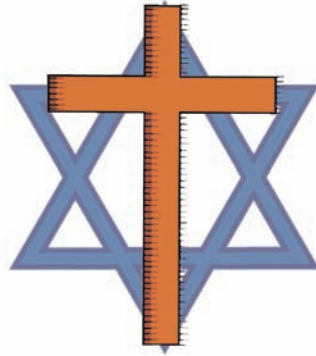


A Comparison of the Hebraic Restoration



and the

Jewish Roots Movement



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Restoration Ministries International

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Introduction

We purpose in this article to clarify the major differences between the facets and goals of the Hebraic Restoration and the Jewish Roots Movement. These two movements may seem the same because so many errantly use the terms *Hebraic* and *Jewish* as synonymous. For follower of Jesus, however, they spiritually have nothing in common.

We'll discuss how the path of the Hebraic Restoration emanates from Jesus and is a path of freedom that brings praise to our Father. The roots of this biblical restoration are found in Abraham and the promise God gave him that all the Gentile nations would be blessed through his obedient trust in the One True God. That *blessing* to all mankind came in the person of Jesus Christ and His perfect sacrifice on our behalf. As Abraham's trust resulted in righteousness being credited to him, so our trust in Jesus credits us as His followers with the same inheritance.

The Jewish Roots Movement is a modern expression of the Judaizing element from which Paul fought so vehemently to protect the early Church. This movement has nothing to do with a life of forgiveness and regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Rather, it embodies the same enslavement to self-justifying religious ritual and forms which the Newer Testament speaks so strongly against.

In this comparison we are contending for the victory Jesus Christ offers everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, who trusts in Him as Redeemer and Lord. We're also warning against the demonic enslavement into which so many Gentiles and believing Jews are falling within Messianic Judaism. Participation in this movement is *not* a step toward a deeper walk with Jesus. It is a satanic trap using demonic strongholds of *rebellion, bitterness, and rejection* to keep people from personally experiencing a loving intimacy with Lord Jesus and our heavenly Father. It uses legalistic perversion of God's Word to try to earn what our Lord has so freely given through grace.

We are not going to Baja!

We sense such an urgency for you to understand the vast difference between the Hebraic Restoration and the Jewish Roots Movement. Perhaps the following anecdote from Mike will clarify why we feel so strongly about this.

Put yourself in my cockpit 40 years ago.

We were low on fuel and 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 transporting 25 personnel from an aircraft carrier some 100 miles out in the Pacific Ocean. Since we were the first of our contingent of 6 helicopters to refuel at the carrier, we were put into a holding pattern as we waited for the other five helos in our flight group to refuel, load their personnel, and lift off.

We flew back toward the mainland in the #2 position just over the top of dense fog. As I kept up with my co-pilot duties of navigating, I warned my pilot several times that our flight leader in the #1 helo wasn't flying us toward San Diego — he was headed deep into Mexico toward the tip of Baja California! My pilot-in-command reluctantly radioed the flight leader about his navigation error. He made a minor correction but still didn't alter the path on which he was leading the rest of us.

My mind swiftly recalled an incident during flight training several months earlier. At that time I had failed to take sufficient action to correct an errant student flight leader who had put our flight of four aircraft on a collision course. Through desperate evasive response my

plane had just barely missed striking the other aircraft. During the debrief following 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 over before someone got killed?”

Now, months later, a low fuel light stared at us. The flight leader, still believing he was north of the track to San Diego, had ordered us all 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 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” — a course going *northeast* away from Baja. Just as we touched down on our base runway one of our engines flamed out, starved of fuel. I’d almost let the situation go too far.

If you have fully put your trust in the Messiah Jesus as your Redeemer and Lord of your life, you’ll discern why this comparison needs to reach the hearts of others. The Holy Spirit has been prompting us for some time to disseminate this

information, particularly as we’ve received phone calls, emails, and letters imploring us for help: What is the difference between the Hebraic Restoration and the Jewish Roots Movement?

Sadly, the most disturbing news has been the reports of Gentile Christians attending Messianic communities and then denying Christ and converting to Judaism. The situation is critical. The words of Jude seem appropriate: “*Dear friends...I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints*” (Jude 1:3).

You Are to Use the Word “Hebraic”

In the fall of 1993 Sue and I were leaving a retreat ministry after almost 11 years of service. We had no idea what we were going to do next. The years of teaching retreats, counseling clergy, and keeping up the seventy acres of farmland had taken a toll on us. This wasn’t a “two-week notice and take off” type of situation. Much was involved in finding suitable homes 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, many elements began to fall into place.

- Three days after we agreed with our board to leave the retreat center, a friend who had moved to Israel 5 years earlier came to see us. Through our Lord’s clear intervention, this man 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 our friend visited us I got up early and knelt in our living room, crying out, “Lord, show me *why* You have us going to Israel.” Then I did something I’d never 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 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 are there.”

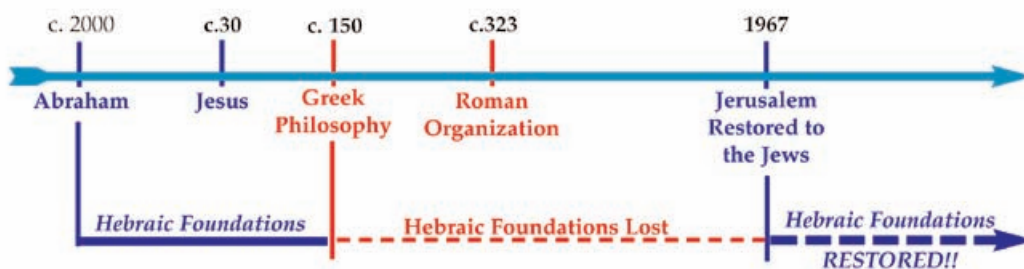
God’s plan continued to unfold once we had arrived in Israel. Our first day there our host Bert and I were standing next to the Tower of David in the Old

City of Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit spoke to me, “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 participated 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 voiced were prayer concerns about which Sue and I were seeking the Lord. We had told no one else about these particular needs. He then continued, “The Lord would also have you know that He has brought you here to Israel so that you would go back to the US with a *prophetic message.*”

Sue and I first heard the word “Hebraic” during that Jerusalem prayer conference. The 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 discussed more fully in Section 2 of our book *Restoring the Early Church*, a free download at our website.]

Hebraic Foundations: **Lost** and Restored



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Suddenly, the Spirit's message about a *Gentile Awakening* began to make sense. God was 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). As God accomplishes this, He is also restoring to the Gentiles the relational intimacy and spiritual power of the early 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 compelled us to use the word **"Hebraic"** to define that which we saw our Lord restoring to His collective body around the world. He implanted in our minds the **Restoration Diagram** [upper right] so people could visualize the *relational priorities* He was restoring. The Spirit gave no further explanation at that time, however, of *why* we should use the word "Hebraic."

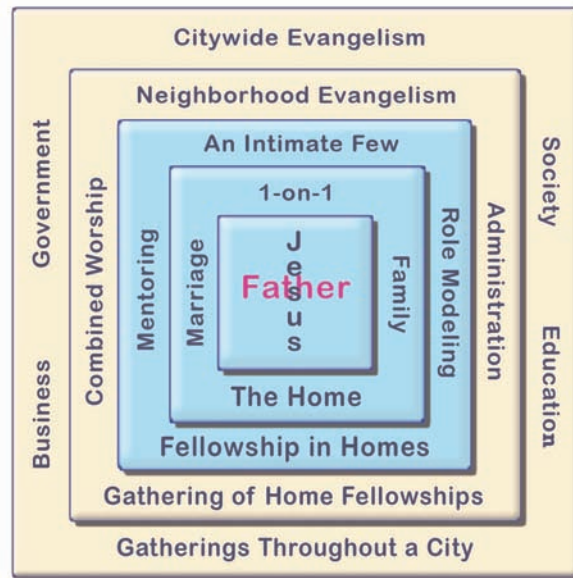
During our research we encountered people who were using the phrase "Jewish Roots." This was all so new to us that we initially thought the Holy Spirit had given us a different word for the same thing. Over time we discovered this was not so! Despite some outward similarities, very little of the multifaceted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

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

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Restoration Diagram



Hebraic Restoration
Going back to the obedient trust of Abraham.

The priorities of this restoration are *relational*. Paramount is the development of a powerful and viable *love relationship* with our Lord given by His grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Our Father has made Jesus the Head of a family of children whom He adopted because of their trust in the sacrificial love of His Son. Because of this love, our *expression* of that intimate relationship is enacted by living out God's commands and teachings.

Jewish Roots Movement
Going back to the Law of Moses.

Supporters of this movement are adamant that believers, both Jew and Gentile alike, must reclaim God's teachings as commanded for the Jewish peo-

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

ple and live by them. The religious forms and traditions that were commanded to the Jewish people and then often *expanded* upon by nonMessianic rabbis over the centuries are presented as a lifestyle which Gentile followers of Jesus must adopt as well.

All the practices of Jesus followers in the Newer Testament were already part of the faith enactment of the *Hebraic* stream in Israel who abided in the trust-filled relationship of their father Abraham.

God had been preparing His Church for centuries *before* the coming of Jesus. Thus they only needed the Atonement and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Personal Note: Throughout this writing we will be using the Hebrew word "*Torah*" in place of the word "law." *Torah* is God's righteous teaching, His instruction for a life that pleases Him and presents a living picture of what *loving Him* and *loving our neighbor* looks like in action. God's teaching contains both *freedom* and *boundary* for our lives as we relate to Him and to others out of grateful appreciation for what Jesus has accomplished on our behalf. The word "law", on the other hand, has come to connote only a sense of boundary. As we shall see, it is in the area of *freedom* that Jesus is best understood by those who follow Him.

Personal Observation: Sue and I firmly believe that our Lord intends for those who are pressing to restore the *Jewish* Roots to the Church, literally God's collective *called-out ones*, to first fully embrace their *Hebraic roots*. In other

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

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 Jewish traditions espoused by people who are connected with the Jewish Roots Movement.

The Answer to *Why* the Word "Hebraic"

Simply this. God is Cutting Through All Religious Forms. He is Restoring the Preciousness of the Relationship He Had with Abraham and Wants with Each of His Own Who Are In Jesus.

Over the past twenty years as we have shared the Restoration message, we've gained an understanding of why the Hebraic 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*, a lifestyle he knew he was responsible to share with those in his care.

Our Lord made clear why He chose Abraham from all the people He might have called and set apart: "*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). The children whom our Father adopts into His family through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus are called to exercise no less an 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 grateful, trust-grounded obedience to His Son Jesus, an empowerment given to His own as a new creation through the Holy Spirit.

Abraham is recorded in Genesis 14:13 as the first *Hebrew*. Of what significance is this to followers of Jesus today?

Biologically:

Abraham is the father of the Jewish people through his (and his wife Sarah's) son Isaac, and of the Arab people through Ishmael (by the slave woman Hagar).

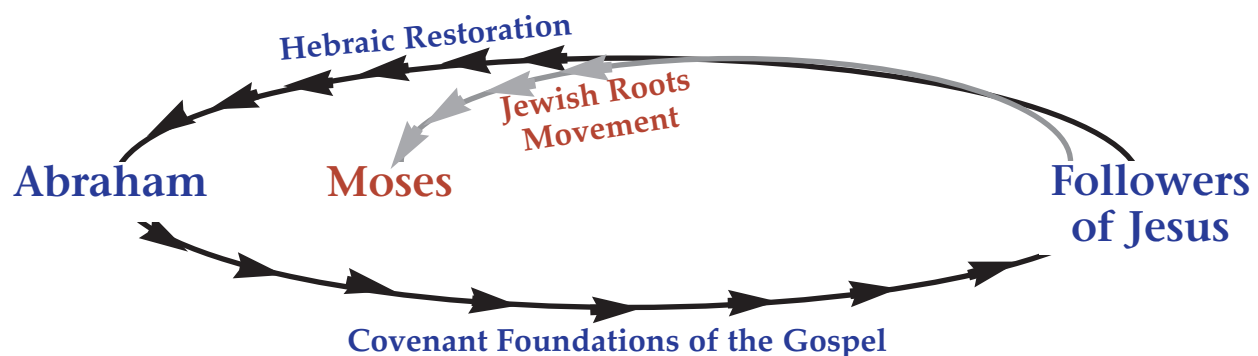
God's promises that He would restore the Jewish people back to the land of Israel one more time are still in effect to the biological descendants of Abraham through Isaac. He is keeping His promises to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob because He gave His word to these Patriarchs (see Deut.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

The children of Israel (Jacob) themselves are frequently called rebellious and stiffnecked by our Lord (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).

Yet many within the Jewish Roots Movement romanticize the very people who resist drawing to the Messiah as their Lord and King. Rather than focusing on God and His faithfulness in keeping His promises, they exercise a sentimental perspective of the people themselves. [Similar romanticizing of the Native American has produced the same interference with God's plans to bring many Native tribal peoples to Himself and use them to restore the Church in the US to its biblical Hebraic foundations.]

Our Lord prophesied that He would once again restore the Israelites to the land He'd promised their forefathers. This event is occurring even now, and truly fulfills the promise that the return of the Jews from the *northland*, i.e., the former USSR, 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 from the former Soviet Union, from the United



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States, and even from India and Iraq have returned to Israel in the past two decades. 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).

Spiritually:

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). God intended the Gospel as the means of redeeming the whole world, not just the Jewish people. The wall which separated the "circumcised" and the "uncircumcised", the Jew and the Gentile, is broken by the kind of trust Abraham evidenced by loving obedience: *"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 followers of Jesus today with the man of faith, Abraham, is crucial to understanding why our Father told us to call this a **"Hebraic" Restoration**.

A personal comment:

God prophesied that there would be ongoing hostility by the descendants of Ishmael against the descendants of Isaac.

Followers of Jesus who help the Jewish people return to Israel, however, are not to take sides in this controversy. We believe that those who grow in the Hebraic foundations our Father is restoring will be used by Him as the *spiritual* descendants of Abraham to bring peace between the *biological* descendants — the Jew and the Arab. We spiritual descendants of Abraham are privileged to be *reconcilers* rather than agitators.

It is important that we cooperate with our Lord as He fulfills His promises. Focus on Him and His promises instead of government decisions of national Israel. It is a sin when you position yourself *for* one person (a Jew) for whom Jesus died, and *against* another (an Arab) for whom Jesus also died. You are passing a judgment which is reserved for God alone.

God's Promise to Abraham Remains a Blessing to the Jewish People Today

The Hebrew Bible, the Older Testament, makes clear that God's relationship with the Jewish people is based on the promises He gave to the patriarchs:

"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 forefathers 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. 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 Him [deny Him, disobey Him, add other gods alongside 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” (Deut. 7:7-11).

The Lord affirms Himself as a God Who keeps promises for generations to come — and He also affirms His criteria for a love relationship with Him! The cornerstone of Jewish prayer is called the *Shema* [shem-AH], after the first word, “hear”: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deut. 6:4). If the prayer had included the next verse, “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength**” (v. 5), it more likely would have led to the kind of *spiritually intimate relationship* our Lord wanted with the Israelites.

He voiced the same condition of a love relationship when He gave Moses the Ten Commandments: “*You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, [as a husband whose wife has cheated Him] 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*, which is a desire to be known by God with all that is in you, a hunger to be in His presence. The pre-eminence of love is repeated by our Lord Jesus, “**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 neighbor as yourself.**’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt. 22:37-40).

Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, reinforcing for all who would follow Him the same criteria God commanded for the Jew. It’s important to note that all of *Torah* and the Prophets are built on the foundation to *love*. In 1 Corinthians 13 the apostle Paul affirms the outworking of love, as he also does in Galatians 5:6, to evidence the authenticity 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.*”

Without the love which by grace the Spirit flows out from us, obedience by itself creates a wrong focus that results in self-righteous, self-serving goals and motivations. Obedience which emanates from self-effort leads along the path of legalistic perversion and self-justification. Many of the religious leaders of Jesus’s day sought to be justified by their obedience to *Torah*, disregarding the example of trust in God mirrored by their ancestor Abraham. Our Father is *still* calling for a relationship founded on trust rather than rule-keeping, for trust means that we have appropriated by grace the faith in Jesus as our Lord that by His Spirit in us impels us to fulfill His purposes for our lives (Eph. 2:10).

**Both Testaments spell it out clearly:
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Love produces a dependent and personal relationship with the Father.
Lack of love produces reliance on religious form and self-justification.

Both Testaments spell it out clearly: The preeminence of *loving God* is the same for Jew and for 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, you will have no controversy about whether others are obeying Him. Instead, you will understand thoroughly that your obedience comes from the power of *His grace at work in you*. This is the way of the Holy Spirit, a topic we'll explore later.

The reality of a loving Father Who empowers us by His Spirit to obey is brought into scorn by those who are determined to obey God's commands but have no loving relationship with Him. Convinced that perfect obedience means just pedaling harder, they disdain those who fall short of their own self-regard.

Certain of the Pharisees epitomized this hypocrisy: *"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). This condescending attitude plagues a large part of Messianic Judaism today and overshadows the grace and spiritual power that is available *only* through knowing and loving Jesus as Lord of their lives.

Over the years of sharing the Hebraic Restoration we have held seminars in Messianic congregations. When we gave participants a list of spiritual strongholds to identify in themselves from our book

Demolishing Strongholds, we almost universally found strongholds of *rebellion, bitterness, and rejection* influencing and agitating their lives. These three strongholds kept most from fully trusting in the atoning work of Messiah Jesus on their behalf and from living as a new creation in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

The influence of these particular strongholds also stirs up controversy among Messianic believers with followers of Jesus who don't practice as they do. "Religious" discussions become exercises in the vain persuasion and verbal maneuvering Paul warns about: *"But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the Torah, because these are unprofitable and useless"* (Titus 3:9).

Those who are convinced they can obey God's commands *without* being motivated by the love only the indwelling Spirit can mature are focused horizontally, consumed with comparing their personal success with the shortcomings of others. In contrast, trust-grounded obedience which emanates from loving God humbly and gratefully acknowledges total dependence on Him for both the will and the ability to do His will.

- Love produces a dependent and personal relationship with the Father because the authentic follower of Jesus welcomes the grace of being His adopted child. The absence of love, however, produces reliance on religious form and self-justification.

Personal Comment: A number of years ago during the first day of a *Restoring the Early Church Workshop* some of the attendees mentioned a noted teacher who emphasizes observing biblical principles. In fact, Sue and I had

attended his seminars on several occasions. I pointed out that while his principles are biblically valid, a major weakness in his presentations is that he doesn't teach anything about the necessary motive of *loving* God and *loving* others. Many who ascribe to a teaching based on *obedience to principles* as their motivation and goal find they can't draw near the Father Who loves them. Several of the workshop participants took offense at my comments.

That night one attendee searched his notes and materials from that teacher's seminar and the next day reported to the rest of our group, "Mike was right. I went through all my notes from so-and-so and love isn't mentioned even once!"

How were the children of Israel viewed by God and His servants?

- **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, forgive 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).

Please realize that we are not trying to denigrate the Jewish people but to present the biblical view of them as a chosen people from *God's* perspective. He intended that as His spiritual "wife" they represent Him righteously to the nations around them. But they didn't. Has the stiff-necked, rebellious resistance of the Jewish people to recognize and serve their prophesied Messiah changed over the centuries? How does God intend to reach them? Through Gentiles adopting Jewish religious forms and traditions in *Torah* observance, as many in the Jewish Roots Movement propose? NO!!! A far better, more effective way is found in the Hebraic Restoration.

In Romans chapter 11 the apostle Paul explains the special relationship between Jew and Gentile in God's sight. He informs the Gentile followers of Jesus that they are a separate species — a wild olive shoot — that has been grafted in by their trust in Jesus to experience God's grace and the promises in His Hebrew Scriptures:

*"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, 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).

Paul didn't want the Gentiles to fall into the same pattern of arrogance and disobedience which brought about disbelief among so many of the Jews. Many in the Jewish Roots Movement contend that Gentiles are grafted into *Judaism*. Far from it! We are grafted into the *trust-filled obedience* of our father Abraham and the privilege to be called-out as Messiah's own. And because of *our trust* the righteousness of Jesus is credited to us.

Why were the Gentiles who trusted in Jesus allowed to be grafted in to receive the nourishing sap of life? Partially 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* and self-justifying, compassionless disregard for others kept them from trusting in Messiah Jesus, the One for Whom all of Israel had been waiting.

Jesus warned that they couldn't piece together a trust in Him as the Son of God and their self-justifying dependence on personal obedience: "*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 wineskins, and both are preserved*" (Matt. 9:16,17).

- Trust in Jesus and legalistic perversion that seeks self-justification through obedience can never meld, neither for Jew nor Gentile.

Paul foresaw as did the prophet Zechariah a coming day when the house of David *would* call upon Jesus as Lord and King of the Kingdom: "*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). In the meantime, many Gentiles who are dissatisfied with their congregations and self-aggrandizing teaching are being recruited by modern-day Judaizers into forsaking their trust in Jesus and walking the path of perverting *Torah* as their means of salvation.

Wonderfully for the Jew though, Paul reaffirms that God is indeed keeping His promises to them: "*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). Paul reiterates that God's actions on behalf of today's Jewish people reflect His faithful promise to the patriarchs who had trusted and obeyed Him.

- Bear in mind that the Jewish people *are* being restored to the land of Israel — but focus on the faithfulness of God and His promise to the patriarchs. The decisions which national Israel makes are often totally devoid of God's purpose for them. But God keeps His promises even if from our perspective 2000 years is a long time to wait! And His faithfulness to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob serves to escalate the trust we as followers of Jesus can have that He is faithful to us as well. What promises has He given you?

"Jesus Was A Jewish Carpenter"

The above statement frequents bumper stickers and T-shirts. At face value it is true (although immensely incomplete!), and is frequently used as a rallying point for why Gentiles should get back to

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

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 the focus on the Jewish roots of Christianity. But the emphasis on Jesus’s humanity and cultural heritage misses the *divine significance* of the Son of God in the lives of all mankind as Prophet, Priest and King—God in bodily form.

Jesus became man to fulfill God’s promise He made to *Abraham*, not to Moses: “*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 these promises from the perspective of Galatians 3:7-9 reveals that through Jesus they have been made full as a blessing to Jew and Gentile alike: “*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.*”

Paul continues his letter to the followers of Jesus in Galatia by affirming the fulfillment by God’s grace of the promises made to Abraham through His covenant with him. Through *trust* God’s irrevocable covenant with Abraham

would encompass even Gentiles who by faith in Christ become 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. Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ. 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).

- It was because of *His promise* to Abraham that God chose the descendants of Israel as His particular people.
- It was because of *His promise* to Abraham that salvation has come to both Jew and Gentile alike through the fulfilled covenant in Jesus.

Neither Jew nor Gentile is the critical factor in these promises. It’s *God’s faithfulness* to keep His promises that matters! Paul echoes that Jesus is the *seed* of Abraham, for 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 for forgiveness are receiving the

- Are all the Gentiles blessed because Jesus was born a Jew?
- Or, are they blessed because He was the Perfect Sacrifice?

fruit of the covenant that was promised to Abraham. That is why Paul labors so diligently on behalf of Gentiles that we not lose sight that our salvation is a result of *God's grace and promise*.

Over-emphasizing the Humanity of Jesus

The situation we face here is one of *emphasis*. Jesus in His humanity was born of a Jewish mother in order that all prophecy would be fulfilled, and that as a man He would undergo *without sin* the same trials and temptations common to humanity. But His *divine nature* encompasses an identity that includes Gentiles as His adopted brothers and sisters—those who *do God's will* (Mark 3:34,35). Our Lord is more concerned with Gentiles and Jews alike proclaiming His atonement as the only sinless Lamb of God than with centering on His human ancestry. Yes, Jesus was a Jew and Mary was His mother. But to all His disciples, the Divine Jesus Who is now at the right hand of God is the *“important matter.”*

A Lesson of Over-emphasis from Church History

One of the greatest schisms of the organized Church occurred in the 5th century concerning the virgin Mary. Was she *theotokos*, the mother of God? Or was she *christotokos*, the mother of the Christ? There is a significance to the issue, for if she is, as was decided by the hierarchy, the mother of *God*, then she is *de facto* on par with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The identification of a woman as the “mother

of God” would create a relational emphasis of *equality with God* that was neither intended nor prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures. If in her humanity, however, Mary is the mother of the *Christ*, she has brought forth a human child whose Father is the Holy Spirit Who empowered the conception (Luke 1:35). Therefore she is neither a sinless being nor an object of worship and adoration as is so prevalent among Roman Catholics today.

Think back. Wasn't it when Jesus identified Himself as the *Son of God* — and therefore *equal with God* — that the non-believing Jews determined to kill Him? (See John 5:18.) When you uphold His divinity, you are reminding yourself that Jesus is no longer the infant in the manger who is dependent on His mother for nourishment or protection. Jesus is the *Lord of the universe* Whose next appearance will leave no doubt about Who He is: the KING of Kings and LORD of Lords!

By keeping our focus on the divine, eternal nature of Christ who indeed is also a man, we can emphasize the role of Jesus as the only Redeemer for all mankind, and in obedience, carry out our privilege and responsibility to spread His Gospel.

Unbelieving Jew: “Abraham is our father.”
Jesus: “Satan is your father.”

The atmosphere was tense. The Jews who had not believed Jesus were now arguing loudly about their own freedom

By keeping our emphasis on the divine, eternal nature of Christ we can focus on the role of Jesus as the only Redeemer for all mankind, and in obedience, carry out our responsibility to spread His Gospel.

in Abraham. They were blind to their slavery to sin and their need for a Savior. Faced with their arrogant self-righteousness, 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:

*“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. 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 who don’t trust Jesus as Messiah and Lord cannot *hear* the Gospel because of *demonic influence*? Can it be that they need demonic deliverance in order to *see* the true

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

Messiah? As Jesus traveled throughout Israel, many demonic deliverances bore witness to His Person and power. People were also delivered by those to whom He delegated that authority. He gave His apostles the authority to cast out demons as well as to bring the gospel: *“He appointed twelve—designating them apostles [those sent out]—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).

In order to prepare the way for His arrival at various villages, Jesus sent men ahead so that all who wanted to hear Him would be unhindered by demonic influence: *“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 disciples were driving out demons from a Jewish audience so that they might have ears to hear the good news of the Kingdom. How has this approach changed over the centuries? Instead of reaching Jews through deliverance so they might be responsive to hear and obey the Good News of their Messiah’s coming, today both Gentiles and Jews are adopting Jewish customs

and religious traditions to identify with that cultural heritage. The preeminence of the Person of Jesus to deliver from sin's due penalty is downplayed. Consequently few Jewish hearts are responding to the message of life in Messiah.

Note: Understand that degrees of *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 behaviors), 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.

Remember the comment we made earlier about the *Demolishing Strongholds* workshops where we've shared with Messianic communities? Again, three prevailing demonic spirits keep Messianic Jews as well as unbelieving Jews from experiencing our Father's love: *rebellion, rejection, and bitterness*. The most effective evangelism comes not from identifying with the traditions of people in bondage but by demonstrating the power of the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, so they'll have ears to hear. [See our workbook *Demolishing Strongholds* for more on this subject.]

What Is God's Purpose For Torah?

Simply, *Torah* revealed sin and acted as a custodian until Jesus came.

"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).

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

If there is no *Torah*, there is no sin. If there is no sin, then there is no need for a Redeemer: *"Now before the time for this trusting faithfulness came, we were imprisoned in subjection to the system which results from perverting the Torah into legalism, kept under guard until this yet-to-come trusting faithfulness would be revealed"* (Gal. 3:23,CJB). The *Torah* was our custodian *to lead us to Christ* so that we could know and confess our sin, and *see our need for a Redeemer*.

If there is no *Torah*, there is no sin.

If there is no sin, then there is no need for a Redeemer... The *Torah* was our custodian to lead us to Christ so that we could know and confess our sin, and see our need for a Redeemer.

Torah brings us to the point of recognizing our sin as *utterly sinful*; but we are justified *only* through our trusting in Jesus as our Lord and Master. “*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, we 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, a SELF-righteousness which indicates you aren’t finding your righteousness in Jesus alone. You’ll 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*, claiming 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.)

Paul reiterates several important points for Gentiles who have put their trust in the Messiah:

“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. 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 Ephesians 2:8,9).

God’s grace and your trust in Jesus are the crucial factors to a covenant union relationship; legalistic observance of *Torah* is to no avail. Legalistic observance is a religious person’s attempt to be justified or to gain God’s favor through how they obey *Torah*. If you have ever attended a Messianic Jewish service, you may have heard it said, “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 error as well, and a number are even forsaking Jesus as God’s Son and converting to nonMessianic Judaism.

Gentiles who focus on obedience to *Torah* without wholehearted love and trust in Jesus and what He has fully accomplished by His victorious death and resurrection negate Paul’s Spirit-breathed testimony: “*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).*

The Hebraic Restoration is for both Gentile and Jew who would step outside the bondage of *Torah* perversion and find righteousness in Jesus alone.

The Redeemer Has Come! Whose Descendant Was Jesus?

In order to be the only and propitiated Redeemer of the Hebrew Scriptures, 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 in order to fulfill the requirement to be without spot or blemish: *“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).*

Was the *Jewishness* of Jesus a crucial qualification? The writer to the Hebrews does affirm the origin of Jesus as a physical descendant of Abraham through the tribe of Judah, but he emphasizes even more emphatically His lineage through Melchizedek to be our great High Priest. Melchizedek was the priest of Salem whom Abraham honored with a tithe (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, 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. 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” (Heb. 7:14-26).*

Yes, Jesus was born a Jew and delivered His message of the Kingdom first to the Jew. But when He became our atonement sacrifice, He died for all humanity as a *priest in the order of Melchizedek*. Neither a Jew nor even a descendent of Abraham, Melchizedek of old was without lineage. The crucial issue for both Gentiles and Jews is their trust in Jesus as

both Sacrifice and High Priest, and their trust in what He accomplished and continues to accomplish as He intercedes on their behalf.

Jesus is the guarantee of a new covenant ratified in His blood. In this new covenant the eternal LORD Who is God in the flesh is emphasized. To “Judaize” Jesus *over His eternal nature* denigrates the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS as 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).

In Jesus, Is There a Distinction Between Jew and Gentile?

The great news is that the partition that once 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). We who trust are all children of this promise through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Paul also assures the followers of Jesus in Ephesus that the partition has been removed:

“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).

This, then, is Heaven's view that all followers of Jesus must maintain: **“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 is still warning us today

We are not dealing with something new here. The apostle Paul confronted Judaizing perversion head-on almost two thousand years ago. If he were alive today he'd be mortified that this perversion of the gospel into a means of perpetuating Judaism's requirements alongside Messiah's inclusion of Gentiles is still gaining adherents. Even Peter, who was party to a heavenly vision to confirm the spiritual truth that Gentiles in Messiah Jesus are clean (Acts 10:9-15), fell prey to fear of Judaizers. Look at Paul's indignant response to this hypocrisy:

The Apostle Paul faced this Judaizing perversion head-on almost two thousand years ago. If he were alive today he would be mortified that this perversion is still gaining adherents.

*“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 in their Lord had to have hurt Paul considerably.] 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 we who recognize this error have for both our Gentile and Jewish brothers and sisters who are entering this trap. Through legalistic perversion many are forsaking their trust in their Lord and converting to nonMessianic Judaism: *“For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ **for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race**”* (Rom. 9:3).

Personal Comment: The clearest visual image we can offer of our agony for those falling headlong into legalistic perversion of *Torah* is the movie *Escape From Sobibor*. The film reenacts the only successful mass escape of Jews from a concentration camp during WW II. The prisoners had been told they were going to a work camp when, in fact, it was a death camp. Those who first recognized the real purpose of Sobibor were utterly frustrated as they tried to get the other prisoners to see the truth. Unable to destroy the crematoria, the captives puzzled over a way to keep prisoners out of them. Their solution? They all had to escape together.

Today a growing number of people are voicing alarm over the spiritual death that legalistic perversion of *Torah* observance is bringing to Jew and Gentile alike as they seek to establish their own righteousness before God. Our hope is that many will listen and discover the freedom that is offered in Jesus alone.

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

1. The perversion of *Torah* nullifies trust in Christ as sole and fully sufficient Redeemer.
2. Needless controversy springs when *Torah* becomes the catalyst for division among those who are trying to secure their justification by keeping it.

Undoing the Perversion of Torah

Pause here for a moment. Remember again that our God’s highest command is that love for Him and for fellow human beings be the driving motive for all who follow His Son as Lord to think, say and do, whether Jew or Gentile (Deut. 11:22; Lev. 19:18). Those who pervert *Torah* as a means of self-righteous justification, however, deny the foundational require-

ment of love and miss the reality of the wholly unmerited *grace* of God. Seeking some sort of spiritual advantage through obedience to a set of behavioral criteria, those who pervert Torah try to gain approval by *earning* it.

Perversion of God's righteous instruction deals with *behavior* rather than the heart. Consider two comparisons of motive from the perspective of God's way versus *Torah* perversion:

A religious example:

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

Torah Perversion — If I don't steal from my neighbor, God will be more pleased with me.

An example from marriage:

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

Torah Perversion — If I give flowers to my wife, she will love me more.

- *God's way* is always the result of your responsiveness to His indwelling Spirit because of your love for Him.
- *Perversion of Torah's way* seeks justification through self-empowered obedience.

The apostle Paul writes extensively to both Jew and Gentile as he tries to undo the legalistic perversion of *Torah* which certain Jews practiced and were trying to get Gentile followers of Jesus to embrace as well. David Stern's translation of the Letter to the Galatians in *The Complete Jewish Bible* clearly addresses the hypo-

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- **God's way is always the result of what you do because of your love for Him.**
 - **Torah's way is seeking justification for yourself through perverted obedience.**
-

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

crisis of *Torah* perversion. As mentioned earlier, the power of this demonic pull is so strong that a growing number of Gentile Christians attending Messianic Jewish congregations are actually denying Christ and converting to Judaism.

Jesus criticizes even today's religious leaders of this kind of perversion: "*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). Many Jews continue to miss God's way as they try to add to their own righteousness through obedience to the law. The "stumbling stone" of righteousness that comes through trust in the One Who made the meaning of Torah full still causes them to trip.

"What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the 'stumbling stone.' As it is written: 'See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.' Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, **but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they *did not know the righteous-***

ness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end [the goal] of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom. 9:30-10:4).

What is the biblical criterion for righteousness? "Clearly **no one is justified before God by [observing Torah], because, "The righteous will live by trust" (Gal. 3:11).** Those who are trapped by the mindset that they're justified by Torah observance fail to experience the Father's love. They often cast a critical eye toward those who do not observe Torah as they do. And all too often the Torah observant are embroiled in controversy over their different Torah practices. (Just ask different people *when* and *how* the Sabbath should be kept and watch the sparks fly.) The demonic spirits of rebellion, bitterness, and rejection agitate such discord and controversy that love can not be extended and received.

Paul reminds the Galatians 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 to Abraham through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Note that it is *not* Abraham/Moses/Jesus/the Holy Spirit.

Undoing the Controversy Among the Torah Observant

Any area of agitation that brings division among followers of Jesus must be directly addressed. Concerns over which day to celebrate a Sabbath or

which foods may or may not be eaten have caused much unrest and strife among segments of the collective called-out ones, the Church. Paul must have gotten emotionally worn out as he repeatedly tried to emphasize God's way to the resistant: "*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).*

Those who are set on perpetuating division have forgotten that their Father's goal is that none should perish but that *all should repent and come to a saving knowledge of Jesus, their Redeemer.* Those who are divided by peripheral issues are in no position to love their neighbor when they can't even love their brother! This is why Paul so strongly admonishes 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 more greatly appreciating Jesus by celebrating the various Hebrew feasts become a bondage of pressure or obligation to you, once again heed the warning of Paul to the Colossian followers of Jesus:

"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. 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. 2:11-17).

Love Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Behind the Hebraic Restoration is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. It is He Who keeps followers of Jesus from going back to the letter of *Torah* as the modern Pharisees are doing to establish their own worth before God. Notice how Paul differentiates between competence through self-effort of obedience, and competence that comes solely by the grace of God: "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

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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 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 stubbornly resistant Jewish persecutors, "You always resist the Holy Spirit!" This same Spirit is the source and empowerment at work in those who follow Jesus to live and grow *in love of and for God*. Throughout his writings Paul emphasizes the preeminence of love over all else. We know from 1 Corinthians 13 that without the self-sacrificial love from the indwelling Spirit we are *nothing*.

Again, this *motive and enactment of love* is the crucial difference between the Hebraic Restoration and the Jewish Roots Movement. Paul sums up what is of supreme importance in living out a relationship of obedient trust: "**For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is trust expressing itself through love... The entire [Torah] is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'**" (Gal. 5:6,14).

Jesus sums up all of *Torah* and the writings of the prophets with His command of love, for if you *love God and love one another*, every command within the Hebrew Scriptures will express that love in very real ways: "Jesus replied: '**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 neighbor as yourself.' All the [Torah] and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matt. 22:37-40). Love produces right actions: "*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the [Torah] and the Prophets*" (Matt. 7:12).

Paul leaves no doubt that the kind of love which comes from God is a state of freedom which is intended to serve others, not promote self-indulgence: "*You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'*" (Gal. 5:13,14).

The entire *Torah* is encapsulated in the way of love that is evidenced in your treatment of others. Love for God and for others is a fruit that only the Holy Spirit can bring forth in a person's life. And only through the work of the Spirit of Christ in us can we willingly set aside our own interests in order to be a vessel through whom He pours out His love in very real ways: "*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 which prompts an occasional act of kindness. Rather, the supernatural, sacrificial love of our God is a way of life. To walk in love produces an obedient response to the prompting of the Spirit to fulfill a need regardless of personal cost.

John builds on this theme: "*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).

You can understand the *Fatherhood* of God only by yielding to the Spirit in you. Dependence on your observance of *Torah* to assure you of your adoption as His child robs the Spirit of His joyous opportunity for you to call your Father "*Abba*"—Daddy. "*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 inner presence of the Spirit to the external effort of grasping at *Torah*! This intimate union of the Spirit of Christ in us assures our sonship as heirs of the covenant promises in His Son: "*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 children and heirs of all that eternal life offers. Think about the implication of this in *how you live your life*. Because "*God so loved the world*" — and He still does — He wants you to tell others of His love by word and show them by deed. The Holy Spirit empowers you to walk a pilgrim path that is contrary to what your own nature would choose, yet offers an outcome that far surpasses anything this world could offer: "*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).

What pleases the Holy Spirit? To do the same good to others as you would want done for yourself.

Circumcision: A Sign For Both Covenants?

Old Covenant: Circumcision of the Foreskin

The Lord commanded Abraham and his descendants to undergo circumcision, the removal of the foreskin of the penis, as the sign of an everlasting covenant. The promise God gave to Abraham has come to Gentiles, who are now adopted into His family through the new covenant put into effect through the blood of Jesus. So why aren't Gentiles circumcised as were the male descendants of Abraham?

“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).

Confronted with the matter of Gentile circumcision Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to present this thorny issue: “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 chapter 15 recounts the Council meeting in Jerusalem and their efforts to settle this question. 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 in which the Holy Spirit set apart Gentiles too as sons of Abraham: “God, who knows the heart, 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, which is a sign of the Abrahamic cove-

nant, is *not* mandated for followers of Jesus, then are we under a new and different covenant?

New Covenant: Circumcision of the Heart

The Holy Spirit was already revealing to the fledgling Church a particular emphasis in the Hebrew Bible that had been lost through legalistic practices which tried to earn God's favor: "*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).

Paul clearly understood that the aim of God was the *hearts* of all people, Jew and Gentile alike, not the removal of their foreskins: "*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).

Our Lord sought the heart of the Jews to trust in Him but couldn't get it because of their resistance to the Holy Spirit. Paul fought diligently so the Gentiles could live in spiritual freedom without having to become practitioners of Judaism first. How tragic if they should become chained to the bondage of legalistic perversion of *Torah* as the unbelieving Jews had!

With holy boldness Paul faced down those who would enslave followers of Jesus to a justification that required circumcision in order to be in Christ: "*This matter [of circumcision] arose because some*

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 themselves based upon behavior practices of religious ritual and form.

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 *Torah* observant as a requirement of God in the gospel.

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 one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one 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 by grace and the Spirit loves foremost and sacrificially.

Can you feel Paul's intense agitation as he confronted the diabolical enslavement of the Judaizers? He certainly doesn't soften his words as he issues his warning against them: "*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).

Again Paul exposes the false, Christ-denying motives of those who insist Gentiles be circumcised: "*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).

A New Creation: Walk Steadfastly in the Freedom Jesus Gives

The legalistic perversion Paul encountered with the followers of Jesus in Galatia began when *"false brothers...infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves."* What defines the *freedom* the Galatians enjoyed so greatly that the Judaizers sneaked in among them to enslave them through circumcision? This is serious! We wouldn't be writing this comparison of the Hebraic Restoration and the Jewish Roots Movement if we didn't see the same thing occurring today.

Jesus proclaims to all of us, *"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"* (John 8:36). The word "free" encompassed such deep meaning to our Lord that He breathed through His Spirit to Paul the significance of our freedom in union with Him. Note the apostle's urgency that the Galatians *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, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to

We wouldn't be writing this comparison of the Hebraic Restoration versus the Jewish Roots Movement if we didn't see the same thing occurring as a result of the legalistic perversion spawned by the influence of rebellion, bitterness, and rejection in the Messianic Jewish community.

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).

How futile it is to taste freedom in Jesus through trust and then become enslaved to obey *Torah* and become alienated from Him.

Now that you have placed your trust in Jesus as your Redeemer, is there a role for *Torah*? As an expression of our love for our Lord Jesus, we *want* to live within the freedom and boundaries of His Word through His Spirit at work in us. In other words, we are still very capable of sinning. But how would we know when we have offended God or other people if we don't study God's teaching, that is, *Torah*, as well as the glorious rest of His Word? (See our book *Christian Halakhahs* for more on applying God's Word to your life as you represent your love for Him and others.)

Does God See Gentiles As 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).

Note that Paul appears to be addressing 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 by both *Torah* and the Hebrew Prophets. *God's grace* is a spiritual reality that redeems Jew and Gentile alike.

Gentiles are unencumbered by ancestral temptation to seek justification from a connection to *Torah*. Thus they have less to overcome in regaining the trust-grounded obedience of Abraham. Let's look again at the pitfall Israel faced in trying to be righteous through obeying *Torah*: "*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).

In their blind pursuit of *Torah* the Judaizers stumbled right over the Messiah, not even recognizing Him when He walked among them. That lesson stands today as a warning: You can

try to observe all of *Torah* and still miss Jesus.

Paul goes on to warn how Israel failed to obtain God's righteousness because they substituted their own means for His: "*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).

Ignorance of God's way is no excuse when you are standing before His throne! Submission to His way through trust-grounded obedience in Jesus is the target toward which the *Torah* was pointing. Jesus IS the goal of righteousness.

Gentiles are unencumbered by any ancestral temptation to seek justification from the *Torah*. Thus they have less to overcome in regaining the trust-grounded obedience of Abraham.

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 attempts to politically coerce this nation into observing Judeo-Christian principles without a regard for the centrality of Jesus. Only a spiritual solution in Jesus that comes from repentance and trust in His reconciliation with the Father will produce the regeneration that transforms people and nations.

The modern-day perversion of what Paul faced is called "Reconstructionism." Through political/legislative means this movement tries to force people to live out the commands and principles of the Bible while failing to see the need for the

We know that Satan is attacking the followers of Jesus on several fronts. He would like nothing more than to see Christians attempt to effect change through the political solutions.

power of the Holy Spirit in order to live them out. Satan is attacking the followers of Jesus on several fronts, and would like nothing more than to see Christians attempt to effect change through political resolutions rather than humble repentance. Yet neither the Bible nor the writings of the early Church support this deceived, man-centered effort.

How to Reach the Jewish People With the Messiah

- **Recognize their demonic captivity in rebellion, bitterness, and rejection.**
- **Ask forgiveness for past wrongs done by organizational Christianity as well as individual misguided Christians.**
- **Don't embrace legalistic perversion so you can identify with them.**

As with all who lived in first century Israel, Jesus was well aware of the reality of demons as Satan's soldiers. Therefore He gave His disciples authority over them so that His power would be manifest and the ears of the people open to hear Him: *"Calling the Twelve to Him, He sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits"* (Mark 6:7).

He has delegated the same authority to His followers today. We can pray in the authority of Jesus on behalf of the Jewish people and bind the influence of the demonic strongholds which keep them in captivity. When the blinders of rebellion, bitterness, and rejection are removed, they will be able to see the Messiah Jesus as the true fulfillment of *Torah*.

Asking and extending forgiveness for wrongs committed are certainly key to coming into relationship with our Father. The Bible leaves no doubt about that! Injustice is a product of fallen humanity, and injustice done by white Christians to Native Americans, African Americans, and Jews are clear evidence that a person's belief system can't restrain a heart that's filled with hatred and prejudice and greed.

How do followers of Jesus today undo past injustices so that the reputation of Jesus may be cleared of this stain? We ask forgiveness. It takes authentic humility to admit we've sinned and caused unspeakable pain to others. It also takes the integrity and love in the Spirit of Christ to purpose to accept responsibility that injustice not happen again insofar as it depends on us. That humility of obedience to our Father opens the way for Jesus to heal. There is no other way.

Be aware, however, of an insidious ploy of the enemy. Some have been deceived into regarding the spirituality of pagan cultures to a degree that blinds followers of Jesus to recognizing the lostness of these people. Practitioners of Native American spirit rituals or New Age Hindu celebrations or Chinese Qigong demonic power or even legalistic Judaism are enslaved, held in a bondage that prevents them from hearing and owning their need for the Savior. Just as some Christians have romanticized Jewish and Native American traditions and cultural practices, so have others been distracted from the goal of changing hopeless lives with the power of the Jesus.

Many TV shows and movies portray Native American culture as noble, and close to God through His creation. But we who are in Christ must remind ourselves that these portrayals hide the ani-

mism and spirit worship that exclude them from the Kingdom of God as well as keep them captive in a prison demonic fear. In the quest to evangelize Native Americans, atrocities and cruelty were done in the name of Christ. Many "Christian" schools were started to not only teach Christianity but to wipe out all vestiges of tribal culture. Indeed, the collective Church needs to repent for the harm done both against the people and against God as His Name was brought down by misrepresentation of Him.

At the same time, those who bring the authentic gospel to Native peoples aren't obligated to adopt Native American cultural expressions to mollify potential Native converts. Each is free to choose how to love and serve our Lord within the framework of His Word in a way that expresses heart devotion but doesn't invite demonic intrusion.

The same holds true for the Jewish people. Injustice is undone through repentant hearts which earnestly seek forgiveness, not through cultural adaptations which muddy the gospel message of reconciliation with the Father by grace alone through trust in the sacrifice of Jesus alone. Gentile Christians who adopt Jewish religious and cultural patterns in an effort to become "Jewish" are missing God's way. We can't stress this enough: Numbers of Gentile Christians who enter the Jewish Roots Movement forsake Jesus and convert to Judaism. Ironically, the Jewish Roots Movement may be the best evangelism tool non-Messianic Jews have to recruit Gentiles into Judaism.

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

Followers of Jesus who intently study the Hebrew Bible can perceive how God was revealing the coming Messiah to Israel in ages past. We can cooperate with our Father to reach today's Jewish unbelievers with the message of His Son through our love for them. Even the Jewish rejection of the Messiah served to open 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).

Despite suffering intense persecution by the Jews (see 2 Corinthians 11:24), Paul's love for them emboldened his hope that Gentile entry into the Kingdom might provoke a Jewish response: *"I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them"* (Rom. 11:13,14). Gentiles can fulfill the yearning of both Paul and God to see the Jewish people embrace the Messiah by displaying the love of the Holy Spirit as they walk in obedient trust.

Was Paul trying to make the Gentiles "Torah observant" in order to provoke the Jews to envy? No! He encouraged them to live in the freedom they had in Christ, pouring forth love and good deeds to evidence their acceptance in Him. At the same time Paul warned against using their freedom as a license to sin: *"You, my brothers, were called to be free.*

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But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13).

Jude cautioned the called-out ones about the same heresy: ***“For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord”*** (Jude 1:4).

The Hebrew Bible points the way to Jesus. Of what value to Gentile followers of Jesus are the teachings found there? Some believe they can better minister to the Jewish people by adopting the requirements God placed on the Israelites at Mount Sinai. There is nothing inherently wrong in that. Paul did it: ***“To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law”*** (1 Cor. 9:20).

Hudson Taylor, the famous missionary to China, dressed in Chinese clothing to become more accepted. This is not perversion since you are not trying to be ***justified*** by your observance but hoping to create an identity bridge.

But what if God hasn't called you to minister this way? Any form you keep that is not borne on a viable relationship with our Lord will become an ***end in itself*** instead of the ***means of your expression***. When a form becomes important unto itself, you'll hallow it with tradition and build an edifice in your heart to house it! This will only fuel the controversy that will ensue with others who don't practice as you do.

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 heavenward is freedom or slavery.

Study Galatians 4:21-31. Paul makes an analogy that contrasts the descendants of Sarah, the children of promise, and Hagar, the children of enslavement. Of Sarah he says, ***“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 tells us, 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 announcing what those who embrace the Hebraic Restoration confront in people who are enslaved by the Jewish Roots Movement: ***“But just as then the one born according to the limited human capability persecuted the one born through the Spirit's supernatural power, so it is now. Nevertheless, 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).

Let's summarize the differences in elements that are key to followers of Jesus:

Jew and Gentile: Hebraic Restoration

- *Torah*: Presents foundational understanding of God's freedom and boundaries.
- Jesus: Gives full meaning to the *Torah*; emphasizes love and a right heart.
- Holy Spirit: empowers a walk of loving, obedient trust.

Jew and Gentile: Jewish Roots Movement

- *Torah*: Applies religious forms and traditions to Gentiles as well as Jews.
- Jesus: Discards His full meaning of *Torah* and emphasizes right behavior.
- Holy Spirit: Disregards need for His presence, since His empowerment to love is incidental.

Personal Comment: Several years ago we participated in a Passover Seder in which the foreshadowing of the Messiah was explained. Do we now keep the Passover each year? No. But we can use our understanding of Messiah in the Passover to more knowledgeably talk with our Jewish friends. As Gentiles who trust Jesus, we don't *need* to participate in a messianic foreshadowing to fulfill biblical mandates. However, a Jewish (or Gentile) 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.

How we choose to express our appreciation for Jesus as our Passover Lamb varies according to opportunities the Spirit brings before us. It's an *opportunity*, however, not an obligation: "**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).

"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. 10:1). Put your trust in the reality, Jesus, and don't let anyone take that reality away from you.

The apostle John illustrates a classic confrontation between the Hebraic Restoration and *Torah* Observance. Jesus has just healed a man who has been an invalid for thirty-eight years — but He cures him on the Sabbath. He commands the man, "*Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.*" Instead of rejoicing with the one who has been freed from such long bondage, the Pharisees rebuke the restored man: "*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 of love.

Hebraic Restoration: *The Simplicity of a Loving Relationship*

(Mike) For years I have played golf for recreation. I'm what you'd call a "duffer." Mostly I've 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, so I asked God to simplify it so I could enjoy the game more.

About 20 years ago I watched a golf training video which taught a simplified swing. Oh, the frustration for a few months as I discarded 30 years of complicated swinging! Through that experience I'm convinced that it's easier to complicate things than to make them simpler.

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

Finally, one day the simplicity took over and everything about playing golf changed for me. I have achieved much lower scores than ever before. In the previous 30 years I'd had only one unsuccessful attempt at an eagle (two under par). Now they're a much more frequent opportunity. *Simplicity* has brought me greater joy and satisfaction.

The freedom we have in Jesus is based on the *simplicity of a loving relationship of obedient trust*. Our Father isn't an angry ogre ready to pounce on you every time you do something wrong. He's the epitome of love personified. The Father loved you completely while you were still a sinner. Nothing you do can cause Him to love you any more or any less. Remember this as you read how to joyfully walk worthy of such amazing love (Colossians 1:10):

1. Grow in your loving trust in Jesus. ASK the Holy Spirit for guidance and empowerment. Jesus tried to convince the unbelieving Jews how much they needed the Holy Spirit's help: "... how 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 *want* to do.

As the Holy Spirit causes your love to grow, you will be drawn increasing-

ly into God's Word to both better know His character and to learn the way of life that pleases Him. There are 612 teachings/commands in the Hebrew Bible and over 1,050 in the Newer Testament. Your heart will hunger to discover the freedoms and boundaries you have in Christ even as your motivations for keeping His commands will change. For instance, coveting 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.

3. Your welcome at the judgment throne won't depend on how meticulously *Torah* observant you are. Rather, your love for your Lord and for other people will prompt you to be concerned with the welfare of those 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, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me***" (Matt. 25:34,40).

Humility of heart is key to being led by the Holy Spirit. Your humility certainly reveals how dependent on Him you are as our Father's child! As He produces His fruit in you, your responsive concern about others will grow. With a willing and trusting heart that puts no reservations or restrictions on Him, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into ways of living out God's Word that will bless others and bring praise to our Lord Jesus. The

apostle James made clear, “*As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead*” (James 2:26). Only a responsive, obedient trust that flows from your relationship with our Lord will hold merit at the judgment throne.

4. Our Father knows you need relational support to encourage you in your walk with Jesus. He’s also aware that no human can maintain the same level of relational commitment with every person. Our relationships need biblical *prioritizing*. This is often hard to do because you may think that those who are lower on your priority list may feel rejected or let down. But look at an example from the life of Jesus. He devoted special attention to Peter, James and John, whom He took with Him on special occasions. Next were the nine other apostles, then special relationships he shared with Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Finally, there were those who walked as occasional disciples, and then the multitudes.

As our research in Israel ended, our Lord brought to our minds a visual image which we call the **Restoration Diagram** (see page 4). It summarizes His relational priorities in the lives of those who follow Him. The priorities of the diagram can best be understood by visualizing it as a layered cake with our Father and Jesus at the top, with that relationship permeating all others. Subsequent layers of relationships emanate outward in priority.

Although the Hebraic Restoration is multi-faceted, *relational commitment and support* are essential factors for your personal growth and effectiveness in His Kingdom. Begin with your own household and then with those

who are your extended spiritual family in the faith, and on to others in your neighborhood and workplace. Our Father intends that your life as His ambassador be a loving enactment that reflects your trusting relationship with your Lord Jesus — even to those who might persecute you for your faith. Please go online and 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 diagram.

* Scripture passages 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.