

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. *Hebrews 12:12-13*

THE PORTION OF JACOB

The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts is his name. *Jeremiah 10:16*

In ancient times, when men were invited to a feast, each guest was appointed a portion of food and drink by the host. The size and type of this portion was directly related to the level of affection and esteem which the host had for each guest. This is seen illustrated in the account of the meeting of Joseph and his brothers. Since Benjamin was his full brother (having been born of the same mother) he had greater affection for him and appointed for him to have a five-fold portion at the feast which he had prepared for them. (see Gen. 43:16-34)

Those who were guests at these feasts had no say so in the dividing of these portions nor could they in any wise cause them to be increased or diminished according to their will. At this particular feast, set by Joseph, his appointment of a greater portion was strictly based upon his closer kinship and love for Benjamin. There is no evidence that Benjamin had ever done one deed that would endear him to Joseph, since, by most accounts, it appears he was still a young lad when Joseph was sold into slavery at (approximately) the age of seventeen. (see Gen. 37:2)

Jeremiah speaks here of the "portion" which was given to Jacob as being the very presence of GOD who has created all things and has appointed Israel as the "rod of HIS inheritance." GOD did reveal HIMSELF to natural Israel beginning with Abraham and culminating in HIS dispensing of the law in tables of stone at Mount Sinai. Along the way HE preserved that nation and favored them above all other nations even to the exclusion of all other nations from HIS particular favor.

Paul speaks of this in the book of Romans where he quotes the prophet Malachi, saying, "*As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*" (Rom 9:13) He also has reference to it when he writes, "*What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*" (Rom 3:1-2) In this he points out the great blessing that was given to the descendants of Jacob in revealing HIMSELF unto them in a manner which HE did not do for any other nation upon the earth.

There was no reason that the LORD did choose to bestow this particular favor upon natural Israel except that it pleased HIM, having set HIS love upon them. "*For thou art a holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*" (Deut 7:6-8)

HE calls them a "holy people", not because they possessed some innate righteousness but because HE "sanctified" them or "set them apart". HE declared them to be "holy" and appointed unto them a portion (i.e.; the oracles of GOD) not given to the other nations of the earth.

Most everyone who says that they believe the bible, embraces the concept that GOD, as a Sovereign, had the right to choose any nation (or no nation at all) upon the earth as special in HIS sight. Most have no difficulty at all with the notion that the LORD chose Israel as this nation and showered them with blessings and favor that HE did not bestow on any of the other nations. They delight in the accounts of GOD's utter faithfulness to and defense of Israel. Many even consider that this same relationship exists today, and are quick to point out that Israel is "the LORD's chosen people".

The Pharisees believed this quite strongly along with majority of natural born Israelites in JESUS' day. Most natural born Jews still hold this notion as well as a good portion of those who claim to be the followers of JESUS CHRIST in the present day. This was especially true in the early days of the New Testament church as the "Judaizers" sought to impose the rigors of Moses' law on the Gentile believers, believing that an Israelite is one who is circumcised in the flesh.

Paul, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, unceremoniously laid the axe to the root of that notion saying, *"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."* (Rom 2:28-29)

It is here that many begin to quiver, shake, and mumble and to confuse the clear teaching of the New Testament concerning who the "nation of Israel" actually is. *"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel."* (Rom 9:6) Paul made no such equivocation as he said, *"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."* Phil 3:3) *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."* (Gal 6:14-15)

The kingdom of GOD cannot be inherited by flesh and blood nor can any man be found in the abiding favor of GOD by virtue of his performance, natural birth, or citizenship in any earthly nation regardless of its name or heritage. The LORD was pleased to demonstrate HIS love for the true Israel, which is now being made manifest, by HIS choice of natural Israel as their type and foreshadow in former times. HE has now made plain that the people which are the apple of HIS eye make up that "holy nation" which HE chose from before the foundation of the world and hid in CHRIST. *"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."*(Eph 1:9-12)

This is a mystery which was kept hidden from the foundation of the world but has now been clearly manifest by the preaching of the gospel. *"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:"* (Col 1:26-27)

It never ceases to amaze me that many who clearly understand and accept the concept of GOD's sovereign choice of the natural nation of Israel, nonetheless grow angry when they are told that it is upon this same (but preceding) premise that the LORD chose the true Israel, which is the Elect Bride of CHRIST. Yea even before GOD chose Israel as a nation, HE had an everlasting love born out of HIS kinship to those sons which HE hid in the bosom of CHRIST. *"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."* (Gal 4:6-7) This is indeed the heritage of those whom the LORD has appointed to receive their "PORTION" in HIM. "Grace 'tis a charming sound, harmonious to the ear, heaven with the echo shall resound, and all the earth shall hear." Phillip Doddridge (1702-1751)