



The 'Hebrew Roots' Movement

Part Two

By

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We are looking into the Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM), also known as Hebraic Roots and Jewish Roots. You can read the [introduction to this series here](#).

HRM adherents believe that Christianity left its Hebrew Roots centuries ago and that they are bringing it back to where it should have been all along. Some of their beliefs include:

- Restoring Christianity to its Hebrew (Jewish) roots
- Requiring the use of the name *Yaweh* rather than God or Lord and *Yeshua* rather than Jesus
- Belief that Jesus (*Yeshua*) is God (*Yaweh*) (there seems to be some disagreement by different HRM groups about whether Jesus is God in the Flesh or if God elevated the human 'man' Jesus to a position of deity .. we'll look into that as our investigation continues)
- Helping believers express their faith in Yeshua as Messiah by returning to and keeping the Torah of Yeshua
- People are not saved by works, but the precepts of the Torah are eternally binding

- Viewing the Torah as the primary document for living the life God intends for followers of Jesus (Yeshua)
- Every believer should walk a Torah-observant life
- Believers must ‘endure to the end’ in their observance of the Torah
- The original Hebrew versions of Gospel writings are superior to Greek texts, which many in the HRM believe were corrupted. (Hebrew Roots has its own Bibles – *Qodesh Cepher, Sacred Name New Testament, Sacred Name Bible, Holy Name Bible*)
- The Epistles of the Apostle Paul are often ignored and sometimes rejected
- Pagan traditions adopted by Christians are not to be followed
- Hebrew terminology is used in meetings along with Jewish symbols and ‘Messianic’ music and dancing (known as Davidic Dancing)
- Believers should keep the seventh-day Sabbath and annual Passover

- Believers should keep the annual Feast Days (e.g. Feast of Weeks, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles)
- Removed from Protestant Christianity because of core belief differences
- Gentiles keep the Law through the One Law theory and Two House theology

As you can imagine, many Christians disagree with HRM. We have chosen to present a series where both sides have an opportunity to be heard.

In this next part of our series, we'll look at the HRM belief that the original Hebrew versions of Gospel writings are superior to Greek texts and that HRM leaders and followers often ignore and sometimes reject the Epistles of the Apostle Paul.

Hebrew or Greek?

One of the strong evidences for the reliability of the New Testament and Christianity is the vast number of early Greek texts of the New Testament, some of them dating to the early 2nd century AD. However, some members of HRM believe that the Hebrew and Aramaic versions of the Gospel writings are superior to Greek texts, which they believe were corrupted. Did the writers of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) write their accounts in Hebrew and Aramaic rather than in Greek or in addition to Greek? If so, what's the evidence?

Here are various responses to the question from people within the HRM:

First, virtually all the writers of the New Testament were Hebrews, the Apostle Paul among them. He was a Pharisee and served on the Sanhedrin, the Hebrew court. The native tongue of Hebrews was Hebrew, not Greek. Any time the writers of the New Testament heard a language from heaven, it was in the Hebrew tongue. These facts alone reveal that the New Testament (Covenant) has a Hebrew base. Second, the internal evidence shows that the New Testament is filled with Hebraic mannerisms and expressions. These don't make any sense in original Greek, or English, but make perfect sense in original Hebrew. The New Testament has many Hebraic idioms that would never have come out of a Greek original. For instance, what writer in English would use a Spanish idiom like: I asked if the butter is grease (meaning I didn't beat around the bush, or a German idiom like: "To have a bird [in the head], meaning are you crazy? One would not normally use foreign language idioms when communicating in

*English. The Hebrew waw consecutive (consecutive sentences beginning with the word “and”) is a Hebraism not used in Greek. It is found not only all over the Old Testament, especially in the first five books, but also is abundant in the New Testament, especially in the Evangelists and Revelation. Paul’s letters were written by Paul to small Messianic congregations in Asia Minor, Greece and Rome. These early Messianics were Jews of the Dispersion, men and women of Hebrew origin. They spoke Hebrew as their native tongue. Paul would naturally write to them in the Hebrew tongue. They would in turn explain his letters to any converts from foreign lands. Greek was not a popular language in the Galilee region nor was it the language of the Apostles or the Temple. First-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus wrote, “Our nation does not encourage those that learn the languages of many nations.” In fact, the Hebrews detested the Gentile Greeks. And this highly educated priest said he himself had a very hard time with Greek. **Yahwehs Restoration Ministry***

*There are some who advocate that portions of the New Testament were originally written in Aramaic or Hebrew. There are also those outside this movement that hold this view, often called Aramaic Primacy. It is very possible that some of the New Testament was written in a Semitic language. Certainly the dialog of the Gospels took place in Aramaic (and maybe a little Hebrew). Hebrew idioms are found throughout the texts. But it remains that the oldest copies – and they are all copies; there are no extant originals – are in Greek. Hebrew and/or Aramaic New Testament texts are translations from Greek. The majority of Biblical scholars accept that the Aramaic New Testament of the Peshitta was translated from Greek. This was the common language of the day. **The Messianic Light***

Paul?

Some HRM churches teach that there are problems with the letters of Paul. Some HRM teachers believe the problem is with the way Christians misinterpret Paul's writings. Others believe the problem is with Paul himself.

The writings of the Apostle Paul are always twisted by Christianity in order to justify a lawless agenda. The writings of Paul are undoubtedly best understood when viewing him as a Torah observant Jewish teacher teaching recent believers how to live Torah observant in a non-Torah observant world ... Peter states that Paul told them of these same things (be obedient to the Torah) also in his letters. He then says that some of the things Paul states are hard to understand. He states that untaught and unstable men distort Paul's letters and the rest of the Scriptures to their own destruction. Men have been twisting the words of Paul and other Scriptures to line up with their pagan and evil traditions. Yeshua warned about forsaking the Torah of Elohim for the sake of man's traditions (Matt. 15:3, Mark

7:6-9) ... Paul tells us that Torah is holy, good, righteous, and spiritual (Romans 7:12, 14). Paul tells us that the fullness of Torah is in one word, "love" (Romans 13:8-10). The Psalms tell us that Torah is perfect, soul-restoring, righteous, pure, eye-enlightening, true, more precious than gold, and in keeping Torah is great reward (Psalm 19:7-11): We can plainly see that Paul is NOT saying that the pure, perfect, holy, good, and righteous Torah of Elohim is "dogma" that is "against us" and is "hostile toward us." Paul is speaking of something else. Paul is most likely speaking of the traditions of Judaism that claimed the Gentiles were unclean and should not be associated with Elohim's people, the Jews. That dogma and man's tradition was nailed to the stake and taken out of the way. And the love of Elohim and His Torah, through the blood of Yeshua, goes out to the world to the Gentiles also. Looking at this passage in conjunction with Paul's earlier warning against being deceived through the traditions of men make this is the most likely answer (Col. 2:8, 13-14) ... Paul never taught against following Torah. He says here a person should follow it all his life. But Paul is going to make a contrast

between those who seek to follow Torah for their own salvation, such as those who were steeped in Judaism sought to do, and those who are alive to Torah through the blood of Messiah. Paul says that Torah has jurisdiction over a man as long as he lives. Death is the only thing that separates a man from the jurisdiction of Torah. It is only at death that we are released from the judgment of Torah. Because of this, we must die with Messiah on the tree in order to be wed to Him. Then we have life through Him.

Beit Yeshua Torah Assembly

*The study of the Apostle Paul and his writings can sometimes gets deep because Paul is a deep thinker and some of his writings are “difficult to understand,” as the Apostle Peter states. The most common mistake made by readers is to not understand that Paul was a Torah observant disciple of Jesus (Y’shua) and a Torah teacher. Paul taught that the Foundation to the Faith and the basic duty of every disciple was obedience to God and his Laws (Torah). **If one does not understand this, they will easily mis-understand Paul.** Peter, talking*

about Paul, said: “some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable (in the Old Testament) distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.” [2 Peter 3:14-18] Paul’s “Scriptures” were the Old Testament. The New Testament books did not exist yet. This gives light to Paul writing in 2 Timothy 3:12-17 that **the Foundation to the Faith is the Old Testament.** “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings (Old Testament), which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **All Scripture** (Paul referring to the Old Testament) is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” Today we also have the New Testament books, but it

is clear the Foundation for every disciple is, in fact, the Old Testament. [Hebrew Roots Info](#)

Paul is apostate only to those who misunderstand or deliberately twist his teachings. By his own admission he was clearly pro-law (Rom. 3:31, 6:13, 7:12). He stated that he believed all things written in the Old Testament (Acts 24:14). In fact, Peter confirms Paul's apostleship in 2Peter 3:15-16, "And account that the longsuffering of our Master is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." [Yahwehs Restoration Ministry](#)

Apostle Paul is probably the most misunderstood person in the Bible. Both Christians and Jews think that Paul was an “anti-Law” Jew who created his own religion and called it Christianity. But when we understand that Apostle Paul was a Hebrew of the Biblical nation of Israel and that He approached Yeshua the Messiah, The Ten Commandments, and the “Law”, also known as the Torah or Pentateuch (as well as the rest of the Hebrew Bible), from that perspective, then we are able to see Apostle Paul and his writings from an entirely new light. Suddenly the confusion slips away. From a Western worldview, “the Law” (Torah) is erroneously understood as a legalistic system of rules which Israel had to keep in order to be “saved”. The Western world view of “Grace” has come to be understood as freedom from “the Law”. As these understandings have evolved, “the law” of Judaism and the “grace” of Christianity have been placed in opposition to one another. These are modern world views but this is not what Yeshua, Apostle Paul, or the others who embraced the first century Christianity taught and lived; This is evident by their

writings. But unfortunately, things have become muddled.
Together Fellowship Biblical Israel

What we are doing in this series is giving HRM and its critics the opportunity to be heard. In the last part chapter we heard from HRM teachers about their belief that the original Hebrew versions of Gospel writings are superior to Greek texts. We also heard from them about how some HRM leaders and followers ignore and sometimes reject the Epistles of the Apostle Paul.

We will now hear from some critics of HRM.

Hebrew or Greek?

Furthermore, even if some parts of the New Testament were written in Hebrew (such as the gospel of Matthew), as some suggest, isn't it amazing that God did not preserve those manuscripts — instead He chose to preserve His New Testament Scriptures in the GREEK LANGUAGE, with the Greek forms of His name and titles!

Not one book of the New Testament has been preserved in Hebrew — only in Greek. This is prima facie evidence that one language is not necessarily any “holier” than another, and that it is NOT wrong to use the forms of God's name as they would translate from the Hebrew or Greek.

Those who insist on using only the Hebrew names of God are straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel! Nowhere does the Bible tell us that it is wrong to use the names of God in Aramaic, Greek, or any other language of the earth.

Since Almighty God has preserved the New Testament Scriptures in the Greek language, and many if not all of them were originally written in Greek, it is obvious that God Himself INSPIRED the usage of Greek to write and to maintain and preserve HIS HOLY WORD! Therefore, it is self-evident that the Greek forms of God's names and titles are perfectly all right for us to use, and translations of those forms and names into other languages, including English.

NTGreek.org

In the realm of scholarly invention, there exists a minority report that the New Testament documents were written first in Hebrew then later translated into Greek. You might ask why this is an important question to ask at the outset. It is quite important due to certain accusations that “unstable people” twist in order to discredit the New Testament documents and certain theological ideologies surrounding key Christian doctrines concerning Christ and God. Their intent is to parade their own agenda in attempting to reinterpret the New Testament in light of Hebrew idioms and syntax, rather than the Greek language. This holds

huge complications for the Greek language because, simply stated, Greek is not Hebrew, and Greeks did not think like Hebrews. Within this debate, then, the very character of God is placed on the line. Not only this, but the wisdom of God is called into question. God used Greek to transmit the message of the Gospel, and those who oppose this are calling into question the wisdom and providence of God as to the use of His means for the end of the salvation of souls.

The arguments surrounding this theological reformulation raise questions as to whether the Apostles really thought Jesus was God, or that the Trinity is an Old Testament reality as well as a New Testament one. If the New Testament Scriptures were written in Hebrew, and then at a later time scribes copied the New Testament into Greek, then, according to these people, words and phrases used in Greek do not match the Hebrew ideas and were “glossed” in order to make sense. A gloss is an addition, correction, or replacement made by a scribe when translating or copying the New Testament documents. This would allow for a

reinterpretation of the text, and the inerrant and infallible nature of the text would be called into serious question. For instance, they say that no Jew would understand God as coming in the flesh because the idea of the “Trinity” is not a Jewish concept at all, and the Old Testament Jew would never have thought of God in this manner. So New Testament scribes reinterpreted the New Testament documents in a manner that is really not true to the Biblical data. This leaves room for doubt as to whether the Messiah would really be God. It leaves doubt as to whether the Trinity is really a Jewish idea or a “gloss.” These are serious implications indeed.

Do we have any reason to say the New Testament documents were written in Hebrew? A simple answer to this statement is “no.” All of the current archeological evidence, MSS (manuscript) data, and social background of the New Testament era prove otherwise. As a matter of fact, prior to the New Testament era of Christ and the Apostles, there was already a massive undertaking to Hellenize the Jewish culture due to Roman influence. This would already have

existed at the time of Christ and the Apostles; a time that Paul calls, “fullness of the time” (Galatians 4:4). This “fullness” demonstrates historically that God’s plan to bring forth the Christ (a Greek term meaning the “anointed” of God) was positioned in the midst of a Hellenized Jewish Palestinian setting which sat within the boundaries of a Roman culture which was predominately Greek speaking.

Dr. C. Matthew McMahan

While all the extant manuscripts of the First Gospel are in Greek, some suggest that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Aramaic, similar to Hebrew. Five individuals stated, in effect, that Matthew wrote in Aramaic and that translations followed in Greek: Papias (A.D. 80-155), Irenaeus (A.D. 130-202), Origen (A.D. 185-254), Eusebius (fourth century A.D.), and Jerome (sixth century A.D.). However, they may have been referring to a writing by Matthew other than his Gospel account. Papias, for example, said Matthew compiled the sayings (logia) of Jesus. Those “sayings” might have been a second, shorter account of the Lord’s words, written in Aramaic and sent to a group of Jews for

*whom it would have been most meaningful. That writing was later lost, for no such version exists today. The First Gospel, however, was probably penned by Matthew in Greek and has survived until today. Matthew's logia did not survive, but his Gospel did. This was because the latter, part of the biblical canon and thus God's Word, was inspired and preserved by the Spirit of God. **The Bible Knowledge Commentary**, Walvoord, J. F.*

I disagree that the New Testament was first written in Hebrew and then later translated into Greek. Instead, I think it was written in Greek by people who thought 'Jewishly.' More importantly, the authors of the New Testament thought multi-lingually. People who speak a variety of languages also manage to think in a variety of languages. When they do speak, however, they regularly import into that language something that comes from another. It is never a question of 'if,' but only of, 'how much.'

Dr. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg

They teach that the understanding of the New Testament can only come from a Hebrew perspective and that the teachings of the Apostle Paul are not understood clearly or taught correctly by Christian pastors today. Many affirm the existence of an original Hebrew-language New Testament and, in some cases, denigrate the existing New Testament text written in Greek. This becomes a subtle attack on the reliability of the text of our Bible. If the Greek text is unreliable and has been corrupted, as is charged by some, the Church no longer has a standard of truth. [GotQuestions](#)

Paul's Writings?

Some HRM churches teach that there are problems with the letters of Paul. Some HRM teachers believe the problem is with the way Christians misinterpret Paul's writings. Others believe the problem is with Paul himself.

There is an almost total ignoring by the Hebrew Roots Movement teachers of two-thirds of the New Testament, namely the Epistles of Paul (as well as the other Epistles). There is some tipping of the hat to selective pieces of Romans that in their view speak of Abraham and also of being grafted into Judaism, or Jewish Roots. It is clear that being grafted into Israel has to do with Abrahamic and Messianic blessings—not cloning or trying to act like Jews. These spiritual privileges are real spiritual and eternal blessings. They do not mean dressing up and pretending to be of some other nationality or religion.

Ignoring the Epistles is one way to avoid a deluge of material about New Testament church life, church structure, church officers, church practices, and beliefs. It's no wonder that those in Hebrew Roots have a truncated and skewed message. I say this with sadness. [The Berean Call](#)

The theory that the apostle Paul was a false prophet and not a true follower of Christ is usually put forth by those of the Hebrew roots movement persuasion, among others. They believe Christians should submit to the Old Testament Law, but Paul clearly disagrees with them, proclaiming that Christians are no longer under the Mosaic Law (Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:23-25; Ephesians 2:15), but the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:2), which is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...and to love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39). Rather than submitting to God’s Word, the Hebrew roots movement simply dismisses Paul altogether and claims that Paul was a false apostle and that his writings should not be in the Bible.

But Paul's apostolic authority has been well documented in Scripture, beginning with his dramatic Damascus Road experience which changed him from a Christ-hating persecutor of Christians to the foremost spokesman for the faith. His astonishing change of heart is one of the clearest indications of his anointing by the Lord Jesus Himself. Was the Apostle Paul actually a false prophet?

Shabbat (Shabbath)

We turn now to the HRM belief that believers should keep the seventh-day Sabbath and annual Hebrew feasts. Let's begin with some background on the weekly event – the Sabbath.

The Hebrew word *šabbāṭ* (שַׁבָּת) is first used in Scripture in Exodus 6:23:

Then he said to them, 'This is what the Lord has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'

Sabbath rest is *šabbāṭōwn*. It means “to cease, desist, rest.” God gave the weekly event to the children of Israel to rest from their work and to identify with *Yahweh* in what He accomplished for them.

For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. Exodus 20:11

This Sabbath rest was required of Jews week after week, month after month, year after year, century after century. Most Christians believe that requirement was lifted after Jesus rose from the dead, but Hebrew Roots Movement followers have a different view. We'll hear from HRM first.

HRM on Keeping the Sabbath

*There is historically and biblically no such thing as a 'Sunday' Sabbath. Saturday is the 7th day of the week, while Sunday is the 1st day of every week. Sunday was designated as the 'Lord's Day' circa A.D. 350 by the Roman Church at the Synod of Laodicea; and at the same time, Sabbath for gentile Christians was officially abolished by the Roman Church leadership. There is only one biblical weekly Sabbath: the 7th day, Saturday (Friday sundown to Saturday sundown as reckoned by the Hebrew day). It is a day of rest (ceasing). Sabbath was originally ordained at Creation, and it remains a holy day for all mankind to observe. **Torah Class Beliefs***

In the second century of the common era, the Church at Rome became the vehicle which the adversary, HaSatan, used to eventually get the vast majority of Christians to abandon Shabbat observance for Sunday worship. Their primary reasons for wanting to separate from Judaism were twofold:

Many of the Gentile Believers did not want to come under the authority of the Torah — especially when some of the Jews were telling them that Torah observance included the Oral Traditions of the Jews as well as the Written Torah. They wanted to avoid the Roman persecution of the Jews.

In order to find a theological reason for going to Sunday worship, the Church theologians came up with a variety of reasons:

Dr. Bacchiocchi sums up the Shabbat to Sunday controversy this way:

‘Our study has shown that the adoption of Sunday observance in place of the Sabbath did not occur in the primitive Church of Jerusalem by virtue of the authority of Christ or of the Apostles, but rather took place several decades later, seemingly in the Church of Rome, solicited by external circumstances. Even those Biblical testimonia which were drawn from the Old Testament (references to the numbers eight and one) to

*prove the legitimacy and superiority of Sunday over the Sabbath were mostly based on unwarranted criteria of Biblical hermeneutic, and consequently they were in time abandoned. This means, to put it bluntly, that Sunday observance does not rest on a foundation of Biblical theology and/or of apostolic authority, but on later contributory factors ...' (p. 309) **Origins of Sunday Worship***

*What evidence do we have that 'Christians' observed Sunday as the Sabbath in the New Testament? Nowhere, I mean nowhere, is there any evidence of Sunday being observed as the Sabbath, or the sanctioned day of worship in the 1st century. On the contrary, the book of Acts has the followers of Y'shua meeting, worshipping, and hearing the word of God on the seventh day (Acts 13:14, 27, 42, 44, 15:21, 16:13, 17:2, 18:4). Today, we all must choose whether to follow Paul as he followed the Messiah (1 Corinthians 11:1) or to follow the teachings of the early church fathers. **The Sabbath Day***

It is a fact that the early Christian Churches continued to meet on the Sabbath. Commenting on variations regarding religious assemblies within the Christian Church, Socrates Scholasticus writes, 'For although almost all Churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries [the Eucharist] on the sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this.' This 'ancient tradition' spoken of by Socrates was initiated in the early second century in Rome and Alexandria, the first Christian assemblies to break the tradition of meeting on the Sabbath. To understand their reasoning we must examine the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr and the letter of Barnabas, all writings of the first half of the second century. Ignatius (approximately 98-117 CE) warned about, 'the Judaizing tendencies of his territory, which...had suffered the influences of the synagogue and of the Judaeo-Christians [Messianic Jewish believers].' Furthermore, Ignatius writes, 'For if we are still practicing Judaism, we admit that we have not received God's favor.' Ignatius goes on to upbraid Christians specifically for

partaking in the Sabbath, 'after the Jewish manner,' exhorting them to, 'keep the Sabbath in a spiritual manner . . . not in the relaxation of the body . . . and not eating things prepared the day before . . .' The fact that Ignatius felt the necessity to write these admonitions demonstrates that the early Christians were predisposed to the Jewish Sabbath practice. Furthermore, it is one of the first extra-Biblical instances of an emerging conflict concerning issues of Torah obedience among Gentiles. Lastly, it shows a developing antagonism to things considered 'Jewish.'

The Earliest Divisions Within the Christian Church

On God's calendar, a biblical day begins at sundown. The Sabbath begins at Friday night sundown (called Erev Shabbat) and the Sabbath ends on Saturday night at sundown. The Sabbath foreshadows the Messianic Era. The Sabbath represents a Bride. Yeshua is LORD of the Sabbath. The Sabbath teaches us how to rest in Yeshua and believe His promises. Many times, when a Sunday Christian begins to return to and cross over into the Hebrew

roots of the Christian faith, one of the first steps they take is to begin observing the Sabbath. [The Biblical Sabbath](#)

Shabbat is a mark or sign between YeHoVaH and His people, making a distinction between the other peoples or nations of the world, so that we could be separated (Kadosh). In this same way, He sets aside one day of the week to rest and find delight and joy in the rest of that communion with Him.

Shabbat is one of the few commandments that has an explanation of why it is given or why it is necessary to fulfill them. In fact, believers who have the faith that YeHoVaH is the Creator of the world, that He is our Father and that everything He tells us is good, should not need to know the reason to obey His precepts. [A Rood Awakening](#)

*Most people in the Hebrew Roots Movement keep the Sabbath. The fourth commandment is clear and there are numerous other places throughout the bible that make it obvious that God finds observation of the Sabbath something all His people should do. Keeping the Sabbath means in part not working on that day. We are to refrain from our vocation as well as other work. **Hebrew Roots Mom***

Sabbath-Keeping Critique

The Hebrew Roots Movement is not the only religious group that keeps the seventh-day Sabbath. God gave the Sabbath to Israel, so Jews continue to keep the Sabbath. Other Sabbath-Day keepers include Seventh-Day Adventists, Davidian Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-Day Baptists, Church of God Seventh-Day, True Jesus Church, Sabbath Rest Advent Church, Adventist Church of Promise, Logos Apostolic Church of God, along with many others.

We looked in the last chapter at how the Hebrew Roots Movement supported their belief in keeping the Sabbath. We turn now to those who disagree with HRM.

Although they often speak of keeping the “law,” they are usually inconsistent in how this is understood and defined. For example, certain laws are either broken or neglected while a great deal of attention is placed on keeping the Sabbath (Friday sunset through Saturday sunset) and

*celebrating the feasts mentioned in Leviticus 23. **Dangers of the Hebrew Roots Movement***

*As opposed to what the Hebrew Roots movement claims, the New Testament teachings of the Apostle Paul are perfectly clear and self-explanatory. Colossians 2:16,17 says, “Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day – things which are a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.” Romans 14:5 states, “One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.” Scripture clearly indicates that these issues are a matter of personal choice. These verses and many others give clear evidence that the Mosaic Covenant laws and ordinances have ended. Continuing to teach that the Old Covenant is still in effect in spite of what the New Testament teaches, or twisting the New Testament to agree with the Hebrew Roots beliefs, is false teaching. **GotQuestions***

All Torahists—even those who profess salvation comes through Christ alone—teach that not keeping Torah is sinful. They believe that keeping the law of Moses is not optional. They may claim it's not necessary for salvation, but their teachings seem to say otherwise. They view disobedience of the Law of Moses (such as not observing Saturday Sabbath, or kosher food laws, or the annual feasts) as living in sin and lawlessness ... Torahism causes division in the body of Christ. I've seen it damage marriages, friendships, families, and even churches. It happens in two ways. First, Torah-observant Christians often make matters of keeping the Law of Moses a test of fellowship. As I mentioned, they view these Mosaic traditions as required of Christians, not optional. Therefore, they look down on Christians who don't keep the Saturday Sabbath or the kosher food laws or celebrate Easter or Christmas. Those Christians are often reprimanded as lawless sinners. (I'm not exaggerating. If you've got a Hebrew Roots person in your life, you know what I'm talking about.) ***The Dangers of the Hebrew Roots Movement***

The movement's central belief is that the Torah is still binding—that Yahweh, or Hashem, did not intend for Yeshua's appearance to render irrelevant the lessons of the Tanakh, whose rules and instructions remain valid. But notice what Paul wrote to the Colossians: Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. Colossians 2:16-17 NASB ...

The second group of words that Paul uses is rendered: "...
or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day.*"*

Representing, respectively, annual, monthly, and weekly celebrations that were tied in with the Mosaic Law. This phrase is indicative of all the appointed festivals of Israel (see Leviticus 23) and is used as such in at least three different places in the Tanakh.

Feast observance is a hallmark of the “Hebrew Roots Movement,” which keeps one foot in the Old Covenant while claiming to fully embrace the New Covenant.

In Galatians 4 Paul says to the fellowships of Galatia:

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. Galatians 4:9-10 NASB

So, obviously the observance of “days and months and season” was bondage. Paul did not want them to enter that bondage, but the HRM does.

Sabbath day—those of the HRM worship on Saturday, which in itself is not wrong. You can worship any and every day, but their Saturday worship is from the Torah and is bringing them under the Law.

Menachem Kaiser writes, “I met a number of Hebrew Roots followers who do not touch money on the Sabbath—which many of them call “Shabbos,” (shav-os) in the style of contemporary ultra-Orthodox Jews.” This is bondage!

*The Sabbath was a **type**, one of the shadows of things to come. It was a type or shadow of a body or substance which we obtain in Christ. The main idea of the Sabbath was physical rest. That physical rest, therefore, must have been typical of some higher rest to be found by the Christian. The strict observance of the Sabbath, which Yahweh required of the Israelites, like the requirement of strict adherence to the divine pattern for the tabernacle, was because it was to typify a perfect spiritual rest of the Christian.*

*Centuries before Moses, the patriarch Jacob predicted Christ’s coming under the name “Shiloh,” or Rest-giver (Genesis 49:10). Yeshua Himself said: **Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28 NASB***

He is the rest-giver, and the rest He gives from the burden and bondage of sin is the Christian's Sabbath foreshadowed by that ancient Mosaic Sabbath. It was predicted that "His rest shall be glorious," and it truly is. That this is the true Sabbath-keeping is argued by the inspired writer to the Hebrews (4:3-11). He who ceases from his own works to obtain righteousness and trusts in the mercy of God for pardon of sin has entered the true Sabbath. The Sabbath, like the other ceremonial requirements of the law of Moses, is abolished, but the blessed spiritual-rest it prefigured remains for the people of God.

The root for "Sabbaths" means: "to cease, desist." The word came to mean a complete cessation. The idea is not relaxation or refreshment, but cessation from activity. For six days Yahweh created, and on the seventh he rested. The seventh day is a commemoration of grace—Yahweh did the doing. We rest in that.

Now notice, carefully, what Paul says about these Old Covenant regulations:

things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. Colossians 2:17

NASB

[Berean Bible Church](#)

Old Testament law commanded people of God to refrain from all work from Friday night at sunset until Saturday night at sunset and observe a Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11). Sabbath means “to stop” or “cease” and was rooted in God’s rest following the six days of creation, when God declared the day “blessed” and “holy” (Genesis 2:1-3). The people were expected to recognize the Sabbath as a “sign” to God’s people and the world of the covenant God had with them (Exodus 31:14-17).

Under the New Covenant, Jesus is our Sabbath. All the various “rests” legislated in the Mosaic Law under the Old Covenant—the weekly Sabbath rest, the annual festival

*rests, resting the land and the freedom rest of the Jubilee Year—pointed to the ultimate rest we now have in Christ. To “legislate” modern rules for keeping Sunday as the new Christian Sabbath is both theologically unnecessary (Colossians 2:16-17) and ignores the Apostle Paul’s vehement opposition to those who would impose various Jewish laws, including Sabbath keeping, on Gentile Christians (Romans 14:5; Galatians 4:10). **Right or Wrong?***

Keeping the Sabbath

The bottom line is this: observance of the Sabbath is not a requirement of Christianity. Keeping the Sabbath, along with all the other sacrificial laws, are not necessary for those who live under the New Covenant. We don’t keep the Sabbath for the same reason that we don’t sacrifice lambs for the remission of sin. We enter God’s rest when we put our faith in the person and work of Christ. The entire Law of Moses (which includes the Ten Commandments), is obsolete because Jesus Christ fulfills the Law of Moses. Jesus institutes the New Covenant. Jesus death on the

cross is fully sufficient for our salvation and our sanctification.

There are two very good reasons to understand this truth (and for this blog post to be shared with our church body).

The first reason is that teaching observance of the Sabbath law diminishes the completed work of Jesus Christ. There is no greater truth which we may place our faith than the truth that Christ's work on the cross is completely sufficient. Our Savior is our Sabbath rest. Our Savior makes us holy. Observance of a day, or any aspect of the Law, will not gain us the righteousness we so sorely need. We embrace Christ alone through faith alone.

The second reason we need to understand this truth is that we are not to bind another person's conscience with commands that are not applicable to the Christian life. There are two commands we may find joy in observing so our Savior gets the glory. Let's keep our eyes on our pursuit

*of loving God and loving our neighbor. Should Christians
Keep the Sabbath?*

We looked at the HRM belief of keeping the Sabbath Day in the last two parts of our series. We turn now to the keeping of the annual Hebrew feasts. We will hear from HRM adherents in this part, and critics in the next part.

The Annual Feasts

Gentiles have been (and are still being) accepted into the Commonwealth of Israel through Messiah Y'shua. Therefore, it is incumbent upon those same Gentiles to follow the laws of that Commonwealth, i.e., the Written Torah. Not only are Gentiles now part of the Commonwealth of Israel, they have actually been grafted into the very Olive Tree of Israel and are now partakers of the richness which comes from the root of that Olive Tree. That richness includes the Written Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings; in other words, the Hebrew Scriptures.

Leviticus chapter 23 is the Festival Chapter of the Bible. Here is found, laid out in chronological order, all of the Festivals which God commanded the children of Israel to observe: “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “The feasts [moed] of the LORD, which you shall proclaim [kara] to be holy [kodesh] convocations [mikra], these are My feasts [moed].” ’” (Lev. 23:1-2) The very first thing that must be noticed about this passage is that these Feasts are not the “Feasts of Israel,” or the “Feasts of the Jews;” they are the Feasts of the Creator God who made the heavens and the earth: “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.” (Jer. 32:17) In order to be abundantly clear, God repeated Himself in verse four when He again stated these Festivals belong to Him: “These are the feasts [moed] of the LORD, holy [kodesh] convocations [mikra] which you shall proclaim [kara] at their appointed times [moed].” (Lev. 23:4)

The Festivals consist of seven Holydays, five of which occur within three pilgrimage Seasons. In addition there are intermediate days within the two seven day Festival Seasons which are not termed “Holydays.” The three seasons are explicitly mentioned in Exodus ... The seven Holydays are set-apart from normal work days, just as the Weekly Sabbath is set-apart from the other six days of the week.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FEASTS OF THE LORD [YHVH], HEBREW ROOTS PRESS

The Biblical festivals teach us about the first and second coming of Yeshua. The festivals also teach us about our personal relationship with Yeshua and how we progressively grow in faith in Him. These teachings will reveal Yeshua in the Festivals and the spiritual applications today for believers in Yeshua.

BIBLICAL FESTIVALS, HEBRAIC HERITAGE RADIO

Gnostic doctrine taught AGAINST the feast days and Sabbaths because of matters of food and drink. Gnostics taught that everything physical was evil, and thus feasting was evil, and they even believed that God (of the Old Testament) is evil. The Gnostics were teaching this to the Colossians and convincing them that they should abandon the Feast days and Sabbaths.

Paul encourages them (the Colossians) to keep the Feast Days and Sabbaths and not let themselves be judged by the Gnostics telling them otherwise. Sadly, mainstream Christianity has flipped around what Paul was teaching, as though Paul was telling the Colossians to abandon the Law of God. In other words, in mainstream Christianity's eyes, Paul would be agreeing with the Gnostics in that verse, but yet still be against them in every other verse in Col. 1-2. Obviously that does not make much sense. In addition, we know that Paul defended himself against every accusation against not teaching what Moses wrote. This of course would include teaching that not one commandment can be added to or taken away from what Moses wrote (Deut. 12:31) and that the whole law is even for the foreigner/alien (Gentile) grafted in

(i.e. Numbers 15;15-16). Yet, mainstream also accuses Paul of not teaching what Moses wrote. Paul is STILL having to defend himself. Mainstream Christianity creates the contradictions in Paul's writings. Hebrew Roots doctrine reconciles and solves them.

119 MINISTRIES

As a Christian seeks to enrich their faith by incorporating biblical Holy Days into their family traditions, the amount of information on these days and how to celebrate them can be overwhelming and confusing. I'd like to offer just a basic overview of the 7 "appointed times" commanded by God to be kept by His people in Leviticus 23 (and elsewhere).

*Chapter 23 opens with a repeat of the command to keep the Sabbath. **The Sabbath** is sometimes called the most holy of days so it would be a good place to start if you don't already keep it. It continues on to list and explain the 7 Holy Days: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Shavuot, Yom Teruah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot.*

BASICS OF THE BIBLICAL HOLY DAYS

Sacrifice is the major feature of the feasts. Believers in Mashiach are not responsible to keep these feasts, but knowledge of them enhances our faith.

THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS

The Lord's Holy Days, Feast Days, Jewish Feasts, Appointed Times, Mo'edim — whatever term you use, don't miss these days! If you are seeking more intimacy in your walk with Yeshua, learning about, experiencing and keeping these feasts (including the Sabbath) will bring you not only into deeper intimacy with him, but Yehovah will shower you with new understanding, unexpected blessings, strengthened faith and fresh excitement daily. I highly recommend it!

MESSIANIC SABBATH

In addition, to keep the Festivals and Feasts as rehearsals and proclamations of the coming fulfillment of each promise made in His Eternal Covenant. All of the Lord's appointed times call for a 'Holy Convocation' to gather and worship Him, and we do this, not in forced servitude, but in the Joy of Holy Spirit! His Heavenly timing inserts His remnant bride into a prophetic time-line that both blesses and protects; helping to ensure that she finds herself doing the 'right thing' (service), at the 'right time,' in the right place. [Acts 17: 26-27]

STATEMENT OF FAITH, ACTS II MINISTRIES

One of the most important commandments we find in the Word involves worship, especially the weekly Sabbath and annual Feasts. The Feasts are an everlasting commandment in Yahweh's Word. They were observed in the Old and New testaments and will be observed in the coming millennial Kingdom. If these days are new to you, we encourage you to look into them and come to a greater and deeper knowledge of your Father's Word. YAHWEH'S RESTORATION MINISTRY

We will hear from HRM critics in this part.

Annual Feast Days

Although they often speak of keeping the “law,” they are usually inconsistent in how this is understood and defined. For example, certain laws are either broken or neglected while a great deal of attention is placed on keeping the Sabbath (Friday sunset through Saturday sunset) and celebrating the feasts mentioned in Leviticus 23. These issues will be discussed in more detail below.

A very common teaching in the HRM is that faithful believers must only celebrate the holidays that were part of the Mosaic Covenant. Those who demand that others participate in these festivals and abstain from any other celebration or face God’s condemnation are teaching contrary to Scripture. Leviticus 23 describes the proper protocol for celebrating the following feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Weeks (Pentecost), Trumpets, Tabernacles, and Day of Atonement.

First, as discussed above, Christians have the freedom to esteem any day higher than any other or to not hold one day in honor above another (Romans 14:5). While this particular verse might have been written to specifically address the issue of the Sabbath, it can still be applied to any holiday, and Paul taught the same type of freedom applied to the festivals (Colossians 2:16). Neither did the apostles at the Jerusalem Council instruct the Gentile believers to celebrate the Levitical feasts.

The HRM certainly cannot condemn those who celebrate Hanukkah for a couple of reasons. Their followers highly esteem Jewish practices, and Hanukkah is a very important Jewish celebration. But the greatest argument against the “Leviticus 23 only” position is that Jesus almost certainly celebrated Hanukkah, “the Feast of Dedication” in the “winter” mentioned in John 10:22. If he was not in Jerusalem to celebrate the holiday, then what was he there for? And if it were wrong to celebrate it, why did he not take the opportunity to set people straight during the “Feast of Dedication”? So if Jesus did not violate the law by celebrating a holiday not found in Leviticus 23, then why would it be wrong for

*Christians to celebrate a holiday not listed in that chapter? It should be mentioned that many HRM followers also celebrate Purim, another Jewish holiday that started long after Moses (Esther 9:26–28). **Answers in Genesis***

Although there are many different and diverse Hebrew Roots assemblies with variations in their teachings, they all adhere to a common emphasis on recovering the “original” Jewishness of Christianity. Their assumption is that the Church has lost its Jewish roots and is unaware that Jesus and His disciples were Jews living in obedience to the Torah. For the most part, those involved advocate the need for every believer to walk a Torah-observant life. This means that the ordinances of the Mosaic Covenant must be a central focus in the lifestyle of believers today as it was with the Old Testament Jews of Israel. Keeping the Torah includes keeping the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week (Saturday), celebrating the Jewish feasts and festivals, keeping the dietary laws, avoiding the “paganism” of Christianity (Christmas, Easter, etc.), and learning to understand the Scriptures from a Hebrew mindset. They teach that Gentile Christians have been grafted into Israel, and this is one

reason every born-again believer in Jesus the Messiah is to participate in these observances. It is expressed that doing this is not required out of legalistic bondage, but out of a heart of love and obedience. However, they teach that to live a life that pleases God, this Torah-observant walk must be part of that life.

There are aspects of the Hebrew Roots teachings that certainly can be beneficial. Seeking to explore the Jewish culture and perspective, within which most of the Bible was written, opens and enriches our understanding of the Scriptures, adding insight and depth to many of the passages, parables and idioms. There is nothing wrong with Gentiles and Jews joining together in celebrating the feasts and enjoying a Messianic style of worship. Taking part in these events and learning the way in which the Jews understood the teachings of our Lord can be a tool, giving us greater effectiveness in reaching the unbelieving Jew with the gospel. It is good for Gentiles, in the body of the Messiah, to identify in our fellowship with Israel. However, to identify with Israel is different from identifying “as” Israel. [Got Questions](#)

The roots of Christianity grow deep in Jewish culture, and it is highly recommended that all Christians learn about the Jewish feast days, holy days and other customs. They will only deepen our appreciation and understanding of our common ancestry that we have, Gentiles together with Jews. But to suggest that any Gentile believer who follows Jesus must be placed under Old Testament law is nothing but bondage, and it's a bondage that the Bible speaks against not only in the verses quoted here, but in many other places as well. Regarding the freedom we have in Christ, let me leave you with this verse from the Master himself:

*“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” John 8:36. **Christian Observer***

*We need to recognize that since the cross we are NOT required to keep ANY of the feasts, customs, or the Mosaic or Levitical law. Jesus paid it ALL for us! That is not to say it's in any way wrong to observe the feasts, should we so desire to (see: Colossians 2:16-17 and Hebrews 10:1). But by no means must we! **Rapture Ready***

All Torahists—even those who profess salvation through Christ alone—teach that not keeping Torah is sinful. They view disobedience of the Law of Moses (such as not observing Saturday Sabbath, kosher food laws, annual feasts, circumcision, etc.) as living in sin and lawlessness. So despite the claim that keeping the Mosaic Law is not a requirement for salvation, Torahism considers it a confirming sign of a truly-saved, obedient Christian.

*It's important to note that the feasts given in Leviticus 23 were given to Israel as a nation. They were not given to the Gentiles. The Egyptians were never expected to keep Sukkot. The Babylonians were not required to observe Pesach. The Assyrians were not commanded to celebrate Yom Kippur. And no Gentile nation was ever expected to keep Shabbat. Unlike the moral commandments about murder, adultery, child sacrifice, greed, and so on, the Gentile nations were never judged for not keeping the feasts or Shabbat. **R. L. Solbert***

With regard to Galatians 4:8-11, that great Reformer Martin Luther had this to say:

“The Apostle Paul knew what the false apostles were teaching the Galatians. The observance of days, and months, and times, and years. The Jews had been obliged to keep holy the Sabbath Day, the new moons, the feast of the Passover, the feast of Tabernacles and other feasts. The false apostles constrained the Galatians to observe these Jewish feasts under the threat of damnation. Paul hastens to tell the Galatians that they were exchanging their Christian liberty for the weak and beggarly elements of the world.”- Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians

The entire book of Galatians can best be understood as a polemic against the idea that Christians must observe the Mosaic Law in order to be truly saved, or truly disciples of Christ.

The early Christians had to deal with the issue of what became known as “Judaizing” several times. They remained absolutely faithful to the teachings of Paul and the decision of the Jerusalem Council in their denouncing Judaizers. For example, Ignatius of Antioch wrote:

“Let us learn to live according to the principles of Christianity. For whosoever is called by any other name besides this is not of God. Lay aside, therefore, the evil, the old, the sour leaven, and be changed into the new leaven, which is Jesus Christ...It is absurd to profess Christ Jesus, and to Judaize.”- Ignatius of Antioch

“...if we still live according to the Jewish law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace.”-Ignatius of Antioch

“There are many in our ranks who say they think as we do. Yet some of these are going to watch the festivals and others will join the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts. I wish to drive this perverse custom from the Church right now.”- John Chrysostom

*So can a Christian observe the Holy Days of Israel? There seems to be no mandate to do so. In fact, the mandate of Scripture seems to be that we avoid doing so, since to observe the things of the Mosaic Law is an implicit denial of the grace we have received through Jesus Christ. Rather, the tradition of the church has been to observe certain days of significance to the life of Christ and that serve as reminders of that grace. We can certainly learn from the Holy Days of Israel, since they were prophetic of the life and work of Christ, and of His future coming kingdom, but to observe them as if they are mandatory is a denial of the grace of Christ. Don't be misled by the Hebrew Roots error. **Paleo Orthodoxy***

True Christians are very vulnerable because of their God-given love for the Jewish people and Israel. We long to be one with them. We love the rich heritage of God's chosen people in the natural and we love Israel and Jerusalem, the City God chose as his own. God will restore Israel, but God will not restore the old Judaic Religious System, because Christ came to fulfill what that system could never do. The Laws, ordinances, feasts and festivals all pointed to Christ, but they were only a shadow of the true. The Lamb who was

slain from the foundation of the world brought to man in completion what was only a promise to those who lived under the Old Covenant.

*I don't believe we should be observing the feasts or the Sabbath or any of the Jewish holy days, because Paul warned us that, **“After that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?”** He clarifies exactly what he means by his next words: **“Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid [for] you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain”** (Gal. 4:10-11).*

If we in any way try to keep the Law of Moses or keep all of these OT ordinances, Christ has become no effect to us, because whether you realize it or not you're striving to be justified by the Law. Paul says those that do this have fallen from grace. (Gal. 5:4).

Galatians 5:18 “If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the Law.”

Titus 1:14 says not to give heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men, for those that do have turned from the truth.

I believe the Hebrew Roots organizations have become the modern equivalent of the Judaisers who followed the Apostle Paul from city to city, spying on the NT believers' liberty in Christ and striving to pervert the Gospel and cause confusion among the Early Christians. When these Judaisers sought to draw the Christians of the Galatian church back under the Judaic Religious System, Paul warned the Galatian church to not give credence to their arguments for they were perverting the Gospel of Christ.

Instead of Christ alone, the HRM and Messianic Jewish Movement over-balance into the religion that they have never really left! They cannot grasp that ALL is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only that, but they want the Christians to embrace the O.T. Jewish religious beliefs, ordinances, and traditions that were necessary under the Law as well!

Christian Observer

*So if we want to be like Jesus, does that mean that we must become observant Jews, as some allege? Is that what being like Jesus really means? Should Gentile believers try to be Messianic Jews? Can they? Should Gentiles don a yarmulke, worship in a synagogue, blow a shofar, wear a prayer shawl, call Jesus Yeshua or Yeshu, keep the Old Testament feasts and dietary laws, and give their pastors the title of Rabbi, even though **Matthew:23:8** says otherwise? Are Jewish ceremonies and practices efficacious?*

*Is it the Passover or the Lord's Supper? Paul reminded the Corinthians what the Passover stood for and what was really central: "For indeed Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us" (**1 Corinthians:5:7**). It's clear that all the Old Testament ceremonies, symbols, and feasts were types and shadows pointing to Jesus (**Colossians:2:16-23, Hebrews:10:1-10**).*

The Berean Call

HRM Beliefs about Christmas and Easter

Many in the Hebrew Roots Movement have given up the main Christian holidays, Christmas and Easter, due to the pagan origin and customs included in them. But there are others that still celebrate, under the context of them being holidays of their culture or family. All Hebrew Roots Christians observe the Biblical Holy Days to some degree, even if they disagree on whether we're under the command to do so. We all agree that there are benefits to observing these days, whether spiritual or educational.

Understanding Different Beliefs Among Hebrew Roots Christians

*We understand and agree with the desire to celebrate Christ's birth and resurrection, yet Christmas and Easter are undeniably manmade celebrations that began as borrowed pagan celebrations and over time have been further co-opted by the secular world. For these reasons, we have chosen different occasions to celebrate the Believer's intent of Christmas and Easter. Therefore, while there is no God-ordained biblical feast after which we can model a celebration of Jesus' birth, there is a series of 3 God-ordained biblical festivals that precisely speak of His death, burial, and resurrection: the Biblical Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. We celebrate those feasts in lieu of Easter. **Our Beliefs***

Not only can Christmas customs be described as "a descent from seasonal, pagan" practices, they relate specifically to the most famous of the ancient Roman pagan festivals, one that was tied to December 25. Saturnalia was observed during Roman times (at least as far back as several centuries b.c.e.—the exact origin is unknown). It was a festival of feasting, music,

general merry-making, role reversals, and even hedonism and gladiator combat, in honor of the Roman god Saturn. Gift-giving was one of the most important elements of this festival, and children were bestowed with toys. Saturnalia celebrants would wear a “pileus”—a brimless, conical felt hat. Evergreen wreaths decorated homes, and Roman temples were decorated with evergreen trees. It was a festival of “lights,” with the lighting of candles and various objects. Short messages containing poetry and verse were gifted alongside presents (seen to be an early equivalent to our modern greeting cards). Round decorations, known as “oscilla,” were hung from trees, doors and other objects. (As for the “role reversals” in Saturnalia—men dressing as women, servants as masters, etc.—these same practices are a traditional part of Christmas’s “Twelfth Night” celebrations.)

Christmas Trees

Constantine used religion as a political tool, and started to introduce the Babylonian mystery religions in 313 A.D. which then established a foothold with the holding of the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. In 375 A.D., the Church of Rome under Pope Julius I merely announced that the birth date of Christ had been “discovered” to be December 25th, and was accepted as such by the “faithful.” The festival of Saturnalia and the birthday of Mithras could now be celebrated as the birthday of Christ, even though the early church fathers, including Origen, stated for the record that it was blasphemous to celebrate this festival. Following the lead of Rome, the Church at Jerusalem commenced the celebration of Christmas, around 440 A.D. As Messianic believers we should seek G-d’s will in all we do. Adonai commanded that we abstain from idols, this includes practicing pagan traditions and calling them “Christian”. Both Christmas and Easter are pagan celebrations and are not the actual days they propose to celebrate. We celebrate the actual days of the birth (Sukkot) and resurrection of Yeshua

*(First Fruits), which were already G-d ordained Feasts of Israel. **What About Christmas?***

It's with great encouragement as I see many believers in these days starting to question the holiday of Easter. Many are starting to rename the observance to "Passion week", "resurrection day" or even "First Fruits Service". They are doing this because a majority of the memberships of these churches are starting to ask questions about the traditions and practices concerning Easter. Some uncomfortable questions are being posed to pastors and church leaders and they are having to admit that Easter is rooted in pagan spring rituals and ceremonies that are proven to date back thousands of years. It's with great encouragement as I see many believers in these days starting to question the holiday of Easter. Many are starting to rename the observance to "Passion week", "resurrection day" or even "First Fruits Service". They are doing this because a majority of the memberships of these churches are starting to ask questions about the traditions and practices concerning Easter. Some

uncomfortable questions are being poised to pastors and church leaders and they are having to admit that Easter is rooted in pagan spring rituals and ceremonies that are proven to date back thousands of years. [The Hidden Pagan Roots Of Easter](#)

'Easter' is one of the names of the pagan goddess, who Ha-Satan used to deceive the world and whose religion has caused suffering and misery. Semiramis was clearly a false goddess, and her son Tammuz was an anti-Messiah, a false messiah (Christ) that has deceived millions. It is not difficult to discern the deception that Ha-Satan (the adversary) has successfully brought into the Church. The seductive symbols of pagan religion has been incorporated into people's lives, even to this day – continuing to obscure the truth of G-d. From the passages in Jeremiah & Ezekiel, we can see the G-d does not approve of the mixing of True worship of G-d (YHVH) and false, pagan, gods. [Pagan Origins of Easter](#)

MODERN EASTER MIMICS ANCIENT EVIL PRACTICES IN HONOR OF THE GODDESS ISHTAR: Our Easter celebrations coincide with the timing of annual pagan celebrations in honor of the Goddess Ishtar, not the resurrection of Christ. This is a pagan religious practice started by Queen Semiramis, the moon goddess, who was the wife of Nimrod. The legend says that a great egg fell out of heaven and landed into the Euphrates River, and that Semiramis walked out of it. Bunny rabbits signify the breeding capabilities of Queen Semiramis who arrived from heaven as Ishtar the goddess of sex and fertility. After Nimrod died, she claimed that he became the Sun God Baal, Baalim, or Molech. She got pregnant by rays from his sunshine, and that their baby, named Tammuz, was Nimrod reincarnated. For years, this mystery religion was practiced in the following manner. Pagan priests of Baal would impregnate virgins in the Temple on Easter Day. Nine months later the children born from these rituals would be born on or about Christmas day to commemorate the new birth of the

sun during the winter Solstice when the sun is thought to die and be reborn as the days begin to be longer after the shortest day of the year. By next Easter these newborns babes could be sacrificed, and eggs dyed in their blood when they are about 4 months old to celebrate the New Life of Springtime. This is what Easter was always about before the time of Christ and is still practiced behind the veil of Christian names and purposes. Israel had this same problem as recorded in Ezekiel 8:14, 15, & 16 where we find that women were weeping for Tammuz at the door of the Yahweh's House (the Temple). Also, at the door of the temple, 25 men faced the sun in the East and worshiped the Sun.

Easter Is Pagan

We looked at the HRM beliefs about Christmas and Easter being “pagan” holidays in the last part of our series. We will hear from HRM critics in the this part.

[*We do not necessarily endorse the critics listed below or their ministries or websites. Our purpose is to share some of the oppositional viewpoints to beliefs in the Hebrew Roots Movement. I will share my observations in the second section of this series.]

HRM Beliefs about Christmas and Easter

Although there are many different and diverse Hebrew Roots assemblies with variations in their teachings, they all adhere to a common emphasis on recovering the “original” Jewishness of Christianity. Their assumption is that the Church has lost its Jewish roots and is unaware that Jesus and His disciples were Jews living in obedience to the Torah. For the most part, those involved advocate the need for every believer to walk a Torah-observant life. This means that the ordinances of the Mosaic Covenant must be a central focus in the lifestyle of believers today as it was with the Old Testament Jews of Israel. Keeping the Torah includes keeping the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week (Saturday), celebrating the Jewish feasts and festivals, keeping the dietary laws, avoiding the “paganism” of Christianity (Christmas, Easter, etc.), and learning to understand the Scriptures

from a Hebrew mindset. They teach that Gentile Christians have been grafted into Israel, and this is one reason every born-again believer in Jesus the Messiah is to participate in these observances. It is expressed that doing this is not required out of legalistic bondage, but out of a heart of love and obedience. However, they teach that to live a life that pleases God, this Torah-observant walk must be part of that life.

The Hebrew Roots assemblies are often made up of a majority of Gentiles, including Gentile rabbis. Usually they prefer to be identified as “Messianic Christians.” Many have come to the conclusion that God has “called” them to be Jewish and have accepted the theological position that the Torah (Old Testament law) is equally binding on Gentiles and Jews alike. They often wear articles of traditional Jewish clothing, practice Davidic dancing, and incorporate Hebrew names and phrases into their writing and conversations. Most reject the use of the name “Jesus” in favor of Yeshua or YHWH, claiming that

these are the “true” names that God desires for Himself. In most cases, they elevate the Torah as the foundational teaching for the Church, which brings about the demotion of the New Testament, causing it to become secondary in importance and only to be understood in light of the Old Testament. The idea that the New Testament is faulty and relevant only in light of the Old Testament has also brought the doctrine of the Trinity under attack by many advocates of the Hebrew Roots beliefs.

As opposed to what the Hebrew Roots movement claims, the New Testament teachings of the Apostle Paul are perfectly clear and self-explanatory. Colossians 2:16,17 says, “Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day – things which are a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.” Romans 14:5 states, “One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.” Scripture

clearly indicates that these issues are a matter of personal choice. These verses and many others give clear evidence that the Mosaic Covenant laws and ordinances have ended. Continuing to teach that the Old Covenant is still in effect in spite of what the New Testament teaches, or twisting the New Testament to agree with the Hebrew Roots beliefs, is false teaching.

What is the Hebrew Roots Movement?

I work for a ministry that uses this time of year to share the good news that the Son of God became one of us so that through His sacrificial death, burial, and Resurrection, we could be saved from our sins. Every year in December we post articles that help clear up some of the misconceptions that people have about the birth of Christ as described in Matthew and Luke. We do not tell anyone that they must celebrate Christmas, but encourage those who decide to celebrate the holiday to focus on Christ rather than all the extra-biblical traditions. And every year dozens, if not hundreds of people jump all over our Facebook posts to tell everyone how pagan Christmas is and

how sinful it is for people to celebrate the birth of Christ at this time of year.

Many of the attacks come from people involved in what has been called the Hebrew Roots Movement. These are not Jewish people, but professing Christians who have been caught up in the idea that Christians are supposed to follow selected portions of the Mosaic Law. It's one thing to seek to understand Old Testament teachings to gain a deeper understanding of Scripture, but these people go far beyond that. Just as the heretical Judaizers of the 1st century added works of the Law to the gospel message (making it a false "gospel"), the Hebrew Roots Movement has added arbitrarily selected elements of the Law to the Christian message.

There are some really sad elements to this movement. First and foremost, many of the folks are in danger of denying the gospel because they behave as if a person can only be saved if he follows the Law of Moses—well, at least the portions of it that they

highlight (primarily the Levitical feasts and dietary laws). A brief study of Galatians should disavow them of such legalizing practices, but sadly they ignore Paul's plain instruction in this book (see especially Galatians 5:18 and James 2:10). Second, I believe they unwittingly disparage the Jewish people through their actions—they mispronounce and misspell Hebrew names while acting as if they are true Jews. Third, they use a vast array of fallacious arguments based on careless research and misinterpretations of Scripture.

One of the major claims of this group is that the Bible forbids the use of Christmas trees in Jeremiah 10. This notion is an absurd interpretation of a passage that speaks against the carving and decoration of wooden idols to be worshipped. I have never heard of a Christian worshipping a tree, and I have never put up a tree in my house, but that has not stopped these folks from accusing me of violating the supposed prohibition against Christmas trees in Jeremiah 10. [Update on 11/27/16: My wife found an artificial tree for

\$5 last year and has put that up. When I wrote the article two years ago, I had not put up a tree.]

*I have written elsewhere to deal with many of the false claims and faulty arguments of this movement so I won't elaborate on them here (see links at end of post for more details). I want to close this post by sharing a piece of satire I worked on with a friend a few years back. This is not directed at those who simply choose to not celebrate Christmas at this time of year; Christians have every right to not celebrate Christmas since we are not commanded to do it. But Christians also have the right to celebrate the birth of Christ on December 25 or on any other day of the year. This satirical article is directed at those who obnoxiously attack Christians with Jeremiah 10 whenever they hear the word "Christmas" uttered or see it posted in social media. **Worshipping the Christmas Tree? Responding to the Anti-Christmas, Anti-Easter Cult***

Every year around Christmas, Answers in Genesis receives hundreds of messages (via email and Facebook) from people within the HRM who castigate the ministry for talking about Christmas and using it as a time to point people toward the Savior. There is no question that many of our culture's Christmas traditions have no biblical basis, and HRM followers use this truth to label any and all celebrations of Christmas akin to worshipping pagan gods. The same thing happens every year at Easter time. Many of the claims about these holidays by the HRM are flawed, being based on revisionist history, shoddy scholarship, and the misinterpretation of Scripture. We have written much on these topics, so there is no reason to rehash the issues here (see footnote for links to various relevant articles). We will consider a few of the major errors of the HRM on these points.

First, as discussed above, Christians have the freedom to esteem any day higher than any other or to not hold one day in honor above another (Romans 14:5). While this particular verse might have been

written to specifically address the issue of the Sabbath, it can still be applied to any holiday, and Paul taught the same type of freedom applied to the festivals (Colossians 2:16). Neither did the apostles at the Jerusalem Council instruct the Gentile believers to celebrate the Levitical feasts.

Second, it is quite hypocritical to accuse Christians of celebrating pagan holidays (because extrabiblical ideas have become associated with the celebrations for some people) when their own celebrations are loaded with extrabiblical ideas. For example, HRM proponents criticize Christians who celebrate Christmas for a variety of reasons. One popular reason is that the Bible never says anything about things like Santa, reindeer, and mistletoe being connected to the birth of Jesus Christ. While it's true that the Bible does not mention these things, it does not follow that every Christian who celebrates the Lord's birth in December does so using things like Santa, reindeer, and mistletoe. Furthermore, this criticism is a wee bit like the clover calling the grass

green. When some HRM followers celebrate the Passover, they include several items and practices that are not mentioned in Scripture, such as a roasted egg, the hidden piece of matzah bread called the afikomen, a bowl of salt water representing tears of Hebrew slaves and the Red Sea, and an extra seat for Elijah. These “traditions of men” were added over the centuries and are not found in the Bible. So why is it acceptable for traditions to be added to the Passover celebration but not to holidays deemed unacceptable by the HRM?

Third, if it is highly offensive to God to celebrate any holiday outside those mentioned in Leviticus 23, then why do so many HRM adherents often celebrate at least one holiday not found in that chapter and did not arise until more than 12 centuries after Moses? Hanukkah is an eight-day holiday to remember the rededication of the temple following the Maccabean Revolt (c. 167–160 BC). Why would the HRM celebrate such a festival when it is not mentioned in

*the Mosaic law? **Dangers of the Hebrew Roots Movement***

Torahism often causes division in the body of Christ. I've seen it damage marriages, friendships, families, and even churches. Torah-observant Christians often make keeping the Law of Moses a test of fellowship. Because they view these Mosaic traditions as required of Christians, not optional, they often look down on Christians who don't keep the Saturday Sabbath or the kosher food laws or celebrate Easter or Christmas. Those Christians are often reprimanded as lawless sinners. Not every Torah-keeper adopts a divisive or arrogant attitude, of course. But if you've got a Hebrew Roots person in your life, you know what I'm talking about.

Although many Hebrew Roots believers profess with their lips that salvation comes through faith in Christ alone, I've yet to come across any Torah-keeper willing to take the peacemaking attitude that says, "Hey, we can agree to disagree on this issue and still

be brothers and sisters in Christ.” The majority of Torah-observant Christians I have interacted with take a prideful and judgmental attitude toward Christians who don’t “keep Torah.” In fact, that’s how I stumbled across this movement in the first place. A few years back, an old friend from church began publicly accusing me of partaking in pagan rituals. Why? Because I celebrate Christmas.

To be fair, no belief system, including Torahism, should be judged by those who abuse it. There are no Torah-observant tenets that require its adherents to cause division in their families and communities. But there is a virulent strain of distrust—sometimes even outright rebellion—against the mainstream Christian church in many Torah-observant communities. Romans 14 addresses the in-fighting in the Roman church on the issue of kosher food. Paul admonished his readers that “the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit . . . so then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (Rom 14:17, 19).

And when we look at the common fruits of Torahism, we find the opposite of what Paul taught. Rather than peace and mutual upbuilding, Torahism tends to cause disunity in the body of Christ. And it has done needless damage to families, friendships, and churches.

*Often the average Christian senses something is wrong with the idea of Torah-observant Christianity but has a hard time articulating exactly why it's wrong. So the mainstream Christian and the Torah-observant Christian end up talking past one another, quarreling and arguing without any resolution. The old friend I mentioned who took me to task over Christmas is a perfect example. He and his wife were causing so much turmoil in their family and neighborhood that the people who loved them were at their wit's end and didn't know what to do. ***The Dangers of the Hebrew Roots Movement****

There are three reasons that Easter is not a pagan holiday:

1. Easter is not a holiday that morphed out of an ancient celebration of a fertility goddess or a spring harvest. Rather, it is a religious observance initiated by the Christian Church as a way to commemorate the resurrection of Christ. This makes its historical motivation decidedly anti-pagan.
2. Pagan gods and idols are not worshipped during Easter, and Christians don't celebrate fertility or sex. Instead, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. During Easter, Christ's passion story is read aloud from Scripture, God is glorified by the singing of songs, and the Gospel is preached. This is the antithesis of pagan theology.
3. Pagans do not participate in the religious observation of Easter, nor recognize it as a holiday.

*So, rest easy, my brothers and sisters. As long as we keep our focus on Jesus, we are free to celebrate Easter with a clear conscience. It is good and right that we thank and praise God for sending us His one and only Son, who, through His death and resurrection, reconciled us to the Father. **Is Easter a Pagan Holiday?***

Next eBook

In the next part of our special series, *The 'Hebrew Roots' Movement*, we'll look at how they believe Gentiles should keep the Law through the 'One Law Theory' and 'Two House Theology.'