

## Issues with “Divine Invitation Theology” Part 2

**Issue #2: This new teaching identifies the *ger* [non native-born] listed in the Torah as a proselyte, or convert to Judaism.**

This new teaching tries to determine the way that the Apostles would have read the Torah’s instructions regarding the *ger toshav* [stranger who dwells among you] by use of the intermediate Septuagint (LXX). It teaches that the Apostles used the LXX as their primary text in study and teaching, and would have understood the usages of *ger toshav* in light of the way the LXX translates the word as “*proselutos*” [proselyte]. This new teaching reasons that because the Apostles would have seen the issue through the lens of the LXX, they would have not considered the believing Gentile in the same category as the *ger* as mentioned in the Torah. Hence, this new teaching claims that none of the Torah passages that refer to *gerim* apply to today’s believing Gentiles.

Key texts used by this new teaching:

*As for the assembly of, there shall be one statute for Jews and for the proselyte, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; as a Jew is, so shall the proselyte be before HaShem. There is to be one Torah and one ordinance for Jews and for the proselyte who sojourns with you.*

Numbers 15:15-16 (paraphrased)

*And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”*

Acts 15:1 NKJV

*But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”*

Acts 15:5

**Bereans Online responds:**

This new teaching introduces several anachronisms into the discussion. It also pretends to know the way that the Apostles “read” the Scriptures – denying the power of the Holy Spirit to clearly communicate through His eternal word in their native language: Hebrew. If the Apostles were biased to accept what this new teaching contends was the First Century practice of proselytism by the LXX, then that very position undermines their subsequent rulings as extra-biblical, and having no authority for the believer then or now.

While the Septuagint (LXX) is invaluable to our understanding of ancient Hebrew as well as First Century Greek, using it the way that this new teaching does is anachronistic. It takes the usage of the word “*proselutos*” as it was used in a time after the First Century and projects it back into

the days of the Apostles – and then even further back to the time of the translating of the LXX (270 BCE). This ignores the history and etymology of the Greek word “*proselutos*.”

During the reign of the King Ptolemy II Philadelphus (of Selucid Egypt), around 270 BCE, the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek. Traditionally, this translation was made by seventy [LXX] Jewish scholars.

The translators of the Septuagint considered the context of each usage of the word *ger* [stranger, sojourner] to consider if it was referring to a covenant member or a pagan. When the context dictated that the reference was to a Gentile covenant member, they translated *ger* into the Greek word *proselutos*. It is from this word that we get the English word “proselyte.” Much confusion has arisen because of the character that this word acquired after the translating of the Septuagint. When the Septuagint was written, this Greek word was found nowhere else. The word seems to have come into existence ***solely for the purposes of the Septuagint translators*** – and its usage is not divinely inspired. It was the translators’ paraphrase.

The Greek adjective *proselutos* comes from *pros* [toward] and *erxomai* [to come or go]. In other words, “to come over toward.” This usage started as a way to describe those covenant members who were not members of the covenant community of Israel by birth. This usage eventually redefined the word. It started off as a way to identify those Gentiles who “crossed over” to side with the God of Israel and to live with Israel in the covenant community (to “come near” is Temple language).

It was only later that the word came to mean “those who formally converted” to another religion. ***The important distinction is that the word was not used in the Septuagint because it implied formal conversion, but rather because it described the actual way that such people could be distinguished: namely, that they had drawn near to Israel to participate in the worship of the One True God.*** It is anachronistic to read the Septuagint usage of the word *proselutos* and the present meaning of “proselyte” back into the usage at the time of the translating of the Septuagint. To assume that the Apostles did not correctly read and use the Hebrew text is to deny the work of the Holy Spirit in helping them rule correctly regarding Gentiles.

Normative Judaism has this same usage of the word “*ger*.” Many English translations that are used in normative Judaism translate the word “*ger*” as “proselyte.” For instance, the Stone Chumash translates Leviticus 19:34 in this way:

*The proselyte who dwells with you shall be like a native among you, and you shall love him like yourself, for you were **aliens** in the land of Egypt.*

Leviticus 19:34a – Stone Chumash

If the word *ger* was translated consistently, it would read:

*The proselyte who dwells with you shall be like a native among you, and you shall love him like yourself, for you were a **proselyte** in the land of Egypt.*

Leviticus 19:34a

This is obviously a case of writing a theology **into** the text as opposed to allowing the text to frame our teaching. This is a fundamental principle in Bible study: the text informs us, we do not inform the text. The Bereans of Acts 17 practiced exegesis (meaning from the text), not eisegesis (meaning into the text). Eisegesis is something used by experimental theologies.

There is no Scriptural basis for “ritual conversion” or to become a proselyte. The Scriptures speak **against** those who would seek to gain some sort of “Jewish identity” by undergoing this man-made ritual. Beloved, it is a man-made tradition that says that a man or woman can become a Jew by undergoing a ceremony – it is not the Torah.

When this new teaching promotes the idea that the Apostles fell into the trap of allowing the practice of ritual conversion to **twist their understanding of Scripture**, it is a great concern. If, as this new teaching asserts, the Apostles read the passages pertaining to *gerim* and their covenant obligations and were influenced by a much later understanding of the Greek word “*proselutos*” then it is proof that their teaching of Acts 15 and 21 is in error, and is only included in the Apostolic Scriptures to give us an account of how they made that error. While we **do not** consider this to be the case, we are steadfast in our understanding that **G-d’s Word is immutable. It does not change meaning as the culture or language around it changes. It means precisely today, what it meant in the ancient past – and it will mean the same for all of eternity.**

*The counsel of HaShem stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.*

Psalms 33:11

*The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of HaShem blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our G-d stands forever.”*

Isaiah 40:7-8

*Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.*

Deuteronomy 12:32

*Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.*

Proverbs 30:6

*For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called*

*least in the Kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 5:18-19