

The Hebraic Roots Movement

Also called “**Mesianic Renewed Judaism**” or “**The Sacred Name Movement**”

Some of the followers of this movement do not realize the full implication of what they are busy with. Consider for example what the following statement implies: *“Like other Christians, Messianic Judaism adherents believe that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they call by His Hebrew name Y’shua, is the resurrected Messiah and the only Divine Saviour. They believe you can only go to YHWH through the atonement work of Y’shua. **Messianic Judaism adds** to this some observances of Torah (YHWH’s Old Covenant Laws), which are not generally practised (and often discouraged) in Christian churches. These observances include observing Jewish Shabbat, abstaining from pork, shellfish, and other foods banned by Jewish law, and observing Jewish holidays”*. They continue and explain: *“What does YHWH’s Grand Strategy consist of? **YHWH wants the restoration of the Renewed Messianic Congregation’s position and culture of the Good News of the Jewish Messiah within a Messianic Renewed identity**”* (Hebraic Roots Teaching Institute: <http://hrti.co.za>, My emphasis). On what basis do they say that *“YHWH wants ...the restoration of the Renewed Messianic Congregation’s position and culture of the Good News of the Jewish Messiah within a Messianic Renewed identity?”* Where is this written in the New Testament? This renewed Messianic identity that they are referring to is nothing else than Old Testament Judaism. By their statement they are actually contradicting what Paul proclaimed in his letter to the Galatians: *“**There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor freeman, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ**”* (Gal.3:28, My emphasis). Nowhere is it stated in Scripture that in order to please God, we must worship Him from a Judaistic perspective. David has it right when he says in one of his psalms: *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise”* (Ps.51:17). This message knows no cultural boundaries.

In Messianic circles it is commonly reasoned that because the Christian faith was negatively influenced by gentile cultures like that of Rome and Greece, it must return to its Hebrew roots so that its Jewish character can be restored. Whilst they give much attention to the Hebrew way of doing things, they ignore the *“white-washed tomb”* concept that Jesus tried to communicate to the Law-keeping Pharisees of that time (Matt.23:27).

While on earth, did Jesus think like a Hebrew or a Greek? I think that He did neither. He thought like God, because He is God! God’s plan of redemption is elevated much higher than anything Jewish or Hellenistic. His goal through the Gospel is to restore the broken relationship between sinners and Himself; it has nothing to do with the restoration of a certain nation’s language or culture .

The Greek New Testament

Some of the teachers in the Messianic Movement are of the opinion that because the Gospel has been polluted by Hellenism, the Greek New Testament cannot be accepted as an inspired source of information as far as God’s plan of redemption is concerned. It must first be sifted through the Hebrew Language and mindset. They make the mistake of equating the Greek language with Greek culture. They do not understand that the Greek language used in the time in which the New Testament was written, was a universal language which stretched over cultural barriers. It was a medium of communication that was commonly used in the politics, trade and social life of that time. It knew no boundaries. We can therefore understand why it was used to communicate God’s plan of redemption to the world.

As far as the Greek New Testament is concerned; there are still more than five thousand copies of the original manuscripts that are being preserved in archives all over the world today. In Hebrew, only copies of the Greek manuscripts can be found. In the John Ryland library in Manchester, England, a fragment of the eighteenth chapter of the Book of John is to be seen. It is part of a copy of the original. It is interesting to note that the Greek Name of Jesus is mentioned in it. Another fact that has to be considered is that even the letter to the Hebrews was written in Greek. Is it because the Greek New Testament does not fit in with what is being taught in The Sacred Name Movement that its authenticity as an inspired manuscript is being questioned? There are those who even go as far as to reject the writings of Paul!

Those who refuse to accept the Greek New Testament do not realize that they are questioning the only book in which the teachings of Jesus was originally recorded in. It is at this point where an unbridgeable gap exists between New Testament Christians and those who are involved in The Sacred Name Movement. It does not matter what their reasoning might be, it is their focus on the Old Testament and on the use of only Hebrew names and practices, that causes them to disregard much of what is written in the New Testament. This is inherent in their teachings. On what must we as Christians build our faith, if the authority of the New Testament is questioned? It is the only book which contains the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles! To reject the book which contains His teachings, is to reject the words of Christ. It is puzzling how Christians can question the only book through which they initially had come to know about Christ! Messianic Christians must realize that what they are busy with, has put them on a collision course with what is written in the New Testament.

It is unreasonable to think that God, who originally confused the languages of the world (Gen.11), will now expect the different nations of the world to first come to know the Hebrew language and culture before they can fully understand His plan of redemption. Nowhere is this expected in the New Testament. The fact that the Word of God has been translated into so many languages, ties in with the command of Christ to *"make disciples of all nations"* (Math.28:19). With this command the Gospel ceased to be Jewish, but on the otherhand, it did not imply that it then became Greek. It became Christian, with an identity of its own.

The Root

Listening to what is said by followers of The Messianic Movement, you get the impression that the New Testament, in comparison with the Torah, plays an inferior role. At the same time you also get the impression that Judaism is the "root" that they so often refer to. However, when we look at Scripture we see that the "Root" is not the Torah or any other aspect of Jewish culture, but Jesus Christ. The olive tree in which we are grafted, is not natural, physical Israel either, but the spiritual tree of which the root is not Judaism, but Jesus Christ.

Rev.5:5: *"...the Lion that is from the tribe of Juda, the Root of David..."*

Rev.22:16: *"I Jesus..I am the root..."*

In the same way, Abraham is our father, not according to the flesh, but according to the promise and by faith; not according to the Sabbath, tithes, circumcision or according to the observance of any other legalistic ordinance.

We need not return to our Jewish roots in order to fully understand the Bible; we need only to study it. There is a big difference between studying Judaism and the Hebrew language for the sake of gathering background knowledge to enrich our understanding of the Bible and using that information to build a legalistic religious system.

The “Renewed Covenant?”

In some circles they speak of the “Renewed Covenant.” Where do they get this from? Does the Bible speak of the renewing of the Old Covenant? The New Testament clearly teaches that in Christ the Old Testament came to an end (Rom.10:4,Gal.3:23-25). The New Testament brings a new life in the Holy Spirit, not a set of rules of a renewed covenant (See [The Authoritative Voice of God: www.nickmaartens.co.za](http://www.nickmaartens.co.za) , Ctrl + click on website address). The old Covenant requires obedience to a written system of law, whilst the New Testament requires faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Joh.3:15-16, Gal.5:16).

The Value of The Old Testament

Paul explains the valuable role that the Old Testament should play in the life of a Christian. Referring to the experiences of Israel on their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, he says: *“These things happened to them as an example, and were written as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come”* (1 Cor.10:11). The Old Testament contains types and shadows of New Testament realities and by heeding their lessons and warnings, we are helped in our own spiritual pilgrimage. Although these shadow types serve as spiritual lessons, they are not to be used as legalistic prescriptions for any religious system.

Which Name?

In which Name are we supposed to worship? Is it Yeshua, Yehshua, Yehshuah, YESHUA, YESHUAH, Y'shua, Yehoshua, Jashuah, Jahoshua, Yashuah, Jesus or Iesous? The list of variations of the Name can be extended! It seems that even those who are involved in “The Sacred Name Movement” are not completely sure about the the correct use of the Name. Uncertainty also exists concerning the correct form of the Tetragram (YHWH). Our salvation does not depend on pronouncing the Name of Jesus correctly. It depends on knowing who He is and accepting what He came to do.

Why do millions and millions around the world curse the Name of Jesus? Why is it not done to the name of any other god? It is because the enemies of the cross know that Jesus said that He was the Son of God and that there was no other Name under heaven in which sinners could be saved!

Transcription

“Yeshua”, (Hebrew) __ “Iesous” (Greek) __ “Jesus” (Afr. Eng.)

Conclusion

We must be careful, a wrong emphasis placed on Judaism can distort and change the essence of what the Gospel of Jesus Christ stands for. It is for this very reason that the Galatian and Hebrew believers we admonished: *“You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, ...did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing by faith?”* (Gal.3:1-3, Heb.10).

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