

Chapter 2 — No Racism with God

Today some quasi-religious groups exist that promote racist ideologies with discombobulated thinking. They seek to bolster their reasonings by using a bizarre mix of Scriptural interpretations. These groups sometimes identify themselves as descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel and could be considered part of the greater white supremacist movement. Equally misguided are those Black Hebrews who believe they are the only “true” Israelites. However, people caught up in racism no matter what the ideological presuppositions, miss the main point of God’s covenant. They don’t perceive why the Holy One chose Israel to be His servant and witness. For God’s ultimate purpose was to bring all the families of humanity together into a divine covenantal community animated by love and faith.

And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples (Isaiah 56:6-7; cf. Revelation 5:9-10).

Those who would boast of their superiority due to their genetic heritage would do well to take note that the Bible pointedly mentions Jesus of Nazareth’s direct ancestors included Tamar, a Canaanite, Rahab, the harlot from Jericho, and Ruth, a Moabite—all people from Gentile nations (cf. Matthew 1:2, 5). When Abraham received the male circumcision ritual as a token of his personal relationship with God, Abraham circumcised all the males in his household — more than 300 —no matter what their ethnic origin. All of Abraham’s household became part of the covenant community (Genesis 17:23; 14:14; 24:10-27)!



Pharaoh Shishak (Sheshonk) Monument

Indeed, the Hebrew physical anthropology was varied. The ancient Egyptians depicted Hebrew slaves on Egyptian monuments with red, blonde, or black hair, blue-eyes and red beards. Their skin colours ranged from light-pinkish to darkly tanned. Much later, Pharaoh Shishak, who pillaged the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah in 924 B.C., erected a monument celebrating his victory. The Egyptian artists portrayed the nobles of Judah and Israel paying homage to Shishak as having the same varied physical characteristics as the Hebrew slaves depicted centuries earlier.¹

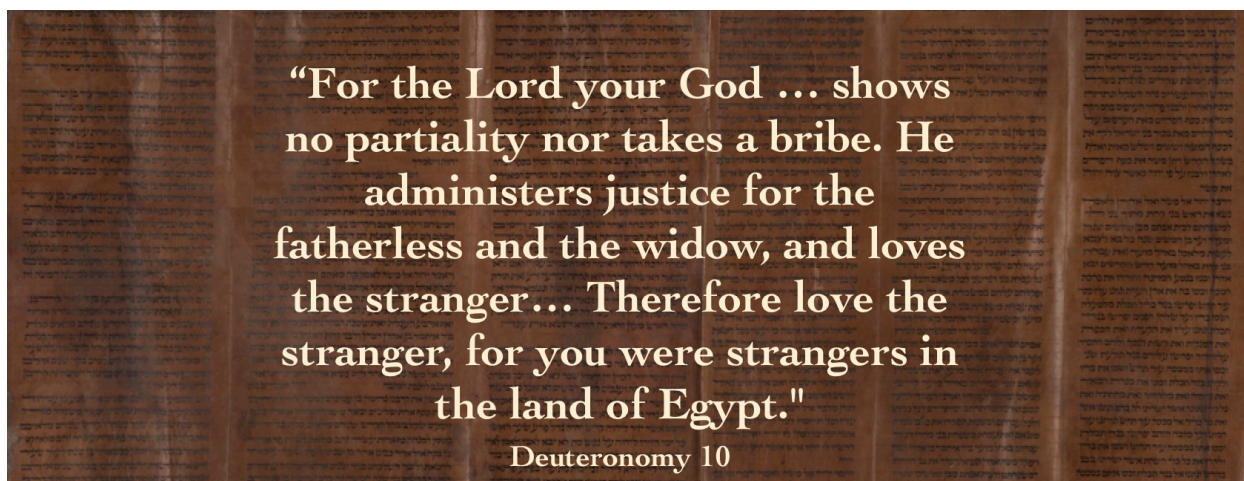
¹ Yair Davidy, *The Tribes*, Russell-Davis Publishers, pp. 43-46.

Your Roots Your Destiny

The Talmud recorded that most Jews were of the intermediate Mediterranean type, being neither a “Cushi type” (black African) nor a “Germani” type (very white). But Jacob’s son Joseph was described in Talmudic literature as traditionally looking “Germani,” having a face as “pink as a rose.”² These different physical types were present in the family of Abraham at an early stage. Esau, Jacob’s brother, was described in Hebrew as being “admoni,” red-haired and hairy, while Jacob was called “smooth-skinned.” The adjective “admoni” was later used to describe King David’s appearance. Rebekah’s brother and Jacob’s father-in-law was called “Laban,” meaning in Hebrew “whitish.” However the shepherdess in the Song of Solomon was described as “I am black but comely,” referring to her ability to tan very darkly in the course of her outdoor profession.

The Scriptures and later Jewish commentaries³ clearly point out that the twelve tribes of Israel came from four different matriarchs. Joseph married an Egyptian priest’s daughter; Machir, the grandson of Joseph, lived with an Aramaean concubine (1 Chronicles 7:14); Reuben married a Hivite; Levi and Asher married descendants of Eber (distant relatives of the Hebrews); Judah had a Canaanite and a Semite for wives; Zebulun’s wife was from Midian; Issachar married a descendant of Shem; Benjamin took a daughter of Zimran, who was the son of Abraham and Keturah; Dan took a daughter of Lot, Abraham’s nephew; Naphtali and Gad both married descendants of Nahor, Abraham’s brother. Moses had a Midianite and an Ethiopian for wives.

There was definitely genetic diversity within the family of Israel. Still the family’s link to Abraham was clear. As we know today the genetic inheritance of the Y chromosome passed from father to son shows remarkable, recognizable stability in passing down an ancestor’s genetic characteristics over thousand of years.⁴ There were shared family characteristics. But, the founders of the tribes of Israel and their wives would have laughed at the racist theories circulating today.



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² Davidy, *ibid.*

³ Davidy, *ibid.*

⁴ *Times Colonist*, “Scientists find genetic sign for Jewish priesthood,” July 9, 1998.

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The teaching of God required Israel to love the stranger (Deuteronomy 10:18-19). They were to be treated as equals before the judgment seats (Exodus 22:21; Numbers 15:29-30), and welcomed to participate with the covenant community in the worship of the true God (Exodus 12:48; Acts 15:7-9). The apostle Paul taught that all humanity could be integrated into the divine covenant community:

Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.....

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you, who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ....

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. (Romans 15:8-9; Ephesians 2:11-13, 19, NKJV).

Frank Moore Cross, Hancock Professor Emeritus at Harvard and one of the leading biblical commentator's of our time, sees the ancient covenant as the “legal means by which the duties and privileges of *kinship* may be extend to another individual or group.”⁵ The ancient Middle East's covenants allowed an outsider to be turned into an insider by means of “a familial conversion process.”⁶ Such “kinship-in-law” provisions, which included the adoption of a son or daughter (cf. 2 Samuel 7:14; Romans 8:15-16), provided a way to extend to others the obligations and privileges of family kinship.

When it comes to the Bible's covenants, the implications of the kinship relationship are far more profound than merely that of a stranger joining a tribal confederation. It means joining the people, the actual kin of God Almighty (cf. Judges 5:11; 1 Samuel 2:24; 2 Samuel 1:12; Romans 8:19, 21)!

Through its covenant with God, Israel becomes the “kindred of Yahweh” [the LORD]. Yahweh, in effect adopts the people of Israel. Mutual obligations are thereby created.⁷

Under no circumstances could the purpose of God in establishing His covenant with Abraham and his descendants as the chosen people be considered exclusivist or racist. A relationship with God was open to all people for all time as they willingly accepted the duties and responsibilities of the covenant and became kin with God and his people Israel.

⁵ Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998, cited in *Biblical Archaeological Review*, “God as Divine Kinsman,” July-August 1999, p. 32.

⁶ Cross, *ibid*.

⁷ Cross, *ibid*.