

# Can a Ger become a Yisreeli?

## By Eli'ezer ben Ephraim haKohen

The ability of a Ger to convert and join B'nei Yisrael is an assumed fact by all current branches of Judaism. In re-examining the sources where did such a custom come from?

First let us look at a completely unrelated verse to this issue:

כֹּד עַל-כֵּן, יַעֲזֹב-אִישׁ, אֶת-אָבִיו, וְאֶת-אִמּוֹ ; וְדָבַק  
בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ, וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother,  
and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.

The important word here is dabaq meaning to cleave. Strong's comments that this word means "to adhere, specially firmly, as with glue...to follow any one, to cleave to him, Ruth 2:8, 21;...Hence, to be attached to any one, to be lovingly devoted...Psa. 63:9, "my soul cleaveth to thee."

TaNakh tells us in Jeremiah 13:11 that YAH will cleave the House of Israel to the House of Yehudah and Isaiah 14:1 teaches us that YAH will join GERIM so that "they shall cleave to the House of Yacob." What tribe is Jacob from? Answer NONE. Yacob is that Abba (Father) of all the Tribes:

Jer 13:11 For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

Isa 14:1 For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.

Just as Israel and Yehuda have been "Cleaved" so to will according to Yeshayahu will Gerim who seek to join Yehudim will be CLEAVED unto the House of Jacob and by CUSTOM they will have the ability to join the reconstituted tribes upon permission of the tribal elders. This is a Tribe by Tribe decision.

Deut. 29:9-14 You are stationed today, all of you, before the presence of YAH your God: your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officials, all the men of Israel, your little-ones, your wives, your GERIM that is amid your encampments, from your woodchopper to your waterhauler, for you to cross over into the covenant of YAH your God, and into his oath-of-fealty that YAH your God is cutting with you today- in order that he may establish you today for him as a people, with him being for you as a god, as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, to Avraham, to Yitzhak, and to Yaakov. Not with you, you-alone do I cut this covenant and this oath, but with the one that is here, standing with us today before the presence of YAH our God, and with the one that is not here with us today.

From the very beginnings of our people non-tribal individuals joined the Children of Israel into the covenant, however, more importantly Torah indicates that this was not to be a ONE TIME event stating "and with the one that is not here with us today." This clear statement does not EXCLUDE the sojourner, whom it PREVIOUSLY included.

Zec 7:9-10: So said the YAH of Hosts, saying: Execute true judgment and perform loving-kindness and mercy, each one of you to his brother. Do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the sojourner, or the poor man. Neither shall any of you think evil against his brother in your heart.

Malachi 3:5. And I will approach you for judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely; and also against those who withhold the wages of the day laborers, of the widow and fatherless, and those who pervert the rights of the GER, and those who fear Me not, says YAH of Hosts.

What are the rights of a GER? To join the people of Israel in their covenant and by so doing, by accepting the same covenant "as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, to Avraham, to Yitzhak, and to Yaakov"

Zech 14:6-8: Therefore, say to the house of Israel, So said the Lord God: Repent and move away from your idols, and from all your abominations remove your faces. For every man of the house of Israel and of the GERIM who sojourns in Israel and draws away from following Me, and brings his idols up to his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity opposite his face, and he comes to the prophet to inquire of him about Me, I, the Lord, shall respond to him by Myself. And I shall direct My anger against that man, and I shall make him desolate, as a sign and as for examples, and I shall cut him off from the midst of My people, and you will know that I am YAH.

Zechariah tells us what happens to the sojourner amongst the Children of Israel who rejects YAH. Finally, the Prophet Yeshyahu 14:1 stated:

For the LORD will have compassion on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the stranger shall join himself with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.

A Ger who does not enter into the covenant remains a Ger and does not become a Y'israeli as can be seen by the passage from Zechariah above.

FURTHER ANALYSIS ON THE RIGHTS OF A GER IS PROVIDED BY CHANCELLOR HAKHAM MEIR Y. REKHAVI from his treatise, *Perfect in the Way*:

"It is a night of keeping-watch for YAH, to bring them out from the Land of Misrayim, this is, it is the night of YAH, a keeping-watch for all the Children of Yisrael throughout their generations. And YAH said to Moshe and Aharon, This is the law of the Pesah [Passover], any son of a stranger shall not eat of it. And any servant of a man purchased for silver, and you shall circumcise him, then he shall eat of it. A resident-settler and a hired-hand shall not eat of it. In one house it shall be eaten, you shall not take out from the house, from the meat outside and you shall not break a bone of it. All the Community of Yisrael shall do it. And if a sojourner shall sojourn with you, and shall make the Pesah [Passover] to YAH, circumcise him (and) all (his) males, and then he shall come near to make it and he shall be a citizen of the land, and all uncircumcised-males shall not eat of it. One Tora [Instruction] there shall be for the citizen, and for the sojourner that sojourns in your midst." (Ex. 12:42-49).

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From the above passage, we can see that only a Yisreeli can offer the Pesah Sacrifice and that if a Ger (sojourner) desires to offer the Pesah Sacrifice, they must first become a fully-fledged Yisreeli. Since it is stated, "And if a sojourner shall sojourn with you, and shall make the Pesah [Passover] to YAH, circumcise him (and) all (his) males, and then he shall come near to make it and he shall be a citizen of the land, and all uncircumcised-males shall not eat of it," we can see that from this particularly verse the bringing of the Qorban Pesah forms part of the initiation ceremony of a convert into the ranks of the Children of Yisrael. The Pesah Sacrifice is thus part of the conversion process, along with circumcision, to becoming a fully-fledged Yisreeli. This means that the convert does not become a fully-fledged Yisreeli until Pesah Night. In other words, even if an individual converts before Pesah Night their conversion does not become active until Pesah Night.

Since the verse in question states, "And if a sojourner shall sojourn with you" the potential convert has to become a Ger before they can become a fully-fledged Yisreeli. Therefore, all the laws in the Tora that pertain to a Ger has to be observed by them before they can become a Yisreeli. There are then two separate stages for a non-Yisreeli to go through before they are allowed to enter into the Children of Yisrael. The fact that one has to become a Ger before they can become a Yisreeli is backed up by the following verse from the same passage, "any son of a stranger shall not eat of it" thus meaning that even if a stranger does circumcise himself he is still not a Yisreeli unless he goes through the process of being a Ger first because it does not mention "but if he circumcise himself".

The verse, "One Tora [Instruction] there shall be for the citizen, and for the sojourner that sojourns in your midst" refers to the Ger after he becomes circumcised and therefore becomes a fully-fledged Yisreeli. A Ger is uncircumcised; if he were circumcised, he would be a Yisreeli. As pointed out above the Tora sees the Ger not as a convert but as a half way house between a God fearing Gentile and a Yisreeli. This can be proved by the fact that in the Tora there are miswoth that are incumbent upon a Yisreeli but not upon a Ger, for example:

"And when the hand of a sojourner or resident-settler with you attains means, and your brother with him is lowly, and has been sold to a sojourner or a resident-settler with you, or to an offshoot of the clan of a sojourner. After he has been sold redemption shall be to him; one of his brothers shall redeem him. Or his uncle, or a son of his uncle shall redeem him, or kin of his flesh from his clan shall redeem him, or his own hand attains means then he shall be redeemed. And he shall calculate with his purchaser from the year that he was sold to him, until

the Year of the Yovel, and the silver from his sale shall be by the number of years, as the days of a hireling he shall be with him. If many years remain, according to them he shall return his redemption payment from the silver of his purchase. And if a few years remain until the Year of the Yovel, then he shall calculate to him, according to his years he shall return his redemption payment. As a hireling, year-by-year, he shall be with him, and he shall not oppress him with tyranny before your eyes. And if he has not been redeemed in any of these ways, then he goes out in the Year of the Yovel, he and his children with him. For to me are the Children of Yisrael servants, they are my servants, whom I brought out from the Land of Misrayim [Egypt], I am YAH your God." (Lev. 25:47-55).

We can see from this passage that a Ger is not the same as a Yisreeli for the above passages states, "And when the hand of a sojourner or resident-settler with you attains means, and your brother with him is lowly, and has been sold to a sojourner or a resident-settler with you." This passage thus distinguishes between a Yisreeli, a Ger, and a Toshav (resident-settler) and if the Ger were a fully-fledged Yisreeli, the distinction between a brother Yisreeli and a Ger would not be necessary.

In the following verse, we see that there is a separate law for the Yisreeli and for the Ger; therefore, it is impossible that the sojourner is a fully-fledged convert. "You shall not eat any carcass, to the sojourner that is within your gates you may give it that he may eat it or sell it to a foreigner, for you are a holy people to YAH your God." (Deut. 14:21) When the Tora states in Deut 31:12 that the Ger is required to join the rest of the people to hear the commandments so that he will keep them, "Assemble the people, men and women and the little ones, and your sojourner that is within your gates, in order that they shall hear, and in order that they will learn, and they shall revere YAH your God, and they observe to do all the words of this Tora." The Tora means that the Ger will learn and fulfil all the words of the Tora that relates to the Ger, and in time, once he fully converts will keep the entire Tora. When it says in Exodus 12:49, "One Tora [Instruction] there shall be for the citizen, and for the sojourner that sojourns in your midst." It means he who was a former Ger, but is NOW, after circumcision, a fully fledge Yisreeli.

In conclusion, a Ger, as can be seen from the above, is not a convert. If he were a convert there would not be a Halakhic distinction between the Ger and the Yisreeli as can be seen from Deut. 14:21. Therefore, before someone converts to being a Yisreeli they must become a Ger first, for a period, and observe those laws of the Tora that pertain to a Ger, only after this can they convert and partake of the Qorban Pesah (when the Temple stood).

Examples of the laws of the Tora that pertain to a Ger are as follows:

"Remember the Shabbath day to make it holy. Six days you shall work, and do all your vocation. But the seventh day is a Shabbath for YAH your God; you shall not do in it any kind of vocation, you and your son and your daughter, your servant and your maid and your beast and your sojourner that is within your gates. For in six days YAH made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day, therefore YAH blessed the Shabbath day and He hallowed it." (Ex. 20:8-11)

"And this day shall be to you for a memorial and you shall celebrate the pilgrimage as a pilgrimage festival to YAH throughout your generations, a law for all times you shall celebrate the pilgrimage. Seven days you shall eat massoth [unleavened bread], indeed by the first day you are to get rid of leaven from your houses, for anyone who eats what is fermented/soured, from the first day and until the seventh day that soul/life force shall be cut off from Yisrael. And on the first day a holy proclamation, and on the seventh day a holy proclamation shall there be to you, all vocation you shall not do on them, only that which every soul/life force must eat that alone may be done by you. And you shall keep this commandment for on this same day I have taken out your hosts from the Land of Misrayim [Egypt], and you shall keep this day through out your generations, a law for all times. In the first (month), on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat massoth [unleavened bread], until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. Seven days leaven shall not be found in your houses, for whoever eats what ferments/sours, that soul/life force will be cut off from the community of Yisrael, whether sojourner or citizen of the land. All that ferments/sours you shall not eat, in all your settlements you shall eat massoth [unleavened bread]." (Ex. 12:14-20)

"And it shall be to you for a law forever, in the seventh month on the tenth of the month you shall afflict your souls/life forces, and all vocation you shall not do, the citizen and the sojourner that sojourns among you. Because on this day atonement is to be made upon you to purify you from all your sins, before YAH you will become pure. A Shabbath Shabbathon it will be to you, and you shall afflict your souls/life forces a law forever." (Lev. 16:29-31)

"And (any) man, (any) man from the House of Yisrael, or from the sojourners that sojourn among you, that eats any blood, I will set my face against the soul/life force that eats the blood, and will cut it off from among its people. For the soul/life force of the flesh it is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the slaughter-site [altar], to make atonement for your souls/life forces, for it is the blood (that) makes atonement for the soul/life force. Therefore I said to the Children of Yisrael: Every soul/life force among you, you shall not eat blood, and the sojourner that sojourns in your midst shall not eat blood. For the soul/life force of all flesh is its blood, it is its soul/life force, and I said to the Children of Yisrael: The blood of all flesh you shall not eat: for the soul/life force of all flesh it is its blood, everyone that eats it shall be cut off." (Lev. 17:10-12,14)

We notice that the Ger is obligated to celebrate Hagh Hammassoth (The Pilgrimage Festival of Unleavened Bread), but not to bring the Qorban Pesah. This is because the Qorban Pesah, as pointed out above, was distinctly Yisreeli, no non-Yisreeli being allowed to partake unless he first submitted to circumcision and thereby embraced the Biblical faith and identified himself with the people hood and destiny of Yisrael.

A Ger, like a Righteous Gentile must keep all the moral laws of the Tora that concern our relationships with our fellow humans and the world around us. In addition to this, the Ger must keep the Shabbath and the Festivals including Yom Hakkippurim, but not the Qorban Pesah (Passover Sacrifice). The Ger must not consume blood, therefore all the meat that a Ger eats must be slaughtered correctly, but they are not obliged to eat only pure animals as the Yisreeli is.