

Paul must have gotten emotionally worn out as he tried to enlighten those who still had a foot in the Judaizer camp. *“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”* (Rom. 14:17). If you focus your faith expression on the details of *Torah* to the diminishment of the Spirit’s fruit, you’ve forgotten our Father’s goal — that *none* should perish but that *all* should come to a saving knowledge of Jesus, their Redeemer.

Any area of agitation that brings *division* among followers of Jesus must be directly addressed. Arguments over which day to celebrate a Sabbath, or which foods may or may not be eaten, have stirred up unrest and strife among segments of Messianic Judaism. (Just ask several from different congregations *when* and *how* the Sabbath should be kept, and watch the sparks fly.)

Those who are divided by issues are in no position to love their neighbor when they can’t even love their brother! This is why Paul speaks so strongly to the believers in Rome:

Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God (Rom. 14:4-6).

Lest the joy of finding greater appreciation for Jesus by celebrating the various

The power of this demonic pit is so strong that a growing number of Gentile Christians who attend Messianic Jewish congregations are actually denying Christ and converting to Judaism.

Hebrew feasts becomes a bondage of pressure or obligation to you, once again heed the warning of Paul to the Colossian believers:

In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Col. 2:11-15).

Paul has erected a monumental defense of the powerful completed work Jesus accomplished on the Cross. With that foundation he now nails to the wall the thesis of freedom in Jesus.

Holy Spirit Empowered Love

The Hebraic Restoration is epitomized when you trust in Jesus and live in the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. It is He Who keeps you from going back to the letter of *Torah* as the modern Pharisees are doing:

You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in

ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:3-6).

Gentiles and Jews who have put their trust in Jesus have entered a New Covenant whose life is found in the *Holy Spirit*, not in *Torah* observance.

Remember Stephen's rebuke of his Jewish persecutors, "*You always resist the Holy Spirit!*" This same Spirit is your source and power to live and grow in the love of, and for, God. Throughout his letters Paul emphasizes the preeminence of love (1 Corinthians 13). *Without love we are nothing.* Again, this is the crucial difference between the Hebraic Restoration and the Jewish Roots Movement.

All of *Torah* is encapsulated in the outworking of love that is evidenced in how you treat others. Love for God and for others is a *fruit*, a spiritual reality that only the Holy Spirit can bring forth in your life. The pattern and the example have already been laid out for Jesus' followers:

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth (1 John 3:16-18).

Clearly John is not referring to love as an emotion that calls for an occasional random act of kindness. Rather, sacrificial love is a *way of life*. To walk in love identifies with an obedient response to the prompting of the Spirit to fulfill a very real need regardless of personal cost.

Building on the theme that love equals lifestyle, John continues, "...I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from

the beginning: I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love" (2 John 5,6).

The Holy Spirit: Access to our Father

You can understand the *Fatherhood* of God only as you yield to the Spirit. Choosing to adhere strictly to the *Torah* deflates your grateful assurance of your adoption as His child, and robs the Spirit of His joyous opportunity for you to grasp that your Father is "*Abba*"—Daddy.

Why would you subject yourself to the bondage from which Jesus redeemed Jew and Gentile alike? "*But when the appointed time arrived, God sent forth his Son. He was born from a woman, born into a culture in which legalistic perversion of [Torah] was the norm, so that he might redeem those in subjection to this legalism and thus enable us to be made God's sons*(Gal. 4:4,5,CJB).

How far superior is the indwelling presence of the Spirit to the external striving to obey *Torah*! "*Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'* So you are *no longer a slave, but a son* and since you are a son, God has made you also *an heir*" (Gal. 4:6,7).

Followers of Jesus are adopted heirs. Think about the implication of this in how you live your life. "*God so loved the world*" — and He still does. YOU are His hands of action, His voice of truth and testimony, and His feet to carry the Good News wherever you go.

The Holy Spirit empowers you to walk the pilgrim path that's so contrary to what your own nature would choose: "*The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.* Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us *do good to all people* especially to those who belong to the *family of believers*" (Gal. 6:8-10).

The Spirit joins your heart with those of all other followers of Jesus as *family*. How do you please the Holy Spirit who has brought you into such faithful fellowship? By doing in His strength the same good to others as you would want done for yourself.

**Love for God and for others is a fruit
that only the Holy Spirit can
bring forth in your life.**

Circumcision: A Sign For Both Covenants

Older Covenant:

Circumcision of the Foreskin

The Lord commanded Abraham and his descendants to excise their foreskin as a sign of their covenant with Him. But have you ever pondered why that particular sign represented the covenant between God and the descendants of Abraham? Physical life comes from the joining of the male and female sexual organs. If circumcision had been a procedure that destroyed a man's reproductive ability, there would have been no descendants.

Circumcision marked a man as one of the chosen of Israel. Refusal to be circumcised branded him as one "cut off" from society, a covenant-breaker. Baptismal immersion marked the follower of Jesus as His chosen "spiritual clan mate". Refusal to identify with His death through immersion indicated a shallow, incomplete understanding of His sacrificial substitutionary death.

*You are to **undergo circumcision** and it will be **the sign of the covenant between me and you** For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old **must be circumcised** including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner — those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be*

*circumcised. **My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant** Any uncircumcised male who has not been circumcised in the flesh will be cut off from his people he has broken my covenant* (Gen. 17:11-14).

Since the *promise* God gave to Abraham has come to Gentiles, why aren't Gentiles responsible to undergo circumcision? That thorny issue confronted Paul and the early Church. Paul was determined that no heavy burdens be placed on Gentiles that were not able to be kept by the Jews. You can almost slice the tension of this conflict with a blade:

Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.' This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question (Acts 15:1,2).

Acts 15 recounts the Council meeting and their efforts at settlement. Certainly at that time the Jewish leadership of the early Church could have mandated *Torah* observance, which would have included circumcision for Gentile followers of the Messiah.

But the Holy Spirit was preparing the way for Gentiles to live in the New Covenant in Jesus. Gentile and Jewish followers of Jesus find life and identification as *spiritual descendants* of Abraham, not through biological lineage. And spiritual circumcision is *of the heart*.

Peter addressed the Jerusalem Council targeting the *heart issue* that cut through the physical dimension of outward circumcision. After all, since in the new covenant there is no spiritual distinction between male and female, *both* need heart circumcision!

God, who **knows the heat**, showed that he accepted them by **giving the Holy Spirit to them** just as he did to us. He made **no distinction** between us and them, for he **purified their hearts by trust**. Now then, why do you try to **test God** by putting on the **necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear**? No! We believe it is through the **grace of our Lord Jesus** that we are saved, just as they are" (vv. 8-11).

Consider this: To negate circumcision as the sign of the salvation covenant was no light matter for this group of devout Jewish men. If circumcision, the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, is *not* mandated for followers of Jesus, then are we under a *new, different covenant*?

New Covenant: Circumcision of the Heart

Circumcision of the foreskin was a *foreshadowing* reminder that a man's life is in the hands of his Creator, and that death comes without this identification sign. In Jesus this parallels the death-to-self of your immersion. Without your grateful identification with the death of Jesus, you have no hope of life. If you refuse to have your heart "cut off" to sin and self-determination, then your life will be cut off from the Spirit and His work. Both Abraham's circumcision and your immersion into Jesus represent the vital element of *belonging to God*.

It is with this backdrop that Paul wrote,

By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like

this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection" (Rom. 6:2-5).

Peter takes up the standard of identificational immersion as well: "And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but **the pledge of a good conscience toward God** that saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21).

In a nutshell: Baptism is your pledge that you will continue on with your heart circumcision, that is, your transformation into increasing Christlikeness.

The Holy Spirit re-affirmed to the fledgling Church a particular emphasis in the Hebrew Bible that had been lost to much of Israel as they sought to be justified through legalistic practices: "Yet the Lord set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he **chose you, their descendants** above all the nations, as it is today. **Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer**" (Deu. 10:15,16).

Their stiff-necked rebellion emanated from their inner arrogant man, their unyieldedness to God's loving purpose for them to represent Him to the nations around them.

Paul so fervently tried to get this point across. God was seeking the *hearts* of all people, not their foreskins. He wanted their *spirits* to be identified with Him. Circumcision of flesh was a *sign* pointing to the reality of His goal to establish a holy people that would bring Him praise. Baptism is an indicator of your heart's deep desire to identify with your Lord. The heart circumcision accomplished by the Spirit of Jesus was the *reality* to which the sign pointed.

In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:11,12).

Baptism is your pledge to press on with your heart circumcision, that is, your transformation into increasing Christlikeness.

Our Lord sought the *heart* of Israel but couldn't get it because of their resistance to the Holy Spirit. Paul fought diligently so that the Gentiles could hold on to the freedom they had in Jesus. How tragic for the early Church if they should become chained to the bondage of legalistic perversion of *Torah* as the unbelieving Jews had!

How disastrous it would have been if the early followers of Jesus evaluated their relationship with Him based on behavior practices of religious ritual and form. Think of all the power the early Church would have forfeited if they had missed the heart circumcision, that is, the transformation into Christlikeness that God so desires!

With holy boldness Paul faced down the perverters who were claiming adherents to *Torah* among the Galatians: *"This matter [of circumcision] arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you"* (Gal. 2:4,5). Many of us need the same courage today to face the modern perversion that is attached to becoming "slaves" to *Torah*.

Be careful: Not every person who calls himself a "Messianic Jew" is a follower of Jesus: *"A man is not a Jew if he is only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God"* (Rom. 2:28,29). And what character does circumcision of the heart produce? A person who loves, foremost and sacrificially.

Can you feel Paul's intense agitation as he confronted the diabolical enslavement of the Judaizers? *"Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we*

who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— though I myself have reasons for such confidence..." (Phil. 3:2-4).

Many in the Jewish Roots Movement can teach Jewish forms and rituals. They can bait people by convincing them that keeping these will make them more pleasing to God. But few teachers in this movement whom we have met have yielded to the heart circumcision done by Jesus Christ.

Physical circumcision as a means of identification in spiritual chosenness is as fruitless as an uncircumcised heart. Nothing is gained for the Kingdom by either.

Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised obey the Torah yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh... Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation (Gal. 6:12,13,15).

The new creation is the "living sacrifice" of devoted obedient trust in your heart as you identify with the Cross of Jesus.

How tragic for the early Church if they became chained to the bondage of legalistic perversion of *Torah* as the unbelieving Jews had! How disastrous it would have been if the early followers of Jesus evaluated their relationship with Him based on behavioral practices of religious ritual and form.

From God's Perspective, Are Gentiles Different From Jews?

Biologically, yes ! Spiritually, no!

But now a righteousness from God, apart from [Torah], has been made

known, to which the **Torah and the Prophets testify**. This righteousness from God comes through trust in Jesus Christ to all who believe. **There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus** (Rom. 3:21-24).

Paul lectures both Jew and Gentile inclusively. We are all “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” Righteousness from God in the Messiah is testified to by both the *Torah* and the Prophets. God’s grace is a spiritual reality that redeems Jew and Gentile alike.

Gentiles are unencumbered by any ancestral temptation to seek justification from the *Torah*. They have no historical code of regulation to follow in order to gain the trust-grounded obedience of Abraham. Earlier we cited this passage, a worthwhile one to repeat:

So, what are we to say? This: that the Gentiles, even though they were not striving for righteousness, have obtained righteousness; but it is a righteousness grounded in trusting! However, Israel, even though they kept pursuing a Torah that offers righteousness, did not reach what the Torah offers. Why? Because they did not pursue righteousness as being grounded in trusting but as if it were grounded in doing legalistic works. They stumbled over the stone that makes people stumble. As the [Scripture] puts it: "Look, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will trip them up. But he who rests his trust on it will never be humiliated" (Rom. 9:30-33, CJB).

Gentiles are unencumbered by any ancestral temptation to seek justification from the *Torah*. Thus they have no code of historical regulation in order to gain the trust-grounded obedience of Abraham.

What character does circumcision of the heart produce? A person who loves, foremost and sacrificially.

In their blind pursuit of *Torah* the Judaizers stumbled right over the Messiah. That lesson stands today as a warning: You can observe all of *Torah* and still miss Jesus.

Paul goes on to warn how Israel failed to obtain God’s righteousness because they insisted on establishing *their own* justification:

Since they are unaware of God’s way of making people righteous and instead seek to set up their own, they have not submitted themselves to God’s way of making people righteous. For the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts” (Rom. 10:3,4, CJB).

After the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD the Judaizers set up their “own way of righteousness”, rabbinical exposition of the *Torah*. Every jot and tittle of the literal Word was surrounded by behavioral fences for the people to be sure of God’s approval of their obedience. Then and now, Judaizers have set up their own way to achieve justification.

Disregarding God’s way will be disastrous when you stand before His throne! Submission to His way through trust-grounded obedience in Jesus is the target toward which the *Torah* is pointing. Jesus IS the goal! Now that you have Him, don’t go back. Press on in Christlike character as His workmanship, walking out your relationship with Him in the works He’s prepared for you in advance (Eph. 2:10).

Just a note: The issue of living in obedience to *Torah* without the presence and power of Jesus isn’t confined to the *Torah* observant. The Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, and the political arm of Focus on the Family are all attempts to politically coerce this nation into observing Judeo-Christian principles without a regard for the centrality of Jesus. Not one of us

could live holy lives according to His revealed word without the power of His Spirit. To expect Christlike behavior from the godless is truly presumptuous!

Both in the US and in Israel, the Christian Coalition emphasizes *political* solutions. This modern-day perversion of what Paul faced has a new name: "Reconstructionism." Through political/legislative means the reconstruction movement tries to coerce unbelievers to live out the commands and principles of the Bible. Yet proponents seem blind to the need for the power of the Holy Spirit to live them out.

Satan is attacking the followers of Jesus on several fronts. He would like nothing more than to see Christians attempt to effect change through political solutions that nullify the need for spiritual regeneration. Neither the Bible nor the writings of the early Church support this man-centered wasted effort.

In their blind pursuit of *Torah* the Judaizers stumbled right over the Messiah. That lesson stands today as a warning: You can observe all of *Torah* and still miss Jesus.

How to Reach the Jewish People With the Messiah

- Recognize their demonic captivity through rebellion, bitterness, and rejection
- Ask forgiveness for generational past wrongs.
- Refrain from embracing legalistic perversion of *Torah* as an identification means.
- Uphold Jesus alone as God Incarnate, the Messiah.

Jesus gave His disciples authority over the demons. "*Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits*" (Mark 6:7). This same authority is available to His followers today. Pray in the authority of Jesus for the Jewish people. Bind the influence of the demonic strongholds which keep them in captivity through deceptive lies and agitating internal chatter. With the blinders of *rebellion, bitterness, and rejection* removed, they'll have spiritual eyes to see the Messiah Jesus as the true fulfillment of *Torah*.

Injustices done by white Christians to Native Americans, Blacks, and Jews are well-recorded in history. How do followers of Jesus today undo injustices that have been done in the past? We ask forgiveness where appropriate.

God gave me that very opportunity in Israel. At the Jerusalem prayer conference mentioned earlier I met a Polish Jewish believer who was working to bring Jews from Eastern Europe to Israel. Stirred by the Spirit, I walked up to her and tearfully asked forgiveness on behalf of my Polish Gentile people who had so persecuted the Jews in years past. With tears of forgiveness, she hugged me and said, "More of this is needed."

The humility that it takes to admit sin and to purpose to accept responsibility so it won't happen again insofar as it depends on you opens the way for Jesus to heal. There is no other way — He alone is the Healer!

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Again, Don't Romanticize!

Be aware of an insidious ploy of the enemy. Some have been deceived into romanticizing certain people groups to a degree that lulls followers of Jesus into not recognizing the *lostness* of these people.

Practitioners of Native American spirit rituals, New Age Hindu celebrations, or even legalistic Judaism are held in demonic bondage that prevents them from recognizing their need for Jesus. Too many Christians today are romanticizing Jewish and Native American traditions and cultural practices. This wrong focus distracts followers of Jesus from the goal of changing hopeless lives through His power.

For instance, many TV shows and movies portray Native American culture as noble, and close to God through His creation. We who are in Christ must understand that these portrayals fail to reveal the animism and demonic spirit worship that exclude them from the Kingdom of God. Unbelieving Native peoples live in a prison of demonic fear that can be broken only through trust in Jesus.

In the quest to evangelize Native Americans, great injustices were done in the name of Jesus. Many Christian schools were started to not only teach Christianity but to wipe out all vestiges of tribal culture. Indeed, the Church needs to repent for the devastation done to Native people.

At the same time, however, western European Americans don't have to adopt Native American cultural expressions to mollify potential Native converts. Worship that emanates from the hearts of Native followers of Jesus can take the form of very unique cultural expression. But adoption of these expressions by western Europeans who think that they are closer to true worship are probably enacting a *wannabe* mentality.

The same holds true for the Jewish people. Injustice is undone through repentance, not through cultural adaptation. Gentile Christians who adopt Jewish religious and cultural patterns to appease their yearning as "*Jewish wannabes*" are missing God's way. We cannot stress this enough: Numbers of Gentile Christians who enter the Jewish Roots Movement are *leaving Jesus* and converting to Judaism. Ironically, the Jewish Roots Movement may be the best evangel-

ism tool the Jewish people have to recruit Gentiles into Judaism!

Have You Ever Considered Making the Jews Jealous? Paul Did!

Followers of Jesus who have studied the Hebrew Bible perceive how God was prophetically revealing the coming Messiah to the Jews in ages past. We can cooperate with our Father to reach Jewish unbelievers today with the message of His Son through our love for them.

We can be the incarnation of the Truth as we proclaim His reality through word and deed. For even the Jewish rejection of the Messiah opened the salvation door for the Gentiles:

*Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: 'We had to speak the word of God to you first. **Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.** For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a **light for the Gentiles** that you may **bring salvation to the ends of the earth.**" When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and **all who were appointed for eternal life believed**(Acts 13:46-48).*

Ironically, the Jewish Roots Movement may be the best evangelism tool the Jewish people have in recruiting Gentiles into Judaism!

A New Creation: Walk Steadfastly in the Freedom Jesus Gives

The legalistic perversion Paul faced with the Galatians began when "*false brothers ...infiltrated their ranks to spy on the freedom they had in Christ Jesus and to make them slaves.*" What defines the *freedom* the

Galatian followers of Jesus enjoyed so greatly that the Judaizers would spy on them to enslave them?

This is a serious reality for us today! It's still going on! Jesus assured His audience (and all of us), "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). The word "free" was so full of joyous meaning that He revealed its importance through Paul. Note the urgency for the Galatians to be steadfast in their freedom:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, [if your identity is grounded in Mosaic law rather than in life through Jesus] Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole [Torah] [an impossible task!]. You who are trying to be justified by Torah have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by trust we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope (Gal. 5:1-5).

How tragic to experience freedom in Jesus through trust and then become enslaved to *Torah*, fallen from His grace and alienated from our Lord!

Personal Note:

If you've placed your trust in Jesus, is there a role for *Torah*? Yes! Because you love our Lord Jesus, you want to live within the freedom and boundaries of His Word, but you're still capable of sinning. How would you know when you're offending God or others if you don't study God's teaching, His *Torah*. [See our book *Christian Halakhahs* for more on applying God's Word to our lives to evidence your love for Him and for others.]

The Choice for Jew and Gentile: Freedom or Slavery

How much more plainly can Paul speak? "But if you are led by the Spirit, then you are **not in subjection to the system that results from perverting the Torah into legalism**" (Gal. 5:18). The issue Jew and Gentile face today in their pilgrimage is freedom or slavery.

Study Galatians 4:21-31. Paul makes an analogy to contrast the descendants of Sarah, the children of promise, and Hagar, the children of enslavement. Of Sarah he writes, "The child by the free woman was born through the **miracle-working power of God** fulfilling His promise...But the **Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother...You, brothers, like Isaac, are children referred to in a promise from God**" (v. 23,28,CJB).

But the child of Hagar, Paul cautions in the same verse, was "born according to the limited capabilities of human beings." Remarkably, he concludes, "One is from **Mount Sinai and bears children for slavery** — this is Hagar. . .she corresponds to the **present Jerusalem, for she serves as a slave along with her children**" (v. 25,CJB).

Paul concludes his analogy by confronting those enslaved by the Jewish Roots Movement. His admonition to "get rid of the slave woman and her son" applies to all who want to press on in their pilgrimage of fruit-bearing freedom in Jesus. "

But just as the one born according to the limited human capability persecuted the one born through the Spirit's supernatural power, so it is now. Neverthe-less, what does the Hebrew Bible say? 'Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for by no means will the son of the slave woman inherit along with the son of the free woman. So, brothers, we are children not of the slave woman, but of the free woman (vv. 29-31).

Don't be a slave to Mount Sinai. Walk in freedom toward the heavenly Jerusalem — our true home (see Rev. 21).

Let's summarize the differences in order to understand elements that are key .

Jew and Gentile Followers of Jesus:

Hebraic Restoration

- *Torah*: Presents foundational understanding of God's freedom and boundary. Provides the *foreshadowing* of the realities to come.
- Jesus: God Incarnate; gives full meaning to *Torah*; emphasizes love and a right heart.
- Holy Spirit: empowers a walk of love-grounded, obedient trust.

Jew and Gentile Followers of Jesus:

Jewish Roots Movement

- *Torah*: Applies religious forms and traditions to Gentiles as well as Jews.
- Jesus: De-emphasizes His sovereignty as God the Son; disregards the weightier heart preeminence of *Torah*; emphasizes *Torah*-grounded behavior.
- Holy Spirit: Minimizes His presence, since there is no personal need for His empowerment to love.

Personal Comment: Several years ago we participated in a Passover Seder in which the foreshadowing of the Messiah was explained. It was very informative, but do we now keep the Passover each year? No, but I can use my understanding of the Messiah in the Passover to fully appreciate what our Lord accomplished on my behalf.

As a Gentile who trusts Jesus, I don't *need* to practice messianic foreshadowings because the Substance of the One Who cast the shadow is my reality. However, a Jewish follower of Jesus who has previously observed Passover might choose to continue to keep the Passover Seder because it is still a meaningful expression to him.

If you'd like to learn more about the cross-cultural respect that was an early Church tool in sharing the Gospel, see our article "*Hebraic Foundations to Trans-cultural Ministry*" under **Hebraic Articles** on our website.

And remember this. Put your trust in the reality, Jesus, and don't let anyone substitute a shadow to displace your devotion.

The apostle John illustrates a classic Hebraic Restoration confrontation between *Torah* observance and freedom in Jesus. Jesus has just healed a man who has been an invalid for thirty-eight years — *but* He heals him on the Sabbath. He joyfully commands the fellow, "*Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.*" Instead of rejoicing with the man who has been freed from such humiliating and painful bondage, the Pharisees rebuke him: "*It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.*" (See John 5:1-15.) You can be so right about *Torah* and still miss its greater emphasis on the love of Jesus.

Hebraic Restoration: *The Simplicity of a Loving Relationship*

For years I've played golf for recreation. I'm what you'd call a "duffer." Mostly I played in spurts with long layoffs in between. My golf swing used to be so complicated that during the layoffs I'd forget how to do it right. Not wanting to get annoyed over something that's supposed to be relaxing, I asked God to simplify my golf swing so that I could enjoy the game more when I did play.

I was given a golf training video which taught a simplified golf swing. Oh, the frustration for a few months as I discarded 30 years of complicated swinging! In fact, I'm convinced that it's easier to *complicate* things than to make them simpler! Finally, one day the simplicity took over, and everything about playing golf changed for me. I've hit

much lower scores than ever before. And you who golf will appreciate this: Having had only one unsuccessful attempt at an eagle (two under par) in the previous 30 years, I've experienced 12 attempts and two eagles this past year! *Simplicity* has brought me greater joy and satisfaction.

The freedom we have in Jesus is based on the *simplicity of a loving relationship*. Our Father is *not* an angry ogre ready to pounce on you every time you do something wrong. He is the epitome of love personified. Our Father loved you completely while you were still a sinner. Nothing you do can cause Him to love you any more or any less. Remind yourself of this as you consider what our Lord desires of you:

1. GROW in your loving trust in Jesus. It's an amazing process of yieldedness, just as a little child grows from the inside out in stature and capability. ASK the Holy Spirit for guidance and empowerment. Jesus tried to convince the Jews how much they needed the Holy Spirit's help: "[H]ow much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to **those who ask him**" (Luke 11:13).
2. As your loving trust grows, EXPRESS it! This is a normal part of any loving relationship. "**For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again**" (2 Cor. 5:14,15). Loving expression is not based on what you *have* to do but on what you out of faithful love *want* to do to serve Him. Align your trust with His, because it's He Who gives you the will and the power to carry out His purposes.

As the Holy Spirit causes your love to grow, you'll be drawn increasingly into the Bible to know Him more. There are 613 commands in the *Torah* and 1,050 in the Newer Testament! Your heart will hunger to discover the *freedoms and boundaries* you have in Christ.

Your *motivations* for keeping His commands will change. For instance, choosing not to covet your neighbor's wife still applies to you today — not because of *Torah*, but because of *love for your neighbor*. What kind of relationship can you have with your neighbor if you covet each other's wives and property? What would Jesus do? *Because of His love* He would apply the teachings of God so that *God could be praised* for His goodness.

3. Your welcome at the judgment throne will not depend on how meticulously you observed the commands of *Torah*. Your GRATEFUL LOVE for Jesus, and His love in you for your fellow man will prompt you to be concerned with the welfare of others who can't return your kindness:

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world'....'I tell you the truth, what - ever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me (Matt. 25:34,40).

It takes a lot of humility to look after the interests of others. As you choose to be led by the Holy Spirit in each decision and interaction with others, He produces His fruit in you. Your concern for others grows! All you need to do to is ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into ways of living out God's Word to bless others.

As the apostle James wrote, "*As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead*" (James 2:26). Only the specific loving-obedience that flows from your relationship with our Lord Jesus will hold merit at the judgment throne.

4. Our Father knows that you need RELATIONAL SUPPORT to encourage you in your walk with Jesus. He also knows that no one can maintain the same level of

relational commitment with everyone he or she knows. Our relationships need *biblical prioritizing*.

This can be hard to do because you may think that those you place lower on your priority list will feel rejected or let down. But take an example from the life of Jesus. He favored three apostles in particular whom He took with Him on special occasions: Peter, James, and John. Next were the other nine, then special friendships such as Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Finally, there were those who walked as occasional disciples, and then the multitudes.

You can be so right about *Torah* and still miss its greater emphasis on the love of Jesus.

As our research in Israel ended, the Lord gave us the The Restoration Diagram shown earlier and to the right to visually summarize His relational priorities for the lives of those who follow Him. Although the Hebraic Restoration is multi-faceted, relational commitment and support are key factors for your personal growth and effectiveness.

Beginning with your own household and home fellowship, out to neighbors and coworkers, all the way to strangers and even those who might persecute you for your faith, the issue is the same — a loving enactment that reflects your trusting relationship with our Lord Jesus.

Please see our books *Restoring the Early Church* and *Pastoring by Elders* for a more complete explanation of the relational priorities that are revealed in the Restoration Diagram. They're on our website under **Books**, and can be downloaded for free.

The Hebraic Restoration is a *life pilgrimage*. You're being increasingly conformed into the character and likeness of Jesus. If you'd like to join us in exploring the nature of pilgrimage, see our study guide on

Hannah Hurnard's book, *Hinds' Feet On High Places* under **Pilgrimage** at our website.

* Scripture passages in this article have been taken from The New International Version of the Bible. Passages marked CJB are from The Complete Jewish Bible translation by David H. Stern.

Restoration Diagram

