

# CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM

A Fresh Perspective on Paul, the Law,  
Works vs. Faith, and Circumcision

Rooted in   
**Torah** 

# REFERENCES

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- Paul and Palestinian Judaism by EP Sanders

**WHAT IS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE  
IN THE FIRST CENTURY?**

You yourselves know **how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him**; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man **unholy** or **unclean**.

- PETER (ACTS 10:29)

# SOURCES OF HONOR

- Purity & cleanliness was a source of honor. "Cleanliness" was not physical hygiene, but the cultural evaluation of peoples' appropriateness and acceptability. Purity is about the invisible social lines regarding "what is proper for a certain place at a certain time...with regard to society's view of an orderly and safe world". Public rituals and social boundaries (Jewish food laws in Mark 7) often reflect a concern for personal cleanliness. Pollution, defilement, and impurity, which are contracted through culturally inappropriate acts deem one a dangerous threat to the group, to be shamed and rejected.

# SOURCES OF HONOR

- Another means of honor is faithfulness and loyalty to the group. Since individuals in honor-shame cultures are part of a large, complex social organism, there are mutual obligations and prescribed actions expected of each person by the group. By observing the identity markers and traditions of the group, members maintain the implicit group covenant, thus making them valuable and honorable members for the preservation and continuance of the group. Those unfaithful to the group are shamed.

# SOURCES OF HONOR

- Finally, strength, not the mere possession of it but the use of it for the good of others, leads to honor. This is well illustrated in the ancient Greco-Roman world that revolved around the concepts of benefaction and patronage. Wherever honor is a prized commodity, there are appropriate cultural mechanisms for upper-class citizens to exercise their power or display their wealth in exchange for honor and endearment from the lower classes. As liabilities to the group, the frail and weak reap only shame.

**Cleanliness/Purity** →  
**Faithfulness/Loyalty** →  
**Benefaction/Strength** →

**Honor** →

**Acceptance**  
**Inclusion**

**Defilement/Impurity** →  
**Unfaithfulness/Infidelity** →  
**Frailty/Weakness** →

**Shame** →

**Rejection**  
**Exclusion**

**Jew**

**Us**

**vs**

**Gentile**

**Them**

Separate yourself from the gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs. And do not become associates of theirs, because their deeds are defiled, and all their ways are contaminated, and despicable, and abominable. They slaughter their sacrifices to the dead and to the demons they bow down; and they eat in tombs. And all their deeds are worthless and vain.

Jub 22:16-17

"a gentile who studies Torah is liable to the  
death penalty"

B. Hagigah 13a & B. Sanhedrin 59a

"Transmitting words of Torah to a gentile is  
prohibited"

Y. Bava Qamma 4.3 4b

These rites, whatever their origin, can be defended by their antiquity...the Jews are extremely loyal towards one another, and always ready to show compassion, but towards every other people they feel only hate and enmity. They sit apart at meals and they sleep apart...they abstain from intercourse with foreign women... they instituted circumcision of the genitalia so that they could recognize their difference. Those who are converted to their ways follow the same practice, and the earliest lessons they receive is to despise the gods, to disown their country, and to regard their parents, children, and brothers as of little account.

Tacitus (*Historiae* 5.5.1–2) ~100 CE

"R. Simeon b. Eleazer says,  
Israelites in the diaspora are worshipers of idolatry.  
How?

A gentile makes a wedding feast for his son and goes and invites  
all the Jews who dwell in his city -  
Even though they (the Jews) eat and drink from their own, and  
their own steward stands and serves them,  
Nevertheless they are worshipers of idolatry,  
As it is written, *You must not make a covenant with the inhabitants  
of the land, for they will lust after their gods and sacrifice to their gods  
and invite you and you will eat their sacrifices* (Exod 34:15)

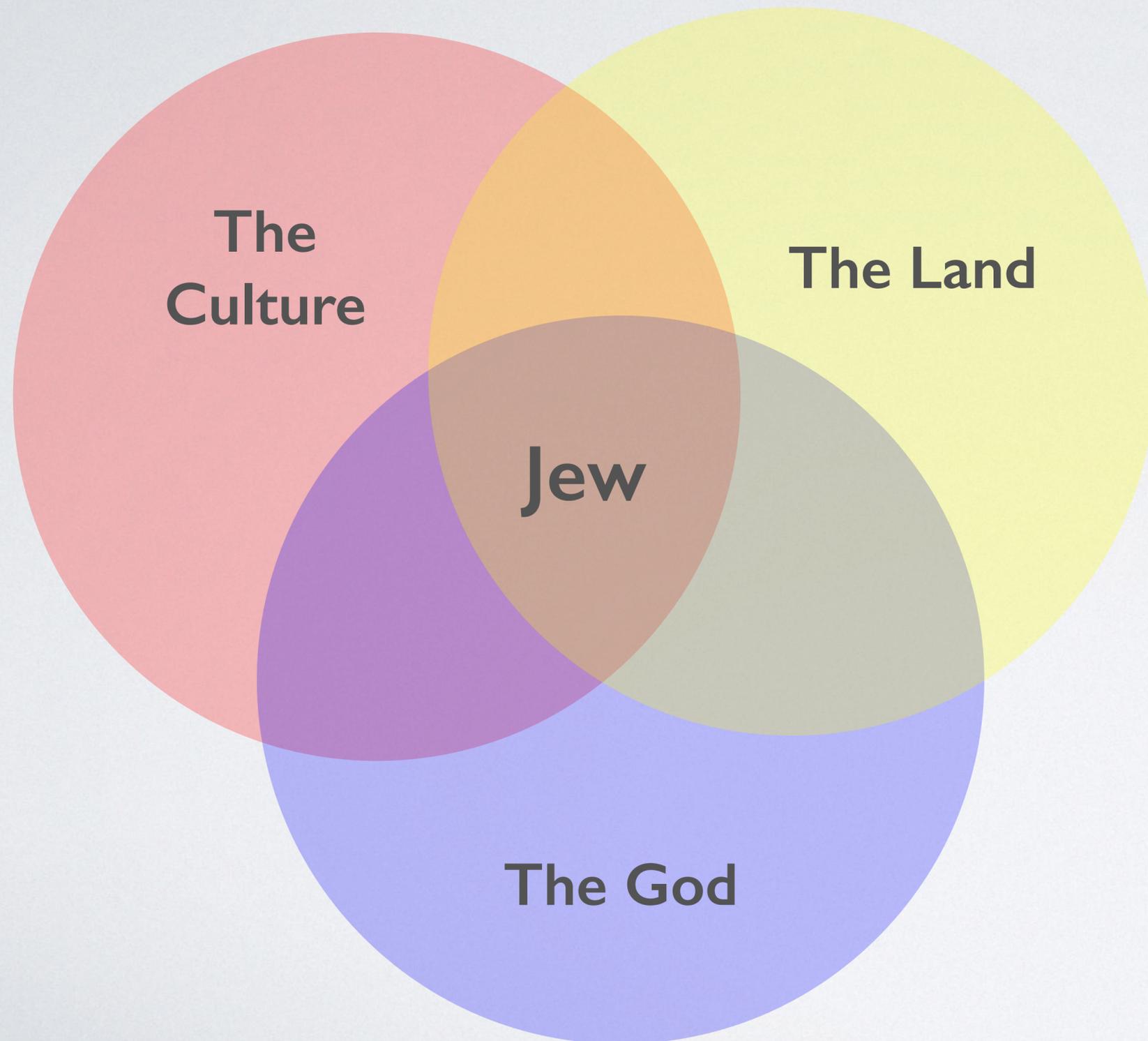
Tosefta Avodah Zarah 4:6

Yet...Historical evidence shows that there was actually a great deal of interaction between Diaspora Jews and their gentile neighbors. Many of the pagan gentiles were attracted to Judaism and many became converts. In fact around 100 CE it was considered fashionable for the Roman upper class to practice Judaism!!!

## **Most Jews were indistinguishable from their gentile neighbors**

- Archaeological evidence shows that Jews of Palestine in the 1st & 2nd century CE wore clothing that was indistinguishable from that of non-Jews.
- The wearing of tzitzit and tefillin were known of, but it was noted by the rabbis that the Jews living in diaspora were outside of rabbinic control and did not wear tzitzit or tefillin. (Cohen, pg 34)
- The common language of Jews in the Roman empire was Greek (hence the popularity of the LXX)
- Most Diaspora Jews went by Gentile names and did not use their Hebrew names frequently
- Most Jews were very poor. Jews in Rome were widely reputed to be beggars.
- It is noted that many times gentiles were able to pass as Jews without much difficulty.

# Who was a “Jew” in the first century?



## **No single or simple definition**

Viewpoint of the Jewish community

Viewpoint of the Greco-Roman community

Viewpoint of the Jerusalem leadership

Viewpoint of the government

In the land vs. Diaspora

# Who was a “Jew” in the first century?

Hyrchanus took also Dora and Marissa, cities of Idumea, and subdued all the Idumeans; and permitted them to stay in that country, **if they would circumcise their genitals, and make use of the laws of the Jews;** and they were so desirous of living in the country of their forefathers, that they submitted to the use of circumcision, and the rest of the Jewish ways of living; at which time therefore this befell them, that they have continued to be Jews.

- Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 13.257-258

# Who was a “Jew” in the first century?

He was called a lover of the Grecians; and had conferred many benefits on his own country, and made war against Iturea, and added a great part of it to Judea, and compelled the inhabitants, **if they would continue in that country, to be circumcised, and to live according to the Jewish laws....**“This man was a person of candor, and very serviceable to the Jews, for he added a country to them, and obtained a part of the nation of the Itureans for them **and bound them to them by the bond of the circumcision of their genitals.**”

- Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 13.318-319

# Who was a “Jew” in the first century?

When Achior saw all that the God of Israel had done, he believed firmly in God. So he was circumcised, and joined the house of Israel, remaining so to this day.

Judith 14:10

(Also Beginnings of Jewishness, pg 48-49)

WHO IS A JEW TODAY?

# Conversion and the State of Gentiles

A proselyte who converted on the eve of Passover [the fourteenth of Nisan]—

the House of Shammai say, “He immerses and eats his Passover offering in the evening.”

And the House of Hillel say, “**He who takes his leave of the foreskin is as if he took his leave of the grave** [and must be sprinkled on the third and seventh day after circumcision as if he had suffered corpse uncleanness].”

Mishnah Pessachim 8.8

# Conversion and the State of Gentiles

[Speaking of the Exodus from Egypt], "Moreover, there also went forth with them a mixed multitude of promiscuous persons collected from all quarters, and servants, like an illegitimate crowd with a body of genuine citizens. Among these were those who had been born to Hebrew fathers by Egyptian women, and who were enrolled as members of their father's race."

- Philo, Life of Moses 1.147

# Conversion and the State of Gentiles

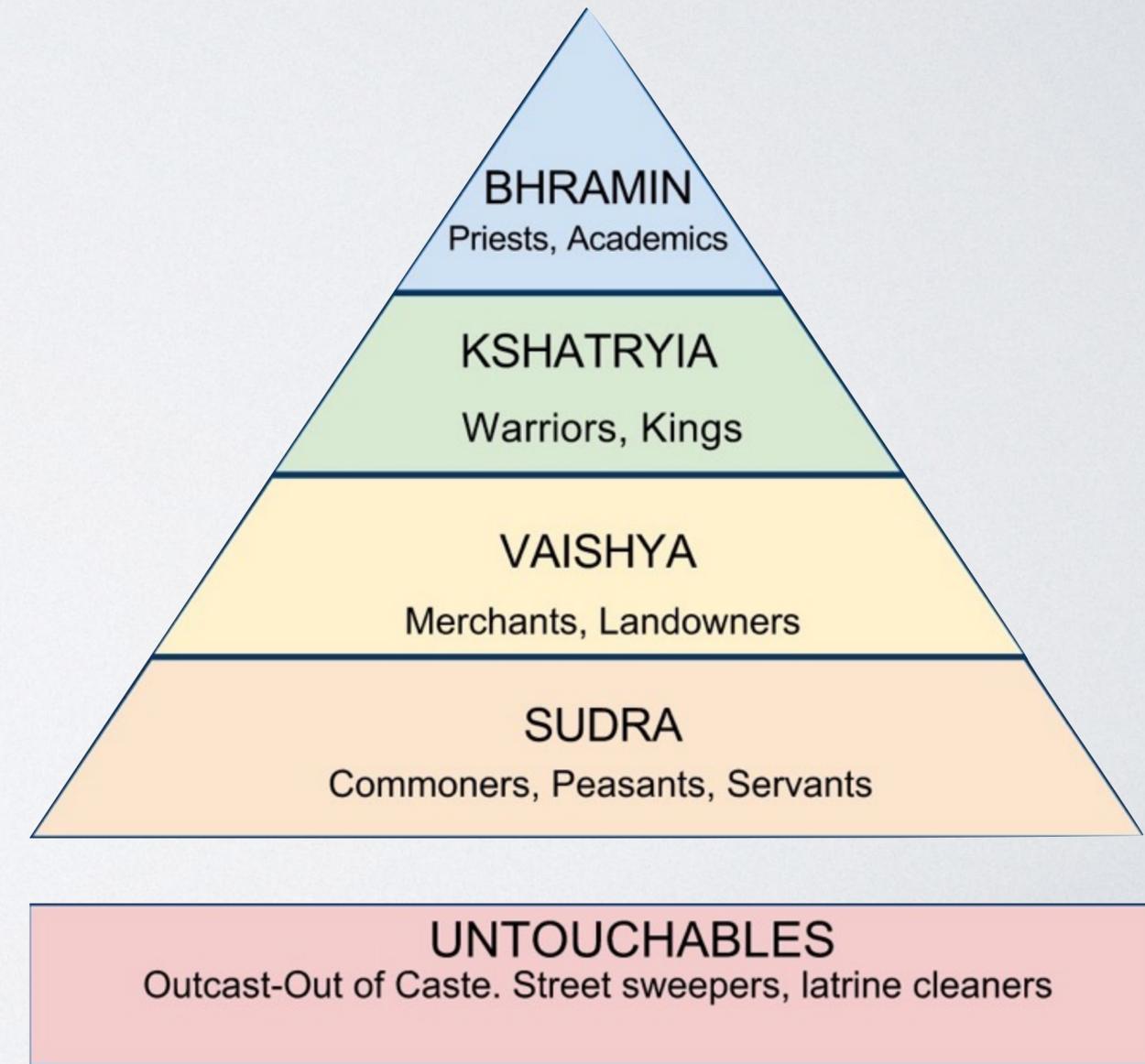
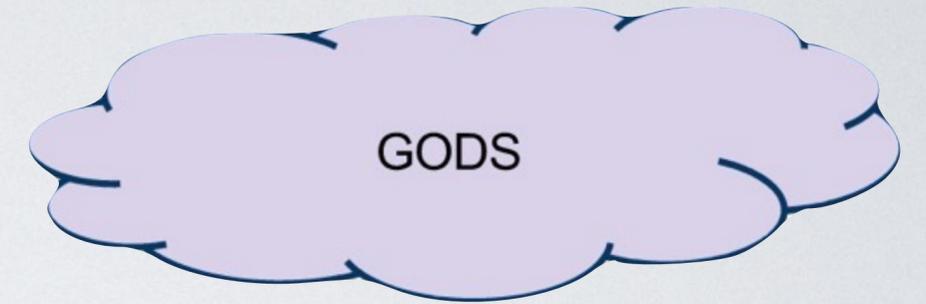
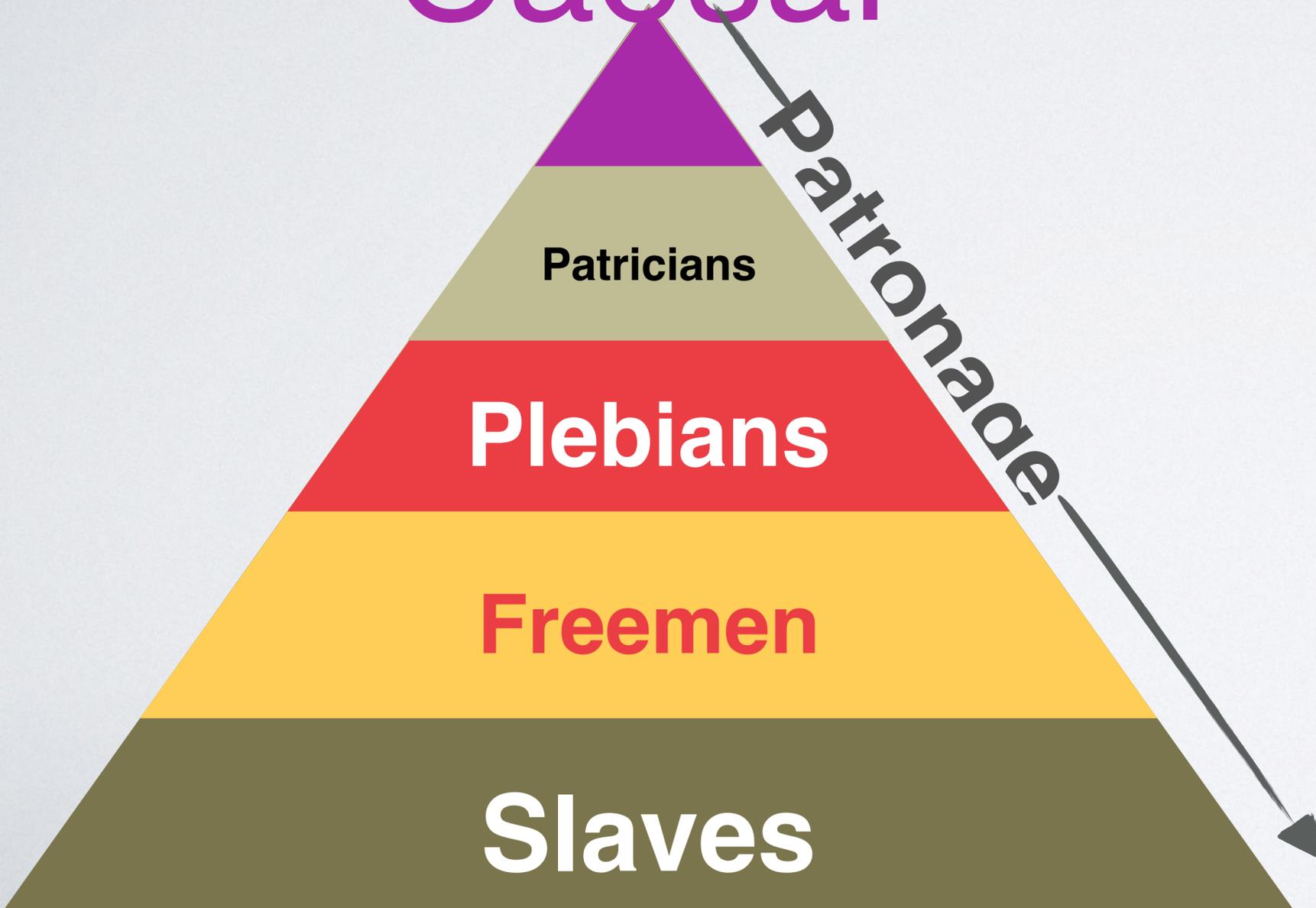
Diaspora Jews connected with the temple by means of the half shekel temple tax which covered the expenses of the offering. It was **THE** connection for them. *Non-Jews (God-fearers) were not allowed to pay the temple tax.*

However the Temple tax was paid by proselytes

(Book of Acts Vol 5: Diaspora pg 10)

# Caste System

Caesar



A Ten castes came up from Babylonia: (1) priests, (2) Levites, (3) Israelites, (4) impaired priests, (5) converts, and (6) freed slaves, (7) mamzers, (8) Netins, (9) “silenced ones” [shetuqi], and (10) foundlings.

B Priests, Levites, and Israelites are permitted to marry among one another.

C Levites, Israelites, impaired priests, converts, and freed slaves are permitted to marry among one another.

D Converts, freed slaves, mamzers, Netins, “silenced ones,” and foundlings are permitted to marry among one another.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua

Gal 3:28

...a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Messiah is all, and in all.

Col 3:11

# Paul's Audience...the God-Fearers

“Brethren, sons of Abraham’s family, and **those among you who fear God**, to us the message of this salvation has been sent.”

Acts 13:26

Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews **and of the God-fearing proselytes** followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

Acts 13:43

# Paul's Audience...the God-Fearers

In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, **both of Jews and of Greeks.**

Acts 14:1

And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with **a large number of the God-fearing Greeks** and a number of the leading women.

Acts 17:4

# Whose Torah Interpretation?

What is for one group or individual a violation of halakah is for another a legitimate interpretation that is necessary in order to preserve Jewish law!

"A Reform Jew would readily acknowledge that he "breaks the law" in the sense of not observing halakah, since he does not consider traditional Jewish law to be binding, but the person would not say that he "breaks the Torah"" (Nanos, pg 84)

# Whose Torah Interpretation?

Torah was not written to a people living in a non-Torah observant environment...

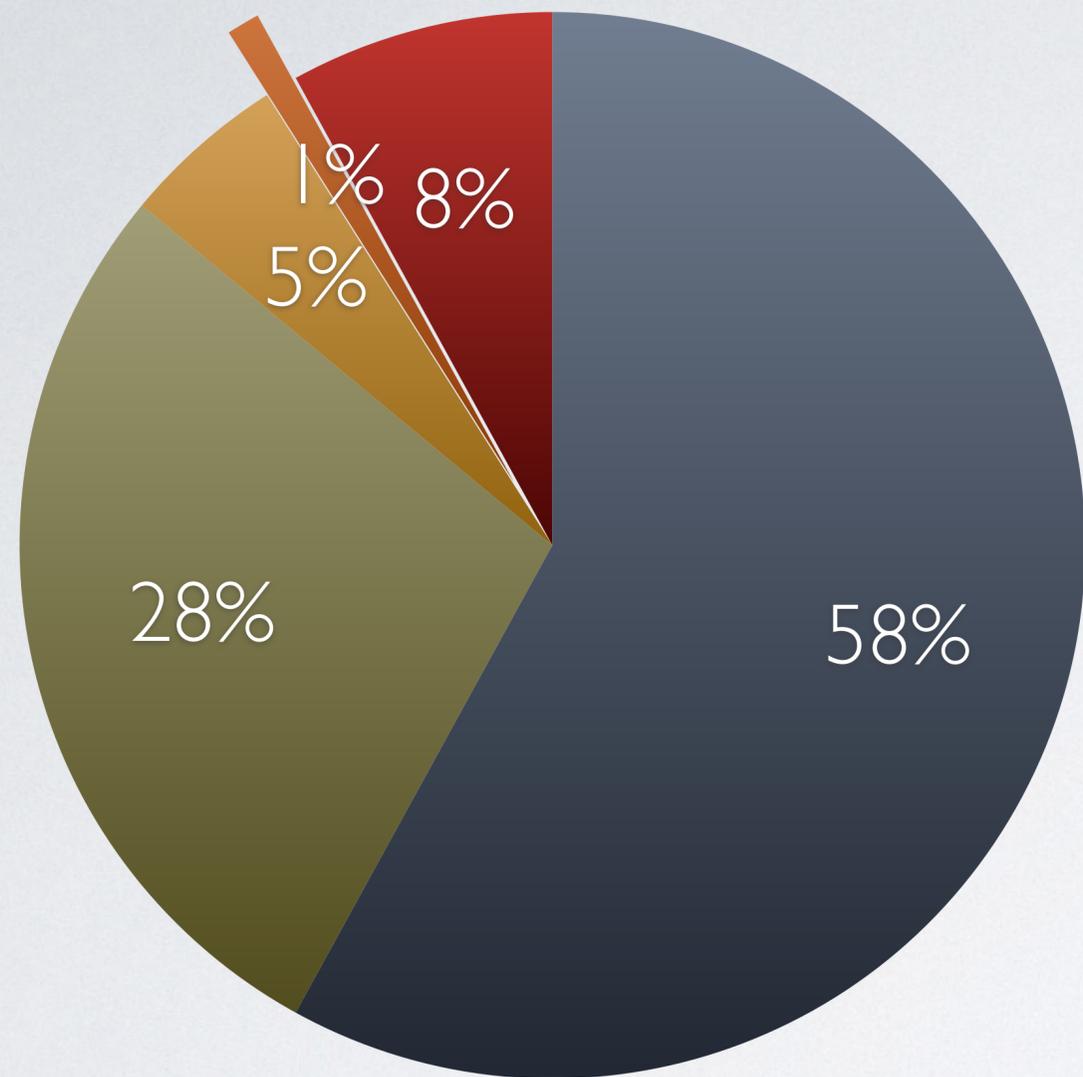
What does “Torah-Observant” mean?

Which commands take precedents?

Are we so sure that we are correct?

Can we validate others' opinions without compromising ours?

Can we exist in community with those who differ?



- Not Observable
- Most Believers
- Messianic Believers
- Messianic Torah Positive
- Most Do Not Observe

- ### Most Do Not Observe
- Brother marry childless widow
  - Live in a Sukkah (hand built)
  - Go to Temple 3x/year
  - Annul debts on Jubilee/Shmitah
  - Not mix material in clothing

# What of the *ger*?

- Exod 12:19 - The stranger is part of *edah* Yisrael and must keep Unleavened bread
- Exod 12:48-49 - *The stranger* becomes native if circumcised & Passover
- Exod 23:12 - The Shabbat is for the *stranger* to have a day off
- Lev 16:29 - The *stranger* keeps Yom Kippur
- Lev 17:8-9, Num 15 - The *stranger* can and MUST sacrifice

# What of the *ger*?

- Lev 18:26 - The *stranger* is prohibited from abominations
- Lev 19:34 - The *stranger* shall be as the native born to you, and you are to love the *stranger* as yourself
- Lev 24:22 - One *mishpat*/Justice for the *stranger* and the native
- Deut 14:21 - The *stranger* may be given meat that dies of itself (Lev 17:15 req native or stranger to bathe after)
- Deut 16:10-14 - The *stranger* celebrates Shavuot and Sukkot

# What of the *ger*?

- Deut 24:19-21 - Remainders of harvest for the *stranger*
- Deut 27:19 - Cursed is he who denies justice to a *stranger*.
- Deut 31:10-12 - The *stranger* must hear (and obey) the Torah reading once every 7 years
- Ezekiel 14:7 - The *stranger* or native must not have an idol in his heart.
- Ezekiel 47:23 - Land inheritance to the *stranger*.

# Ephesians 2:11-15

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “**Uncircumcision**” by the so-called “**Circumcision**,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Messiah, **excluded from the commonwealth of Israel**, and **strangers to the covenants of promise**, having no hope and without God in the world.

## Ephesians 2:11-15

But now in Messiah Yeshua you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the **blood** of Messiah. For He Himself is our **peace**, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by **abolishing** in His flesh the enmity, which is the **law of commandments contained in ordinances** (g: *dogmasin*), so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing **peace**,

## Ephesians 2:19-20

So then **you are no longer strangers and aliens**, but **you are fellow citizens with the saints** (*holy ones*), **and are of God's household**, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Yeshua Himself being the corner stone

## *ROMAN LAW IN WRITINGS OF PAUL: ADOPTION*

- Adoption is a legal device found in many legal systems by which a person leaves his own family and enters the family of another.
- From inscriptions in Jewish catacombs at Rome, it is clear that Jews in Rome were very familiar with the concept of adoption and had no conflict with using it.

# Galatians 4:4-7

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the **adoption as sons**. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

# *ROMAN LAW IN WRITINGS OF PAUL: ADOPTION*

## **Roman adoption laws:**

- The adoptee is taken out of his previous state and is placed in a new relationship with his paterfamilias.
- All of his old debts are canceled, and in effect he starts a new life.
- From that time [on] the paterfamilias owns all the property and acquisitions of the adoptee, controls his personal relationships, and has the rights of discipline.
- The adopter assumes liability for the actions of the adoptee and owes reciprocal duties of support and maintenance.

# DID THE GENTILES WANT TO KEEP THE LAW?

Nay, farther, the multitude of mankind itself have had a great inclination of a long time to follow our religious observances; for there is not any city of the Grecians, nor any of the barbarians, nor any nation whatsoever, whither our custom of resting on the seventh day hath not come, and by which our fasts and lighting up lamps, and many of our prohibitions as to our food, are not observed; they also endeavor to imitate our mutual concord with one another, and the charitable distribution of our goods, and our diligence in our trades, and our fortitude in undergoing the distresses we are in, on account of our laws;

*Josephus, Against Apion 2.282-283*

# Works of the Law

From 4QMMT (4Q394-395), Dead Sea Scrolls

These are some of our pronouncements concerning the law of God; specifically, some of the pronouncements concerning works (of the law) which we have determined ... and all of them concern defiling mixtures and the purity of the sanctuary ...

1. Ban on offerings using Gentile grain
2. Ban on sin offerings boiled in Gentile vessels
3. Ban on sacrifices by Gentiles

# “Works” (of the law)

In the narrative about the circumcision of the non-Jew Izates, King of Adiabene. (Josephus Antiquities 20.17-96)

- Izates lives according to Jewish custom/law, but is not circumcised.
- Ananais argues that God will have forgiveness towards Izates for not perform the *ergon* (work) of circumcision.
- Eleazar is a Jew from Galilee and is likely a Pharisee since he is described as “extremely precise about the ancestral customs”. He argues for the *ergon* of circumcision.
- Josephus multiple times uses *ergon* to denote the act of circumcision to become Jewish.

# Works in 1st Century Judaism

EP Sanders has shown that in the 1st century Jewish mindset, obedience to the law was never thought of as a means of *entering* covenant, of *attaining* a special relationship with God, it was more a matter of *maintaining* that relationship with God. He called this "Covenantal Nomism"

(Dunn, New Perspective on Paul)

# Terms for Jewish Identity in the 1st Century

Saints

Works

Under the Law

The Flesh

Circumcision

Works of the Law

References to having “Torah”

# ROMANS 2:23-29

# Works in 1st Century Judaism

Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faithfulness apart from works of the Law. **Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also?** Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faithfulness and the uncircumcised through faithfulness is one.

Romans 3:27-30

# Works in 1st Century Judaism

“We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; nevertheless **knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law** but through faith in Messiah Yeshua even we have believed in Messiah Yeshua, so that we may be justified by faith in Messiah and not by the works of the Law; **since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.**”

Galatians 2:15-16

# Works in 1st Century Judaism

Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised.

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but **what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.**

1 Cor 7:18-19

# Boundary Markers for Religious Judaism aka “works of the law”

Circumcision

WAIT!!!

Shabbat

Dietary/purity Restriction

These are in  
Torah right????

# Boundary Markers for Religious Judaism

aka “works of the law”

## **Circumcision**

- as a means of conversion (Torah?)
- No evidence of actually checking

## **Shabbat**

- Already being kept (they are at Synagogue...)
- Yeshua was accused of violating this.

## **Dietary/purity Restriction**

- Most didn't eat meat.
- Also prohibited from foods offered to idols (Acts 15)
- Yeshua was also accused of violating this.

**In reality, what is being opposed by Yeshua, Paul, and the other Disciples is submitting to the religious leaders' requirements for conversion and entering into a caste system of oppression.**

**We receive our citizenship from God, not men and in God's Kingdom there is equity; there is one justice system regardless of your lineage.**

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