

Who is "The Israel of GOD?"

In Galatians 6:16, Paul makes a statement, when he refers to "the Israel of GOD," that has caused no small amount of confusion among believers today. Who are they? And, who aren't they? These two questions are what I hope to answer in this article. In order for me to do that, we must go back into the history of Israel and find their beginnings. Lets go back and look at the man that the Israelites, Islamics AND Christians can all refer to in their ancestry; Abraham.

Genesis 12:3

Now the LORD had said to Abram:

"Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Notice that he is told to leave:

- His country: His homeland, Mesopotamia or Babylon.
- His family: His posterity/pedigree and/or blood relatives.
- His father's house: His birthright or inheritance.

Notice that he is promised:

- A land that GOD will lead him to and give to him.
- To be a great nation: A posterity surpassing the one that he is leaving.
- To have a great name: A birthright (name) greater than his own.

Through Abram/Hagar (Egyptian slave) comes the son of the flesh; Ishmael.

Through Abraham/Sarah comes the son of promise; Isaac, his son; Jacob, who was eventually renamed by GOD; Israel.

The natural tendency is to take the blessing given to Abram as being applicable to the nation Israel, or the descendants of Jacob/Israel.

Lets read the blessing again: "I will make you a great nation(Heb:"goy" or non-Jew); I will bless you and make your name great; and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you, and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**"

If the application of this blessing is in accordance to genealogy for the Israelites, why then JESUS' words in John chapter 8:37-45, to the Jewish scribes and Pharisees (who were claiming that very blessing as a result of them being born Israelites?);

- *I know that **you are Abraham's descendants**, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. ³⁸I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with **your father.**"*

³⁹They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father."(We must remember that Abram was NOT an Israelite. He was a Gentile from Babylon!)

Jesus said to them, "*If you were Abraham's **children**, you would do the works of Abraham. ⁴⁰But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. ⁴¹You do the deeds of your father.*"

Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God."

⁴²Jesus said to them, "*If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. ⁴³Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. ⁴⁴**You are of your father the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. ⁴⁵But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.*

It sure sounds like YESHUA is pronouncing a curse on these MESSIAH rejecting Israelites! ("*You are of your father the devil!?!*") And this in spite of them attempting to substantiate that Abraham, and ultimately GOD was their father!

So, how can the Scriptures be interpreted as saying that EVERYONE born an Israelite is a recipient of the blessings given to Abraham?

If they cannot, then WHO are those in line for the blessings promised to Abraham? What do the Scriptures say?

Well, looking again at what JESUS says in John 8 above, we begin to see what the criteria is for receiving the blessing:

- Verse 39; "*you would do the works of Abraham*"
 - o He left his country.
 - o He left his family.
 - o He left his father's inheritance.
 - o He "obeyed My (YEHOVAH'S) voice, kept My charge, My Commandments, My statutes, My Laws" (Genesis 26:4).

It doesn't sound like these scribes/Pharisees realized what it would take for them to receive the blessing given to / through Abraham.

They also would have to:

- **Leave their country.** Meaning that they could not be as devoted to Land/Nation of Israel, as they were supposed to be devoted to YHWH...
- **Leave their family.** (or literally; "to leave one's pedigree") No longer could they trust in ancestral lineage for identification, but now would have to leave their family behind and follow YHWH!
- **Leave their father's house.** Meaning that they would have to detach themselves from their inheritance, their birthright, and start all over!

- **Obey HIS voice, charge, commandments, statutes and Laws.** Meaning that they too would have to reject ANY/ALL "additions to and/or subtractions from" HIS WORD! (i.e. no more Oral Torah and/or Mishnah)

- verse 42; *"you would love me"* (YESHUA) By implication; "as your brother" or (fellow Israelite) Leviticus 19:17-18 "You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD." / 1John 4:20-21 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, ^ohow can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also. To say that you love GOD while at the same time being guilty of hating HIS MESSIAH, is NOT consistent with doing "the works that Abraham did!"

- verse 43; *"you would understand...and listen to My(YESHUA) Word."*
 To say that you love JESUS/YESHUA, while at the same time being guilty of rejecting HIS Word, is NOT consistent with doing "the works that Abraham did!"
 1John 2:3-6 "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

So, we see that JESUS knows who aren't children of Abraham or children of GOD. It appears that HIS disciple, John (by references to his epistle above) knew as well!

And Matthew records for us that JESUS confirms that same criteria (required of Abraham) again for those who would follow MESSIAH, then and now!

- Matthew 19:28-30

*And everyone who has **left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother** [□] **or wife or children or lands**, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. ³⁰But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*

So, is it safe to assume (based on the writings of Moses, Matthew and John) that unless a person is willing to leave their citizenship (country), their pedigree (family), their inheritance (father's house), and their man-made religion, they not only are NOT doing "the works of Abraham" but they also are not meeting the criteria that JESUS established for following HIM? I believe so, at least according to the above Scriptures...

So, who is "the Israel of GOD" that Paul refers to in Galatians 6:16? The Israel of GOD are those descendants of Israel that receive YESHUA/JESUS as the atoning sacrifice for their sins, who receive the HOLY SPIRIT into their lives and reject their citizenship in the earthly Jerusalem in exchange for a citizenship in "the NEW Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from GOD, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."(Revelation 21:2)