpretation of some of the writings of Paul to contradict Genesis through Romans.

And so, I see from both sides of the church/synagogue divide an active effort to build walls and divide. And that division was never envisioned by Yeshua, nor any of His early followers.

The plan was for those who were coming into faith in the G-d of Israel from among the nations to enter the synagogues of Israel scattered over the known world, where the Torah and Prophets were being read and preached each Sabbath. There, these new believers would hear the Scriptures, and be mentored into their new faith by mature believers.

³⁶ These demand the benefits of the covenant relationship without recognition of the obligations of obedience which are the foundation of that relationship.

The question was then presented regarding these new converts. What level of covenant relationship must they achieve before they can be considered part of the Jewish people, and thus benefit from the promises G-d has made to Israel for salvation? These people understood at that time that G-d had established a progression in faith, through a number of well-defined covenantal steps, each with its own set of requirements, and benefits.

Each step into the deeper covenant relationship is a volitional one, and the decision to take that next step is one made only by the one of faith, for himself. G-d does not force a progression upon anyone, but allows each person to determine what level of covenant relationship he will have with G-d.

Yeshua spoke of this dynamic in one of His parables. He showed how, when the Word of G-d is brought into the world, it can have an impact upon the lives of those non-believers who hear it. Some will hear, but reject. Others will hear and adopt to a lesser degree. Others will adopt and push through to higher and higher levels of covenant relationship, where they will produce fruit commensurate with that relationship.

Luke 8:5-15

5 "The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. 6 "Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. 7 "Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. 8 "Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

9 His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant. 10 And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND.

11 "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. 12 "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. 13 "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. 14 "The seed which fell

among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. 15 "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

With this progression of covenantal relationship already firmly established in Hebrew theology, the first great ingathering had begun after Yeshua's atoning sacrifice. A flood of people from among the nations was responding to the Word of G-d, and coming to faith.

An argument was soon being made that these new believers must reach a higher level of covenant relationship before they could be considered fully admitted to "the kingdom" and considered grafted-in to the Jewish people. And so, this important matter came before the Jerusalem Beit Din, headed by Yacov³⁷, the brother of Yeshua, as Chief Rabbi.

After the sides of the debate were presented, the Beit Din determined where the entry-point to fellowship of the saints would be for new believers, and rejected the notion that a new believer must progress fully to the upper level of covenant before being admitted to the assembly.

³⁷ Later Bible translators changed his name to James, in an effort to please King James, who commissioned the translation.

Neither must that new believer be fully grafted-in to the Jewish people before their progression of faith could begin.

Yacov ruled that only four commands be imposed upon these G-d-seekers to allow them to join the assembly on the Sabbath.

Acts 15:1-21

15 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.³⁸ 3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. 4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who

³⁸ In Jewish law, a court of judgment (Beit Din) would resolve this dispute.

had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. ³⁹7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."
12 All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.
13 After they had stopped speaking,⁴⁰ James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. 14 "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the

³⁹ The Beit Din was established.

⁴⁰ The testimony was finished and it was time for Yacov to announce his decision.

Gentiles a people for His name. 15 "With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,
16 'AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, 17 SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,' 18 SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO.

19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. 21 "For Moses⁴¹ from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath." ⁴²

Each of these four commands (two kosher, one regarding idolatry and one regarding sexual purity) represented hallmarks of pagan worship of that day. Pagans sacrificed food to idols before eating it. They had no care for whether an animal died humanely or not. They would routinely use

⁴¹ "Moses" is an idiom referring to Torah, also known as the "books of Moses" or simply, "Moses."

⁴² There were no churches. The only Scriptures were in the synagogues, where it was being read on Sabbath.

blood in their pagan rituals and in their foods, and they resorted to temple prostitutes (as well as having a lax notion of fidelity to a spouse).

If a new believer put away these hallmarks of paganism, the Beit Din determined that such would provide sufficient proof of a changed heart (repentant and contrite toward G-d) to allow them to be accepted without hesitation by members of the congregation on Sabbath, where the Scriptures were being read and discussed. Then these new believers could grow up in their faith by hearing the Word. And G-d had already appointed sufficient teachers in that synagogue to provide good lessons to these new ones. They would grow up in their faith, to achieve higher levels of observance of G-d's instructions, and thus higher levels of covenantal relationship.

Paul spoke of this as well, in his letter to the Ephesian congregation.

Eph 4:11-24

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;⁴³ 13 until we all attain to

⁴³ The mentoring process is contemplated at several levels.

the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man,⁴⁴ to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth⁴⁵ in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk,⁴⁶ in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;⁴⁷ 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if

⁴⁴ A maturity in faith – achieving higher levels in the covenantal relationship – is contemplated.

⁴⁵ Truth is found in Torah, but it must be given with loving instruction.

⁴⁶ The gentiles walk as their own god, determining for themselves right and wrong.

⁴⁷ They have rejected Torah and the G-d who gave it to the world.

indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him,
just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former
manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being
corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that
you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,⁴⁸ 24 and put on the
new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in
righteousness and holiness of the truth.⁴⁹

The progression of faith in the covenantal relationship with G-d has distinct stages, but there is only a single covenant. I describe that covenant as like a diamond, when it is rotated in bright sunlight, flashes a different hue from each face as it is turned. The individual flashes of light are distinct, but emanate from the same diamond. The single covenantal relationship is shown in the prophecy of Isaiah as he describes how different people will fold-into different aspects of that covenant, even at the highest levels.

Isa 56:1-7

56 Thus says the Lord, "Preserve justice and do
righteousness, For My salvation⁵⁰ is about to come

⁴⁸ The power of Torah is to reshape the mind's understanding of right and wrong, holiness and sinfulness.

⁴⁹ The "righteousness and holiness of truth" is a descriptor of the teachings of Torah.

⁵⁰ Lit. "Yeshua."

And My righteousness to be revealed.⁵¹ 2 "How blessed is the man who does this⁵², And the son of man who takes hold of it⁵³; Who keeps from profaning the sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil."⁵⁴ 3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely separate me from His people." Nor let the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."⁵⁵ 4 For thus says the Lord, "To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me,⁵⁶ And hold fast My covenant,⁵⁷ 5 To them I will give in My house and within My walls⁵⁸ a memorial, And a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off. 6 "Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord,⁵⁹ To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath And holds fast My covenant; 7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."

⁵¹ How a true walk of righteousness (sanctification) should be.

⁵² The things that are blessed to do are seen in the passage.

⁵³ In context, taking hold of the covenant.

⁵⁴ G-d has defined good and evil in Torah.

⁵⁵ G-d breaks down the barriers between people groups as He assembles His larger covenant people from all nations.

⁵⁶ G-d has given us a record of what pleases Him in Torah.

⁵⁷ Note the singular statement of "covenant."

⁵⁸ The Temple is referred to here as His House.

⁵⁹ A priesthood chosen from among the ingathered ones from the Nations, not merely from the tribe of Levi.

As a final part of this introduction, I will set-out in summary form the various levels of progression from paganism, to the most inner circle of covenantal relationship one can have with G-d. This progression has nothing to do with national origin. People who have grown up in a Jewish family which is serious about Torah have a bit of a head-start on the process, but other than that there is no advantage granted by genetic heritage. All must walk the same path either toward G-d, or away from Him.

In future installments, I will begin to unpack the various covenant levels, and show you how to reconcile some otherwise-troubling Scriptural passages in ways consistent with this progression.

Pagan, outside of the family of G-d altogether.

Noahic Covenant of the G-d Fearer.

Abrahamic Covenant.

Mosaic Covenant / Levitical Covenant

New/Renewed Covenant