



The 'Hebrew Roots' Movement

Part Three

By

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We continue with our in-depth research into the Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM). It is also known as Hebraic Roots and Jewish Roots. You can read the [introduction to this series here](#).

Adherents of HRM believe that Christianity left its Hebrew Roots centuries ago and that what they are doing now is bringing Christianity back to its “roots.”

The research format for this series is in two sections:

- Section One — what adherents and critics believe about the doctrine and practice of the Hebrew Roots Movement
- Section Two — what I believe about the doctrine and practice of the Hebrew Roots Movement

We are still in Section One of this series.

One Law and Two House Theology

One of the beliefs of the Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) is that Gentiles keep the Law through the One Law and Two House theology. What is that? Let's see how HRM teachers explain it. We'll look at critiques of the beliefs in the next part of our series.

*One Law theology involves the claim that Gentiles are commanded by God to observe the Torah in the same way as the Jewish people. A key verse used by proponents of One Law theology is Numbers 15:16, "There will be one law for you and for the foreigner who resides with you." **One Law Theology***

As a strong proponent of the One Law position, I have consistently taught that Gentiles who come to faith in Yeshua do not "become Jews," but remain redeemed Gentiles who join the remnant of Israel and therefore demonstrate the faithfulness of God to the Abrahamic promise.

But this whole matter of maintaining a distinction between Jews and Gentiles needs to be considered more thoroughly. Much depends upon the vantage point of the one making the assessment. What I mean by this is simply that for “outsiders,” that is, for those outside of a Torah community who are assessing what they see of the community, it may well appear that Gentile members of the community are Jewish. This is because the Gentile members of the community participate in activities that have traditionally been labeled as “Jewish.” But for those within the Torah community itself, things might be seen quite differently. I know this is the case in our own community. It is not uncommon for a non-Jewish member of our community to relate his or her experience, in which someone in their neighborhood, or in a public place, asks them if they are Jewish. The question is reasonable because they’re wearing tzitzit, or buying kosher foods, or picking up challah for their Shabbat meal. The answer the inquirer receives, however, is something like this: “No, I’m not Jewish, but my Messiah is, and I’m seeking to walk in His footsteps.”

It seems that this same kind of scenario obtained even in the 1st Century. The idea that Jews were easily recognized as distinct from their Gentile friends is not well supported by the historical data. We do know that many Gentiles regularly visited synagogues in the early centuries, and even though many did not undergo rabbinic conversion, they adhered to a great deal of traditional Jewish halachah and lifestyle. Significantly, the fiscus judaicus, the so-called “Jewish tax,” was assessed upon all who adhered to “Jewish practice,” that is, who had a lifestyle characterized by Torah observance. Even before the second revolt, according to Suetonius, during the reign of Domitian (81–96 CE) his agents assessed the fiscus judaicus upon those they presumed to be “Jewish” on the basis of their lifestyle.

Torah Resource

Two-House centers on two main theses: First, that the tribes of the Northern Kingdom, usually referred to as the Ten Lost Tribes, did not disappear into history, and second, that many if not most Christians today are descended from them. We actually agree on the first point, as we will show; it is the second point that is a matter of contention.

*It should be noted that the degree to which the second thesis is taken differs from group to group. Some, taking very seriously Yeshua's statement, "I wasn't sent to anyone but the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mat. 15:24), believe that all Christians are actually descendants of the Northern Kingdom. It was in response to these individuals that the MJAA wrote its white paper: *The Ephraimite Error: A Short Summary.**

However, in the interest of fairness, we must note that not all take this extreme stance. For example, TNN Online outlines their beliefs as follows:

Based on these three paragraphs, there are indeed some truthful statements concerning what TNN Online believes and advocates concerning the reunion of all Israel:

- 1. We do believe that many non-Jewish Believers (“Christians”) may be flesh-and-blood descendants of the Northern Kingdom Israelites captured and dispersed by Assyria in 722-721 B.C.E.*
- 2. We do believe that non-Jewish Believers in Yeshua are coming to a knowledge of their Hebraic heritage and should obey God’s Torah.*
- 3. We do believe that one day people of the scattered House of Israel/Ephraim will return to the Land of Israel, just as the House of Judah has, in fulfillment of critical end-time prophecies such as: Isaiah 11:14; Jeremiah 3:18, 30:3; and Zechariah 10:7, 10.*

However, there are some mistruths in these statements as well, with which TNN Online as an advocate of the Two-House teaching does not agree:

- 1. We do not believe that every non-Jew or “Christian” is a physical Israelite.*
- 2. We do not believe that the scattered descendants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim are exclusively contained in areas populated by the British, i.e., Anglo-Saxons and Celts, or for that same matter, Northern Europeans. **Hebrew Root***

Along the journey of discovering the Hebrew Roots of my faith, I’ve picked up on a few interesting theologies, one of which is the Two House Theory. Essentially, this school of thought teaches that Christians are one of the lost Tribes of Israel and that God is uniting them with the house of Judah (i.e. the Jews) into one House under the New Covenant.

Historically, we know that after King Solomon died, all of Israel was divided into two regions: The Northern Kingdom of Israel & the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The division was caused by North's lack of allegiance to Solomon's successor. In 722 BC, the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom, forcing the 10 tribes that inhabited the land to scatter and eventually become "lost".

Those who follow the Two House theory suggest that the Assyrian conquering is a direct fulfillment of this blessing forcing Ephraim to scatter and become several nations. And to further support their position they refer to a passage in Romans 11, wherein the Apostle Paul describes Gentiles as being grafted into the root of Jesse in order to receive the blessings of God.

I think Christians feel slighted if they are not Messianic Jews because of the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament, because we have come to associate them with the covenant of Salvation. When in reality, some of God's promises were to a physical Israel and to a land that he promised them. Has nothing to do with salvation or Christ's sacrifice. In fact, Yeshua flat out states that His kingdom (not the Kingdom of Ancient Israel) is a spiritual one:

*"My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world. **John 18:36***

*I don't think we need to concern ourselves with trying to be Jewish as Christians. If you are a Jew coming from Judaism as Paul did (see Galatians 1:13) or you are Gentile, the promises made about the Ephraim and the division of the land has no bearing on your Salvation. Don't worry about it. You are not less in the eyes of the Father because you don't live in Israel or have Jewish blood. **Two House Theory – Are Gentiles Being Grafted Into Israel***

Furthermore, an important aspect of the gospel message would also include a belief in the restoration of the two houses of Israel (a regathering of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, see Matt 10:6; 15:24), or the restoration tabernacle of David (Acts 15:16), and that when believers are “born again” they become the one new man, become redeemed Israelites and are part of the covenants and commonwealth of Israel (Eph 2:11–19), and are the offspring of Abraham (Gal 3:39; Rom 4:16; 9:8–11). These saints comprised of Jews and non-Jews that have been gathered in from the nation are “the

*Israel of Elohim,” as Paul terms it (Gal 6:16). **What Are the Fundamentals of the Hebraic Christian Faith?***

[*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.]

One Law and Two House Theology

We introduced ‘One Law and Two House Theology’ in the last part of our series. We shared the views of teachers in the Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM).

In this part of our series we will look at some of the ‘critiques’ of this belief from both Christian and Messianic Jewish teachers.

The other primary ways HR groups obligate Gentiles to keep the Law is through two theological constructs: the One Law theory and Two House theology. One Law teaches that there is one law (Torah), and “that all Jews and Gentiles under the new covenant are called to keep

the same Torah in all regards.”¹⁴ ¹⁵ The primary argument of One Law is that since believing Gentiles (wild branches) are grafted into the natural branches of the olive tree (i.e., Israel) the Law (except for circumcision) applies to both, thus “One people, One Messiah, One Torah.”¹⁶ Two House Theology¹⁷ similarly places Gentile believers under the law, but with a twist. Many Two House proponents teach that the Assyrian captivity caused the Northern Kingdom (i.e., Ten Tribes) to lose their identity, and later dispersions caused these people to assimilate and take on a Gentile identity in their new lands. Thus, many who are coming to the Lord, are unwittingly members of the “Lost Ten Tribes.” This return, they suggest, is the restoration of the Two Houses of ancient Israel: Judah and Ephraim. Evidence of this theory is the large number of “Gentiles” who have been drawn to the Hebrew Roots and Messianic Jewish movements.

The primary failure of the One Law movement is a disregard of any distinction between Jews and Gentiles in terms of function and responsibilities. Also, there seems to be a disregard of the target audience identified throughout the Torah. Deuteronomy 4:44 for example states: “This is the law Moses set before the Israelites” (emphasis added). It was not a law set before Gentiles. Another mistake made by One Law teachers is to regard laws given for specific circumstances as generally applicable for all circumstances and peoples. Foreigners were expected to keep only certain aspects of the Law when they desired to dwell amongst the covenant people. For example, the “alien within your gates” was, according Hebrew Roots Movement, page 3 to Deuteronomy 5:14, not allowed to work on the Sabbath. However, there is no indication this was applicable everywhere and by everyone.

*The primary problem with the Two House movement is the latent British Israelism. They dismiss the distinction between Jew and Gentile by identifying all believers as Israelites. If Two House theology is true, surely gathering the “Lost Ten Tribes” would have been an obvious part of Paul’s missionary message. A better approach is to recognize, as Paul does in Ephesians 2, that in Christ, God is taking Jews and Gentiles and making one new man. He is not making Gentiles into better Jews. **Hebrew Roots Movement**, Watchman*

Two House Theology appears to be established largely in the fringes of the Hebrew Roots and Messianic movements. Not surprisingly, most of its adherents are Gentiles. While it is not classic British Israelism it does draw from many of the same ideas.

Essentially, it is argued that those Gentiles who become believers are in fact mostly Ephraimites – that is, they are directly descended from Ephraim, Jacob’s grandson, which of course would make them Israelites. Thus it is largely only Israelites and so called Judahites who are coming to saving faith in these days. Born again Gentile believers are taught to be in fact Ephraimites unaware of their true identity -till now!

One of the key texts to which Two House Theology appeals is Genesis 48:19. Ephraim is prophesied to become melo hagoyim -a multitude of peoples or nations. It is argued that this is a prediction that the descendants of Ephraim would one day become separate national identities distinct from those we today identify as Jews.

Again, it is taught that these “Ephraimites” have till now been unidentifiable. It is further taught that their self-recognition as Israelites and their union with the “Jews” is a necessary prelude to “all Israel’s” restoration and redemption.

It is true that Genesis 48:19 does use the Hebrew word goyim -the plural of goy, the word normally translated as Gentile or nation. The fundamental error, however, is in the assertion that this word always and only ever refers to Gentiles.

Genesis 12:1-7 records the announcement of what has come to be known as the Abrahamic covenant. God promises to make a great nation of Abraham's physical descendants -a clear reference to Israel. Even in this passage the word used is goy.

Another clear example is Jeremiah 31:36 where the Lord promises that Israel will always exist as a nation before me. Again, the word is goy. Zephaniah speaks of the Jewish people regathered for judgement and, ultimately, for great blessing. He speaks of Israel as a goy in Zephaniah 2:1 and 9.

While it is true that goy normally refers to Gentiles (i.e. those who are not physically descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) that is not always the case. Context must determine meaning.

*All belief systems are based on particular primary assumptions. Two House Theology is predicated upon a number of significant errors. Its misunderstanding of the biblical usage of goy and goyim is one such error. **Two House Theology -a new spin on an old error***

We, as Messianic Jewish leaders, have become increasingly concerned that there are a growing number of individuals and groups today promoting the idea that all the world's believers in the Messiah – Jewish and Gentile alike – ought to be keeping the Torah, particularly the Shabbat, the feasts, and kosher diet. The doctrine which is the subject of this paper has been around since the day of the Apostles, in different forms, but today it has come to be known as “One Law One People” or just “One Law,” for short. It insists upon Gentile Torah observance universally. Most of those who teach it, also

promote false theories about Israel identity as well. Recently, some of the more prominent One Law teachers have banded together and begun using the label “Hebrew Roots” to describe themselves as a movement. This nomenclature is regrettable from our point of view, since it causes confusion.

Followers of “One Law One People” insist that everybody ought to be keeping the Torah. Since everybody does not keep the Torah, they typically see their Torah observance as some kind of evidence of their chosen-ness. Not only does this breed a sense of legalistic pride, but there are deeper concerns. Almost inevitably, “One Law One People” teaching is associated with the idea that people who keep the Torah given to Israel actually ARE Israel. This idea is usually advanced by myths about the “lost tribes.” The followers of “One Law” typically begin to identify Israel in Bible prophecy as somehow pertaining to them. Most of them think of themselves as belonging to the northern kingdom of Israel, as represented in the prophecy of the two “sticks” referenced in Ezekiel 37. Thus, they see Torah

*observance as their duty as members of the people Israel. The question of Israel identity always seems to be related to this doctrine of One Law. Thus, not only is it wrong on its face, theologically, but it is deeply and intimately intertwined with replacement theology. Obsession with the Torah, and with Israel identity, has caused many Hebrew roots groups to take on the external look and feel of being Jewish. In Hebrew roots conferences and in local congregational groups, for example, it is commonplace to hold meetings on Shabbat and during the Levitical feasts. In their meetings, they typically employ traditional articles of Jewish worship like davidic dancing, Jewish liturgical prayers, and shofarblowing. It is common for people to be wearing kippot and tzitzit, using Hebrew slogans on their banners, displaying the Magen David, and even processing Torahs. **One Law, Two Sticks: A Critical Look at the Hebrew Roots Movement**, International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS)*

One of the glories of life in the Messianic Jewish community is the unity of worship and service between its Jewish and Gentile members within a specifically Jewish context. In recent years, however, a trend has developed that challenges the Messianic Jewish community on this very issue. This trend involves various groups and movements that teach that all Jews and Gentiles under the new covenant are called to keep the same Torah in all regards.

In so doing, these One Law movements not only misinterpret a great body of Scripture, but they also miss the unique calling of Jews and Gentiles within the Body of Messiah, robbing both groups of the biblical richness of their identity. They lose the new covenant vision of unity in Messiah between Jews and Gentiles and replace it with a man-made rallying cry, which One Law advocate Tim Hegg has expressed as “One people, One Messiah, One Torah.”

*Several streams teach such views, including Ephraimite groups that believe that Gentiles who have come to faith in Yeshua in some way fulfill the prophecies concerning the regathering of the Northern Tribes and their reunion with Judah. Generally, they teach that all believers are called to follow the same Torah instructions, with the exception of circumcision. **ONE LAW MOVEMENTS: A Challenge to the Messianic Jewish Community***

The question of Gentile Torah-observance was definitively answered by the First Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Luke recorded that within the first-century community in Jerusalem, a disagreement arose from some Jewish believers in Jesus who argued, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). The first to disagree with them were Paul and Barnabas who arrived bearing news of the many Gentiles who came to salvation and who received the Holy Spirit before their very eyes. But even after hearing that the Gentiles were worthy to receive the Spirit, there were still some believers who were arguing, “It is necessary to circumcise them [the Gentiles] and to

direct them to observe the Law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). Presumably, the theology of these so-called “believers from the sect of the Pharisees” would have likely resembled that of One Law advocates.

But the story doesn’t end there. The apostles and elders of the Jerusalem congregation gathered together to debate the issue and decide what measure of the Law the Gentiles should keep. The chapter records, “after there had been much debate,” Peter was the first to speak, recounting his recent experience with the conversion of Cornelius’s household:

And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us [the Jews] and them [the Gentiles], cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are (Acts 15:8-11).

After Peter took his seat and Paul and Barnabas gave further testimony, James, the leader of the congregation, concluded that Gentile believers in Jesus should not be commanded to keep the Law of Moses. Rather, the council decided only to require four specific things for Gentile converts to abstain from: (1) sexual immorality, (2) blood, (3) strangled foods, and (4) food sacrificed to idols. The point is, the New Testament clearly teaches that there is no “One Law” that both Jews and Gentiles are called to observe.

Like we mentioned above, One Law teaching is related to the important assertion that much of the Law remains applicable for Jewish believers in Jesus. For this reason, it seems very close to the truth and might even be attractive to Christians who emphasize the continuity between the Old and New Testaments. But, as the saying goes: The most dangerous of all falsehoods is a slightly distorted truth. By teaching Gentiles to observe the Law of Moses, One Law teachers inadvertently erase the ethnic distinction between Jews and Gentiles taught in the New Covenant Scriptures. Certainly, the assertion

that Gentiles must convert to Judaism and thus become Jews is the opposite of teaching that Jews must convert to Christianity and become Christians. But both teachings equally result in the supersessionist erasure of ethnic distinction and particularity. Thus, One Law theology is but another form of replacement theology. Gentiles are not called to observe the Law of Moses, but rather to remain distinct through non-observance. Any assertion to the contrary would be to directly violate the decision of the apostles at the First Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. One Law Theology, Gateway Center for Israel

I started this series about the *Hebrew Roots Movement* (HRM) six years ago. I was concerned then, as I am now, that this is a dangerous movement within what some people think is true Christianity – meaning they believe HRM preaches and teaches the ‘true Gospel’ of Christ. They don’t, which is why I started this series.

Section One of the series included presentations by HRM teachers, along with critiques by Christians and Messianic Jews who disagreed with HRM. You can find them by searching for individual articles or downloading three free eBooks that cover all of the previous materials –

[The Hebrew Roots Movement, Part One](#)

[The Hebrew Roots Movement, Part Two](#)

[The Hebrew Roots Movement, Part Three](#)

I will start Section Two in the next series of studies, but I’d like to give you a brief summary about Section One.

HRM Beliefs

Here are some of the beliefs I found to be prominent within the Hebrew Roots Movement. Keep in mind that groups that identify with Hebrew Roots do not necessarily agree with each other on every point of belief (much like Protestant denominations), but these are some of the beliefs that appear to be primary.

- 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 Ceper, 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
- Removed from Rabbinic Judaism because of core belief differences
- Gentiles keep the Law through the One Law theory and Two House theology

I shared the two perspectives in previous articles: one from HRM teachers and the other from Christian and Messianic Jewish teachers. I did not cover every aspect because of the length of time it took to cover the topics I did. What you will find in previous articles and the free eBooks are indicative of some of the major points of difference that impact important aspects of salvation and how God would have His people 'rightly divide the word of truth' (Timothy 2:15).

Section Two Plan

My plan for Section Two is to present the primary problems with the Hebrew Roots Movement in ways that some readers may find easier than Section One. You may have heard it said that ‘the plain things are the main things and the main things are the plain things.’ One of the main problems with HRM is they’ve gotten the plain things and main things wrong. Some HRM teachers may simply be confused about what God says in His Word, but I think other teachers know what they are doing. That makes them ‘false teachers.’

Let me add something here that some may find helpful. When someone teaches a heresy without knowing it’s a heresy, they may not be a heretic (false teacher). If they are shown that their teaching is incorrect (‘wrongly’ dividing the Word of truth) and change their teaching to match the truth of God’s Word (‘rightly’ dividing the Word of truth), that is the proper way to respond to spiritual correction. However, if a teacher is clearly shown their error but they refuse to change their teaching – that is evidence of heresy (false teaching). They should not be trusted. If they are in your church, the elders

should remove them from any teaching position or position of authority in the way that Jesus and His apostles command. If you attend an HRM congregation, you should remove yourself from their teaching and fellowship in the way that Jesus and His apostles command. If you do not, you will have to deal with the spiritual consequences.

Yes, those are strong words. I wouldn't utter them if I didn't believe them to be true. Like Paul, I say to believers – “Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?” The word ‘bewitched’ in Galatians 3:1 is βασκαίνω and means ‘to slander, to give the evil eye, to cast an evil spell.’ Imagine the believers in the Galatian churches reading those words from the Apostle Paul. He was the first to preach the Gospel of Christ in Galatia. Many of the people reading his letter would have known him personally. Those words had to sting, as well they should –

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:6-9

In other words, ‘shame on you for turning away from the truth of the Gospel of Christ!’ That’s what I’m saying to Christians who have joined HRM congregations, reading their materials, watching their videos, etc. Shame on you! Believing and practicing the teaching of HRM is to follow a ‘perverted’ Gospel, which is not a gospel at all. ‘Anyone’ who preaches any other Gospel than what Paul preached – ‘let him be accursed.’ ἀνάθεμα, *anathema*, ‘accursed of God, a divine curse.’

Next eBook

I've given HRM teachers six years to present their positions, even as I've given opponents ample opportunity to refute the HRM claims. I hope you have learned from the give and take in the first section of this study.

I would like to share some perspectives that may be a bit different than what you've read so far, so please join me for Section Two of 'The Hebrew Roots Movement' in the next part of our series.

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