

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

I am very grateful to Stuart Krauss for his masterly analysis "The Word *Ger* in the Bible and Its Implications" (XXXIV:4, October-December 2006). This subject has occupied my attention for many years. It is easier to solve the contradictions, anomalies, and vague references if one deals with Scripture alone. When one tries to make sense of how the halakhah dealt with "*ger tzedek*," and "*ger toshav*," it is more difficult. Mr. Krauss provides many answers to puzzles which compel the *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, in its article on *Ger*, to admit that there is no consistency in the meaning of the word in the Torah. Sometimes it is *ger tzedek* and sometimes it is *ger toshav*.

What surprised me, however, was that, while Krauss does cite Deuteronomy 29 where *Ger* is mentioned along with the other categories of Israelites standing before the Lord in the last speech of Moses, he ignores the fact that, in this case, we have not only the question of including the "stranger" in certain mitzvot, such as the pourings on the altar, and even in the fasting on Yom Kippur, but actual inclusion in the Covenant in general. As Moses says: "*levarekho bivrit*." Krauss assumes that the *ger* is a non-Israelite, yet how odd that one who was not inducted into the *brit milah* is included in the Covenant of which Moses spoke. What is the meaning of this inclusion?

Yehezkel Kaufmann in *The Religion of Israel* (Moshe Greenberg abridgement, page 301), solves the problem: ". . . it was believed that the *gerim* took part with Israel in the covenant with [the Lord] (Deut. 29:10) and the blessing and curse at the time of Joshua (Josh. 8:33). From the beginning, then, the Torah was given to non-Israelites." This is the most radical statement of the situation of which I know.

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