

# LIVING IN THE GOOD OF OUR HEBRAIC FAITH

## 1. The Early Church experience

Acts 15:6-17 records the debate of the first Jerusalem Council as it came to terms with the remarkable events that had taken place at the House of Cornelius. They quickly realised that the prophecy of Amos 9:11 had come to pass. He foretold, "After this I will return and rebuild the tabernacle of David which had fallen down and I will rebuild its ruins and I will set it up so that the rest of mankind might seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My Name".

So despite the fact that the Temple was still standing, the Holy Spirit had revealed that an altogether new work of restoration was taking place in their midst. In a few years, the Temple would be destroyed but this Tabernacle or House of David which had been restored was going to affect the whole world. Back in 2 Sam 23:5 David knew very well that "his house was not right with God." God wasn't going to build just on the human frailties of David and his descendants. He was going to build a new house out of the heart of David for a dwelling place of God amongst the people of God. Why a tabernacle and not a temple? Perhaps it has to do with the very temporary nature of a tabernacle or 'tent of meeting' rather than the grand edifice of the Temple. God had in mind much more of a moveable testimony to His glory rather than a fixed asset. The Corinthian believers were also reminded of this in 1 Cor 3 and 6 - that their bodies were the temple of the Holy

Spirit and they were not to defile them. No longer did men have to travel to Jerusalem to admire the glorious temple, now they could behold living demonstrations of God's glory in the midst of men. As individuals and in households, the new Jewish and Gentile believing Church were living out their true Hebraic Faith.

This idea of Tent rather than Temple lies at the very heart of our Abrahamic Faith today, where scripture reveals Abraham's desire to be a tent-dweller rather than a city dweller. Abraham "looked for a city whose builder and maker was God" rather than like his ancestor Nimrod who built cities much to his own glory. "Here we have no continuing city" he said. In contrast, his nephew Lot abandoned tent dwelling for the city of Sodom. And we all know what good it did him.

Our Hebraic Faith therefore is built on the life and testimony of our Father Abraham rather than Jewish particularity which has over the centuries been heavily affected by Rabbinic ideas. Being Abrahamic also implies it is a Patriarchal faith and one built on family, a home and responsible family relationships.

## 2. Our Legacy - Israel's history, Faith and practise

The New Testament, which is the will sealed in the blood of Yeshua the Messiah, provided a profound legacy to all those who would be begotten again unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. (Heb 9:15-18; 1 Pet 1:2-5) All those who put their trust in this irrevocable testament would come under the covering protection of the kingdom of God and be kept safe by the power of God through faith in the completed

substitutionary atoning work done at Calvary (Col 1:12) Unfortunately the blessing of this legacy has been lost to most in the Church either by neglect or by outright rejection.

**Paul's thesis.** What had once been held exclusively by and for the Jews as the natural descendants of Abraham was then made available to Jew and Gentile alike as the spiritual children of Abraham. Gal 3:14, 19. Simply stated, Abraham has become "the father of all them that believe." Rom 4:11 It continues in Rom 11:7, 11, 12, 33 The failure on the part of Israel as a nation to recognise Jesus as the Messiah was part of God's plan to bring salvation and the wealth of his knowledge and wisdom to gentile people. In Rom 3:1,2 He poses the question "Then what advantage has the Jew?" Answer, "Much in every way." Chiefly, it was the knowledge and relationship with God.

**God not a respecter of persons.** Rom 2:10 onwards makes it clear. The reason he chose the Jewish people is that through them the world might be blessed with the knowledge of the New Covenant made through the person and work of His Son the Lord Jesus. The gentiles who "...were once not a people" came to be included in the people of God as a chosen race, a royal priesthood etc (1 Peter 2:9, 10) They did not replace the Jews as the people of God, but they did come alongside them as 'fellow citizens' of the 'commonwealth' of Israel with all the rights and privileges extended therein (Eph 2:12, 19). Rom 11 deals with the wild and unproductive olive tree imagery, which shows how gentile believers could be grafted into the rootstock of Israel for salvation. Rom 11:17. They who were not a people became part of the people of God through the new covenant relationship obtained through faith. We, today, might not

all be ethnically Jewish but Israel's history is our history if we believe what it says that we are grafted into the covenants and promises made to Israel.

### 3. Restoring our understanding

**Israel's History** is our history, from Egypt to the Promised Land all according to promise by God to the Fathers. The possession of the Land was clearly dependant upon their faithfulness but God would never break his everlasting covenant with them as a people. In our times we are blessed to have witnessed this re-gathering which is a clear fulfilment of true Biblical Prophecy.

**Israel's Faith.** To fully comprehend our Christian faith, we should know about our heritage. We study a Jewish book-written by Jews; we serve a Jewish Lord who had Jewish disciples; we desire to follow the first century church which was first predominately Jewish; and through the Jewish Messiah (Christ), we are grafted into a Jewish family! Doesn't it make sense to make some kind of study of the Biblical Hebrew culture! 1 Cor 10 states that we are to see Israel as our example. 1 Cor 5:8 told gentile believers that they could participate in the feasts – but not like the Jews!

This is a refreshing, new, exciting way to view the Bible! Much of the Bible is mysterious to many Christians. The perplexing phrases, puzzling actions, the sometimes difficult-to-understand words of Jesus, unconventional holidays and parables can only be understood with an awareness of the Jewish culture. A Christian's roots are deep in Biblical Judaism through Christ, all the way back to Abraham! *"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise..."* (Gal. 3:29).

As Martin Luther said, “Study is Worship.” Studying Scripture from our Western/Greek view is like looking for gold in a dark mine with a dim pen light. You can see enough to stumble around but you need more light to see clearly. A good grasp of the ancient Hebraic customs and terminology would allow you to re-examine Scripture in this powerful flood light, exposing intricate details and treasures.

**Israel’s Practise.** God has specific ways that He wants us to serve and worship Him. He recommends a disciplined worship which has structure and order. We are indeed set free from sin in Christ but we are not free to do as we please. We are set free (Gal 5:1) but lawlessness cannot be our experience. Jesus and the first church pointed out those ways for us. They are the old paths that Jeremiah reminds us of. *“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls...”* (Jer. 6:16). Unfortunately these “old paths” have been ‘paved over’ with man’s influences, opinions, traditions and interpretations of interpretations of interpretations of interpretations... and sometimes, like the holidays, simply ignored.

#### 4. A Hebraic lifestyle is centred on the Home

Look in the New Testament at the many references to Household of faith. A Hebraic lifestyle has three focal points.

**The Family.** Christians can learn much from the Bible’s strong family/worship Hebraic lifestyle. Everything is centred on the home - family, education and worship. Every area of the Hebrew worldview is entirely saturated and encompassed with God. The Hebrews

made no distinction between their spiritual life and the natural areas of life. They see all of life as an entirety. It is all God’s domain. Everything that happens is an opportunity to praise Him. He is in control of everything - pains and joys. God’s Word explains this Hebrew reasoning: *“I have set the Lord always before me”* (Psalms 16:8), and in Proverbs 3:6, *“In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths.”* There were times of Temple worship; **however, most of the worship centred on the home.**

**Sabbath.** Today, if you were to visit a religious Jew’s home on a typical Friday you would find everyone in the home in a hurried state preparing for the coming Sabbath. Setting a fine table and special meal. At sundown, all the hurrying stops. The Mother of the home prays and dedicates this special day unto God as she lights the Sabbath candles to begin the Sabbath. The Father leads the family in prayers, Bible readings, and singing praise and worship. He prays a special blessing over each child. In scripture there is a God inspired order in the family for peace. (1 Peter 3; 1 Cor 11 explains). The rest of the twenty-four hour period is spent resting, enjoying family, growing spiritually as individuals, and growing closer together as a family.

**Festivals.** By examining the holidays, from Passover to Tabernacles, we can get a taste of the almost forgotten family worship; worship led by the father, in the homes, teaching children God’s Word (Deut. 6), with their families, singing and praising God, learning of His ways, growing, in Him, together! We should ask ourselves, “Is there a time, if someone entered our home, that they would see such devotion to God?” How ashamed we should be when those who

don't even know Jesus as the Messiah, show such devotion. The Church is an extension of the Family

**Professing Christians, in general, tend to view "Church" as somewhere you go to on Sunday.** Life and relationships are divided into quarters, in four distinctly different locations. Firstly, religious - a few hours a week at church; secondly educational (school), thirdly professional (workplace), and lastly leisure (home). Each person in the family is going in separate directions and rarely at home together. Even in the church, the only family time spent together is on the

ride to and from church. Upon arrival the family divides into their respective classes. It is hard to find all the members of a family together in one area at the same time in church, much less worshiping and interacting together or praying together as a family. In an age of role reversal, gender confusion, and age abuse - What a travesty of the real church we see! But according to Acts 15, it was meant to be different. Let's pray for real restoration.