

1. When we are saved by grace through faith we are adopted into the family of God and become siblings with the children of Israel. As such, we are fellow heirs to both the blessings and the curses connected to the covenant the Most High made with his people. This is an issue of fundamental importance for all believers to understand. Romans 11, verses 11 through 25, is a key passage in explaining the significance of the role gentiles play in our Heavenly Father's plan, as well as our place in his family.
2. It must first be noted that in Jeremiah 11 the nations of Israel are compared to a "green olive tree, beautiful with good fruit." However, because of their repeated infidelity in worshipping false gods, Jeremiah warns that branches of this tree will be broken off. Understanding this symbolism is essential for making sense of Paul's metaphor of olive trees in Romans 11.
3. In his illustration, Paul makes mention of a cultivated olive tree, which depicts the nations of Israel; and a wild olive tree, which represents gentile believers. The root of the cultivated tree symbolizes the covenant that Yahweh made with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The covenant also involves the promised blessings and curses that are connected with obedience to the instructions that were given by Yahweh at Mount Sinai. The branches of the cultivated olive tree represent native born Israelites who have grown out of the root of Abraham. Whereas the branches of the wild olive tree are gentile believers who are from a distinct and separate tree.
4. Once this comparison is understood, this confusing passage becomes quite clear. Some native born Israelites have been broken off of the family tree due to their disbelief. In their place, the Father has since "grafted in" gentile believers who are now nourished and supported by the root of the cultivated tree. Both native born Israelites and gentile believers are cautioned to continue with what the Father considers to be moral goodness, or integrity, lest they too be cut off. And we would do well to remember what Yeshua himself taught regarding branches being cast off.

5. So with the understanding that Paul is depicting Israelite believers as branches from the cultivated olive tree, whose root stems from the covenant with Abraham, and gentile believers as branches from the wild olive tree, let's now read from Romans 11 and see if it becomes easier to understand
6. For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; and if the root *is* holy, so *are* the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?
7. As Romans 11:22 mentions, this becomes an amazing picture of our Father's goodness and severity. Although it seems severe, in his righteousness, the Father must prune or remove any branches which are not holy and "set-apart" as the root is holy. Likewise, out of the abundance of his goodness and mercy, he is willing to graft in any branch that was not originally part of the tree. In other words, any gentile who is not a native born Israelite is still allowed to become a part of YHWH's family tree.
8. Paul affirms this concept in his letter to the Ephesians, speaking to gentile believers, he reminds them "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 brought near by the blood of Christ.

9. So if we were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise without Christ, then with Christ we are citizens of Israel and partakers of the covenants of promise. And the foundational truth of the covenant is summed up in the conditional statement made by Yahweh himself in Exodus 19:5, 'Now therefore, **if** you will indeed *obey My voice* **and** *keep My covenant*, **then** you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine.'
10. So ultimately this means that if we, as gentile believers, have truly been grafted in to the Family tree of Most High God, then all of the instructions in the Old Testament directed towards the Children of Israel, that are still able to be observed without a temple, also apply to us now. This is perhaps the most significant point to understand regarding our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Since we have been adopted into His family, we are now accountable to all the rules of His house.
11. This is the exact same scenario that took place with the Mixed Multitude during the Exodus from Egypt. Moses came specifically to liberate the children of Israel from slavery, however, when they were finally set free, any Egyptians that wanted to join themselves to the nation of Israel were also allowed to come. Provided that they were willing to agree to the conditions of the covenant, just as we see in Exodus 12:49, "One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you."
12. In much the same way, Yeshua himself said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." As Romans 1:16 teaches, his sacrificial death brings salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. So just like in the Exodus, gentile believers that want to join God's Family are grafted into the the house of Israel, provided that they are willing to agree to the conditions of the covenant, which is based on obedience to the Father's instructions.

13. So as Christians, we need to understand that our identity as God's children is as a member of the Children of Israel. Just like the familiar children's song Father Abraham taught us. We need to recognize that the grace that was shown to us is even greater than we once realized, because He pruned a spot for us in His family tree. And now that we have been adopted into his family and made fellow heirs with Christ, the least we can do to express our gratitude, is obey all the rules in our Father's house.