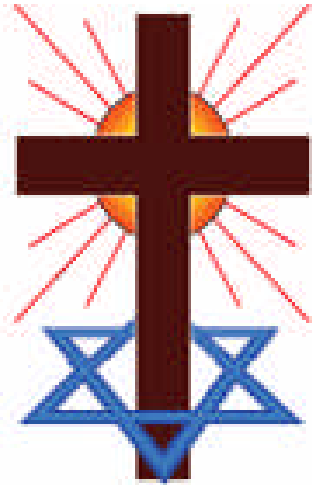


The  
**Hebraic Restoration**



**Confronts**

The  
**Jewish Roots Movement**



Revised February 2003



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## Introduction

Major differences abound between the facets and goals of the Hebraic Restoration and those of the Jewish Roots Movement. These two movements may *seem* similar because people errantly use “Hebraic” and “Jewish” interchangeably. However, to the follower of Jesus who seeks a deeper, love-grounded walk of obedient trust, they have nothing in common.

The path of the Hebraic Restoration emanates from Jesus — a path of freedom. Its roots are found in Abraham and the promise God gave to him that through him the Gentile nations would be blessed. That “blessing” to all mankind came in the person of Jesus, God the Son, and His perfect sacrifice on your behalf. Just as *Abraham’s trust* brought the righteousness that was credited to him, so, too, *your trust in Jesus* credits you with that same inheritance.

The Jewish Roots Movement is a modern expression of the Judaizing element against which Paul fought so vehemently to protect the early Church. This movement has nothing to do with a love-grounded trust in Jesus. Rather, it embodies the same enslavement to Jewish religious ritual and forms about which the Spirit-inspired authors of the Newer Testament so sharply warned.

Our purpose in writing this article is to contend for the *victory* that Messiah Jesus offers everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, who puts their trust in Him. A demonic enslavement is ensnaring so many Gentiles and believing Jews within Messianic Judaism. Participation in this movement doesn’t deepen your walk with Jesus. Instead, it trips you into a trap of demonic strongholds. *Rebellion, bitterness, and rejection* keep people from personally experiencing loving intimacy with the Lord Jesus and our heavenly Father. Legalistic perversion of God’s Word displaces the finished work of Jesus. That perversion convinces you that *you must earn what our Lord has so freely given through His grace.*

Prayerfully read this article and discern for yourself which is freedom and which is slavery. Your spiritual walk is at stake!

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. If We Go to Baja We Die!
3. “You Are to Use the Words *Hebraic Restoration*”
4. Distinctions Between the Hebraic Restoration and Jewish Roots
5. Nine Years Later: *The Answer to Why the Words “Hebraic Restoration”*
8. God’s Promise and His Conditions For Keeping It
10. Don’t Romanticize the Jewish People!
13. “Jesus Was A Jewish Carpenter”
15. Should We Practice Shadows, or Trust the Reality?
16. The Redeemer Has Come!  
Who Were His Ancestors?
17. Judaizer: “*Abraham is our father.*”  
Jesus: “*Satan is your father.*”
19. What Is God’s Purpose For *Torah*?
20. *In Jesus, Is There Any Longer a Spiritual Distinction Between Jew and Gentile?*
24. Holy Spirit-Empowered Love
26. Circumcision: *A Sign For Both Covenants*
28. From God’s Perspective, Are Gentiles Different From Jews?
30. How to Reach the Jewish People With the Messiah
31. A New Creation: *Walk Steadfastly in the Freedom Jesus Gives*
33. Hebraic Restoration: *The Simplicity of a Loving Relationship*

## If We Go to Baja We Die!

We sense such an urgency for you to understand the distinction between the Hebraic Restoration and the Jewish Roots Movement. Perhaps the following story will clarify the intensity of our writing.

Put yourself in my cockpit 32 years ago.

Low on fuel, we were still 25 miles out to sea southwest of San Diego. Just a few months earlier I had arrived at this helicopter squadron right out of flight training. Now I was a co-pilot on a helo carrying 25 personnel from an aircraft carrier some 100 miles out in the Pacific Ocean. Our helicopter had been the first to refuel at the carrier. We were then put into a holding pattern that ate up fuel as we waited for the other five helos of our flight group to refuel, load their personnel, and lift off.

Flying in the #2 position just over the top of dense fog, I focused on my navigation duties. I'd warned my pilot several times that our flight leader wasn't heading us back toward San Diego — he was drifting deep into Mexico toward the tip of Baja California! My pilot reluctantly radioed the flight leader of his navigation error, but his minor course correction still wasn't going to get us back to our base.

Anxiously, my mind wandered back to an incident during flight training several months earlier. I had failed to take sufficient action when our flight leader put our group of four aircraft on a collision course. As a result, we just missed striking another plane by the skin of our teeth. During the debrief that followed the flight, the Commanding Officer and Flight Safety Officer replayed the audio tape of my repeated radio transmissions that had warned the flight leader of his error. When the tape was over, the CO pierced me with steely eyes and

demanded, "Dowgiewicz, *how far were you going to let this go?* You knew the flight leader didn't know what he was doing. *When were you going to take action before someone got killed?*"

Now, months later over the Pacific Ocean, a low fuel light stared at us. The flight leader, still believing he was north of the track to San Diego, had ordered the flight to turn south. As the pilot-in-command of my helo began his turn south with the rest of the flight, I grabbed the controls and stopped his turn. "Dick," I pleaded, "if we follow him we're going to run out of fuel right here over the ocean!" Dick understood what I was saying — and the implications of it: mutiny. His career was on the line if I was wrong.

His finger squeezed the radio button: "Mayday! Mayday! This is Landslide 15. We are a flight of six lost somewhere southwest of San Diego. Can someone help us?"

The crisp voice of an air traffic controller boomed back, "Roger, Landslide 15. I have you on my radar. Vector to San Diego 060/25 miles." Just as we touched down on our base runway, one of our engines flamed out, starved of fuel. I had almost let the situation go too far.

If you have fully put your trust in Messiah Jesus, we hope you'll discern our urgency to write this article. The Holy Spirit has been prompting us to write for some time: "*Clarify the differences between the Hebraic Restoration and the Jewish Roots Movement.*"

The most disturbing news for us has been the reports of epidemic numbers of Gentile Christians who are attending Messianic Jewish services, then denying Jesus in order to convert to Judaism. Sue and I hope we haven't waited too long. The situation is critical. The desperate words of Jude are appropriate at this time: "*Dear friends...I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for*

*the faith [in Jesus] that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 1:3).*

## **“You Are to Use the Words Hebraic Restoration”**

In the fall of 1993 Sue and I were leaving a retreat ministry of almost 11 years. We had no idea what we were going to do next. The years of teaching retreats, counseling clergy, and keeping up the sixty acres of farmland had taken a toll on our marriage.

This wasn't a “two-week notice and leave” type of situation. Much was involved in finding a suitable home for the livestock, as well as tying up countless ministry loose ends. During the two-month time frame between our decision to leave and our actual departure, though, many elements began to fall into place.

- Three days after we agreed with our Board to leave the retreat center, our friend Bert Schlossberg, called. Bert, who had moved to Israel five years earlier with his family, was visiting the US and wanted to see us. Through our Lord's clear revelation, he invited Sue and me to live with his family in Jerusalem. Now, you have to understand that up until this time, going to Israel was close to the bottom of things I wanted to do.
- The morning after Bert's visit I got up early and knelt in our living room, crying out, “Lord, please show me *why* You have us going to Israel.” Then I did something I'd seldom done before. I let the Bible flip open on its own. My eyes fell on God's recruitment of Jeremiah:

*‘Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the*

*whole land — against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you declares the Lord (Jer. 1:17-19).*

I knelt there and sobbed, especially when I read, “*I am with you and will rescue you.*” I knew then that this wasn't just a vacation trip to Israel. Whatever the Lord had in store or was preparing me for, He would have to *rescue* me.

- Several days later I received a letter from a man I'd never met. “You're going to Israel on a *prophetic mission*. Please fax me anything the Lord shows you while you're there.”

God's plan continued to unfold once we landed in Israel. Our first day there Bert and I were standing next to the Tower of David in the Old City sector of Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit spoke to my heart, “Mike, you are going to be part of a *Gentile Awakening*.” I had no clue what He was talking about.

The following month Sue and I took part in a prayer conference in Jerusalem. A pastor from Memphis whom I'd never seen before walked up to me and put his hand on my shoulder. “The Lord would have you know three things.” The first two he spoke of were private prayer concerns about which Sue and I were seeking the Lord. We had told no one else about these particular needs. He continued, “The Lord would also have you know that He has brought you here so that you would go back to the US with a prophetic message.”

Sue and I had first heard the word “Hebraic” during that prayer conference. A speaker had just finished quoting Zechariah 9:13, “*I will bend Judah as I bend my bow and fill it with Ephraim. I will rouse your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece and make you like a warrior's sword.*” His prophetic explanation expanded on that verse. Now, throughout the world, the Lord was pouring

forth a *Hebraic understanding* of the Scriptures to undo what the ancient Greeks had done. [The tragic Hellenist/Roman influence on the Church is covered more fully in Section 2 of our book *Restoring the Early Church*.]

Suddenly, the Spirit's message about a *Gentile Awakening* began to make sense. First, God is using the return of the Jewish people to Israel as a banner to the Gentiles that He keeps His promises:

*In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to **reclaim the remnant** that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. He will **raise a banner for the nations** and **gather the exiles of Israel**; he will **assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth** (Isa. 11:11,12).*

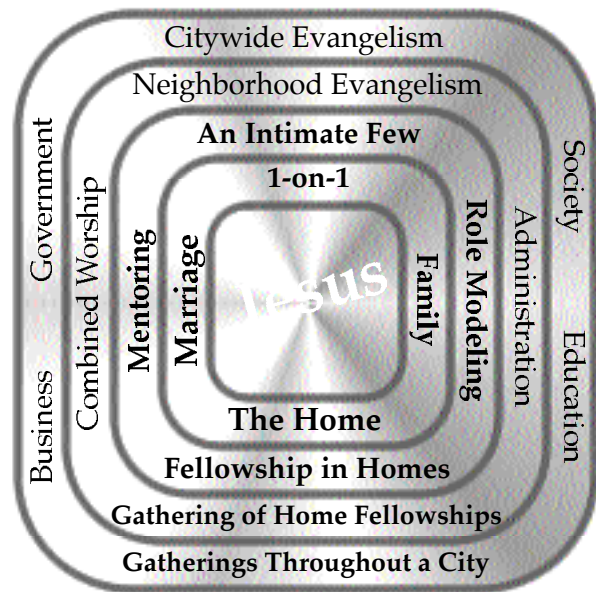
Second, as He accomplishes this, He is also restoring to the Gentiles the *relational intimacy and spiritual power* that epitomized the earliest Church.

After the conference Sue and I pored over all we could find on the early Church. When we had concluded our research, the Holy Spirit impelled us to use the word "**Hebraic Restoration**" to define that which we saw our Lord restoring to His Church around the world. The Spirit gave no further explanation at that time, however, of *why* we should use the word "Hebraic."

He also implanted in our minds the **Restoration Diagram** so that people could visualize the *relational priorities* He was restoring. The priorities of the diagram can best be understood by visualizing it as a layered cake with Jesus at the top, penetrating every level. The subsequent layers emanate outward.

The Diagram is more fully explained in Section 3, "The Early Church Born Again", in our book *Restoring the Early Church*. Suffice it to say that the early Church was

## Restoration Diagram



recognized by its *intimate relationship* both with God and with one another.

During our research we encountered people who were using the phrase "Jewish Roots." This was all so new to us that we initially thought the Holy Spirit had given us a different word for the same thing. Over time, however, we discovered that this was not so! Despite some outward similarities, very little of the multifaceted Hebraic Restoration shares commonality with the pursuit of Jewish Roots.

### Distinctions Between the Hebraic Restoration and Jewish Roots

Study this brief summary that compares the major difference in focus between the Hebraic Restoration and the Jewish Roots Movement.

#### Hebraic Restoration:

##### *Going back to Abraham*

The priorities of this restoration are *relational*. They go back to the *trust-filled relationship* Abraham had with God. Paramount is the development of a vibrant and viable *love relationship with our Lord* empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Our Father is the Head of a *family of children* whom He adopted because of

**Despite some outward similarities, very little of the multifaceted Hebraic Restoration shares commonality with the pursuit of Jewish Roots.**

their trust in the sacrificial love of His Son, Jesus. As a result of this love, your expression of that intimate relationship is seen as you live out God’s commands and teachings.

**Jewish Roots Movement:**

*Going back to Moses*

Supporters of this movement are adamant that believers, both Jew and Gentile alike, must reclaim *God’s teachings in the Hebrew Scriptures* as He commanded for the Israelites. The religious forms and traditions that *foreshadowed* the coming of Jesus were commanded to the Jewish people. Other traditions were added by later rabbis and sages.

These are now being presented as a lifestyle for *Gentile as well as Jewish* followers of Jesus. The Jewish Roots Movement emphasizes the practice of Jewish rituals and traditions that preceded the incarnation of Jesus. In a very real sense, they focus on things that *foreshadowed* His coming, rather than the *substance* of His Person and work.

Personal Note: Throughout this article we’ll be using the Hebrew word “*Torah*” in place of the word “law” to refer to God’s commands and teachings in the Older

Testament, the Hebrew Bible. *Torah* is God’s righteous instruction that contains both *freedom* and *boundary* for our lives as we relate to Him and to others.

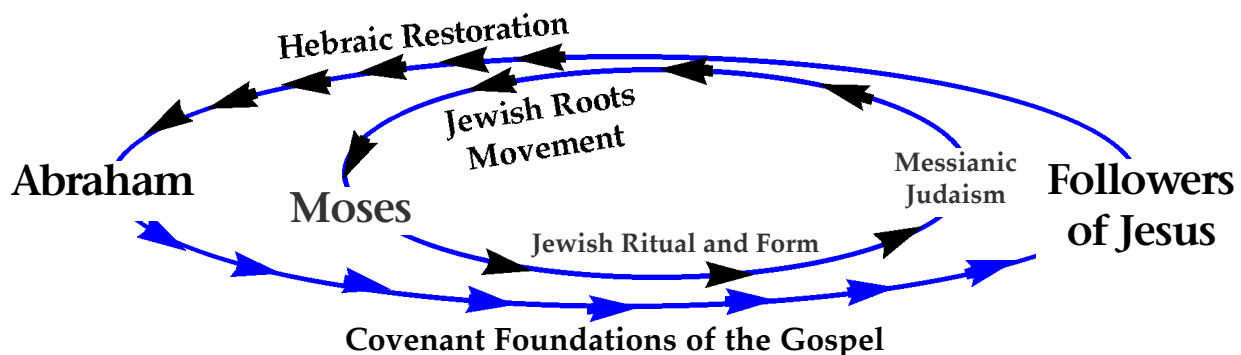
The word “law”, on the other hand, has come to connote only the limited sense of *boundary*. As we shall see, it is in the area of *freedom* that Jesus is best understood by those who follow Him.

Sue and I firmly believe this: Our Lord wants those who are insistent on restoring the Jewish Roots to the Church to first fully embrace their *Hebraic* roots. In other words, *get back to Abraham* — don’t stop at Moses! The righteousness credited to Abraham by trust can remove so much of the controversy and estranged relationships that surround *Torah* observance and the Jewish traditions so espoused by people who are connected with the Jewish Roots Movement.

***Torah is God’s righteous teaching that contains both freedom and boundary for our lives as we relate to Him and to others.***

**Nine Years Later:  
The Answer to Why the Words  
“Hebraic Restoration”**

Simply this. God is Cutting Through All the Religious Forms. He is Restoring the Preciousness of the Trust-filled Relationship He Had with Abraham — the Same Intimacy He Wants with Each of His Children Who Trust in His Son, Jesus.



Over the past nine years as we have shared the Restoration message, we've gained an understanding of *why* the Restoration is not a Jewish Roots movement. Think of how much our Lord *enjoyed His relationship* with Abraham! Abraham's *response* to that love relationship with his Lord was his *trust-grounded* obedience. Abraham wasn't striving hard to be obedient in the hope that God would then draw near to him.

Our Lord made clear why He chose Abraham out of all other peoples: "*For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him*" (Gen. 18:19). Abraham would prepare *Godly successors* who would follow his way of relating to God.

The children whom our Father adopts through Jesus are to exercise no less a relationship of obedient trust than did Abraham. This God of righteousness credited Abraham with righteousness because of his *trust-grounded* obedience. Today He credits His adopted children with the same righteousness for their *trust-grounded* obedience to His Son Jesus.

Abraham is recorded in the Word as the *first Hebrew*. Of what significance is that to followers of Jesus today? As we shall see shortly, a great deal!

### Biologically

Abraham is the father of the Jewish people through his son Isaac, and of the Arab

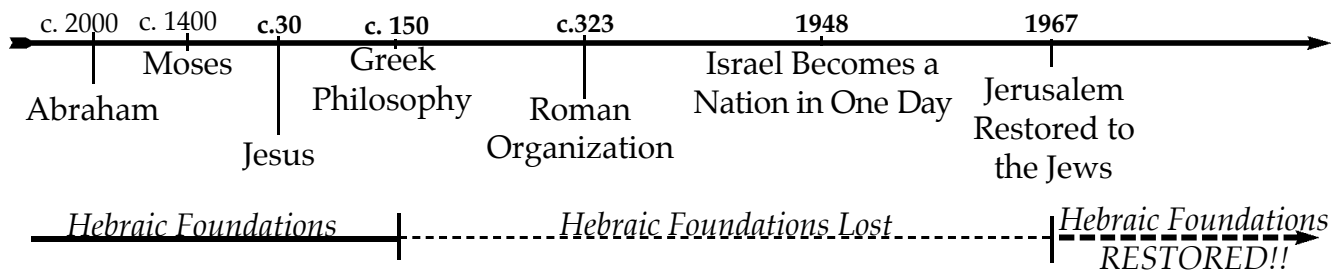
**All of the church practices seen in the Newer Testament were already part of the faith enactment of the *Hebraic stream* in Israel, people who followed in the trust-filled relationship of their father Abraham. God had been preparing His Church for centuries before the coming of Jesus. They needed only the Atonement of the Messiah and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to walk in a trusting, obedient relationship with Him.**

people through Ishmael. "[Abraham's] sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre..." (Gen. 25:9).

God's promises that He would restore the Jewish people back to the land of Israel one more time are still in effect to the biological descendants of Abraham through Isaac. God is keeping His promises to the Jewish people because He gave His word to the Patriarchs. Our God *keeps His Word* (See Deut. 1:8; 7:7-11; 34:4; Rom. 11:28,29; see also Chapter 13, "Fulfilling Biblical Prophecy: Israel and the Jewish People Today" in our book *Restoring the Early Church*.)

God considered the Jewish people "rebellious and stiff-necked." (See Exo. 32:9; 33:3; 33:5; 34:9; Deu. 9:6; 9:13; 10:16; 31:27; 2 Kings 17:14; 2 Chr. 30:8; Neh. 9:16,17; Jer. 7:26; 17:23; 19:15; Acts 7:51.) The "romanticizing" of Jews by the Jewish Roots movement does everyone an injustice, particularly the Jewish people themselves. Rather than focusing on God and His faithfulness to keep His promises, the Jewish Roots group emphasizes the *chosenness*

### Hebraic Time Line: *Lost and Restored*



of the people and their perceived exoneration before God *minus the Messiahship of Jesus!*

Our Lord prophesied that He would restore the Jewish people to Israel one more time. This event is *occurring even now*, and truly fulfills the promise that the return of the Jews from the northlands would be called an even greater miracle than the Israelite entry into the Promised Land out of Egypt!

*However, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when men will no longer say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' but they will say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers (Jer. 16:15,15).*

Over 800,000 Jewish people have returned to Israel in the past 13 years since the fall of the Soviet Union — a "land of the north". Many of these have come back with the help of Gentiles, fulfilling the prophet's words, "*This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'See, I will **beckon to the Gentiles**, I will **lift up my banner to the peoples**; they will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders'" (Isa. 49:22).*

The Lord is indeed bringing them back, and He will finally remove their heart of stone. Then they will see the Messiah they once rejected. The words of the prophets *are* being fulfilled, and *will* be fulfilled!

*Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will **gather you from the nations** and **bring you back** from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will **give you back the land of Israel again.**' I will give them an **undivided heart** and put a **new spirit** in them; I will **remove from them their heart of stone** and **give them a heart of flesh.** Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my*

*people, and I will be their God' (Eze. 11:17, 19,20).*

*And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. **They will look on me, the one they have pierced,** and they will **mourn for him** as one mourns for an only child, and **grieve bitterly for him** as one grieves for a firstborn son (Zec. 12:10).*

### **Spiritually**

Note that the relationship that Abraham had with God is not confined to the Jewish people. As Paul testifies, Abraham is the father of *all* who put their trust in Jesus: "*Therefore, the promise **comes by trust** so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to **all Abraham's offspring** — not only to those who are of the [Torah] but also to those who are of the **trust of Abraham.** He is the **father of us all**" (Rom. 4:16).*

Think of the trust it took for Abraham to be willing to trod that dusty path with his long-awaited son Isaac, knowing in his heart that God would demand the youngster's life. Yet that very trust could cause Abraham to confidently order his servants to wait by the wayside with the donkey until he and his son *returned from their worship*. And what was that worship to be? The perfect praise of an obedient trusting heart that could confront death as boldly as life.

God intended the Gospel of wholehearted trust and reconciliation for the whole world, not just the Jewish people. His intentions permeated the Hebrew Scriptures as He was preparing His people to be a *light* to the Gentile nations to follow the one true God. And that light would be more than casual assent or cultural inheritance. It would shine with the intensity of trust demonstrated by an old man willing to sacrifice his promised son out of obedient love for his God.

*Understand, then, that **those who trust [in Jesus]** are children of Abraham. **The***

*Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (Gal. 3:7-9).*

This connection of a love-grounded obedient trust foreshadowed by Abraham is crucial for us today to understand why our Father told us to call this a **"Hebraic Restoration."**

#### A personal comment:

God prophesied an ongoing hostility by the descendants of Ishmael toward the descendants of Isaac. Followers of Jesus who help the Jewish people return to Israel are to obey God by *not taking sides* in this controversy. We believe that those who grow in the Hebraic foundations will be used by our Lord as the *spiritual* descendants of Abraham to bring peace between the *biological* descendants — the Jew and the Arab. We spiritual descendants of Abraham have the wonderful opportunity to be *reconcilers*, not agitators.

It is vital to cooperate with our Lord as He fulfills his promises. Focus on Him, not on national Israel. It is *sin* for you to take a position *for* one person (Jew) for whom Jesus died, and *against* another person (Arab) for whom Jesus also died. If you take sides, you are *passing judgment*, a role reserved for God alone.

## God's Promise and His Conditions For Keeping It

As we mentioned earlier, the Hebrew Bible, the Older Testament, informs us that God's relationship with the Jewish people is based on the promises He gave to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Because of their obedient trust in His faithful love, they were willing even in their leanness of number to follow God wherever He led.

*The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your fathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt (Deut. 7:7,8).*

Note that this covenant of love involves both the Initiator, God, and His subject, Israel. And the parameter that holds the covenant together is *love for Him* and *walking according to His ways*. Failure to love Him has disastrous consequences for those chosen by God, whether then or now!

*Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands But those who hate [refuse to love] him he will repay to their face by destruction; he will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him. Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today" (Deu. 7:9-11).*

### To Love God or Not

Our Lord affirms Himself as the God Who keeps His promises for generations to come. He also affirms His criteria for a *love relationship* with Him!

The cornerstone of Jewish prayer is called the *Shema* [she-MAH], after the first word, 'hear': "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one*" (Deu. 6:4). If the prayer had included verse 5, "**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength**", perhaps the love aspect of the relationship our Lord wanted with the Israelites would have become cemented.

Again God reiterates the condition of love in the Ten Commandments, the kind of love a husband has for His precious bride:

*“You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a **jealous God**, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but **showing love** to a thousand generations of those **who love me** and keep my commandments” (Exo. 20:5,6).*

The Hebrew word used for love in the above passages is *ahav* [uh-HAHV], a passion to press in to God with all that is in you, a hunger to be in His presence. Keep in mind the focus of a love relationship with God *first*, then on keeping His commands out of the fullness of that love. Otherwise, you’ll stumble into thinking that you have to obey *in order to* be worthy of His love.

You can’t miss the pre-eminence of love emphasized by our Lord Jesus as He quotes from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, *“**Love the Lord** your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: **Love your neighbors yourself.**’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on **these two commandments**” (Matt. 22:37-40).*

In a love double-whammy, He reinforces for *all* who would follow Him the same criteria God commanded for the Jew. All of *Torah* and the prophets are built on the foundation *to love*. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 stresses to the believers in Corinth the *man-date to love*, while his message to the Galatians reveals the *goal* of our trust: *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. **The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love**” (Gal. 5:6).*

Paul’s words are strong: *“The only thing that counts.”* Think about this as you reflect on your own faith walk. What is *your* trust producing?

Without love, obedience by itself creates a skewed focus that results in faulty motivations and goals. Obedience not grounded in love led the Jewish people down a path of legalistic perversion. As Paul warned the Roman believers, Israel sought to be justified by their obedience to *Torah*, rather than by the trust in God held by their ancestor

Abraham. And trust, not legalistic perversion, is life for us who trust Jesus today.

Both Testaments spell it out clearly. The preeminence of *loving God* is the same for Jew and Gentile. This one virtue, love, separates the Hebraic Restoration from the Jewish Roots Movement. When you obey God as a loving expression of a viable relationship with Him, your heart isn’t tied up with knots of controversy or judgment about others. You’ll understand inside and out that your obedience comes from the power of *His grace* at work in you. This is the way of the Holy Spirit.

This whole idea of relationship with God may seem totally foreign to you, especially if you were raised as I was in a denomination that stressed obedience to traditions, and distance from our Father in heaven Who was keeping eternal tabs on your every shortcoming.

But take heart! That’s why it’s called a “new birth” and a “new creation”! Our Lord knows your misperceptions and confusion about Him, and He’s eager to reveal *His* heart when you call out with all *your* heart to want to know Him better!

If you’re a person bent on obedience to God’s commands but have no loving relationship with Him, you’ll start to disdain those who don’t think, act, or worship as you do. The Pharisees epitomized this attitude. It earned them the infamous, Jesus-given title of “hypocrites”: *“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and **prayed about himself** ‘God, I thank you that **I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector**” (Luke 18:10,11).*

Grievously, condescension plagues a large segment of Messianic Judaism today.

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Over the years we've shared the Hebraic Restoration message in a number of Messianic congregations. Time and again as they filled in the list of demonic strongholds from our book *Demolishing Strongholds*, three have prevailed: **rebellion**, **bitterness**, and **rejection**. These three strongholds are prison bars that keep the Jewish people, in particular, from:

- fully trusting in the Messiah Jesus as God Incarnate.
- walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and His ongoing work.
- being freed from the mire of their stiff-necked expectations that God should fit within their theological box of parameters.
- experiencing the loving relationship God has always desired with them.

As if that bondage were not enough, the influence of these strongholds also stirs up controversy with other believers who don't practice their traditions. Paul's warning is meaningless to them: "*But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the Torah, because these are unprofitable and useless*" (Titus 3:9). Are you aware of just how many Gentiles devote countless hours and effort trying to prove that they have Jewish lineage? The "wannabe" mentality is as pervasive among Gentiles in Messianic congregations as the Native American "wannabe" quest is among Anglos!

Obedience that is devoid of love peers around you horizontally, comparing your actions with those of others so you can feel better about yourself. On the other hand, trust-grounded obedience emanates from loving God as you humbly and gratefully acknowledge total dependence on Him to will and to do as He desires.

Reverent, grateful love produces a dependent and personal relationship with our

Father. Failure to love produces reliance on religious form and prideful self-justification.

Personal Comment: During a recent *Restoring the Early Church* workshop, some participants mentioned a noted Bible teacher who emphasizes observance of biblical principles. Sue and I had attended his seminars on several occasions. I pointed out to those attending our workshop a major weakness in his teachings: *no call to love*. Many of those who ascribe to his teaching make *obedience to principles* their chief motivation and goal.

Several of the workshop participants took offense at my comments. That night one man searched all of his notes and materials from that teacher's seminars. The next day he shared his findings with the rest of the workshop folks: "Mike was right! I went through all my notes and materials from so-and-so, and love is never mentioned even once!"

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**Love produces a dependent and personal relationship with our Father. Failure to love produces reliance on religious form and prideful self-justification.**

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## **Don't Romanticize the Jewish People!**

Perhaps inspired by novels like Leon Uris' epic *Exodus*, Gentiles involved in Messianic congregations and Jewish Roots studies tend to have a sentimental, romanticized image of a people who are larger than life.

Indeed, God has fulfilled His promise to Abraham to bless all the nations through the Hebrew people in realms that range from science and medicine to economics and literature. More Nobel prizes have been won by Jews per capita than by any other people group. But the acclaim and praise for such accomplishment is due the God Who has worked through them, and Who yearns for their hearts to turn from stiff-necked

resistance to Him. His warnings have abounded:

- **Moses:** *“For I know how **rebellious and stiff-necked** you are. If you have been rebellious against the Lord while I am still alive and with you, how much more will you **rebel** after I die!”* (Deu. 31:27).

*“‘O Lord, if I have found favor in your eyes,’ he said, ‘then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a **stiff-necked** people, for - give our **wickedness and our sin**, and take us as your inheritance’”* (Exo. 34:9).

- **Ezekiel:** *“Say to the **rebellious** house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Enough of your **detestable practices**, O house of Israel!’”* (Eze. 44:6).
- **Stephen:** *“You stiff-necked people, with **uncircumcised hearts and ears!** You are just like your fathers: **You always resist the Holy Spirit!**”* (Acts 7:51).
- **Paul:** *“But to Israel [God] says, “All day long I held out my hands to a people who **kept disobeying and contradicting**”* (Rom. 10:21).

Please realize that we are not trying to denigrate the Jewish people, but rather to present the biblical view of them as a “chosen people” from God’s perspective. Has the stiff-necked, rebellious resistance of the Jewish people changed over the centuries? Through the example of the Jewish people, God is convincing Gentiles who trust in Jesus not to get hung up on *self*, be it worth, esteem, focus, or gratification. Instead, focus on God and His unchanging love and mercy:

*Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have **now received mercy** as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too **may now receive mercy** as a result of God’s mercy to you* (Rom. 11:30,31).

How does God intend to reach today’s Israelites? Through Gentiles adopting Jewish religious forms and traditions of *Torah* observance, as many in the Jewish Roots Movement propose? NO!!! As we shall see, there is a better, more effective way found in the Hebraic Restoration.

In Romans 11, the apostle Paul explains the special relationship of Jew and Gentile in God’s sight. Gentile followers of Jesus are a separate species — a wild olive shoot — that has been grafted in to the carefully cultivated olive tree to experience the rich root of God’s grace:

*If some of the branches have been broken off [unbelieving Jews], and you, though a **wild olive shoot** [Gentile believers], have been grafted in among the others and now share in the **nourishing sap from the olive root** do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but **the root supports you** You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.’ Granted. But they were **broken off because of unbelief** and you **stand by trust**. Do not be arrogant, but **be afraid** (Rom. 11:17-20).*

A very adamant Paul could not bear for Roman Gentile believers to stumble in the same Judaistic arrogance of disbelief. Many in the Jewish Roots Movement contend that Gentiles are grafted into Judaism. Far from it! We are grafted into the grace-given, trust-filled obedience of our father Abraham — the *evidence* of our relationship with Jesus, not the *means* of striving for it! And because of our trust, the righteousness of Jesus is credited to our account with God.

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Why were the Gentiles who trusted in Jesus allowed to be grafted in to receive the nourishing sap of life? In part, because of the unbelief of the biological descendants of Abraham. It wasn't that the Jews disbelieved *Torah*. It was because their *legalistic perversion of Torah* kept them from trusting in the Messiah, Jesus, for Whom they had been waiting. Jesus warned them that trust in both Him and their legalistic perversion of Torah do not go together:

*No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wine skins, and both are preserved (Matt. 9:16,17).*

Love-grounded trust in Jesus and legalistic perversion that seeks self-justification by obedience can never meld, either for Jew or for Gentile. But Paul foresaw a day when the Jews would grasp God's way through Jesus: *"And if they [the Jewish people] do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again"* (Rom. 11:23). Abraham would not only be their biological father, but even greater — their spiritual father!

In the meantime, duped Gentiles are being recruited by Judaizers into negating their trust in Jesus in order to tread the path of Torah legalism and rabbinic Judaism.

You may be wondering what rabbinic Judaism is. After the Temple was destroyed in AD 70, the Jewish people were no longer able to offer sacrifices, so rituals became a facet of the Jewish home. By AD 80 an academy to restructure Judaism opened in

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**Trust in Jesus and in legalistic perversion that seeks self-justification by obedience can never meld, either for Jew or for Gentile.**

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Jamnia, west of Jerusalem. Out of this gathering of Pharisee scribes who had escaped the Roman siege came attempts to unify interpretation of the Law.

As well as developed the formal ordination of rabbis and sages, whose expansion of *interpretation* of the Hebrew Scriptures would cover every possible facet of, and meaning for, Jewish life. The writings of noted rabbis over the centuries were heeded and built upon as fences to ensure that the Torah would remain unbroken. Many Gentiles as well as Jews in Messianic Judaism today, however, give as much credence to the writings of the rabbis as to the Word itself.

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Wonderfully for the Jews, God is working through the Spirit to fulfill the promises He made in His Word. The rabbinical writings are informative and thought-provoking, but only the Word of God is authoritative and breathed out through His power.

Again, God's intervention on behalf of the Jews reflects His faithful promise to the patriarchs: *"As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs"*(Rom. 11:28).

Make sure your focus coincides with God's purposes as the Jewish people are being restored to the land of Israel. Fix your attention on our Father and His promise to the patriarchs, and pray accordingly. National Israel and their political maneuverings are inconsequential.

That *God keeps His promises* is the vital point for us Gentiles to remind ourselves about, for He's the same Father Who keeps His promises to us as well!

What promises has He given *you* that this banner of Israelite return can stir your heart to keep on trusting?

## “Jesus Was A Jewish Carpenter”

This slogan frequents bumper stickers and T-shirts. At face value it echoes a rallying point for why Gentiles should get back to the Jewish roots of the Church. “Jesus was born a Jew, lived as a Jew, and died a Jew” is another phrase used to support this movement. But the emphasis on Jesus’ humanity and cultural heritage misses the *divine significance* of His role in the lives of all mankind as Divine Redeemer and God Incarnate.

Jesus became man to fulfill God’s promise to Abraham if he would separate himself so that God’s purposes could be fulfilled through his obedient trust: “*The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you’* (Gen. 12:1-3).

Looking back at this promise from the “faith eyes” of Galatians 3:7-9 points us to the real target of this promise, Jesus.

*Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

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- Are all the Gentiles blessed because Jesus was born a Jew?
  - Or, are they blessed because He was the Perfect Sacrifice Who fulfilled the promise God gave Abraham?
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Paul then builds on the foundation that Abraham’s seed, Jesus, would incorporate Gentiles as children of the promise:

*He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. . . The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. . . What I mean is this: The [Torah], introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the [Torah], then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise (Gal. 3:14-18).*

What can we say, then, about the relevance to us today of God’s promise to Abraham?

- Through Jesus, Gentile and Jew alike become spiritual children of Abraham, children of the promise.
- Through Jesus, all who trust as Abraham did receive the Holy Spirit.

Neither the Jew nor the Gentile is the critical factor in all of this. It’s *God’s faithfulness to His promises* that matters! Paul echoes that Jesus is the seed of Abraham. God’s promise of salvation to all mankind through the seed of Abraham *preceded* the giving of *Torah*.

In other words, Gentiles who are saved through their trust in the shed blood of Jesus are receiving the fruit of the *spiritual* covenant that was promised to Abraham. That’s why Paul fights so diligently for Gentiles to not lose sight that their salvation is a result of their trust *and* of God’s grace and His fulfilled promise.

### **Over-emphasizing the Humanity of Jesus: A Deadly Error**

The situation we face is one of *emphasis*. Yes, Jesus in His humanity was a Jew, a

descendent in the flesh of the chosen Hebrew, Abraham. Jesus *had* to be born man in order to undergo the temptations and trials common to mankind. But isn't His *divine nature* of greater importance to the Gentile who can't identify with a Jewish heritage?

Consider the problem Jesus confronted as He rebuked the Pharisees for their misplaced emphasis: "*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former*" (Matt. 23:23).

Jesus was not saying that their attention to the tithe was wrong. It was *incomplete* because there were weightier matters they should have attended to as well. Inordinate focus on the Jewishness of Jesus would meet the same reproof for the same reason. Our Lord is more concerned with Gentiles and Jews alike proclaiming His atonement to the world than with our centering on His human ancestry. Both are true, but the weightier truth of His *redemption work* as fully God and fully man changes lives!

### **Overemphasizing the Humanity of Jesus: Church History Examples**

One of the greatest schisms in the Church concerned Jesus' mother, Mary. Was she *theotokos*, the mother of God? Or was she *christotokos*, the mother of Jesus the Messiah? To the detriment of much of European Christianity, *theotokos* was embraced. Why would this be a problem?

The identification of a humble obedient woman as the "mother of God" created a relational emphasis of *equality with God* that was neither intended nor prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures. Such reasoning has proved a major stumbling block to Muslims. "Jesus can't be God. How can God have a mother?" And to many Muslims, the Trinity is misperceived as "God the Father, Jesus the Son, Mary the Mother."

The over-emphasis of Jesus' humanity

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### **Emphasizing the divine, eternal nature of Christ thrusts the spear of truth squarely into the reality of Jesus as the only Redeemer for all mankind.**

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paved the way for a large segment of Christianity to adore and pray to Mary in a way that Scripture reserves for God alone. As God declared in Isaiah 42:8, "*I will share My glory with no one.*" To imply that God needs His arm twisted by maternal pleas on behalf of sinners drains His character of mercy and grace.

The Protestant community at large has not been left unscathed by oversaturation in Jesus' humanity at the expense of His divinity. How often have you heard emphasis on Jesus as our "friend", even a buddy? Has that been balanced by the reverent reality of His role as "KING of Kings and LORD of Lords"? Satan is doing all he can to *minimize* the divinity of Jesus by *over-emphasizing* His humanity — a trap for messianic communities that don't consider Jesus to be God Incarnate, but God's created servant.

Think back two thousand years. Wasn't it Jesus' identification as the *Son of God* — and therefore *equal with God* — that so inflamed the Pharisees? This "messiah" was not meeting their long-held presuppositions! After all, the Jewish people were still in bondage to the detested occupation forces of Rome. Surely the Messiah would rise up and overthrow them, then assume the throne of David as an earthly king!

The slippery slope of unbelief starts when your presuppositions are blasted apart. The *shadow* of your expectation does not always equal the *substance* of reality. Today's messianic congregations are rifted by disagreement about whether Jesus is God Incarnate, or whether He will reign as a King but not equal to God.

And this is the stumbling block with unbelieving Jews as well. If *God is one*, as the Shema reiterates, then how can there be three essences of Father, Son and Spirit? It's much easier for Jew [continued on p. 16]

## Should We Practice Shadows or Trust the Reality?

### Hebrew Bible — Foreshadow

“So the law was put in charge **to lead us to Christ** that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are **no longer** under the **supervision of the law**” (Gal. 3:24,25).

“Therefore **do not let anyone judge you** by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a **shadow** of the things that were to come; the **reality, however, is found in Christ**” (Col. 2:16,17).

“They serve at a sanctuary that is a **copy and shadow of what is in heaven**. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: ‘See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’ But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the **covenant of which he is mediator is superior** to the old one, and it is **founded on better promises**”... “The law is **only a shadow** of the good things that are coming — **not the realities themselves**. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship” (Heb 8:5,6;10:1).

### Jesus — Reality and Fulfillment

“Understand, then, that those who trust [in Jesus] are children of Abraham. The **Scripture foresaw** that God would **justify the Gentiles by faith**, and **announced the gospel in advance to Abraham**: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith” (Gal. 3:7-9).

“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, 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]**. 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).

**DO NOT GO BACK TO PRACTICE THE SHADOWS ONCE YOU HAVE RECEIVED THE REALITY, JESUS.**

## Do Religious Forms and Apparel Really Matter To God?

A significant beauty of the Gospel as its truth goes forth into different cultures is the *freedom for each culture* to express their gratefulness to, and worship of, God in their *own unique styles*. The moving of the Holy Spirit births fresh expressive songs and testimonies to proclaim the very special differences of each people group created by God.

So, we confront an issue here. Are the Jewish images of expression and forms of celebration *more important* than those that express each culture’s love and devotion to God? The Hebraic Restoration would say, “No!” Many in the Jewish Roots Movement, however, would disagree.



and Gentile alike to believe that the prophesied Messiah is a marvelous teacher and prophet — a son of God — rather than THE only and unique Son Incarnate.

As you uphold His divinity, remind yourself that Jesus is no longer the baby in the manger, dependent on His mother for nourishment or need. He is the *Lord of the universe* Whose next appearance will leave no doubt about His Deity!

Recap: Don't be led away from reverencing the divine, eternal nature of Christ. Yes, Jesus was a Jew, with a very human mother whose lineage prophetically fulfilled His place in the tribe of Judah. But to all His disciples, the Divine Jesus Who is now at the right hand of God is the "important matter."

Today's pendulum of theology has emphasized His very real mercy and grace, but often at the cost of His holy righteousness and justice. Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John to reveal to them Who He really is. The "Transfigured Jesus" is "God with skin on" for both Jew and Gentile who step outside the bondage of *Torah* legalistic perversion to find their righteousness in Him alone.

## The Redeemer Has Come! What Is His Ancestry?

In order to serve as our Redeemer, Jesus had to meet certain qualifications. First, He had to *identify completely* with the humanity for which He was laying down His life. Second, He had to be a *sinless sacrifice*, something only God in the flesh could accomplish: "Since the children have flesh and blood, **he too shared in their humanity** so that by his death he might **destroy him who holds the power of death**— that is, the devil — and **free those** who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Heb. 2:14,15).

The writer to the Hebrews verifies the physical origin of Jesus through the tribe of Judah, but elaborates more emphatically on His lineage in the *spiritual realm* through Melchizedek. The priest of Salem, Melchi-

zedek was honored by Abraham with a title (see Gen. 14:18-20).

*For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears [and Moses had built on the theme that God would raise up "another prophet" like himself], one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. For it is declared: 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.' The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for Torah made nothing perfect) and a better hope [Jesus] is introduced, by which we draw near to God (Heb. 7:14-19).*

Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah and delivered His message of the Kingdom to the Jews first. But when He became our atonement, He died for all mankind as a priest in the order of Melchizedek. Referred to as neither a Jew nor a descendent of Abraham, Melchizedek was without lineage.

*And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.'" Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant*

*Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens [as only God could be] (Heb. 7:14-26).*

The crucial issue for both Gentiles and Jews is their relationship with Jesus and their trust in what He has accomplished and *continues* to accomplish through intercession on their behalf.

He is the guarantor of a *new covenant*. In this new covenant the eternal LORD Who is God in the flesh is hailed as the permanent priest exalted above the heavens. Those who “Judaize” Jesus based on His physical descent *at the expense of His eternal nature* denigrate the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, the God Who became man for the salvation of all humanity: “**For God so loved the world that he gave his only and unique Son, so that everyone who trusts in him may have eternal life, instead of being utterly destroyed**” (John 3:16,CJB).

**Judaizer: “Abraham is our father.”**  
**Jesus: “Satan is your father.”**

The atmosphere was tense. The Jews who had not believed Jesus were now arguing vociferously about their own descent from Abraham. They were blind to their slavery to sin and their need for a Savior. Faced with their arrogant self-pride, Jesus thrust the spear of truth into their hearts regarding their true lineage. Their father, Satan, had convinced them to carry out his murderous design.

According to the eyewitness John, the Judeans who were so agitated in their refusal to obey His words were the very ones who had trusted in Him moments earlier!

Can’t you just feel the temperature rising in this exchange?

*‘Abraham is our father,’ they answered. ‘If you were Abraham’s children,’ said Jesus, ‘then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are **doing the things***

***your own father does’** ‘We are not illegitimate children,’ they protested. ‘The only Father we have is God himself.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are **unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire.***

Recognizing that their prideful hearts were bent on believing the lies of their minds, Jesus continued:

*He was **a murderer** from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is **no truth in him**. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the **father of lies**. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? He who belongs to God **hears what God says**. The reason you **do not hear** is that you **do not belong to God** (John 8:39-47).*

A thought to consider: Can it be that even today the Jewish people cannot “hear” the Gospel because of *demonic influence*? Can it be that they need deliverance from lying demonic spirits in order to see the true Messiah? As Jesus traveled throughout Israel, demonic deliverances were commonplace—and not just by the Lord alone. He gave to His apostles the authority to cast out demons as well as to bring the gospel: “*He appointed twelve — designating them apostles — that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have **authority to drive out demons***” (Mark 3:14,15).

To prepare the way for His arrival at Judean villages, Jesus would send ahead His disciples so that all who wanted to hear Him would be able to without interference from

demonic distraction: "After this the Lord appointed **seventy-two others** and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place **where he was about to go**. The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the **demons submit to us in your name!**' (Luke 10:1,17).

These men were driving out demons from a Jewish audience so that they could recognize His power as from God and have ears to hear His words in their hearts. Has anything changed over the centuries? Tragically, yes.

Instead of reaching the Jews through deliverance so that they might have ears to hear the Good News of their Messiah's coming, Gentile and Jewish believers alike are adopting Jewish customs and religious traditions to identify with that cultural heritage. Few Jewish hearts are responding to the Gospel message of repentance and love-grounded obedient trust because they are seeing few if any *transformed lives* in their midst. Traditions don't change lives; response to the Holy Spirit does!

Note: Understand that *demonization* rather than "demon possession" is the correct translation of the demonic events mentioned in the Bible. Since Jesus Himself was accused at various times of having a demon (and He certainly wasn't manifesting frightening behavior), not all people who are agitated or influenced by a demon will foam at the mouth or cast themselves into fire! Satan's purpose is to keep people from being spiritually able or willing to *hear* the Truth.

As noted earlier, three prevailing demonic spirits keep the Messianic Jew, as well as the unbelieving Jew, from experiencing our Father's love: *rebellion*, *bitterness*, and *rejection*. The most effective evangelism comes not from identifying with the traditions of those in bondage but by demonstrating the power of the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. [See our workbook *Demolishing Strongholds* for more on this subject.]

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**The most effective evangelism comes not from identifying with the traditions of those in bondage, but by demonstrating the power of the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**

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### **Kabbalah, the Mystical Demonic Path**

Remember the discourse on the father of lies that Jesus aimed at the Jews who wanted approval by the Father but not at the cost of forsaking their identity with their concept of self-justification? Attempts to customize one's own religion are as old as Eden. A particularly alluring form of religious belief has attracted Jews in the past and messianic Gentiles of today. The Jewish *Kabbalah* was a mystical search for the secrets that would reveal God's essence and bring practitioners closer to understanding Him.

Actually, this path was similar in concept to the *gnosticism* so urgently confronted by the apostle John. Both spiritual streams sought the *hidden knowledge* that would elevate them above the rest. You didn't need to go through Jesus to know God. If you had the hidden secret knowledge, you could approach Him directly. According to veteran missionary E. Stanley Jones, "Gnosticism [and by inference, kabbalah] supplied mysterious formulas and passwords which gave the soul access to the higher world and brought about perfect union with the Divine."

But striving for secret revelation is dangerous for at least two reasons. First, you open your spirit to influence by the father of lies and his various deceptions that blanket over the true Gospel.

Second, your striving is really a form of prideful self-justification, a spiritual snobbery that refuses to accept your broken state before God and the humility that *He alone* is the One Who can change you from the inside out. You begin to rely more on mystical impulse, which can be counterfeited and manipulated by demons, rather than on the authenticity of the Word and your trusting obedience to God's will.

We wouldn't bring this matter up except that vestiges of Kabbalah mysticism are popping up in a number of messianic groups who don't worship Jesus as God Incarnate but focus almost exclusively on the Father and the Hebrew Bible. The humility of repentance and personal responsibility for their sin are unappealing to those who want to revel in their perceived spiritual revelation. Keep in mind that if particular knowledge is "secret", then our Lord probably didn't intend for you to explore it!

## What Is God's Purpose For Torah?

**Simply, Torah reveals sin as sin, and acts as a custodian to bring us to Jesus.**

Confronting the issue of Torah adherence plagued most of the faith communities Paul had labored to establish. Here he tries to clarify its role to the followers of Jesus in both Rome and Galatia.

*What shall we say, then? Is the Torah sin? Certainly not! Indeed **I would not have known what sin was except through the Torah.** For I would not have known what coveting really was if the Torah had not said, 'Do not covet.' But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For **apart from Torah, sin is dead** (Rom. 7:7,8).*

*For if [our] inheritance comes from the **legal part of the Torah**, it no longer depends on a promise. But God [in his grace] gave it to Abraham through a promise. So then, why the **legal part of Torah**? It was added in order to create **transgressions until the coming of the seed about whom the promise had been made..**" (Gal. 3:18,19, Complete Jewish Bible).*

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**Legalistic observance is your attempt to be justified or to gain God's favor through behavioral obedience to Torah.**

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*Torah was given to reveal the transgressions of man against a holy God and against one another. Torah not only shows us *how to relate* to God and each other, it also reveals where the *boundaries* are in our relationships. For example, coveting your neighbor's goods is a boundary you shouldn't cross because of *love* for your neighbor.*

If there is no *Torah*, there is no sin. If there is no sin, then you have no need for a Redeemer. But unatoned sin always brings the consequence of death. The *Torah* was our custodian to lead us to Messiah so that we could recognize and confess our sin, and see our need for a Redeemer.

*Torah's purpose is to bring us to the point where we are justified only through our trusting in Jesus. "But now that the time for this trusting faithfulness has come, we are **no longer under a custodian [the Torah]. For in union with the Messiah, you are all children of God through this trusting faithfulness**" (Gal. 3:25-26, CJB). Now that Jesus has come to fulfill the promise given to Abraham, you are no longer under the custody of *Torah*.*

Your observance of Torah earns you nothing. In fact, your observance *without* the love God commands will lead you into legalistic perversion. You will be a modern-day Pharisee. Remember, *Torah* was given to lead you to the Messiah.

Many in the Jewish Roots Movement are teaching Gentiles to get back under the supervision of *Torah*. They claim that righteousness is found in *Torah* observance. What the Jews themselves could not keep, they are now trying to get Gentiles to do! (More on this later.)

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**If there is no Torah, there is no sin. If there is no sin, you have no need for a Redeemer. The Torah was our custodian to lead us to Messiah so that we could recognize and confess our sin, and see our need for a Redeemer.**

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In the next section, Paul reiterates several important points for Gentiles who have put their trust in the Messiah. *Torah* points out sin, it doesn't save!

*Moreover, we know that whatever the Torah says, it says to those who **live within the framework of Torah** in order that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world be shown to deserve God's adverse judgment. For in his sight no one alive will be declared righteous on the ground of legalistic observance of Torah commands; because what Torah does is show people how sinful they are.*

The apostle made quite clear that he wasn't inaugurating some foreign religion out of a vacuum. Rather, the Messiah was the goal at which the Hebrew Scriptures aimed.

*But now, quite apart from Torah, God's way of making people righteous in his sight has been made clear — although the Torah and the Prophets give their witness to this as well — and it is a righteousness that comes from God, through the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah, to all who continue trusting. For it makes no difference whether one is a Jew or Gentile, since all have sinned and come short of earning God's praise. By God's grace, without earning it, all are granted status of being considered righteous before Him, through the act of redeeming us from our enslavement to sin that was accomplished by the Messiah Jesus (Rom. 3:20-24, CJB; see also Eph. 2:8,9).*

God's grace and your trust in Jesus are the crucial factors, not a legalistic observance of *Torah*. Legalistic observance is your attempt to be justified or to gain God's favor through behavioral obedience to *Torah*. If you've ever attended a Messianic Jewish service, you may have heard that "our righteousness is found in *Torah*." The error of the

ancient Jews who rejected Jesus continues to be repeated. The great sadness is that many Gentiles are being seduced into this lie as well.

Gentiles who focus on obedience to *Torah* without wholehearted love and trust in Jesus and what He has accomplished nullify Paul's eager encouragement to the Philippian believers. Determined to put legalistic striving behind him so he could press on to gain Jesus, this spiritual father wrote,

*What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, **not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the Torah**, but that which is through trust in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by trust. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death (Phil. 3:8-10).*

## **In Jesus, Is There Any Longer a Spiritual Distinction Between Jew and Gentile?**

No! The great news is that the spiritual partition that separated Jew and Gentile has been torn down. Through Jesus we are united as one!

*You are all sons of God through trust in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is **neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female**, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:26-29).*

Through the sacrifice of Jesus, we who love and trust Him are children of this

promise. While of course we do not forfeit our gender, racial heritage, or religious ancestry, we do find ourselves *one in Jesus* as Abraham's seed — no one more unique than another.

The followers of Jesus in Ephesus needed reassurance from Paul that they weren't spiritual second-hand citizens in God's Kingdom:

*For he himself is our peace, who has **made the two one** and has **destroyed the barrier**, the dividing wall of hostility, by **abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations**. His purpose was to create in himself **one new man out of the two** thus making peace, and in this one body to **reconcile both** of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. **For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit** (Eph. 2:14-18).*

The earthly perspective differentiates between classes and spiritual castes. But according to Paul in his encouragement to the believers in Colosse, our hearts and minds must be motivated by Heaven's heart:

*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, **set your hearts on things above** where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds on things above** not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now **hidden with Christ in God**... Here there is **no Greek or Jew** circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but **Christ is all, and is in all**" (Col. 3:1-3,11).*

## **De-Judaizing the Gentiles Paul Still Warns Us Today**

We're not dealing with something new here. The Apostle Paul faced Judaizing per-

version head-on almost two thousand years ago. Were he alive today he'd be angrily mortified that this attack on salvation by trust is still gaining adherents. Even Peter, privy to the heavenly vision that welcomed Gentiles (Acts 10:9-15), fell prey to the Judaizing snare:

*When Peter came to Antioch, I **opposed him to his face** because he was clearly **in the wrong**. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was **afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group**. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that **by their hypocrisy** even Barnabas was led astray.*

This betrayal of freedom by a disciple who had walked side by side with the Lord Who conquered slavery to the Torah hurt Paul tremendously. Peter's hypocrisy brimmed with potential to demolish all that Paul had so obediently taught in Christ.

*When I saw that they were **not acting in line with the truth of the gospel** I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you **force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs**? We who are **Jews by birth** and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is **not justified by observing the law** but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our trust in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by trust in Christ and **not by observing Torah** because **by observing Torah no one will be justified**" (Gal. 2:11-16).*

Paul's earnest zeal for his fellow Jews to walk free in Jesus is the same painful yearning those of us who see this error today have for our Gentile brothers and sisters who are entering this trap: "For I could wish that I

**The Apostle Paul confronted Judaizing head-on almost two thousand years ago. If he were present today he'd be angrily mortified that this perversion is still gaining adherents.**

*myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers those of my own race" (Rom. 9:3).*

Our brothers and sisters are being led astray by practices that subtly diminish worshipful focus on Jesus. A case in point: Paul buttressed his letter to the Corinthian believers with emphasis on gathering together to share in breaking the bread of Jesus' body and the wine of His blood to proclaim the New Covenant He had ratified.

How many times Sue and I have met with messianic believers on the Sabbath to pass around the challah bread and wine cup but heard absolutely no mention of Jesus' body and blood! While God was blessed for having provided "grain from the earth" and "fruit from the vine", no connection was made to connect the presence of Jesus with this observance. We once asked those in a Sabbath gathering, "When do you get together to worship and praise Jesus?" "We don't" was their reply. Some have even admitted that outside of looking up a few Newer Testament passages that coincide with the Torah cycle readings, they haven't purposefully read the Gospel accounts or the Epistles *in years!* How sad that the *shadow* is more satisfying than the *Substance*.

Personal Comment: The best image we can offer that reflects our agony for those who are falling headlong into legalistic perversion of *Torah* in Messianic Judaism is a fact-based movie, *Escape From Sobibor*. The film reenacts the only successful mass escape from a concentration camp during World War II. The prisoners were told it was a work camp when, in fact, it was a death camp. Those who first recognized the real purpose of Sobibor were frustrated as they attempted to get the other prisoners to see

the truth. Unable to destroy the crematoria, the captives puzzled over a way to keep people from a fiery demise. Their solution? Mass escape.

Today, a growing number of people are voicing concern over the spiritual death that the legalistic perversion of *Torah* observance is bringing to Jew and Gentile alike as they forsake Jesus to seek their own righteousness through self-justification. We hope that ears will respond to the sounded alarm, and a great host will find the freedom that is offered in Jesus.

### **The double-edged sword wielded by Judaizers past and present:**

1. Legalistic perversion of *Torah* nullifies the righteousness gained in Jesus.
2. Needless controversy springs from legalistic perversion of *Torah*, and shakes the confidence of Jew and Gentile alike.

### **Confronting Torah Perversion**

Pause here for a moment. Remember again that our God commands *love* in the inner heart of both Jew and Gentile. *Torah perversion*, on the other hand, denies the pre-eminence of love. Rather, it provokes you to justify yourself or to seek spiritual advantage through obedience to a set of behavioral criteria. *Perversion deals with behavior*, not with the heart. Consider these comparisons of God's way versus *Torah* perversion:

#### A religious example :

**God's way** — I don't steal from my neighbor because I love my neighbor.

**Torah Perversion** — If I don't steal from my neighbor, God will be more pleased with me because I've obeyed the Law.

#### An example from marriage:

**God's way** — I give flowers to my wife as an expression of my love for her.

**Torah Perversion** — If I give flowers to my wife she'll love me more because I'm being a good husband.

- God's way is always *the result* of what you do because of *your love* for Him.
- Torah's way seeks *self-justification* and *personal gratification* through your actions.

The apostle Paul addresses both Jew and Gentile to undo the legalistic perversion of *Torah* practiced by Judaizers eager to ensnare Gentiles. His timeless warnings plea for believers today to forsake the legalistic perversion that's now disguised as "*Torah* observance."

David Stern's translation of the letter to the Galatians in *The Complete Jewish Bible* clearly illustrates the hypocrisy of *Torah* perversion. As mentioned earlier, the power of this demonic pit is so strong that a growing number of Gentile Christians attending Messianic Jewish congregations are actually denying Jesus and converting to Judaism.

Leaders of legalism today fall under the some scathing indictment by Jesus as those who misled people 2000 years ago: "*Woe to you, teachers of [Torah] and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are*" (Mat. 23:15).

So many Jews in Jesus' day had been taught to find their righteousness through obedience to the Law. The same stumbling stone plagues observant Jews today. With no Temple in which to sacrifice atoning animals, absolute obedience to even the "legal fences" put around the *Torah* must be kept!

*So, what are we to say? This: that 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 right -*

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- God's way is always the *result* of what you do because of *your love* for Him.
  - Torah's way seeks *self-justification* and *personal gratification* through your actions.
- 

*eousness, 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 legal - istic works. They stumbled over the stone that makes people stumble. As the [Hebrew Scriptures] 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 not be humiliated' [apperceived from Deut. 30:11-14] (Rom. 9:30-33).*

What is the biblical criterion for righteousness? Paul wants to make sure there is no room for doubt on this issue. "*Clearly no one is justified before God by [observing Torah], because, 'The righteous will live by trust'*" (Gal. 3:11). Those trapped by the mindset of being justified by *Torah* observance fail to experience our Father's love. Their very attitude criticizes those who do not observe *Torah* as they do.

*Brothers, my heart's deepest desire and my prayer to God for Israel is for their salvation; for I can testify to their zeal for God. But it is not based on correct understanding; for, 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. 10:1-4).*

Paul reminds the Galatian believers that God's blessing comes not through Moses and *Torah* but through Abraham and his example of obedient trust: "*He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by trust we might receive the promise of the Spirit*" (Gal. 3:14). The spiritual connection here is Abraham, Jesus, the Holy Spirit. Note that it is *not* Abraham, Moses, Jesus, the Holy Spirit.

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

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**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.**

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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 out-working 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.

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

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## **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).

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

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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.

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**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.**

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## **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).*

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**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.**

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

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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.

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**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.**

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## 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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**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.**

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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).*

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

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### **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.

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

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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

