



THE CONCEPT OF CHOSENNESS IN JUDAISM AND  
CHRISTIANITY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

BY

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## **ABSTRACT**

The concept or doctrine of chosenness is mutually exclaimed by Judaism and Christianity. Both religions have their own perspective of chosenness. Chosenness is a significant concept that has shaped the identity of both religions throughout history. Chosenness entails a sense of exclusiveness of the religion and its religious community. The concept could be an important factor in determining the relationship of the Jews with Christians and other religious communities. This research attempts to explore the understanding of chosenness from the point of view of both religions. In consequence the similarities and differences between these two religions in addressing chosenness could be examined. The data and information relevant to Jewish and Christian notions of chosenness are collected and gathered. Apart from books, articles and reliable websites, the important material relied on for the research purposes is the New King James Version Bible. The understanding of both religions on issues related to chosenness namely; covenant, salvation by laws versus salvation by faith, holy land, and exclusiveness versus universal mission are compared and analysed. The research discovers that to a certain extent both religions have similar understanding of chosenness. However they differ on some other points.

## مُلخَص البَحْث

لقد أدرجت كل من اليهودية والنصرانية فكرة "الشعب المختار" في أصول ديانتهم. ولكل من هاتين الملتين وجهة النظر في بيان معنى هذه الفكرة. ففكرة "المختارية" تشكّل هويتها عبر التاريخ. وهي تستلزم الشعور بخصوصية الدين وخلوصه لأصحابه وأنهم مجتمع الخواص. لهذا تمكنت المختارية أن تكون عاملة مهمة في تحديد هيكل علاقة اليهود والنصارى مع أبناء الديانات الأخرى. فهذا البحث يحاول استكشاف مفهوم هذه الفكرة من وجهة نظر كلتي الملتين ثم الرغبة في مقارنة أوجه الائتلاف والاختلاف الموجودة بينهما في معالجتهم للأمور الناشئة من هذه الفكرة. لقد تم جمع المعلومات والبيانات ذات الصلة بمفهوم المختارية عند اليهودية والنصرانية من خلال البحث المكتبي. وأضيف إليها ما جمع من الكتب والمقالات والمواقع الموثوقة بها، كما أعتمد أساسيا في اكمال أغراض هذا البحث على الكتاب المقدس New King James Version. لقد تم كذلك إجراء المقابلة بين أصول ديانة اليهودية والنصرانية المتعلقة بفكرة "المختارية" وتحليلها، فمنها ما يتعلق بمفهومهم للعهد وعقيدة الخلاص بالعمل أو بالإيمان فحسب وقضية الأرض المقدسة ومحدودية الدعوة ضدّ شموليتها. فاكتشفت الباحثة على أنه توجد بين هاتين الديانتين مشابهة في مفهومهما للمختارية إلى حد معين ولا سيما بينهما فروق تفرقهما.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (*Uṣūl al-Dīn* and Comparative Religion).

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## DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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**THE CONCEPT OF CHOSENNESS IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY: A**  
**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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In the Name of Allāh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

All praises to Allāh SWT May Allāh's Peace and Blessing be upon our Prophet Muhammad SAW, his family, companions and all those who follow him until the end of time. First and above all, I am grateful to Allāh SWT for His Infinite Mercy, for the Blessings and for giving me an opportunity to experience the journey in seeking the knowledge and completing this research.

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## TRANSLITERATION TABLE

b = ب	z = ز	f = ف
t = ت	s = س	q = ق
th = ث	sh = ش	k = ك
j = ج	ṣ = ص	l = ل
ḥ = ح	dh = ض	m = م
kh = خ	ṭ = ط	n = ن
d = د	ẓ = ظ	h = هـ
dh = ذ	‘ = ع	w = و
r = ر	gh = غ	y = ي

Short vowels	Long vowels	Diphthongs
a	ā = ا	ay = اي
i	ī = ي	aw = وا
u	ū = و	

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Jews believe that they are people chosen above all others as God's selected few who merit His Divine address and reward. They term this doctrine as chosenness.<sup>1</sup> This doctrine entails a sense of superiority and exclusiveness above other people and religions.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it has been the single most important factor in determining Jewish relations with non-Jews, especially among religious communities.

In history, the Jewish belief of chosenness, which maintains a religious uniqueness of the Jews, has been a cause of hatred or anti-Semitism towards Jews, especially among Christians.<sup>3</sup> Anti-Semites sentiment largely arose out of Jewish separatist, racist, and nationalist attitude.<sup>4</sup> This has resulted in various degrees of Jewish persecution. For many early Christians, Jewish persecution was often the result of Jewish rejection of Jesus' message and their role in his subsequent crucifixion.<sup>5</sup> In recent history, the most painful event to inflict the Jewish community is the Holocaust.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*The Oxford Dictionary of The Jewish Religion*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky & Geoffrey Wigoder (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 157.

<sup>2</sup>S. Leyla Gurkan, *The Jews as A Chosen People: Tradition and Transformation*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1-2.

<sup>3</sup>David E. Holwerda, *Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two*, (Michigan, USA: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 6.

<sup>4</sup>David J. Wolpe, *Why Be Jewish?*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 49. *Anti-Semite* is a euphemism for "Jew hater". The word was created and popularized by Wilhem Marr, a nineteenth century anti-Semite, who was looking for a better term for *Jew hater*. See also Hans Küng, *Judaism: Between Yesterday and Tomorrow*, (New York: Continuum, 2002), 229.

<sup>5</sup>Holwerda, 9.

<sup>6</sup>Holocaust refers to the murder by the Germans of six million Jewish people in Europe between 1933 and 1945. See, Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in Modern Times: An Introduction and Reader*, (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995), 206.

Such incidents in history have much to do with the concept of chosenness which is mutually exclaimed by both Judaism and Christianity. It is a concept closely related to religious exclusiveness. According to Judaism, the concept of the chosen people is an understanding of their election to enter into the covenant with God and it denotes a special relationship between God and the people of Israel. Deutonomy (14:2) mentions: “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth”.<sup>7</sup>

The Jewish belief of their special status with God is exclusive to the race of Israel. According to Judaism, salvation is attained through following the God of Israel alone.

With regard to the exclusiveness of Judaism, Christianity maintains a similar position. As a brother to Judaism, which accepts the Old Testament as part of the Bible, Christianity however, differs in some points of its belief system. Although essentially Christians believe in the concept of the chosenness of Israel, due to Jewish rejection of Jesus as the true Messiah and the violation of the covenant, Christians consider Jews to have strayed. Jesus is believed to replace the earlier position of God’s chosen one through the renewed covenant. Still maintaining the exclusivity of Christianity, Christians affirm that the only way to salvation is by having faith in Jesus. This is the belief that there is no salvation outside the Church. Moreover, they believe that Jesus, as the true Messiah, will come at the end of the world to establish the Kingdom of Heaven.

As far as the concept of chosenness is concerned, both the Jewish and Christian claims as the chosen people of God are made on the basis of their

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<sup>7</sup>Deutonomy, 14:2.

understanding of the concept of chosenness. While at some points both groups share a similar understanding of chosenness, nonetheless they differ on other points.

## **1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Chosenness is a significant concept within the Jewish community. It has been at the heart of the development of Judaism throughout history. The Jews have their own understanding and perspective of this concept. Interestingly, Christians also acknowledge the concept of chosenness. Based on biblical passages, however, Jews and Christians differ in their understanding of chosenness.

Recognizing the importance of the concept of chosenness for both Judaism and Christianity, a number of studies have been done on this subject. Various studies on chosenness have explored different perspectives such as the historical, psychological and philosophical. Several works are concerned with the foundation of the concept and its implication on religion and society.

However, there is a need to explore the understanding of the concept of chosenness from the outlook of Jews and Christians. Though we know that Christians also acknowledge chosenness, previous studies related to chosenness have focused more on Judaism. Therefore, the proposed study attempts to examine both the Jewish and Christian understanding of chosenness. From here, we will be able to distinguish between the similarities and differences of how the concept is understood by both religions.

## **1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the understanding of the concept of chosenness according to Judaism and Christianity?
2. What are the biblical passages that denote the concept of chosenness to both communities?
3. What are the similarities and dissimilarities between the Jewish and Christian understanding of chosenness?
4. What are the implications of chosenness on the Jewish and Christian communities as well as on other religious communities?

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To explore the concept of chosenness from the perspective of Judaism and Christianity.
2. To analyse the biblical passages that signify the concept of chosenness to both communities.
3. To examine the similarities and dissimilarities between the Jewish and Christian notions of chosenness.
4. To analyse the implications of the concept of chosenness on the Jews, Christians and other communities.

## **1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH**

The study of the concept of chosenness has been approached from various perspectives. Many works have focused on the foundation of this concept in the Bible. Such studies focus on the development of the concept of chosenness from theological,

historical and philosophical aspects. However, with regard to a comparison between how this concept is understood by Jews and Christians, little research has been done. Therefore, this study seeks to distinguish between the Jewish and Christian notions of chosenness. Thus, we are able to determine how Judaism and Christianity are similar or differ.

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research adopts a qualitative method. It relies upon data collected through library research, such as books, articles, journals, seminar papers and reliable websites. The important material to be referred to is the New King James Version Bible. Most of the reading materials in line with the concept of chosenness according to Judaism and Christianity are examined and analysed. Previous studies which are related to this research are given special attention. The information is organized and evaluated critically. A comparative analysis to distinguish between similarities and differences in the concept of chosenness is also applied.

## **1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW**

As far as this research is concerned, numerous works on the concept of chosenness can be found, especially pertaining to Judaism. The concept of chosenness is always discussed in relation to Judaism, perhaps for its great significance to this religion and its community. This concept of chosenness has been studied in various fields, i.e., religion, history, sociology, psychology and others.

In understanding this concept, a number of writings discuss the origin of this concept through interpreting the important sources in Judaism which are the Hebrew Bible, the Ancient Jewish literature as well as Rabbinic literature. The discussions are

concerned with the development or transformation in the interpretation of this concept according to Judaism. These writings also discuss the impact of chosenness on Israel. However, pertaining to the understanding of the concept of chosenness according to Christianity, few studies have been done.

This research is an endeavour in deep understanding on the concept of chosenness from Jewish and Christian perspectives in order to reach a clear understanding of how both religions have come to understand the concept. The next few sections discuss the key notions addressed in this research.

### **1. The Jewish Notion of Chosenness**

In understanding the concept of chosenness from a Jewish perspective, Arnold M. Eisen in his book *The Chosen People in America* focuses on chosenness in the thoughts of American Jews. Eisen discusses the ways the American Jewish society adapted to the American gentile community while maintaining their identity as Jews. It involves integration as well as survival. For the purpose of adaptation to the chosen land of America, Eisen strongly affirms the need for reinterpretation of this concept of election.<sup>8</sup> Eisen focuses on the subject of chosenness from a Jewish perspective.

An interpretation on chosenness in Judaism can also be found in Muhammad Khalifah Hasan Ahmad's, *Sejarah Agama Yahudi* (The History of Judaism). However, he does not treat the issue of chosenness with any measure of depth. The issue of chosenness is discussed in relation to the doctrine of covenant between Israel and Yahweh as well as the belief in the Saviour or Messiah.<sup>9</sup> Apart from that, the Jewish

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<sup>8</sup>Arnold M. Eisen, *The Chosen People in America*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 4-7.

<sup>9</sup>Muhammad Khalifah Hasan Ahmad, *Sejarah Agama Yahudi*, translated from Arabic by Faisal Saleh (Selangor: Al-Hidayah House of Publishers, 2012), 243-256.

exile from Egypt led by Moses was seen as a significant episode pointing to God's election on the people of Israel.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, in *Jews and Christians a Troubled Family*, Walter Harrelson and Randall M. Falk compare certain issues from the Jewish and Christian perspectives. According to the authors, the covenant with Abraham is understood as a result of his rejection of the idols of his father, Terach. However, in Genesis, it appears to be a cause of divine grace and it is not on Abraham's merit.<sup>11</sup> With regard to the Christian standpoint of election, covenant and mission, it pertains to Jesus. For Christians, Jesus' message is addressed to God's chosen people, the Israelites. Another point concerns Paul's view on this issue of election. It is not clear however, how Paul makes a distinction on the mission of the Jews and the Church.

S. Leyla Gurkan in *The Jews as a Chosen People, Tradition and Transformation* explains the transformation of the Jewish concept of chosenness that took place throughout history. It is interesting to know how this concept developed and shaped the Jewish religion and identity. Various Jewish literature i.e., biblical, ancient Jewish, rabbinic, and modern are highlighted in order to better understand the foundation of this concept. Traditionally, the Jewish conception of chosenness was understood in a holiness sense. But as time passed, the concept evolved and took a new meaning. It grew to become a theology of mission and survival.<sup>12</sup> Although this work is insightful, it does not focus on the concern of this research. Its emphasis is on the transformation and development of the chosenness conception within Judaism, but excluding Christianity.

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<sup>10</sup>As cited by Muhammad, 244 in H. Anderson, *Historians of Israel and II Chroicles, Ezra, Nehemiah*, (London: Lutherwood Press, 1962), 35.

<sup>11</sup>Walter Harrelson & Randall M. Falk, *Jews & Christians: A Troubled Family*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 171.

<sup>12</sup>Gurkan, 3.

In examining the Jewish concept of chosenness, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi in his *Islam and the Problem of Israel* presents the idea from two strands within Judaism. These two strands are derived from the Torahic narrative, where al-Faruqi describes as “universalist” and “ethnocentrist”. As far as the doctrine of covenant in relation to the conception of ethnic entity is concerned, Faruqi explains how these two strands differ in their understanding of these concepts. For universalism, the covenant entails a moral responsibility of humans. This moral accountability applies to all human beings. Unlike universalism, ethnocentrism holds a belief that irrespective of their sins towards God, His favour and blessings to His people remain eternal. Faruqi further stresses that this ethnocentric interpretation of the covenant is made on material, biological and racist terms.<sup>13</sup> Faruqi only touches upon the subject of chosenness in the chapter “Jewish Universalism and Ethnocentrism”, and does not address how it is related to Christianity.

In discussing chosenness, Hans Küng in his book *Judaism between Yesterday and Tomorrow* writes about election, people and covenant as well as the promise land, Canaan under the subtopic “The Central Structural Element in Judaism”.<sup>14</sup> This work provides an idea how these aspects became the central elements in Judaism. However, pertaining to the subject of election, Küng only emphasizes on Judaism and not on Christianity. Furthermore, the emphasis on the subject matter is thorough.

Mentioning chosenness from its conception of mission and message, David J. Wolpe in *Why Be Jewish* emphasizes that the mission of chosenness is to bring the world to realize the highest truth, through spiritual search and moral behaviour.<sup>15</sup> Although the book focuses on Judaism, the author nonetheless makes a brief

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<sup>13</sup>Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, *Islam and the Problem of Israel*, (Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2003), 37-42.

<sup>14</sup>Küng, 37-40.

<sup>15</sup>Wolpe, 39.

comparison with Christianity. The author portrays Jewish chosenness as less exclusive than other peoples' chosenness.

## **2. Christian's Notion of Chosenness**

As clearly mentioned before, Jews and Christians both claim that they have the right to be the chosen people of God. Christians without denying that Jews were the chosen one believe that they were replaced by Christ. Therefore, the Israelites are not the only people of God. Every man and woman is considered chosen through Jesus Christ. In contrast, Jews who rejected Christ maintain their status as God's chosen to be eternal.

Rejecting the claim of Israel to consider them as God's chosen people, an article written by Robert Bridge entitled "Vatican Rejects "Chosen People" Claim, Calls on Israel to End "Occupation"" is interesting to be looked into. The article is the standpoint of the Christians toward the issue of Jewish occupation in Palestine. Though it focuses on the issue of Jews and Palestine, it also stresses the argument put forward by Greek-Melchite Archbishop Cyrille Bustros<sup>16</sup> on the notion of chosenness. Bridge mentions that Bustros firmly argued that Christians cannot view the promised land as an exclusive possession of the Jewish people. Bridge further explains that Bustros said that the promised was invalidated by Christ and all people have become the chosen people.<sup>17</sup> Bustro's comment was made at the conclusion of a Vatican conference in discussing the plight of the Christians in the Middle East. Even though Bridge's article highlights the position of Christian bishops on chosenness, it is

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<sup>16</sup>Archbishop Cyril Salim Bustros was born on January 26, 1939 at Ain-Borday, near Baalbeck in Lebanon. He was appointed as the Archbishop of Baalbeck by the Holy Synod of the Melkite Church in 1988. See Joseph Hagger, "New Eparchy of Newton," Eparchy of Newton, Melkite Greek Catholic Church, 22 June, 2004, <<http://melkite.org/eparchy/archbishop-cyril/new-eparch-of-newton>> (accessed 20 October, 2014).

<sup>17</sup>Robert Bridge, "Vatican Rejects "chosen people"claim, calls on Israel to end "occupation"", RT.Com, 30 October, 2010, < <http://rt.com/politics/vatican-israel-palestinians-catholic>> (retrieved 10 December, 2013). The date of the conference is not mentioned in the article.

general in nature. Thus, further explanation of the Christian view of chosenness is needed.

Speaking from the Christian perspective, Elizabeth Dilling in *The Jewish Religion; Its Influence Today* reveals the new name of people to be regarded as God's chosen. In the topic "Jews God's Chosen", the author attempts to give an authentic understanding on the group that has the right to be called God's chosen. According to the author, it is undeniable that in the Old Testament, God's chosen people were known as the Israelites or Jews. However, this chosen people were replaced by a new name, known as Messiah or Christ.<sup>18</sup> Dilling however, does not mention in detail pertaining the Christian standpoint on chosenness.

As far as the idea of chosenness is concerned, it entails some implications on religion and religious communities. Discussing Jews and Christians from different aspects and perspectives, Walter Harrelson and Randal M. Falk in their *Jews & Christians a Troubled Family* emphasize the issue of the state of Israel from the understanding of Jews and Christians. The establishment of the state of Israel is always seen in connection with the covenant of God and the election of Abraham to possess the promise land.<sup>19</sup> However, Christians believe that the Kingdom of God is in heaven. Therefore, for the Christians, the land of Jerusalem is not considered as important as it is to the Jews. However, an explanation on the Kingdom of God in relation to election requires further clarification.

The *New World Encyclopaedia* also highlights the concept of the chosen people from the perspective of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As for Christian chosenness, it is stressed that some Christians hold the belief that they share the status

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<sup>18</sup>Elizabeth Dilling, *The Jewish Religion: Its Influence Today*, (US: The Noontide Press, 4<sup>th</sup> edn., 1983), 67.

<sup>19</sup>Harrelson & Falk, 146.

of the chosen people together with the Jews. On the other hand, some Christians believe that Jews are no longer God's chosen people because of their rejection of Jesus.<sup>20</sup> Even though we can see the understanding of the three religions on chosenness, the discussion is general.

In conclusion, the above-mentioned previous works are concerned more with chosenness from the outlook of Judaism. Jewish chosenness is discussed from various perspectives i.e., the meaning of chosenness, its historical background, the transformation of the concept throughout history and the implications of the concept on Judaism, its community and on other communities. In addition, chosenness has also been emphasized from the Christian standpoint. However, the writings on it are not explained in a manner as detailed as that of Judaism. The same thing applies to studies comparing between Jewish and Christian notions of chosenness. Therefore, this research is important in analyzing the concept of chosenness in Judaism and Christianity in order to examine the similarities and dissimilarities of the concept from both parties.

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<sup>20</sup>New World Encyclopaedia, "Chosen People," <[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Chosen\\_People](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Chosen_People)> (accessed 25 November, 2013).

## CHAPTER 2

### JEWISH CHOSENNESS

#### 2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF JEWISH CHOSENNESS

Chosenness is a constant theme in the biblical text of Judaism. Throughout the centuries, the concept of chosenness has been discussed from historical, theological and psychological perspectives. This concept is indeed an essential element in giving identity to Judaism and the Jewish community throughout its history.

What could be the reason of God's choosing this people of Israel to be His special nation instead of other groups of people? Is it because God loves the Jews more than others, or is it because the merit of the Jews? In Deutronomy (7:7-8), it states that: "The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you..."<sup>1</sup> This passage suggests that God chose Jews because He loves them. Harrelson and Falk also support that the Jewish election was by God's grace and not for their special value.<sup>2</sup>

In order to have a clear understanding of the Jewish conception of chosenness, it is necessary to have a clear picture on the development of Judaism since Abraham until the present days. Before the coming of Abraham, the Jews like other ancient nations were not monotheists. The Jewish ancestors did not recognize the only one God. They were polytheists. As the ancient world believed in many Gods, the Jews

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<sup>1</sup>Deutronomy, 7:7-8. Refer to Gurkan, 14-15. See also David S. Ariel, *What Do Jews Believe?: The Spiritual Foundations of Judaism*, (United States: Schocken Books, 1995), 113.

<sup>2</sup>Harrelson & Falk, 172.

also believed that every nation has its own God.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, those Gods are responsible to keep His people safe, provide them prosperity, as well as guide them in battle. Each tribe worshipped her own God. The God chose His own people. In fact, not only the people were chosen, but in the case of the Jews there was also a promised land.<sup>4</sup>

It was claimed that in such a polytheistic tradition, Abraham came to call his people to believe in monotheism. Abraham, who is known as the ‘father of all nations’ is recognized as the first patriarch<sup>5</sup> in Judaism. God made a covenant with Abraham which denotes the election of Abraham and his people. In the Bible, Genesis (12: 1-3) mentions:

Now the Lord had said to Abram, “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you, And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”<sup>6</sup>

From the passage, it is understood that Abraham has been promised by God with a land and he and his people will be blessed by God. Harrelson and Falk underscore that some Jewish scholars concurred that the reason for Abraham’s election was not mentioned in the Bible. On the other hand, the reason was reported in *Midrash Rabbah*<sup>7</sup> that the election of Abraham was due to his rejection of idolatry of his father, Terach and the people at his time.<sup>8</sup> Abraham smashed the idols at his father’s workshop in order to prove that those idols were not powerful. In order to

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<sup>3</sup>Roy A. Rosenberg, *The Concise Guide to Judaism: History, Practice, Faith*, (United States: A Meridian Book, 1994), 1.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid*, 2.

<sup>5</sup>Patriarchs refer to the founding fathers of Judaism i.e. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. See Werblowsky & Wigoder, 521.

<sup>6</sup>Genesis, 12:1-3.

<sup>7</sup>*Midrash Rabbah* is a series of commentaries on the Pentateuch and the Hagiographa- the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. See Dan Cohn Sherbok, *Judaism: History, Belief and Practice*, (London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 133.

<sup>8</sup>Harrelson & Falk, 17.

preserve his faith for the unseen deity, he left his father's house. God commanded him to leave his homeland to the land of Canaan (later called land of Israel).<sup>9</sup>

The covenant between God and Abraham has benefited Abraham's children as well as the universal humanity. God did not only choose Abraham but He chose all the children of Abraham and the rest of mankind to be blessed by Him. Genesis (17:7) states: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you".<sup>10</sup> It is also mentioned in Genesis (12:3): "...And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed".<sup>11</sup> Following the passages above mentioned, it is suggested that Abraham's election has been accounted for universal Jewish mission.<sup>12</sup> God promised goodness through Abraham for His people of Israel and all human races.

Significantly, through the covenant, two things are required from the descendants of Abraham. They are, to recognize Yahweh alone and to practice circumcision. In consequence, the covenant of Abraham was symbolized through circumcision. Since then, every male baby in the Jewish community will be circumcised on day eight of their birth. This Jewish tradition is known as '*brit milah*' in Hebrew.<sup>13</sup> Later, this fundamental ritual was continued by Isaac, Jacob, his sons and Moses as a symbol of the covenant of Abraham.<sup>14</sup>

The second remarkable covenant that allegedly denotes the notion of chosenness in Judaism was the covenant that God offered to Moses at Mount Sinai. It is claimed that this is the most important covenant that support for the idea of the Jews

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<sup>9</sup>Ariel, 111.

<sup>10</sup>Genesis, 17:7.

<sup>11</sup>Genesis, 12:3.

<sup>12</sup>Harrelson & Falk, 171.

<sup>13</sup>Ariel, 112.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.