

ADJUSTING TO THE RULE CHANGE

A Devotional Meditation on Vayikra (And He Called)

Leviticus 1:1-6:7; Isaiah 43:21-44:23; Hosea 3:1-5; Romans 9:1-5; Ephesians 2:11-22

Albert J. McCarn

March 23, 2024

The rules changed when I was 8 years old. I was born in the segregated American South, where black and white people interacted according to an elaborate set of social standards designed to uphold the myth that one race was superior to the other. The change happened gradually over a generation, but for me it was sudden, when desegregation came to my school. That was the day my all-white third-grade class doubled in size with the addition of students bussed in from a black school. Over the next few weeks, the evidence of my daily experience challenged what I had been taught. The color of our skin indicated a difference between us, but it was an outward difference, not a fundamental difference in our humanity.



Photo by Peter Reed, Cookham, England, UK, May 1, 2006, [via Flickr](#).

I would like to say that everyone in the South adjusted to this change with relative ease, but I cannot. It seemed the younger generations did better than our elders. It's not that the older generations were evil or morally deficient. Many, such as my parents and grandparents, were godly people who modelled lives of devotion to Christ and His church. However, segregation was all they had known, and many had great difficulty coping with the new paradigm. I understand and sympathize with their dilemma, much though I wish they had been able to lead us into this change, rather than scramble to maintain what remained of their status quo.

Desegregation was only one of the profound changes that occurred during my childhood. Another was the status of Israel. The Jewish state of Israel was born a few years before my birth, much to everyone's surprise. In the summer before my first-grade year, Israel stunned the world again in the Six Day War by regaining control of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and much more. Israel's victory changed the balance of power in the Middle East and the wider world, and set in motion tremendous spiritual developments in the plan of Israel's God to restore and redeem His Covenant People.

That is the world in which I grew up. From childhood, I have accepted that the Jewish people are God's Chosen People, that the land of Israel is their land by decree of the Almighty, and that the final chapter of human history revolves around the nation of Israel. With that as the foundation of my spiritual understanding, in time I began to learn about my relationship to the Jewish people thanks to my adoption into the Commonwealth of Israel as a follower of Israel's Messiah.

The rules have changed in the relationship between Christians and Jews. Those who grew up before 1948 probably have more trouble adjusting to this rule change. Until the

rebirth of the Jewish state of Israel, it was easy to say that God was finished with the Jews, and that the church had replaced them as the “new Israel.” Now we have a new reality that challenges everything we have learned. Obviously, God is not finished with the Jewish people, the church has not replaced them, and somehow the prophecies of Messiah’s return cannot be understood without reference to them and the land of Israel. So how do we do that? This is what I think about daily.

There is a growing movement on both sides of this Covenant family seeking to come together and get to know each other, maintaining our relationship even through our profound differences. It’s still a small movement, and there are many on both sides who prefer the status quo of separation. I’m not sure that’s what God prefers. This is the God Who promises:

“Remember these things, Jacob, and Israel, for you are My servant. I formed you, you are My servant. Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me! I have blotted out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”

Isaiah 44:21-22 TSV

Is this promise given to the Jewish people as Israel, or to the Christian church as a new “spiritual Israel”? Paul gives us the answer:

I tell the truth in Messiah—I do not lie, my conscience assuring me in the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* [Holy Spirit]—that my sorrow is great and the anguish in my heart unending. For I would pray that I myself were cursed, banished from Messiah for the sake of my people—my own flesh and blood, who are Israelites. To them belong the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the *Torah* and the Temple service and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs—and from them, according to the flesh, the Messiah, who is over all, God, blessed forever. Amen.

Romans 9:1-5 TLV

Paul was a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin. Of course he is speaking about his Jewish kin, asserting that they are indeed Israelites. Apparently that question had been raised among the non-Jewish believers in Yeshua even in his day. That’s why Paul had to explain that Israel is the Jewish people, as well as those who are brought into the Covenant through the atoning work of Messiah Yeshua. Both need each other, because each has only part of the revelation about this Covenant nation, its purpose, and its destiny. We can learn about that from Hosea, who prophesied judgment on both Houses of Israel just before Assyria conquered Israel’s apostate Northern Kingdom:

For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

Hosea 3:4-5 ESV

This prophecy is being fulfilled in our days. The apostate Ten Tribes of Israel were dispersed into all nations, and they have lived without king, prince, sacrifice, priesthood (ephod), and other distinguishing marks of the Hebrew nation. The Jewish tribes were

also dispersed, and have lived without all these things as well. Now the Jewish faithful are returning to their God and are restoring the priesthood so they can rebuild God's Temple and restore the sacrificial offerings that demonstrate His connection with them and with all nations through them. At the same time, Christians are performing the function of the Ten Tribes by returning to the King, the Son of David, and proclaiming salvation and redemption in His Name. In this lengthy process, both Houses are being cleansed of the undesirable elements of household gods, and are learning the pillars, or standing stones, that mark the way back to Zion.

The redemption process is well underway, but it's far from complete. The iniquity of Israel remains in the hearts and in the governmental policies of Israel's people, Jewish and Christian. However, we're beginning to see the shape of the Kingdom in its fullness under Messiah's reign. The rules have changed. We can see how God has been working through both the church and the Jewish people. How we proceed from here depends on how we adjust to the rule change.