

Nazarene Israel:

The Original Faith of the Apostles

By Norman B. Willis

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Notice:

At the time of this printing, the author has plans to rewrite Nazarene Israel in its fourth edition, to reflect the latest understanding the Father has given him.

The author plans to re-write the section on male head-coverings, as well as to make slight modifications to the section on Acts Chapter Fifteen. He no longer believes that the prohibition on blood pertains to the Laws of Niddah, but is simply a prohibition on eating blood.

Other than that, the author's understanding remains largely unchanged, and he only plans to update the tone of the text, to make it even more accessible for new readers.

***“But are you willing to know, o vain man, that
without works, your faith is dead?”***

Ya’akov (James) 2:20

Table of Contents:

What Would You Do?	9
What Was the Original Faith?	11
Statements of the Church	12
He Shall Be Called, ‘A Nazarene’	17
The Law Not Nailed to the Cross?	19
The Torah: A Marital Contract	24
Does Love Do Away With The Law?	30
Understanding Acts Twenty-One	35
Why the Same Days of Worship?	45
The Church as Temporary Vehicle	63
The Papacy as Anti-Messiah	68
Protestantism: The Lost Ten Tribes?	81
The Nation Divided	91
The Final Warnings	103
Israel is Swallowed-Up	114
Establishing the Pattern	121
Fulfilling the Prophecies	132

The Two Houses in the New Covenant	144
More Two House References	150
Why the name 'Christians'?	161
More Jews, Greeks, and Gentiles	168
Understanding Circumcision	174
Cornelius the Returning Ephraimite	183
Tradition and Inspiration Clash	188
Was it a Greek Inspiration?	198
The World's Most Beautiful Puzzle	209
Rabbinic Tradition and Torah Law	216
Understanding Acts Chapter Fifteen	225
The Gentile Return Procedure	236
Shaul on Circumcision	244
Why the Hebrew Customs?	264
Reclaiming Torah Culture	269
Tradition and the Laws of Niddah	275
Torah-Tradition and Headcoverings	289
Will You Do Your Utmost?	300
Common Objections	308

“But we wish to hear from you, what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere.”

Acts 28:22

What Would You Do?

You want to keep the original apostolic faith, don't you? Of course you do. All good believers do; and most Christians believe they are already keeping it, or else they would have switched to a different Christian denomination long ago.

But why are there so many different Christian denominations, anyhow? And why do they disagree with each other on so many points, when each claims to be doing what the Scriptures teach?

Now, what if you were to read a new study, which was the result of years of full-time research; and this new study not only explained why there were so many different denominations, but also demonstrated (from Scripture and the words of the Church Fathers) that the original faith of the Apostles was not called Christianity; but that it was called *Nazarene Israel*?

And what if this new study showed that the original *Nazarene Israelite* faith differed from today's Western Gentile Christianity in several vital respects?

Would you scoff? Would you mock? Would you put the book down without reading past the first page? Or would you want to study these things out for yourself, to see if they were so?

And what if this book asked you to disprove its claims, knowing that the more you read and the more you understood, the more you would begin to look at Scripture in a completely new and exciting way?

What would you do?

10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

12 Therefore many of them believed; and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

Ma'aseh (Acts) 17:10-12

What Was the Original Faith?

Most Christians laugh at the suggestion that Christianity was not the original faith of the Apostles, because they *think* they read somewhere that it was.

This study, however, will show that what most Christians think they have read is actually a popular misinterpretation of the Scriptures; and that this popular misinterpretation was prophesied to last for some two thousand years, so that other Scripture Prophecies might be fulfilled.

What other Prophecies? Prophecies such as the return of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel (in Hosea, and elsewhere). Most Christians do not realize how this prophecy is being fulfilled right now...and in them.

We will read a lot more about the Prophecies, but for now we need to understand who the real main players were, in the First Century.

However, since the subject of the original faith is of such vital importance to all of us, and since there are so many divergent opinions on this subject, you might be well-advised not to accept this author's word for anything.

That's right, I ask you not to take my word for anything at all. I only ask that you read for yourself what the Scripture and the Church Fathers say the original faith of the Apostles really was...and is.

Then I ask you to pray about it, and listen *only* to what the Scriptures say. However, then I ask you to take it to heart, to do what the Scriptures say.

If that is what you want, read on.

Statements of the Church

If you believe that the terms *Christian* and *Nazarene* are synonyms, consider the following statement by the Christian Church Father Epiphanius, in which he deprecated and maligned a group called the *Nazarenes*, suggesting that they practiced an entirely different (and in his mind, heretical) belief:

“The Nazarenes do not differ in any essential thing from them (meaning the Orthodox Jews), since they practice the customs and doctrines prescribed by Jewish Law; except that they believe in Christ.

“They believe in the resurrection of the dead, and that the universe was created by God. They preach that God is One, and that Jesus Christ is His Son.

“They are very learned in the Hebrew language. They read the Law (meaning the Law of Moses)... Therefore they differ...from the true Christians because they fulfill until now [such] Jewish rites as the circumcision, Sabbath, and others.”

[The Church Father Epiphanius in his doctrinal book, “Against Heresies,” Panarion 29, 7, Page 41, 402]

Epiphanius tells us that the Nazarenes fulfilled “until now” the Jewish rites of circumcision, the Sabbath, and others. Since Epiphanius was one of the key players in establishing Roman Church Doctrine in the fourth century CE, his words tell us that he knew the *Nazarenes* and the Christians were not the same group of people at that time.

Also noteworthy is the fact that Epiphanius considered the Nazarene faith to be heretical. What does it mean that a Christian Church Father considered the Nazarene faith to be *heretical*?

To answer this question, let us consider this statement by Marcel Simon, a renowned expert on first century Christianity, who took issue with Epiphanius’ comments. He writes:

“They (meaning the Nazarenes) are characterized essentially by their tenacious attachment to Jewish observances.

“If they became heretics in the eyes of the Mother Church, it is simply because they remained fixed on outmoded positions.

“They well represent, (even) though Epiphanius is energetically refusing to admit it, the very direct descendants of that primitive community, of which our author (Epiphanius) knows that it was designated by the Jews, by the same name, of ‘Nazarenes’.”

[First Century Assembly expert Marcel Simon, Judéo-christianisme, pp 47-48.]

M. Simon tells us the Nazarenes of the fourth century were the “very direct descendants” of the first century assembly. If true, that would mean it was not the Christians, but the *Nazarenes* who descended directly from James, John, Peter, Paul, Matthew, Andrew, Philip and the rest. Yet this expert on the first century Assembly also calls these Nazarenes *heretics*, precisely because they continued to practice the faith once delivered to the saints.

But why would a Christian scholar such as Marcel Simon call the original apostolic faith *heretical*? And when an acclaimed first century expert tells us that the Nazarenes (and not the *Christians*) are the “very direct descendants” of the Messiah’s own Apostles, is he not (in effect) confessing that his own Christian Church is not?

The importance of this question cannot be overstated. If these statements are bona fide, then Catholic Christianity was never the original faith of the Apostles; and this would mean neither the Catholics nor their modern-day Protestant offspring are honestly keeping the faith once delivered to the saints.

The ramifications of this argument are serious, and sweeping. Therefore, before we can go any further, we must know for certain whether the Christians and the Nazarenes were the same, or two different groups; and whether the Apostles called themselves Christians or *Nazarenes*.

Epiphanius and M. Simon seem to suggest that the Apostles were not Christians, but *Nazarenes*. However, in order to accept their statements as fact, we must have supporting evidence from Scripture. Therefore, is there any way we can learn, from the inspired New Covenant itself, whether the Original Faith of the Apostles was called Christianity, or whether it was called *Nazarene Israel*?

He Shall Be Called, 'A Nazarene'

Since the terms *Christian* and *Nazarene* both appear in the New Covenant (and are seemingly used interchangeably in some places) most people have always assumed that the two are one-in-the-same.

However, Epiphanius and M. Simon appear to have believed that the two groups were different. Likewise, a careful study of Scripture also reveals that the Apostles understood these two terms to refer to two different (albeit related) groups of people.

Likewise it is quite significant that nowhere in the New Covenant is the Messiah ever called a *Christian*. There are two places where the Apostles are called Christians, and one place where the Apostle Peter (actually Kefa) uses the term *Christian* to refer to the Body of believers in general. There are reasons why this was done, but before we can understand why the distinction between the two terms would be blurred in certain places, first we must know the exact meaning and significance of the names *Christian* and *Nazarene*.

The Scripture tells us that the Messiah Yeshua (Hebrew for Jesus) was to be called a Nazarene, because He grew up in a town called Nazareth (or *Natseret*, in Hebrew):

23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, (so) that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene (Hebrew: Natsari)."
[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 2:23]

Scripture students look for this reference in the English editions of the Old Covenant, and don't find it. This is because the reference actually comes from a word play on the Hebrew of Isaiah 11:1, where *Netser* and *Natsari* are essentially the same word; just with different vowel points (a pun in Hebraic thought):

11 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch (Netser) shall grow out of His roots.
[Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 11:1]

Then, at Acts 24:5, the priesthood accuses the Apostle Paul (Shaul in Hebrew) not of being a Christian, but of being...

"a ringleader of the Nazarene sect."
[Ma'aseh (Acts) 24:5]

But notice something peculiar. When Shaul (Paul) is accused of being a ringleader of the *Nazarene sect*, he does not insist he is a Christian. Rather, he lets himself be identified as a member of the *Nazarene sect*, meaning he still self-identifies as an Israeli (a member of the Nazarene segment of Israel).

However, as distinct from the Christians, Shaul (Paul) replied that even though he believed in Yeshua (Jesus), he also believed everything that was written in the Law and the Prophets; and as this book will show, he also continued to keep the Laws of Moses:

"According to the Way which they say is a sect (KJV: heresy), so I worship the God of my fathers; believing all things that are written in the Law and the Prophets!"
[Acts 24:14]

Then, near the very end of his ministry, Shaul is asked by the Jews in the synagogue at Rome about the Nazarene sect, to which he belonged:

“For indeed concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere.” [Acts 28:22]

The Christian assessment is that the Messiah Yeshua came to do away with the Jewish people, and to nail the Law to the Cross. However, as we will see, the actual record in Scripture does not support this hypothesis.

The Word does not say that the Apostle Shaul saw himself as a member of a new *Christian* group that had replaced the Jews as a people: Rather, it shows us that he thought of himself only as an Israeli who now believed that Yeshua was the prophesied Messiah.

Scripture tells us that Shaul saw himself as a member of the sect (or the sub-set) of the Nation of Israel that believed. Thus, the *Nazarenes* did not see themselves as the replacement of Israel, but part of it.

True, Deuteronomy 18:18 did foretell a Prophet like Moses arising from among the brotherhood; and that whoever did not listen to that Prophet would be punished:

***I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.
19 And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.
[Deuteronomy 18:18-19]***

Stephen even refers to this prophecy in Acts chapter seven, thus implying that those who did not accept Yeshua’s sacrifice for their sins would be punished. However, if history is any indication, the Nazarenes seem to have differed sharply with the Christians as to whose job it was to do that punishing.

History tells us the Christians performed acts of great savagery upon the Jews; but there is no record that the Nazarenes ever performed any act of violence against any other Israelite sect (Jewish, Christian, or otherwise). Instead, Scripture and secular history both record that it was the Jews who first behaved violently towards the Nazarenes (Yeshua and Stephen, et al); and then the Christians later exacted revenge upon anyone keeping ‘Jewish observances’, which also included the Nazarenes.

How did the Christians persecute the Nazarenes? In 336 CE, the Roman Church issued the following edict, justifying the death of anyone found ‘Judaizing’ (keeping the Jewish observances). This was because the Roman Church considered that any believer who kept these observances was a *heretic*, despite the fact that the Apostles (and even the Messiah) had kept such observances themselves:

***“Christians must not ‘Judaize’ by resting on the Sabbath; but must work on that day, honoring rather the Lord’s Day (‘Sun’ day) by resting, if possible, as Christians.
However, if any (Nazarene) be found ‘Judaizing’, let them be shut out from Christ.” (Other translations read, “Let them be anathema to Christ.”)
[The Church of Imperial Rome; Council of Laodicea under the Emperor Constantine; Canon 29, 336 CE]***

The Law Not Nailed to the Cross?

Although the term *Christian* is not used in the Text (per se) until Acts Chapter Eleven, the first Christian probably appears as early as Mark 9:38:

38 And John answered Him, saying, "Rabbi, we saw someone casting out demons in Your Name, who does not follow us. And we stopped him, because he does not follow us."

39 But (Yeshua) said, "Do not stop him! For there is no one who shall do a work of power in My Name, yet be able to speak evil of Me quickly; for he who is not against us is for us."

[Mark 9:38-40]

Why was this man probably a Christian?

Christians believe the Messiah came to "Nail the Law to the Cross;" and for this reason they reject obedience to the Law as a prerequisite of following Yeshua (or Jesus). This is because, according to Christian doctrine, all one needs to do to follow the Messiah is to call upon His Name.

Mark 9:38 shows that this doctrine is false. If all one must do to follow Yeshua is to call upon His Name, then why did John tell us that there was a man who was casting out demons in Yeshua's Name, who was not following Him? Surely, to cast out a demon in Yeshua's Name is to call upon His Name; and yet this man was "not following."

To understand the hidden meaning of this passage, first we must understand the Western Gentile Church's definition of the word 'belief' (as well as the different definition that the Nazarenes used).

The Western Church teaches that in order to inherit eternal life, all one must do is to believe on Yeshua. The Nazarenes agreed with this, except that they had a far more stringent set of criteria as to what actually qualified as *belief*. Since the Nazarene standard was more rigorous than the Christian one, they felt the Christian standard was inadequate.

But how can all this be?

Hellenic (Grecian) philosophy generally equates thought and belief. It says that if someone *thinks* that something is true, they *believe* it is true. Therefore, if someone were to think that Yeshua is the Messiah, he (or she) *believes* that He is the Messiah. According to this Hellenistic model, then, just *thinking* that Yeshua is the Messiah is enough to get one saved.

Notice, however, the logical aftermath of this philosophy, which does not call for obedience to any external standard: Just as long as one *thinks* Yeshua is the Messiah, then there are no other rules of conduct. One can worship on whichever day one wants, and can do as one pleases. One enjoys complete freedom, just as long as one thinks that Yeshua is the Messiah.

The Nazarenes rejected this thought-centered model as being insufficient. This is because, in the Hebraic model, right-action is the proof of belief. This is because the *Hebrew* belief is that God (or *Elohim*, in Hebrew) demands that all men do what is right (as codified in Elohim's Laws). Therefore, if one's beliefs do not lead one to obey Elohim's Commandments, then one's beliefs are functionally flawed (and by logical extension, one does not properly *believe*).

This *Hebraic* model tells us that no matter how well-intentioned we might be, merely to *think* that Yeshua is the Messiah is not enough to save us. Rather, genuine belief requires us to demonstrate our obedience to His Commands. The reason that His Commands are so critical is they are the only reliable external standard by which men can safely judge their own actions; for a man's own heart is desperately wicked, and deceitful above all things:

9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Who can know it? [Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 17:9]

According to this *Nazarene* model, men cannot generally be trusted to know what is right and wrong on their own, because their own selfish desires will lead them astray. Therefore, obedience to His Commands is the only genuine proof of one's faith; and without such substantiation, genuine faith is not present.

This kind of thinking confuses most Christians. The Church has always taught that the desire to obey Elohim's (God's) Commandments is nothing more than Legalism; and as such, it should be strictly avoided.

The Church also teaches that since Yeshua came to nail the Law to the Cross, that as long as we have Love, there are no more Commandments to obey, and one has complete liberty in the Messiah:

13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." [Galatians 5:13-14]

But is this doctrine that the Law has been nullified correct? There appear to be some serious problems with it. For example, in His very first sermon, Yeshua clearly told His followers *not* to think He had come to do away with the Law or the Prophets:

17 "Think not that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but (only) to fulfill.

18 For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, nothing at all shall pass from the Law, till all is fulfilled.

19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven.

But whoever does and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."

[Matthew 5:17-19]

The Christian doctrine that Yeshua was sent to abolish the Law is confusing, when one considers that it directly violates His own Words. Further, Scripture never prophesied that the Law or the Prophets would be abolished, and there are numerous prophecies to the contrary (e.g., Malachi 3:6, Jeremiah 31:36, Matthew 5:17-19, and others).

Ironically, when confronted with Yeshua's Words, many Christians will search through Shaul's letters, searching for something that can be used to explain Him away. When asked why they would use the words of a mere mortal to explain away the Words of the Son of Man, they don't have an answer; but still they believe Shaul's words to be superior to Yeshua's.

The Apostle Peter (actually Kefa) warned us that Shaul's writings were difficult to understand; and that there was a group of believers in his day who misused Shaul's writings, in order to justify a Lawless agenda:

15 And think of the long-suffering of our Master as Salvation (literally: Yeshua), as also our beloved brother Shaul wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him;

16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable twist, to their destruction, as also the rest of the Scriptures.

17 Then beloved, you being forewarned, watch; lest being led by the error of Lawlessness you should fall from your own steadfastness.

[2nd Peter 3:15-17]

Who was it in the first century who believed in Yeshua, but also believed that the Apostle Shaul's words told us that the Law is abolished? Could it have been the very same group of people who still today believe in Yeshua (or Jesus), and yet argue that the words of the Apostle Paul tell us that the Law is abolished?

Could it be that the people the Apostle Kefa wrote to warn us about were the Christians?

Yes it was; and to understand why, first we need to learn more about the true function and purpose of the Law.

The Torah: A Marital Contract

Since the Nazarenes were religious Jews who had come to believe in Yeshua, they would have been drilled in the fundamentals of Judaism from the time they were able to talk.

One of Judaism's fundamentals, then, is that when Jehovah (or Yahweh; actually Yahuwah) brought the Children of Israel up from their bondage in Egypt, He brought them to the foot of Mount Sinai, and there gave them a code of Instructions that essentially amounted to a spiritual marital contract. This spiritual marital contract was called the *Law of Moses*, otherwise called the *Torah*, in Hebrew.

In truth, the word *Torah* does not actually translate to 'Law.' It is called the *Law* because the Words of the King of the Universe do carry the weight of Law. However, the word *Torah* actually translates to *Instruction*; and in this context, it means *the bride's Instructions*.

The Torah, then, was the written Instruction that anyone wishing to become Yahuwah's (or YHWH's) bride should practice, because it would 'purify' them.

Further, it was given as a kind of a betrothal:

Then all the people answered together and said, "All that YHWH has spoken, we will do."
[Exodus 19:8]

The Children of Israel gave their "I do's" at the foot of Mount Sinai, and in light of this knowledge we need to ask ourselves one very important question: If

the Torah is the marital contract between Yahuwah (YHWH) and His people, then why do the Christians want to see it abolished?

Why indeed? Moses (or Moshe) tells us that YHWH gave the Torah to Israel for her own good:

12 “And now, Israel, what has YHWH your Elohim asked of you, except to fear YHWH your Elohim, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him; and to serve YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul; to keep the commandments of YHWH, and His statutes, which I am commanding you today for your good.”

[Devarim (Deuteronomy) 10:12-13]

The thought of a loving bride rejoicing that the Bridegroom came to set her free from something that was given to her for her good makes absolutely no sense; but Christianity is based upon this very premise.

However, realizing that the Torah was given as a list of requests from the King of the Universe to His fiancée, we can now understand verses like Yochanan Aleph (1st John) 2:3-5, which tell us that unless we truly desire to keep the Bridegroom’s Torah, we do not really know (or love) the Bridegroom:

3 And by this we know that we know Him; if we keep His commandments.

4 He who says, “I have known Him,” but not keeping His Commandments is a liar; and the Truth is not in that one.

5 But whoever keeps His Word, truly in this one the love of Elohim has been perfected: By this we know we are in Him.
[First John 2:3-5]

Then he also tells us that:

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness; for sin is lawlessness.

[Yochanan Aleph (1st John) 3:4]

The Nazarenes might consider that if sin is lawlessness, then lawlessness is sin. Therefore, if one ignores His Bridal Contract, one is essentially sinning.

Humans were created as a bride unto YHWH; and if we are unwilling to keep the King’s Bridal Contract, then we cannot truly respect (or love) the Bridegroom.

Epiphanius and M. Simon admit that the Apostles kept the Law; and yet Christianity generally refuses to acknowledge this fact. It is even recorded that the Church originally excluded Yochanan’s (John’s) letters from the Canon, because His Pro-Torah writings conflicted with the Roman Church doctrines.

In modern times, many Christians still hold to this anti-Law stance, citing John 3:16 in their defense:

16 For Elohim so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

[Yochanan (John) 3:16]

Christianity interprets this verse to mean that in order to receive eternal life, all one must do is to believe on Yeshua; and, perhaps, to call upon His Name. This may seem right, but only twenty verses later we are told that unless we obey the Torah, such thought-belief is not enough:

**36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of Elohim abides on him.”
[Yochanan (John) 3:36]**

This passage confuses many Christians. If the Law is abolished, then what is it that the Baptist says that they are to obey?

The Baptist, however, speaks clearly. He tells us that if we believe in the Son, we will receive eternal life. However, if we do not obey the Son's Instructions (Torah) then we will not see that life, as the Bridegroom will refuse to take to Himself any bride who does not love Him enough to do what He asks.

Many Christians cannot bring themselves to accept John the Baptist's words, because they conflict with concepts they have always held dear.

The King James translators could not accept John the Baptist's words either, and so they translated John 3:36 as follows:

**36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God [Elohim] abideth on him.
[John 3:36, KJV]**

Here we see some of the anti-Law bias that Kefa (Peter) warned us about, in his second epistle (above).

The King James translation suggests that if we believe in Yeshua, we have everlasting life. However, if we do not believe Yeshua, we will not receive eternal life. This seems to make perfect sense: The only problem is that it conflicts with the Greek Texts.

When we study this passage in the Greek, we find there are two different words in the Greek, both of which were translated into the English as 'believe.' However, only one of these words is correct:

**36 He that [Strong's G#4100] on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that [Strong's G#544] the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.
[John 3:36, KJV]**

Strong's G#4100 is 'pisteuoon', meaning to *think* something is true (or to believe that something is true, but only in an intellectual sense).

In contrast, Strong's G#544 is 'apeithoon', meaning to disbelieve, in the sense of *disobeying*.

When we plug these words in at the appropriate places, we see that what John the Baptist really said is that anyone *thinking* Yeshua is the Messiah does indeed receive eternal life. However, unless this thought-belief leads them to obey the Marital Covenant, they will not be taken as part of His bride; and therefore they will not see eternal life.

In other words, John the Baptist tells us that to live forever, one must obey the Bridal Covenant (so that one can be taken as part of the bride).

These words are clear, but Christianity insists that the Torah is too difficult to keep; and that asking the believers to keep the Commandments is an impossible, unnecessary burden. This, however, is against the Apostle Yochanan's (John's) first epistle:

2 By this we know that we love the children of Elohim: when we love Elohim, and keep His commandments.

3 For this is the love of Elohim: that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome (to us). [1st John 5:2-3]

The reason the Nazarenes did not find His Commandments to be burdensome was because they loved their Husband, and wanted to do whatever they could, to please Him.

Conversely, the Christians said they loved their Husband, but yet they rejoiced at the thought that they had been set free from doing those things He had said would please Him.

One may well ask, "Which one of these two philosophies is really motivated by Love?"

While pondering that question, consider that at Acts 24:14, the Nazarene Apostle Shaul told us that he still believed all things that had been written in the Law, and the Prophets:

"According to the Way which they say is a sect (KJV: heresy), so I worship the ancestral One; believing all things that are written in the Law and the Prophets!" [Acts 24:14]

This could not have reliably been said of any *Christian*.

However, as we will see below, the *Nazarene* Apostle Shaul was willing to part with a relatively large sum of money to publicly demonstrate that he still believed in obeying even the most seemingly-obscure Commands that were written in the Law.

Does Love Do Away With the Law?

At Matthew 22:37, Yeshua quotes two verses from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18), to show us that the Torah 'hangs on' love:

37 "You shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (Leviticus 19:18)

40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."
[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 22:37-40]

By quoting these two verses, Yeshua shows us that Love was always the foundation (or the underpinning) of the Torah. He also implies that without love, the Commandments will fall to the ground (where 'falling to the ground' is a Hebraic idiom that means 'to perish', and/or 'to become utterly useless').

Christianity, however, takes Yeshua's analogy one step further. Christianity suggests that since the Covenant hangs on love, that love has already rendered the Commandments null, and void. But does that even make sense? Why would love do away with something that was 'hung' upon it? Does a building's foundation destroy the structure on top of it?

If we follow this line of thought to its logical end-point, we will find a hidden malice in Christianity's spirit.

Since Yeshua quotes from the Torah to show that love is still the foundation of the Torah, it means that love always was the foundation of the Torah; even in Moses' time.

However, if Love always was the foundation of the Torah, but Christianity now tells us that Love has replaced the Torah (after Yeshua's sacrifice), then this would mean that the Torah was always kind of a waste of time; or worse.

Christianity supposes that the Torah is too difficult for any human being to keep, even though Moshe (or Moses) tells us the exact opposite:

11 "For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you; nor is it far off.

12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'

13 Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'

14 But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. [Deuteronomy 30:11-14]

See if you can follow this line of thought:

If the Torah was impossible for Israel to keep, and if all that ever really mattered was Love, then when YHWH gave the children of Israel the Torah, He was giving them a kind of a curse. He was intentionally setting them up to fail by giving them an impossible task, so He could reject them cruelly in the end.

True, the Apostle Shaul does tell the Galatians that the Torah can be a kind of a curse; if they mistakenly believe they can earn their Salvation by works of the Law (as opposed to believing in Yeshua):

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the Law, to do them."
[Galatians 3:10]

As we will see near the end of this book, the key operant phrase here is *of the works of the Law*. This did not pertain to the Nazarenes, but was actually directed at a sect called *The Circumcision*. These believed that although Yeshua was the Messiah, they still had to save themselves through works of the Law. For this reason Shaul says they were 'of' the Law, or 'under' the Law. Shaul told them that Yeshua had been sent to set them free from that faulty delusion. In fact, as we will see later, almost the entire Book of Galatians is dedicated to this topic.

Contrary to Christian doctrine, Nazarene Shaul did not say that he no longer believed what was written in the Law, or the Prophets. Rather, he was telling those of the now-extinct sect called *The Circumcision* not to believe that they could save themselves by the works of their own hands.

But while it is a curse to try to mistakenly earn one's way to Salvation, was the Marital Covenant intentionally given as a curse?

Did a heartless, merciless Elohim reward Jacob for his faith, by giving Jacob's children an impossible Law they could never keep?

Did YHWH intentionally set Israel up for a fall by giving them an impossible task, and then rejecting them forever, when they were unable to perform it?

This concept makes YHWH out to be evil; but Christianity assumes this concept is true, when it tells us that the Law was always impossible to keep.

The question any logical mind should ask itself, however, is why Love would abolish the Covenant, when the Covenant was always based upon Love. Does the idea even make sense?

Does a foundation abolish a house? Or do coat-hooks abolish the coats that are hung upon them?

Why would Love abolish the Covenant, when the abolition of the Marital Covenant was never prophesied anywhere in Scripture?

And why would YHWH dispose of Israel's children when the promises to Avraham, Isaac and Jacob had been given as an *everlasting* covenant?

***7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be Elohim to you, and to your descendants after you.
[Breisheet (Genesis) 17:7]***

When YHWH tells us that the Covenant with Noah was an everlasting covenant (Genesis 9:16), Christians expect it to last forever. However, when this exact same word ('olam': forever) is used with regard to the promises given to the Patriarchs, Christianity tells us that these promises were only temporary (or were somehow conditional), because YHWH only gave them 'to the Jews.'

Despite the lack of intellectual honesty in Christianity's foundational argument, many Christians still adamantly insist that Love does away with the Law. Many of these insist that the only Commandments the Apostles observed after Yeshua's death were the Two Great Commandments: To love YHWH, and to love one's neighbor.

Others suggest that after Yeshua's Ascension, the only Commandments the Apostles would have kept were just the Ten Commandments (which were written on two tables of stone).

But what should we think if the New Covenant actually showed us that the Apostles kept more than just the Ten Commandments, even many years after Yeshua's Ascension?

What if the New Covenant actually showed that although the Apostles absolutely did not believe that the performance of the Law would lead to Salvation, they nonetheless continued to diligently keep all the Commandments that were written in the Torah; even the seemingly obscure ones?

What would that tell us?

Understanding Acts Twenty-One

In Acts 18:18, Shaul shaved his head, for he had taken a vow:

18 And having remained many days more, having taken leave of the brothers, Shaul sailed to Syria, having shaved his head; for he had (taken) a vow. [Ma'aseh (Acts) 18:18]

The only vow in Scripture in which the man or woman must shave his or her head is the Nazirite vow, given at Numbers Chapter Six (in the Torah of Moshe).

According to Numbers Chapter Six, when one separates (or ends) one's vow, one must shave one's head, and then go up to the Temple at Jerusalem, to offer the animal sacrifices for cleansing.

Since the term 'go up' is Hebraic idiom for 'going up' to Jerusalem, we see that this is precisely what the Apostle Shaul did:

21 But he took leave of them, saying, "By all means it is necessary for me to keep the coming feast in Jerusalem: But I will come again to you, Elohim willing!"
22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. [Ma'aseh (Acts) 18:21]

Interestingly, Shaul took this vow at least twice, because in Acts Chapter Twenty-One he had to end yet another Nazirite vow (when he met with the Apostles in Jerusalem).

Scripture tells us that those in Jerusalem were elated to hear the reports of Shaul's successes among the Gentiles; but there was also a problem. Those in Jerusalem were still very zealous for the Law of Moshe; but they had heard reports that Shaul no longer was. In fact, it was rumored that Shaul now taught against the Law of Moshe; and against the Hebraic customs.

Since Israel is operationally defined as those who strive diligently to keep His Covenant, teaching against the Covenant would have been an instant-disfellowship offense. Therefore, in order to discern the truth, a confrontation took place between the Apostles Ya'akov (or James), and Shaul.

This conversation is recorded for us in Acts Chapter Twenty-One. Let's read it carefully:

20 And hearing, they glorified YHWH, and said to (Shaul), "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed (on Yeshua), and all are (still) zealous for the Law (of Moshe)!"

21 "But they were informed about you, that you (now) teach against (the Law of) Moshe, telling all the Jews throughout the nations not to circumcise their children, nor to walk according to the (Hebraic) customs.

22 "What, then, is it? At all (the pilgrimage festivals), a multitude must come together; and they will (surely) hear that you have come.

[Ma'aseh (Acts) 21:20-22]

At 2nd Timothy 3:16, the Apostle Shaul told us that all Scripture is profitable:

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of Elohim, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of Elohim may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
[2nd Timothy 3:16-17]

If all Scripture is *profitable*, do we not need to understand all of it?

Curious, then, is that in contrast to Shaul's teaching that all Scripture is *profitable*, Christianity says that Love is all that matters. Because of this, it has become common Christian practice to gloss over any part of the Word that is not easy to understand, or readily pleasing; and many even try to explain away any passage that conflicts with Church dogma.

Notice the hypocrisy: A few Christians treat all Scripture as profitable, but the general trend is not only not to read it, but to ignore any passage that does not reinforce what one wants to believe. It is also generally accepted practice to skip over any passage one does not readily understand (since Love is all that matters).

Though they would never admit it, the Christians seem to believe that the Inspiring Spirit is some times just a bunch of hot air; and that even though all Scripture is *profitable*, that some of it amounts to nothing more than simple nonsense, filler, and/or fluff.

However, if we take a step back, and take in the big picture of the First Century CE, we will see that Acts Chapters Eighteen and Twenty-One are profitable for doctrine indeed.

The Apostle Kefa (or Peter) told us (at 2nd Kefa 3:16, above) that Shaul's writings can be difficult to understand. Because of this, it seems reasonable to conclude that even he and the other Apostles had a difficult time understanding Shaul's letters.

Shaul's letters were widely circulated among the synagogues in the Dispersion; yet it also seems likely that his letters eventually found their way back to the Apostles in Jerusalem. The Apostles would then have become very curious to know what to make of these letters, which seemed to suggest that the Law was now somehow abolished.

Since Israel is operationally defined as those who are doing their utmost to keep His Bridal Covenant, Shaul's letters would have caused a great deal of confusion on all sides. The Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Christians all would have thought that Shaul was indeed supporting the idea that the Bridal Covenant had been replaced by simple love; and the Apostles in Jerusalem would have been extremely unhappy that the term *Nazarene* was being equated with such a lawless idea.

Shaul had been a highly respected rabbi before his Salvation, and even now he was still highly influential among both the Christian and Nazarene communities. It would have been important to the Nazarenes to know what he was actually teaching.

In order to clear up the confusion as to what Shaul actually meant in his letters, Ya'akov confronted Shaul, and asked him if he had indeed intended to suggest that the Covenant was done away with.

Although the conversation is not recorded for us in its entirety, given an analysis of the greater overall context of the passage, we can safely infer that Shaul explained that he still taught the Marital Covenant. However, since the *Gentiles* were strangers to the

Torah (and hence found it strange), Shaul had found it necessary not merely to detail the Commandments, but to explain to the *Gentiles* that the Law was really all about how to walk out spiritual love in the human world. In so doing, he had to explain that without Love, all of the other commandments are pointless; like crossed t's and dotted i's that don't add up to a word.

As Shaul explained to the others present that he indeed still taught the observance of the Marital Contract, it may have become clear to Ya'akov (and the rest of the Apostles present) that in trying to explain the Word so finely to *Gentile* audiences, Shaul had left himself wide-open to misinterpretation.

When the Apostles put together their original canon, they placed the writings of Ya'akov, Kefa, Yochanan and Yehudah (James, Peter, John and Jude) in front of the epistles of Shaul. This was done precisely so the reader would first read the warnings contained in these so-called 'Jewish' Apostles' letters and not think that Shaul was suggesting that the Commandments were done away with. (The order was later re-arranged by the Church.) However, in that moment (in Acts Chapter Eighteen), something had to be done to clear up the confusion that existed between the Nazarene, Christian and Jewish communities.

Although the entire conversation is not recorded for us, Ya'akov probably suggested that if Shaul indeed never meant to imply that Love did away with the Law, then it would be best for him to demonstrate this publicly. Israelites were coming up for the Pentecost from all over the known world. These would then be able to see with their own eyes that Shaul indeed still walked orderly, keeping the Laws of Moses. These would then go home to their respective synagogues and spread the truth about Shaul by word of mouth.

Therefore, Ya'akov then told Shaul that if he wanted to clear up all the confusion that he should...

23 "Then do this, what we say to you: There are four men (here, besides yourself, also) having a (Nazirite) vow on themselves:

24 Take them, be purified with them, and (you) pay their expenses (so) that they may (also) shave their heads: And then all shall know that what they have been told about you is nothing; but that you yourself walk orderly, keeping the Law (of Moses)." [Acts 21:23-24]

Since this event takes place near the very end of Shaul's ministry, after the bulk of his epistles were already written, this passage is of singular importance in defining how one must approach the writings of the Apostle Shaul.

The Law that Shaul and Ya'akov are discussing here cannot possibly be just the Ten Commandments, because none of the Ten Commandments specify a legal procedure which requires one to shave one's head, or go up to Jerusalem, or offer up animal sacrifices. Only the Law of Moses does that.

Further, the sacrifices required to separate the Nazirite vows of five men amount to fifteen animals. Shaul apparently had enough money on him and agreed that it was important to part with it, to demonstrate his continuing devotion to the Covenant.

If Shaul had taught that Love did away with the Law, this passage would read very differently: but it does not read differently.

What the Book of Acts shows us, then, is that the Apostles continued to offer up the animal sacrifices even many years after Yeshua's Ascension. It also seems to suggest that the only reason they stopped is because the Romans destroyed the Temple.

This is how the Text actually reads; but many Christians find this fact disturbing. While this may seem to be due to the successes of so-called Animal Rights groups in the modern era, more foundationally it stems from the Western Church's teaching that Yeshua was sent to free His bride from her Covenant (and the associated Temple sacrificial system); and therefore the Temple sacrifices are allegedly unnecessary.

When first coming to appreciate the truth, Christians sometimes fear that an acceptance of the facts might mean that they would have to reject their belief in Yeshua's Deity. While such fears are easy to understand, they are utterly groundless. If the Apostles continued to believe in Yeshua's Deity while keeping the whole Law, they can too.

Having put to rest any fears over an imagined need to deny Yeshua's Deity, a dozen questions then arise as to why Yeshua's sacrifice as the sinless Passover Lamb apparently did not persuade the Apostles to abandon the Temple sacrificial system. We can see that the Apostles still offered up the Temple sacrifices: But why did they do so?

A complete explanation of the Temple sacrificial system is beyond the scope of this introductory work. However, it should be possible to help the average reader understand why the Apostles continued to offer the Temple sacrifices by reviewing the system briefly here.

Hebrews 10:3-4 tells us that the blood of bulls and goats never could take away sins:

***3 But in these offerings is a reminder of sins year by year;
4 For it is impossible for blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
[Ivrim (Hebrews) 10:3-4]***

While the Church uses this as an alleged proof-Text to show that the animal sacrifices have been done away with, the truth is actually the exact opposite.

Israel is operationally defined as those persons striving to keep His Covenant. Those not striving to keep His Covenant were always to be purged from the midst of the camp, so as to keep the rest of the camp pure, and untainted.

Since everyone in Israel was supposed to strive fearfully to attain and then maintain his or her status as part of the bride, it was always expected that when an Israelite was made aware of the fact that he or she had sinned, that he or she would correct his or her own self. (This stands in contrast to the judicial systems of all other nations, where the threat of punishment is used to instill a false sense of order.)

Since punishment was not supposed to be needed in a brotherhood that was striving diligently to please the Bridegroom, the sin sacrifices were only intended to serve as an external reminder to the one having sinned, not to sin any more.

Specifically, the sacrifices served as a graphic demonstration that the wages of sin is death; and that unless one obeyed the Covenant, they would be cut off from eternal life (as they would not be chosen as part of His bride).

Another useful piece of knowledge is that a study of Leviticus 4 and Numbers 15 indicates that the only time sin is forgiven is when it is:

- a. Not rebellious against YHWH's authority; and
- b. The sinner has truly repented.

Under all other conditions, sin is *not* forgiven; and the punishment for such sin is death (e.g. Numbers 15:30, and elsewhere).

In King David's infamous sin with Bathsheba, King David's sin was both intentional, and pre-meditated. However, his actions were committed in so-called 'hot blood': *not* as an act of intentional rebellion against YHWH, or His authority.

When the prophet Nathan finally broke through King David's denial (and made his sin clear to him), King David repented; and then YHWH forgave his sin.

Notice, however, that in spite of King David's repentance there was still a death-penalty to be paid (see 2nd Samuel 12). The child of this illicit liaison died.

Further, we should note that the animal sacrifices were only ever intended to temporarily *atone* for our sins, until Yeshua would *take away* our death penalty for all time. However, that Yeshua took the death penalty for our sins in the Heavenly realms (allowing us to inherit eternal life) does not alter the fact that whenever a believer commits a sin here on earth, there still needs to be an earthly punishment (if only to serve as an external, graphic reminder to weak flesh and blood that sin has deadly consequences).

Not everyone is King David, so for a much more mundane example, suppose that a Temple existed today. Further suppose that you are a cattle rancher, and that you have committed a sin.

When confronted with your sin, if you do not repent, you are in rebellion against YHWH's Torah (and are therefore in rebellion against His authority). As brutal as it sounds, you must surely be put to death, because the only way to keep the rest of the Nation safe from the leavening effects of sin is to maintain an absolute sense of purity within the Nation's borders.

In contrast, if you do fear YHWH (and value your opportunity to regain your status as part of His bride), then once your sin becomes clear to you, you will automatically (and willingly) repent.

Once you have repented, YHWH forgives your sin. It was always thus; even in the time of Moshe.

However, once forgiven, you must now punish yourself. You must voluntarily take your very finest prize-winning bull up to the Temple, and offer him up in sacrifice, to YHWH. You will even have to eat part of your finest prize-winning bull yourself, so that you may feel true revulsion because of your sinfulness.

The blood of your prize-winning bull can never take away your sin: Only YHWH can do that. However, the loss of your prize-winning bull will serve as a continuing reminder to you not to sin like that again; which is why Hebrews 10:3-4 tells us:

3 But in these offerings is (only) a reminder of sins year by year;

4 For it is impossible for blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

[Ivrim (Hebrews) 10:3-4]

A more complete explanation of the sacrificial system will have to wait for another time, but Acts Chapter Twenty-One shows us that as long as the Temple stood, the Apostles still felt motivated to offer up the animal sacrifices at the appropriate times. This is surely because they knew Yeshua's Words at Matthew 5:17 to be true: That until Heaven and earth passed away, nothing would fall from the Law of Moses (because it is the bride's Marital Contract).

Why the Same Days of Worship?

The Roman Catholic Church makes use of the Roman calendar, in which the day begins at midnight. In contrast to this, the Hebrew calendar day begins at evening. For example, Genesis 1:31 tells us:

31 And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. [Genesis 1:31]

Leviticus 23 verifies this, telling us that the Hebrew day lasts from evening to evening:

32 On the ninth day of the month, at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe your Sabbath.” [Vayiqra (Leviticus) 23:32]

We will see that the Apostles continued to worship on the Jewish-Israelite calendar (which is why Shaul went up to Jerusalem, for the Pentecost). However, the Roman Church uses certain passages in the New Covenant to justify their switch to the Roman calendar, in which the primary days of worship have always been the Sun-day, Christmas, and Easter.

Since the Nazarenes lived in First Century Judea (which was under the subjection of the Roman Empire), did the Nazarene Apostles use the Roman calendar primarily? Or did they (rather) continue to use the Scriptural Hebrew calendar, since this was the calendar commanded in Torah?

One passage the Church has traditionally used to justify Sun-day worship is Acts 20:7:

7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Shaul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

8 There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together.

9 And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Shaul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.

10 But Shaul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him."

11 Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. 12 And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted. [Acts 20:7-12]

According to the Church, the disciples met to eat on Sun-day morning, listened to Shaul until midnight (when Eutychus fell out the window), and then, after eating again, they continued until daybreak (Monday).

This interpretation might seem to make sense, except why were there so many lamps in the room, if the disciples initially met during daylight hours? And why did they skip lunch and dinner?

When we examine this passage with the assumption that the Apostles were keeping the Hebrew calendar, then it makes much more sense.

Jewish custom is to worship at the synagogue (or at the Temple) during the Sabbath, and then to go over to a friend's house after sundown, in order to stretch out the day of worship and rest as long as possible. When gathering for this after-Sabbath festivity, the Jewish people usually also share a communal meal. In the Hebrew idiom, this custom is known as 'breaking bread.'

If we assume that the disciples gathered after the Sabbath was over (just after sundown) and ate such a communal dinner together, this would explain why they needed so many lamps. Also, they would have been enjoying a traditional Jewish time of worship and celebration by eating (rather than going hungry).

This very same kind of post-Sabbath friendship-and-fellowship bread-breaking also appears in the Good News, in the Book of John:

19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled (for fear of the Jews) Yeshua came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." [Yochanan (John) 20:19]

Yeshua was crucified (or impaled) at the spring festival of the Passover. Jerusalem can already be hot by that time; and if it was hot, then the logical thing would have been to leave the doors open. However, since there was indeed persecution, the disciples had to close their doors. Thus, the only thing really unusual was Yeshua's appearance.

The Christian Church, however, uses these two passages to justify Sun-day worship. This is curious, considering that the Book of Acts specifies that the Apostle Shaul's custom was to go into the Jewish synagogues on the Day of the Sabbath:

14 But going through from Perga, they arrived to Antioch-Pisidia, and going into the synagogue on the day of the Sabbath, they sat down.

15 And after the reading of the Law, and of the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent to them, saying, "Men, brothers, if there is any word of exhortation to the people, speak!"

16 And rising up and signaling with his hand, Shaul said, "Men, Israelites, and the ones fearing Elohim, hear!"

[Ma'aseh (Acts) 13:14-16]

Shaul indeed went throughout the known world, trying to persuade those in the synagogues to believe on Yeshua. However, Shaul never 'planted a Church.' About the closest he ever got was when he was thrown out of the synagogue in Corinth, and had to establish a Nazarene synagogue next door:

5 When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Shaul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Yeshua is the Messiah.

6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

7 And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped Elohim, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on YHWH with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were immersed (or baptized).

[Ma'aseh (Acts) 18:5-8]

Crispus was apparently also expelled from the main synagogue after coming to believe on Yeshua, as verse 17 (not shown) identifies another man named Sosthenes as the new ruler of the (main) synagogue.

However, as the next chapter will show, though Shaul founded a new assembly at Corinth, it would not have been called a 'Church' (at least by its attendees); but it would have been called a synagogue.

More importantly, this fellowship would not have met on Sun-day. Shaul would have established it as a Sabbath-keeping congregation, since Shaul followed Yeshua, and his custom was the same as Yeshua's:

16 So (Yeshua) came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. [Luke 4:16]

So why does the Christian lore tell us the Apostles began to keep new and different festival days after Yeshua's death, when a responsible examination of the New Covenant shows no such evidence?

The word 'Easter' appears in the King James Version at Acts 12:4, but this is only because the King James translators incorrectly rendered the Greek word *Pascha* (meaning the Passover) as 'Easter':

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter (sic) to bring him forth to the people.

[Ma'aseh (Acts) 12:4 KJV]

All major versions since the King James have corrected this error. Even the New King James reads:

4 So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

[Ma'aseh (Acts) 12:4 NKJV]

There are several other references to the Passover in the New Covenant. All these indicate that the Apostles were still keeping the Hebrew calendar, many years after Yeshua's Ascension:

6 And we sailed away after the Days of Unleavened Bread (meaning, the Passover). [Ma'aseh (Acts) 20:6]

There are also numerous references telling us that the Apostles continued to observe the Festival of the Pentecost:

8 But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost. [1st Corinthians 16:8]

And, as mentioned before, we know that this was still the Hebrew Pentecost, because the Apostle Shaul was hurrying to observe this festival in Jerusalem (rather than Rome):

16 For Shaul had decided to sail by Ephesus, so as not to spend time in Asia, for he hastened if it was possible for him to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. [Acts 20:16]

Many Christians also miss the reference to the Day of Atonement in the New Covenant. It is called 'the Fast' at Acts 27:9, because the Day of Atonement is traditionally observed by fasting:

9 And much time having passed, and the voyage already being dangerous because the Fast had now gone by.... [Ma'aseh (Acts) 27:9]

Boat travel was dangerous because weather in the Mediterranean can be turbulent after the Fast, which is always held in fall. The main thing to notice, however, is that the authors of the New Covenant used idiomatic language (slang).

Even though the word 'Fast' is translated perfectly from Greek into the English, unless one understands that it was a slang reference to the Day of Atonement, one can easily miss the fact that the Apostles were still using the Hebrew calendar.

Christian scholarship appears intent on ignoring Yeshua's caution not to think He had come to destroy either the Law, or the Prophets:

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law, or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy (them), but (only) to fulfill them.

18 For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, nothing at all will pass from the Law, until all is fulfilled.

19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. [Mattithyahu (Matthew) 5:17-19]

Even though Yeshua said not to think He came to destroy the Law or the Prophets, many Christians think just exactly that. They suggest that because Yeshua came in fulfillment of the Festivals, one is no longer required to keep them.

These Christians suggest that the Law is like a bank loan: Once you have paid your loan, the loan is now 'Paid in Full'; and therefore this loan is 'fulfilled.' Once it is fulfilled, it has become void; and they suggest that it is likewise this way with the Law.

But are laws like a loan? And, if you repay a loan, does that mean you will no longer have to obey any of the laws that govern banking?

At Luke 4:18, Yeshua stood up in front of the synagogue at Nazareth to say that He had come to fulfill the first part of the prophecy at Isaiah 60-61:

16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.

17 And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah (or Yeshayahu). And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

18 "The Spirit of YHWH is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Good News to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and 19 "to proclaim the acceptable year of YHWH...." [Luqa (Luke) 4:16-19]

In Yeshayahu (Isaiah), the passage continues:

2 And the Day of Vengeance of our Elohim. [Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 61:2]

Even though Yeshua does not intend to fulfill Isaiah 61:2 until His Second Coming, still He said He was sent to *fulfill* the first part of it (Isaiah 61:1):

20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." [Luqa (Luke) 4:16-21]

Yeshua fulfilled Isaiah 61:1, but He must return to fulfill Isaiah 61:2 (the Day of Vengeance of our Elohim, above). Both the Law and the Prophets speak of Yeshua's eventual return; but if the Law and the Prophets are now destroyed, then how will Yeshua ever return to fulfill the second half of this prophecy?

Is this what the Christians really want? Do the Christians hope Yeshua will not be able to return and fulfill the second half of the Prophecies? Is that why they want to see the Law and the Prophets destroyed?

If the Christian hypothesis is true (that the Law and the Prophets were annulled), then why does the Apostle Shaul tell us (below) that the festivals are shadows of things *still* to come? That is precisely what Colossians 2:16-17 says, although most people do not realize it, because of major errors in most of the English translations.

For example, the King James Version reads:

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moons, or of the sabbath (days): [17] Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body (is) of Christ. [Colossians 2:16-17, KJV]

The King James makes it appear as if we should never let anyone judge us according to what we eat or drink, or what days we keep in worship. It also seems to suggest that it makes no difference whether we keep the same days of worship the Apostles kept, or whether we keep the Sun-day and Easter, because (after all) the Body is *of* Messiah.

However, this rendering has some problems.

When we take this back to the Greek Texts, we find that the words in parenthesis, (days) and (is) do not appear. They appear in the King James only because the translators *added* these words, in order to make the passage harmonize with the popular view that the Law and the Prophets had been abolished.

However, since we are not supposed to add to the Word (Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:6, etc)., once we realize that the words (days) and (is) do not belong in this passage, we need to take them out, and see what kind of difference it makes.

Here is the exact same passage, but with the supplied words (days) and (is) taken out:

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moons, or of the Sabbath; which are a shadow of things to come; but the Body of Christ [Colossians 2:16-17]

If we read this passage closely, we will see that there are three main ideas mentioned here (1-2-3):

- 1. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moons, or of the Sabbath;***
- 2. which are a (prophetic) shadow of things (still) to come;***
- 3. but the Body of [Messiah].***

If we rearrange the clauses to make the English read better (3-1-2), we find that Shaul was actually telling us that the festivals are still prophetic shadows:

16 Let no man but the Body of Messiah judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moons, or of the Sabbath; for the festivals are shadows of things (still) to come. [Colossians 2:16-17]

Rather than telling us that the festivals do not matter, Shaul is actually telling us that we should keep the Sabbath, the Festivals and the New Moons, because they are prophetic shadows of future events.

Shaul's true meaning, however, is not at all reflected in the New International Version, which reads:

***16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.
17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.
[Colossians 2:16-17, NIV]***

The NIV tells us that these prophetic shadows of future events are now all discarded, or irrelevant. The NIV further suggests that as long as one believes that Yeshua is the Messiah, it no longer makes any difference what one might eat or drink, or what days of worship one might decide to keep (if any).

However, the idea that the Festival Days are important prophetic shadows of future events did not originate with Shaul. Yeshua came in prophetic fulfillment of the Passover; and it was important for the faithful to be in the Temple in Jerusalem on the Day of the Pentecost, even after Yeshua's Ascension:

1 And in the fulfilling of the Day of Pentecost, (the faithful) were all with one mind, in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole House where they were sitting. [Acts 2:1]

If Yeshua's death was really the clear-cut turning point that the Church Fathers claim, then it would not have mattered whether the faithful were in the Temple in Acts Chapter 2, or not. Instead, the Spirit would have been poured out on them no matter where they were.

Christianity counters by saying that the Law and the Prophets were not abolished instantaneously; but that Yeshua's death ushered in a three-to-four-hundred-year period of change, in which authority was given to the Church Fathers to make all sorts of sweeping changes to the faith.

Christianity further asserts that these changes were all legitimate and valid, even though they directly conflict with the Bridal Contract, the Prophecies, Yeshua's Words, and the Apostles' writings.

The Church asserts that the First Century was a special time; and that the reason the Apostles still observed the Festivals was simply because they did not know any better.

The Church suggests that the Apostles had no idea that the Church Fathers would make such wonderful improvements on YHWH's Covenant, or else they would have abandoned it while the Book of Acts was still being written.

In contrast, Jews have always taught that major prophetic events always occur on the Festival days.

The Torah is essentially a codification of YHWH's Spirit, made into a list of Instructions. This codification was first given to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai (Horeb) on the Pentecost, fifty days after they left from Egypt (after the Passover).

Thousands of years later, the Spirit was again handed down at Pentecost, this time in Acts Chapter Two. The main difference was that this time, instead of just giving a codification of the Spirit's guidance, the faithful were given the Spirit itself.

Thus, in actuality, there have already been two fulfillments of the Feast of the Pentecost. Therefore, while the pattern is one of repeated fulfillments, the Church tells us that there will never be another fulfillment. But is this really true?

Consider for a moment that Israel's children already fulfilled the Feast of Tabernacles once, when they dwelt in tabernacles (or booths) in the Wilderness in Sinai.

The second fulfillment came when Yeshua was born. While the Christians tell us He was born on December the 25th, the truth is that He was born on the first day of the Fall Festival of Tabernacles, which is why Yochanan (or John) tells us:

14 And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us. [John 1:14]

Other versions read "and pitched His tent among us", which gives essentially the same meaning.

Christianity teaches that Yeshua was born in a manger on December the 25th, with donkeys and horses looking on, and Yeshua swaddled in a crib, on the hay. As romantic as this Roman Church version of the story sounds, it is far from the truth.

Since Christianity does not value the Hebrew language, most Christians do not realize that in Hebrew, the word for a manger is the same as the word for a *tabernacle*. Thus, the account of Yeshua's birth should actually read:

7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a tabernacle, because there was no room for them in the inn. [Luqa (Luke) 2:7]

To a Hebrew, it is only fitting that the honor of raising the Messiah should have been given to a devout couple who kept the Commandments. This describes Joseph and Mary (or Miriam) exactly.

Joseph and Miriam (or Mary) had come up for the pilgrimage feast in Jerusalem, in keeping with the Commandment that all males who wished to continue to be thought of as Israelites should make the pilgrimages to Jerusalem three times a year.

The commandment specifies that all native-born Israelites must dwell in tabernacles (i.e., temporary dwellings) for seven days, in keeping with the Command in the Torah. In Hebrew, these dwellings are called *sukkot*. In English, these tabernacles are sometimes referred to as 'booths':

42 You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, 43 that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am YHWH your Elohim'."
[Vayiqra (Leviticus) 23:39-43]

While Joseph and Miriam had come up to Jerusalem in obedience to the commandment in Torah, they originally intended to stay at an inn. This is because, while the Jewish rabbis teach the importance of keeping the commandments, they also teach that the highest commandment is the preservation of human life.

The rabbinical ruling in that time was the same as it is today; that at any person who was pregnant, old, or sick did not actually have to sleep in a tabernacle (or a booth, or a 'manger'), but that for health and safety's sake, they could rent a room at an inn. However, we know from Scripture that there was no room at the inn; and therefore even though Miriam was pregnant, Joseph and Miriam had to dwell in a Tabernacle (or a booth, or a 'manger').

All of this came to pass so that Yeshua might be born in a tabernacle on the first day of the Fall Festival of Tabernacles, in prophetic fulfillment of the Command. Thus, just as the Jews have always taught, important prophetic events in Israel happen only on the festival days, in prophetic fulfillment of these festivals.

But lest we believe that there are no more fulfillments of these Festivals, Zechariah 14 prophesies a third fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, which is still to come:

16 And it shall be, everyone who is left from all the nations which came up against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, YHWH of hosts; and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. 17 And it shall be, whoever will not go up from the families of the earth to worship the King, YHWH of hosts, there shall even be no rain on them. [Zech. 14:16-17]

And there is also a fourth fulfillment, which is prophesied in the Book of Revelation:

3 And I heard a great voice out of Heaven, saying, "Behold, the Tabernacle of Elohim is with men!" And He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and Elohim Himself will be their Elohim. [Revelation 21:3]

Contrary to Roman myth, Yeshua could not have been born on December the 25th. In the first place, December the 25th is the Roman festival of Saturnalia (or Bacchanalia). The Roman Church supposedly re-named this festival in honor of the Messiah, but this does not alter the fact that it is still a pagan festival; and the observance of even a re-named pagan festival is strictly prohibited by the Marital Covenant (Deuteronomy 12:30).

Second, if the Apostles had observed December the 25th, it would have been recorded. However, the word 'Christmas' appears nowhere in Scripture.

Third, 'December' is not even a month on the Hebrew calendar. Why would the Apostles have kept a pagan festival date that does not even show up on their calendar?

Fourth, if the Father designated certain days for worship and rest at the time of the Creation (and then banned the keeping of all other festival days) then why would those days have changed at the coming of the Messiah? Indeed why, when none of the Prophecies speak of a change in the days of worship?

Yeshua tells us that He went to prepare a place for His bride, in His Father's House:

2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.

I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. [Yochanan (John) 14:2-4]

Yeshua is surely a good Son. If He intends to bring His bride back to His Father's House, then why would He take a bride, who insists on worshipping and resting on those pagan festival days that His Father always said He hated?

Why indeed, when other virgins love Him, and want to keep all of His Father's Commandments?

The Church as Temporary Vehicle

In the Beatitudes, Yeshua warns His followers not to take the broad, easy path to Salvation, because it actually leads to destruction:

13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it.

14 And the gate is narrow and the road is afflicted that leads to life; and there are few who find it."

[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 7:13-14]

Then, seven verses later, Yeshua warns that there will be a large group of people calling Him 'Lord' who will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven:

21 "Not everyone who (calls) Me 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven; but (only) the ones who do the will of My Father in Heaven.

22 (For) many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord! Lord; did we not prophesy in Your Name; and in Your Name cast out demons; and in Your Name perform many works of power?'

23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you! Depart from Me, you who work Lawlessness'."

[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 7:21-23]

It might seem impossible that the Messiah would reject the Christians; but the Christians are the only group on earth who:

1. Are a 'many' that
2. Call upon His Name,
3. Cast out demons in His Name, and
4. Perform many works of power in His Name;
5. But work Lawlessness (do not keep the Law)

The Christians are the only group on Earth that meets all these criteria. Therefore, this can only be a warning not to accept the broad, easy doctrines of the Christian Church.

But why would the Jewish Messiah reject the Christian Church? Has not Christianity been the vehicle by which the Good News has been spread to the four corners of the earth?

Yes, it has: But as the next few chapters will show, the reason the Messiah will ultimately reject Christianity is that the Divine Plan of Redemption is really a multi-step process, of which Christianity is only an intermediate step. Those who stop progressing short of the ultimate goal will not graduate the overall refinement process; and they will therefore disqualify themselves from being taken to Him as a bride.

But if the concept of Divine Providence tells us that everything ultimately stems from the hand of the Creator, then why was Christianity allowed to flourish?

Christianity would not have flourished inside of Jewish Judea for the same reason the Jews reject it now: The Jews in Judea were already familiar with the idea that the Torah was for all time. For this reason, they would have rejected any new (Hellenic Christian) doctrine which taught against keeping the Covenant.

Outside of Jewish-Judea, however, it would have been a different story. Non-Jews would have been unfamiliar with the concept of Bridal Instruction, and probably even found it objectionable. Christianity, then, was a means for non-Jews to initially draw closer to the Covenant, without having to take on the more challenging of its requirements. It was a kind of a half-way house for returning Ephraimites.

The decision to keep Torah is a difficult one, because it calls for one to change one's spiritual identity. In order to truly keep the Torah, one must begin carrying a burden for the Land of Israel, the Laws of Moses, and the Hebrew language. When that truly happens, it is no longer possible for one to continue to identify oneself as a Greek, a Roman, or an American. Rather, one becomes part of the spiritual Nation of Israel; those who have given up earthly, materialistic desires, and have placed the Father's wishes ahead of their own.

However, those in the nations had never been unhappy with their spiritual or national identities. Therefore, to be told that Salvation ultimately required them to learn Hebrew, keep all the Laws of Moses, and carry a burden for the Land of Israel may have made it appear that the cost was just too high. Such concepts would have seemed strange to Greco-Roman ears, and the sticker-shock would probably have led most of them to balk at the investment.

In contrast, if the same potential convert had spoken with a *Christian*, the Christian might have told the potential convert that all that was required was to call upon Yeshua's Name, and then to begin walking in love. The Christian may also have told the potential convert that the Nazarene Israeli doctrine did not seem to match-up very well with Yeshua's own Words to the Woman at the Well:

21 Yeshua said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 You (Samaritans) worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for Salvation (Yeshua) is of the Jews.

23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father seeks such to worship Him.

24 Elohim is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

[Yochanan (John) 4:21-24]

Since Yeshua had said that Jerusalem was no longer the place, the potential convert would likely conclude that the Nazarene doctrine of continuing to focus on Jerusalem was incorrect. The convert would then be relieved to hear the Christian assure him that he would not have to change his national identity, bear a burden for the Land of Israel, tithe, keep the Torah, or even learn Hebrew, since Love was all that mattered.

The new converts must have felt that it was truly a gift from heaven to be able to gain eternal life just by learning to love their neighbors, and worship the living Elohim with their lips: That they got to keep the same pagan days of sun-worship only made it seem just that much sweeter for them.

It must have been painfully difficult for the Apostles to watch what was taking place; and to know that the truth would eventually be eclipsed by a half-truth; and that this was a necessary measure.

However, in a certain sense it really was an act of mercy towards greater mankind that YHWH allowed the Nazarenes to be exterminated by the Christians, as this brought about the ultimate Salvation of fallen Adam just that much faster.

Yeshua even alludes to the fact that the Kingdom of Heaven would be extended to all of fallen Adam's children by a sinful, leavening vehicle in some of His seemingly-more-obscure parables:

**33 Another parable He spoke to them:
"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven,
which a woman took and hid in three
measures of meal, till it was all
leavened."
[Matthew 13:33]**

Yeshua often likens the people of the world to wheat; and that lawless Christianity was used as a leavening agent to make the dough rise faster is clear. At this juncture, all that remains is for the leaven to be cooked out of the dough by the fire of refinement, bringing the Christians back to the original Nazarene faith. Once this takes place, hopefully all that will be left will be a few loaves of show-bread fit for a King.

However, Yeshua is clear that the majority of the Christian world will not come back to the original faith. He tells us at Matthew 7 that 'many' will take the broad and easy path that leads to destruction; a path that calls for no observance of His *Instructions*. Even though they call Him 'Lord', He will reject them.

In this way, Christianity has at once been a tool of leavening and a stone of stumbling for those who are willing to accept Christianity's easy promises, but who refuse to obey His *Instructions*.

The Papacy as Anti-Messiah

Before Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire, the previous religion was known as Mithraism. Mithraism is sun-worship; and in Mithraism, the sun-god (Ra) was thought to personally attend the Roman emperor.

That the Roman citizens believed their god would sit in personal attendance to the Roman emperor gave him unparalleled power and prestige in their eyes. To disobey the decree of such a demigod was not only considered treason, but (almost) heresy.

As opposed to the Nazarene faith, Mithraism was not Torah-based. The Torah teaches that it is idolatrous to worship men, and idolatry is therefore prohibited by the jealous Elohim. For this reason, the Roman emperors did little to disguise their ill feelings toward the Nazarenes. By teaching the people that the emperors were not demigods, the Nazarenes had weakened the emperor's basis of prestige and power. No politician likes that.

The Roman emperors also initially despised the *Christians*, for similar reasons. Christianity also taught that one's truest allegiance should not go to Caesar, but to Yeshua, the King of Kings. This also weakened the emperors' power structure; but there was a way for a clever emperor to turn this to his advantage.

Because Christianity is not based on Torah, if Scripture could be misconstrued to suggest that the emperor was divine, then Constantine could adopt Christianity as his 'official' religion, and continue to teach the people to worship him as a demigod.

History records for us that the Roman Emperor Constantine was raised a sun worshipper. In 312 CE, while he was in the grove of the sun-god Apollo in Gaul (ancient France), Constantine claimed to have received a dream in which 'Christ' appeared to him, instructing him to write the first two letters of his name (XP) upon his troops' shields. Then, the next day, he claimed to have seen a cross superimposed over the sun, at which time he was given the message, "In this sign you will be victorious" (en hoc signo vinces).

The next year, Constantine and his co-emperor issued the Edict of Milan, a document formally ending the persecution of Christians within the Roman Empire. Constantine then continued to battle with others for supremacy over the Empire; and he did in fact emerge victorious by the year 324 CE.

We should note, however, that even though he officially converted to Christianity, Emperor Constantine still revered the sun. His belief in Christianity was inextricably merged with his belief in sun worship, and he continued to live his life by sun-worship constructs. He continued to wage war for personal advantage, continued to rest on the sun day (in honor of the sun god), and even minted coins to the Roman sun god, Sol Invictus Mith-Ra. It is also reported that he had his wife and son beheaded, even though he considered himself to be a *Christian*.

About the same time he established himself as the undisputed ruler of the Roman Empire, Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea. This council blended Christianity and Mithraism, establishing the new *Catholic* ('Universal') Christian faith. This new faith took the same core of familiar Mithraic festivals, but re-named them according to Christian themes. This was done to such an extent that the accusation has been made that Catholicism ('Universalism') is really more Mithraism-in-disguise, than anything else.

While Constantine allowed the official version of Christianity to be practiced within his empire, it should also be noted that the Catholic Church condemned the Nazarenes as heretics, in that they continued to keep the Torah, as the Apostles had:

“Christians must not ‘Judaize’ by resting on the Sabbath; but must work on that day, honoring rather the Lord’s Day [‘Sun’ day] by resting, if possible, as Christians.

However, if any [Nazarene] be found ‘Judaizing’, let them be shut out from Christ.”

[The Church of Imperial Rome; Council of Laodicea under the Emperor Constantine; Canon 29, 336 AD]

Other translations read, "Let them be anathema to Christ", insinuating that the *Nazarenes* were to be considered the ultimate *personae non gratae*. Thus, those who were willing to adopt Mithraic traditions would become safe from the lions in the arena, but the Nazarenes never became so.

Shut out of the synagogues in the first century by the Jews, and now thrown to the lions by the Papacy in the fourth, the Nazarene faith eventually died out. Its adherents either yielded to Roman persecution, or were killed by the gladiators for sport.

Thus, while the Christian Church would fulfill a prophetic role in helping to spread the Good News of Yeshua to the ends of the Earth, it would also serve as the means by which the faith once delivered to the saints would be snuffed out for two thousand years. It was simultaneously a blessing to the world, and a stumbling block to the faithful.

Most historians acknowledge that Constantine's motives in blending Mithraism with Christianity had more to do with power politics than anything else. Caesar was, above all, a politician. If he had simply converted to Christianity as it existed before he co-opted it, he would not have been able to continue to pretend that he was a demigod. Had that happened, his degree of power and control over his empire would have diminished very rapidly.

If Emperor Constantine was to remain the most powerful man on the planet, he would have to find some way of re-forming Christianity around Mithraism, so that he might continue to appear an all-powerful demigod. His means of doing this was to take certain verses in the New Covenant and twist them, to make it appear as if they said things they actually did not.

If one forbids the people to read or interpret the Scriptures for themselves (as the Catholics historically did) then one can suggest that certain verses say whatever it is that one needs them to say. What Emperor Constantine needed these verses to say, then, was that he was not just an ordinary mortal.

Here is the passage the Catholics use to suggest that the Emperor was a demigod:

15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

16 Shimon Kefa (Simon Peter) answered and said, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living Elohim."

17 Yeshua answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Yonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

18 And I also say to you that you are Kefa (Peter); and on this rock (petra) I will build My assembly, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 16:15-19]

There are several issues which will be discussed in later chapters. The key issue at the moment is that the Catholics tell us that this passage indicates the Roman Emperor was more than just an ordinary mortal man:

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter (Petros); and on this rock (petra) I will build My assembly, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

The Catholic Church asserts that Yeshua intended to build His assembly upon an individual named Shimon Kefa personally: Therefore, whomever Shimon Kefa (Simon Peter) would designate as his successor would become the head of the Body of Messiah, as if the Messiah ruled through him.

One problem with this assertion is that Petros and petra are not the same word. Yeshua does not say He will build His Assembly upon Petros (Kefa). Rather, what He said was that He would build His assembly upon the divine revelation that He was the Messiah, the Son of the Living Elohim.

That divine revelation is the 'this' of verse 17:

17 Yeshua answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Yonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this (revelation knowledge) to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Moreover, most English translations give an inaccurate rendering of verse 19:

19 And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

This inaccurate rendering seems to suggest that Kefa was in fact some sort of larger-than-life demigod. However, when we take this passage back to the Greek Text that the Roman Church asserts is the original, what it actually says is that the Apostles would bind what had already been bound, in Heaven:

19 And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will already have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will already have been loosed in heaven.

Rather than suggesting that Kefa was some larger-than-life demigod (consistent with Greco-Roman theology), what it says is that by surrendering to the leading of the Spirit, Kefa and the other Apostles became tools in the Master's hand.

The Roman Emperor, however, saw his opportunity to lay claim to continuing demigod status, and he took it. The official Roman dogma became that this verse implies a so-called 'Apostolic Succession.' This doctrine of alleged 'Apostolic Succession' says that just before his death, Kefa allegedly passed his supernatural powers to his alleged designee (Clement), who then transferred them to the next alleged designee (and etceteras), to Emperor Constantine; and right on up to the modern day.

The Church justifies their assertion that the so-called Apostolic Succession was indeed passed to Clement, because Clement was indeed a disciple:

3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the Good News, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.
[Philippians 4:3]

We also know from Clement's writings that he later became the first bishop of the Church of Rome. Catholic legend maintains that when Kefa was taken to Rome to be crucified, that before he was killed he laid hands on Clement, thereby designating him as the alleged receiver of the so-called 'Apostolic Succession.'

The baton had allegedly been passed.

However, this legend is highly problematical. First, Matthew 16 does not speak of an 'Apostolic Succession.' Second, Scripture indicates that it was actually Ya'akov (James, Yeshua's half-brother) who was originally designated head of the Jerusalem assembly. That headship was passed to Kefa after Ya'akov's death (in Acts 12) is not proven anywhere.

Third, if headship had been given to Kefa, why would he have transferred it next to the capital city of the empire that had long subjugated Judea, and had chosen to destroy both Jerusalem and the Temple? Why would he transfer headship to the capital of the Empire that had crucified Yeshua, and would soon crucify him? It would seem a most unlikely choice.

Fourth, when we read Clement's epistles, we see something very odd, which can perhaps only be described in political terms: A careful read of the New Covenant shows us that even though the Apostles had learned directly from Yeshua, they continued to maintain a generally humble attitude. Even Kefa (who had allegedly been handed the so-called 'Apostolic Succession') continued to address his fellow believers as little more than fellow bondservants, emphasizing that they too had been called to serve:

***1 Shimon Kefa, a bondservant and Apostle of Yeshua Messiah, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our Elohim and Savior Yeshua Messiah:
2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of Elohim, and Yeshua the Messiah our Master.
[Kefa Bet (2nd Peter) 1:1-4]***

Contrast this to Clement's first epistle, in which he uses his position as the Bishop of Rome as a kind of a bully-pulpit, demanding that the assembly in Corinth conform to his doctrines and decrees:

1 The Church of God which is at Rome, to the Church of God which is at Corinth.... [1st Clement 1:1]

Clement then goes on to demand that the laity at Corinth submit itself to the clergy, setting a precedent that the Bishop of Rome could dictate orders to the other assemblies. Rather than encouraging brothers, Clement initiates a long Papal tradition of talking down to one's alleged inferiors.

The idea of a power structure in Israel was not new: Israel had known military hierarchy since the days of Moses. What was new was that the leadership should be so haughty, and so presumptuous; and that the spiritual Nation of Israel should be led by a series of increasingly warlike, sun-worshipping demigods who relocated the spiritual center of the nation to Rome.

In Second Thessalonians, the Apostle Shaul warned the first century believers of a *Man of Sin* who would sit in a coming Temple, pretending to be Elohim Himself:

***3 Do not let anyone deceive you in any way, because that Day will not come unless first comes the falling away, and the Man of Sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 the one opposing and exalting himself over everything being called Elohim, or object of worship, so as for him to sit in the Temple of Elohim as Elohim, showing himself that he is Elohim.
[2nd Thessalonians 2:3-4]***

1st John 3:4 tells us that sin is the transgression of the Law. Therefore, if sin is the transgression of the Law, the *Man of Sin* in verse 3 might well be called the *Man of Lawlessness*: And who has done more to teach against the Law, than the Pope?

7 For the mystery of Lawlessness is already at work; only he is holding back now, until it comes out of the midst; 8 and then the Lawless One will be revealed, whom YHWH will consume by the spirit of His mouth.... [2nd Thessalonians 2:7-8]

In the First Century, the Lawless One had yet to be revealed, and Shaul wrote about a future revelation. Because of this, the majority of the Christian world still looks for a *coming* anti-Messiah, not realizing that he has been in power for some 1700 years already.

The Pope not only sits in a kind of a Temple, showing himself as Elohim, but he also fulfills the prophecy of Daniel 7:25. Daniel 7:25 speaks of a '*Little Horn*' who would attempt to change the appointed Festival times, and the Law. He would also seek to exterminate the Nazarenes, thereby 'wearing them out' for 3-1/2 prophetic years:

25 "And he (the Pope) shall speak words (contrary to) the Most High; and shall wear out the saints of the Most High; and he intends to change the appointed (feast) times and (the) Law. And they (the saints) shall be given into his hand for a time, and times, and half a time." [Daniel 7:25]

This reference to the saints being given over into the Papacy's hand for 'a time, times and half a time' is a reference to the approximately 1260 years in between the formation of the Roman Catholic Church dogma (in the early 300's), until the Protestant Reformation finally got under way (in the late 1500's).

The time, two times and half-a-time in this passage is a reference to 3-½ prophetic '*times*', meaning 3-½ prophetic years.

There are 360 days in the Hebrew calendar, and when one multiplies these 360 days in a year times the 3-1/2 prophetic years, one gets 1260 prophetic days, which correspond to 1260 earth years.

Scripture tells us that the Messiah is the head (or leader) of every man (1st Corinthians 11:3). The implication is that while there has often been leadership in Israel, it was never supposed to be self-appointed (but was always supposed to be appointed by Elohim). For someone to intentionally exalt himself as a kind of a demigod (claiming to be a stand-in for the Messiah) is the very foundation of the spirit of anti-Messiah.

It should be noted that contrary to popular belief, in Greek, the term '*anti*' does not mean '*against*.' Rather, it means '*instead of*', or '*in the place of*.' Therefore, an *anti*-Messiah is not someone who tries to destroy the Messiah, but someone who *pretends to be* the Messiah, or His literal representative. How interesting, then, that the Pope claims the title '*Vicar of Christ*', by which he claims to be the vicarious representative of the Messiah, on earth.

All of this is strictly against the Torah, and against Yeshua's Words. Yeshua not only said to call no man 'rabbi', but He also said to call no man on earth our *Father*.

8 But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher: the Messiah; and you are all brethren. 9 "And call no one on earth your 'Father', for One is your Father; the One in heaven." [Mattithyahu (Matthew) 23:9]

Yeshua's Words are plain enough: Do not call any man on earth your *Father*. However, the term *Pope* literally translates to 'Papa' (or *Father*).

Further, the Pope's crown (or mitre) is inscribed with the title '*Vicarius Philii Dei*.' This title literally means, '*In-Place of the Son of the Deity*', or '*Instead-of the Son of the Deity*.' The Pope's title, then, is the exact definition of the term *anti-Messiah*.

Further, certain languages assign numerical values to each of their letters. Greek is this way. When one adds up the Greek numerical value of the Latin title that is inscribed on the Pope's crown, '*Vicarius Philii Dei*', one gets the numerical value of six hundred and sixty six:

**18 "Here is wisdom: Let the one having reason count the number of the Beast, for it is the number of a man, and its number is 666."
[Revelation 13:18]**

The Book of Genesis is generally considered prophetic, as it sets the pattern for the same type of events to recur later on in Scripture.

Notice, then, that even back in the Garden of Eden, the Adversary appeared to Eve and tried to get her to abandon YHWH's commandments, by implying that there would be no negative consequences for disobeying YHWH's Laws:

1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which YHWH Elohim had made. And he said to the woman, "Has Elohim indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, Elohim has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die'."

The Catholic 'Vicar of Christ' does essentially the same thing by insinuating that we can inherit eternal life, while disregarding the Marital Covenant:

**4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die, 5 for Elohim knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like Elohim, knowing good and evil."
[Breisheet (Genesis) 3:4-5]**

Protestantism: The Lost Ten Tribes?

Many people have heard of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, but few people know much about them.

Scripture tells us that Israel had twelve sons, each of whom would later head one of the tribes. Ten of these tribes were exiled from the Land of Israel some 2700 years ago, for their disobedience to the Torah.

After the Ten Tribes were taken captive by the Assyrians, they were deposited in the lands that make up modern-day Syria and Iraq. However, after some years had passed, these Ten Tribes then migrated away from these Assyrian lands, and subsequently became lost to popular history.

But if the ten tribes became lost, then where are they now? Logically, they have to be somewhere. Therefore, if Prophecy tells us that they will some day return, then from *where* will they return?

There is a theory called the *Two-House* Theory that explains where the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel are right now. As a radical oversimplification, the Two-House Theory tells us that the Protestant Christian peoples (and especially the American Protestant Christians) are the prophetic (if not also the literal) descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel.

It should be stressed that this theory in no way excludes anyone based upon race, ethnic heritage, or present nationality. This theory only explains the mechanics of how the prophecies were historically carried out. However, if we accept the tenets of this theory, then we can understand some other unique phenomena that have no other Scriptural explanation.

This study will not reiterate the extensive historical and archaeological research that has already been done on the migrations of the tribes. Those wishing to learn more about the archaeological findings can refer to the work of Capt, Collins, Davidy or White. Our purpose here is simply to build upon the results of these studies, and to put them into a larger overall framework. This framework will demonstrate that one of the primary reasons Yeshua first came was to begin a centuries-long process of regathering the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel (otherwise known as the House of Ephraim, or the House of Israel). When one knows to look for it, the signs are all over the Word:

***24 But He answered and said, "I was not sent (at this time) except to the lost sheep of the House of Israel."
[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 15:24]***

As we will explain in the chapters that follow, this Regathering process was to take place in sequential phases (or steps).

The first step was to establish the original faith of the apostles, as well as its Christian variation. This was accomplished in Yeshua's time.

The next step was to allow the Roman Empire to co-opt this Christian permutation and merge it with sun worship, forming the Catholic (or '*Universal*') variation of the Christian faith.

We have already shown that by making a variation of the faith that would glorify and exalt the Roman Emperor as a demigod (i.e., the Pope), the Roman Emperor would then have a personal incentive to spread the Good News throughout his Empire much faster than the Nazarenes would have been able to spread it in the same amount of time.

The third step in the regathering of the House of Ephraim (the Lost Ten Tribes) was the Protestant Reformation, which would begin a generations-long return process back to the Covenant, and the original faith. Although the Protestants may not always have understood that they were in fact attempting to return to the original faith does not alter the fact that this is where the Protestant Reformation has ultimately been taking them.

Finally, the fourth phase calls for a separation between the remnant that desires to come all the way back to the Marital Covenant and the Land of Israel and the masses of Christendom, who do not. And, as will be explained in the chapters that follow, a number of prophecies specify that this final phase of the Regathering process began in-or-about 1996 CE.

Since prophecy tells us that this final phase has already started, we should be able to look at the world and find a group of believers in the Messiah (both Protestant and otherwise) who are attempting to re-establish their identity as the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. There are in fact several such groups, and their numbers are rapidly growing.

Since the promises of the Two House Theory are being borne out right before our eyes, it is clearly a true theory; and therefore we should endeavor to understand it as completely as possible. However, in order to do that, we must first understand the origins of the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

To re-cap the story, Abraham begat Isaac, and then Isaac begat Jacob, who was later re-named Israel.

Israel had twelve sons. Each of these sons then fathered one of the twelve tribes of Israel, as they are called. The names of these tribes (in order of birth) are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph, and Benjamin.

The eleventh child, Joseph, had two sons. The names of these sons were Manasseh and Ephraim. Joseph's father Israel then commanded that both Manasseh and Ephraim should be thought of as separate tribes, indicating that Joseph was to have a double-sized inheritance. Thus, from the twelve tribes, one tribe (Joseph) was taken away, and two tribes were added in its place (Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim). This meant that instead of only twelve tribes in Israel, now there were thirteen.

However, the tribe of Levi was later broken up and scattered among the rest of the tribes, in order to minister to them. For this reason, Levi was not numbered among the tribes; so now the number of tribes returned to twelve.

Because of all the number juggling involved in counting Israel's tribes, it is not incorrect to say that there are thirteen tribes. However, the convention is just to call them the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Moreover, as we will see two chapters from now, a division came about between the northern ten tribes (called the House of Israel, the House of Ephraim, and/or the House of Joseph) and the southern two tribes, who are called the House of Judah (or 'Jacob') in prophecy. The ten were separated from the two, and are only just now beginning to come back together. This is what the Two House Theory explains.

The Book of Genesis is said to be prophetic, in that the patterns established in Genesis tend to repeat themselves later on. This is also why it is said that the end is known from the beginning.

In the Book of Beginnings, then, Judah sells Joseph into slavery, and Joseph is then thrown into prison for a crime he never committed. This, then, is a prophetic shadow of events that will later befall the House of Joseph (or *Israel*, or *Ephraim*).

After spending several years in prison, Joseph is called before Pharaoh for his Elohim-given ability to interpret dreams. Because he interprets Pharaoh's dreams correctly and gives wise advice, Joseph is seen as a sage; and for this reason, he is made second-in-command of all Egypt. Joseph then uses his power and position to help Pharaoh consolidate his hold on Egypt. Again, all this is prophetic of future events regarding the Lost Ten Tribes.

Joseph is then given to wife Asenath, daughter of Poti-pherah, the Egyptian high priest. Asenath then bore two sons unto Joseph. The older son's name was Manasseh, and the younger son's name was Ephraim.

We should note here that Genesis 1 informs us that living beings reproduce after their own kinds. For example:

***11 Then Elohim said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so.
[Breisheet (Genesis) 1:11]***

Since human beings also contain their seed within themselves (and therefore reproduce after their own kinds) we might expect Joseph's two children to grow up to be partly good Hebrews (because of Joseph), and partly very-spiritual pagans (because of Asenath's father, Poti-pherah, the Egyptian high priest). This is exactly what we do see.

While Manasseh and Ephraim were undoubtedly real people, they also serve as prophetic shadow pictures of what later became the Christians of the greater British Empire (including America). As we have seen, Christians in general are partly good Hebrews

and partly very-spiritual-pagans, given to altering the true worship to include numerous pagan rites, rituals, and sun-worship festival days.

It should further be noted that the names of the children were both prophetic. The older son's name, Manasseh, roughly translates to "He will forget his toil, and his Father's House." This is a prophetic picture of England, where the Industrial Revolution began.

The Industrial Revolution helped the British people (and their descendants) to forget their labors, and their toil. Sadly, however, they also forgot their Father's house (i.e. the Temple). Some might suggest that this is the reason for all of the anti-Semitic bias found on British radio and television stations (such as the BBC, and others).

After Joseph called his father Israel (and the rest of the family) down into Egypt, Joseph's father Israel prophesied that both of Joseph's sons would eventually become great. However, Israel prophesied that Joseph's younger son (Ephraim) would ultimately become the greater of the two:

12 So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth.

13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him.

14 Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.

**15 And he blessed Joseph, and said: "Elohim, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the Elohim who has fed me all my life long to this day, 16 the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the youths! Let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."
[Breisheet (Genesis) 48:12-16]**

Hebrew is a very special language. In the Hebrew, then, this phrase 'grow into a multitude' also has a hidden meaning. That hidden meaning is 'like a multitude of fishes.' This is a hint that Ephraim and Manasseh would become like a multitude of fish.

What people have grown into a multitude in the midst of the earth, and have adopted the fish as their symbol? Only the Christians have done this; and in particular, the British and American Christians.

**17 Now when Joseph saw that his father (Israel) laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."
19 But his father (Israel) refused and said, "I know, my son (Joseph), I know. He (Manasseh) also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother (Ephraim)**

**shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations (or, 'the completeness of the nations')."
[Breisheet (Genesis) 48:17-19]**

Scholars take many different meanings from the phrase, 'the completeness of the nations.' However, this passage seems to indicate that Ephraim would ultimately become:

1. A multitude of (Israelite) nations; and
2. 'Greater' than his older brother (i.e., more numerous, and/or more prosperous).

Originally conceived as a Protestant Christian nation, America is richer, more populous than England, and has become a multitude of nations (in that it is comprised of fifty originally-sovereign states). Further, in that America is comprised of people from virtually every tribe and nation and tongue, America also serves as the 'completeness of the nations.'

Beyond this, it is important to remember that names in Scripture are always prophetic. The name Ephraim means both 'doubly fruitful' and 'prodigious.' When we look for a Protestant Christian nation that is greater than its older brother, is a multitude of nations, is doubly fruitful and prodigiously blessed, the only real logical candidate is Protestant Christian America.

Again, this information is not intended to exclude anyone from the Covenant, or to make more of America than it is. YHWH loves all of His children, and He has extended His Salvation to all of the nations of the world. All this explanation does is to explain the mechanics of how the Prophecies were historically carried out.

There are other historically non-British nations (such as South Africa) that have strong Hebrew-Roots movements within them. For this reason, it would be wrong to suggest that the heirs to the Kingdom will come only from England and/or America. Yeshua Himself even says that many will come from the east:

11 And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven.

[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 8:11]

Racism has no part to play in extending Yeshua's Salvation to all of the children of fallen Adam. The commandment in Matthew 28 was to go unto all nations, and make disciples. This cannot properly be construed as meaning only Britain, or America.

However, to recognize that America does indeed play a special prophetic role is only logical. While anti-Semitism has abounded in Christian America (as elsewhere), there has been something of a reversal of this trend since the Second World War, as if prophecy were entering a new phase.

Further, while anti-Semitism does exist in America, it has usually been somewhat milder than in Europe. America has stood by Israel since its inception in 1948; and it is sometimes said that America is the only earthly friend that Israel has.

If America stands by Israel, it is only because the American Protestant Christians desire to see Israel protected, for a variety of theological and humanitarian reasons. That Israel does not presently understand the Protestant Christian basis of America's support does not alter the fact that it is basically America's Protestantism that makes her a friend to Israel.

But what is it that has caused America to be a relatively pro-Israel Protestant nation? It has been the fact that America is the modern-day prophetic representative of the Tribe of Ephraim.

The special relationship that exists between America and England is the brotherhood between the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Likewise, the special relationship between America and Israel is the relationship between the House of Joseph (Ephraim) and the House of Judah.

There was almost always fighting and rivalry between the Two Houses; but more often than not, when times got tough, the Two Houses clung together, and so it will be in the future.

However, so that we can understand some of the secrets of the New Covenant better, let us learn a little bit more about the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and their later division into *Two Houses*.

The Nation Divided

After Joseph passed on, new kings arose in Egypt, who did not know of all the good things that Joseph had done for Egypt, and for Pharaoh. These new kings feared Israel's children; and so they chose to enslave them. The bondage in Egypt was hard.

Then, four hundred and thirty years after Israel's descendants first went down into Egypt, YHWH sent a man named Moshe, to draw them out. Moshe brought Israel's children through the Red (actually *Reed*) Sea, and then into the wilderness of Sinai. Then, some fifty days later, they were given the Torah at the foot of Mount Sinai, which constituted their betrothal. At that time, they were told that they would be brought into the Promised Land, the Land of Canaan.

Knowing that YHWH was leading them to the Land of Canaan, Moshe sent twelve spies into the Land, to spy it out. However, of the twelve spies, only two of them brought back a positive report. Their names of the two bringing back a positive report were Caleb the son of Yephunneh (of the Tribe of Judah), and Joshua the son of Nun (of the Tribe of Ephraim):

**6 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Yephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes;
7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land!" [Bemidbar (Numbers) 14:6]**

It is very symbolic that the two spies bringing back the good report were from the tribes of Judah and Ephraim. These two tribes represent what later came to be known as the Two *Houses* of Israel.

The southern-most *House* was that of Judah (or 'Jacob'), and it consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. These two tribes together (with some of Levi) are what we think of as '*The Jews*' of today.

In contrast, the northern ten tribes were called the *House of Israel*, the *House of Ephraim*, and/or the *House of Joseph*. While these three terms are all synonymous, these are different than the Jews. This is because there are prophecies over both Judah and Israel that have yet to be fulfilled. For example:

18 "In those days the House of Judah shall walk with the House of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north, to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers. [Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 3:18]

Scripture definitely prophesies different things over Judah than it does over Israel, and unless one understands the distinction between the two groups, the Prophecies can seem to be just one big mass of jumbled, conflicting material.

Christians expect the Prophecies to conflict with each other, because it reinforces their dogma that the Messiah would have to come and do away with them.

But does the Christian hypothesis really make sense? Does the Father contradict Himself? Or did He send His Son to blot out His allegedly meaningless ramblings? The entire concept is an insult to YHWH.

The Two Houses of *Israel* and *Judah* are clearly two separate, distinct groups of people:

11 Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezre'el!
[Hosea 1:11]

The Church, however, has never understood the Two Houses; and so they have never taught on it. Rather, they have mistakenly concluded that today's Jewry represents all the Twelve Tribes of Israel. A brief survey of Israel's history, however, will show that this is not correct.

After Moses' death, Joshua led the children of Israel in the conquest of the Land of Canaan. Then came the period of Judges, and then First and Second Samuel. During these periods, the tribes were not held together under any kind of strong, central leadership; and consequently they languished.

After Judges and Samuel came the period of First and Second Kings. After King Shaul's reign, King David united the Israelite people, vanquished their enemies, and then led Israel's children back to the Marital Covenant.

Scholars agree that Joshua and King David establish the classical Hebrew standard for a Messiah. A *Messiah* (or an 'anointed' one) is a divinely-appointed leader who vanquishes the enemies of Israel, unites Israel's children, and then brings the lost and scattered of Israel back to the eternal Covenant. Although most Christians may not realize it, this is exactly the role that Yeshua is fulfilling, although it is taking place so slowly that one cannot fully understand how He is doing it, without an overview of both Covenants.

When Yeshua died, the Jews were not able to see how He was gathering in the lost and scattered of Israel's children; nor could they see how He had vanquished Israel's enemies. Moreover, because of widespread misunderstanding of Shaul's epistles, many Jews believed that Yeshua had come to destroy the Covenant. For all of these many reasons, the Jews rejected Yeshua as their Messiah.

However, as the fourth and final phase of the regathering of the Lost Ten Tribes continues (and the *Nazarene* movement continues to grow) the Jews will slowly begin to see that Yeshua really is their Messiah. They will see that He truly is regathering Israel's lost and scattered children from every tribe and tongue and nation; and that He truly is bringing them back to the Eternal Covenant. When that happens (and the Jews see Yeshua's followers zealous for the Torah in large numbers) there will be no separating the Jewish people from their Messiah.

Yet while there are other reasons for the history of conflict between Christians and Jews, the violence can in many ways be traced to the ancient rivalries that have always existed between Israel's Two Houses. These rivalries have existed ever since Joseph first dreamed (and his brothers became jealous); but by the time of King David, these rivalries had become intense:

43 And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, "We have ten shares in the king; therefore we also have more right to David than you! Why then do you despise us? Were we not the first to advise bringing back our king?"
Yet the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel. [2nd Samuel 19:42-43]

Despite their sibling rivalries, King David was able to unite the tribes, and keep them together. However, after David had grown old, his son Solomon began to reign.

With Solomon's reign, a number of problems developed. Solomon had taken a large number of foreign wives. These wives were called 'foreign' in that they never converted to Israelite worship.

The problem was not that Solomon's wives were foreign-born. Rather, the problem was that they never converted to the worship of YHWH (as had Ruth), but continued to worship their pagan gods. Thus it happened that in an effort to please his idolatrous wives, Solomon began to practice the same forms of idolatry as they did, even though YHWH had personally warned him not to:

1 But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites — 2 from the nations of whom YHWH had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you: (for) surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love.

3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.

4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to YHWH his Elohim, as was the heart of his father David.

5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth (Easter) the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did evil in the sight of YHWH, and did not fully follow YHWH, as did his father David.

7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. 8 And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. 9 So YHWH became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from YHWH Elohim of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what YHWH had commanded.

11 Therefore YHWH said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. 12 Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; (but) I will tear it out of the hand of your son.

13 However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and (one more) for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

[Melachim Aleph (1st Kings) 11:1-13]

Solomon also took a large number of slaves from the Northern House of Ephraim, both to build the Temple, and his own personal estate. For example, when we read in Ecclesiastes about the magnificent gardens and pools that King Solomon had built, these were all built by slaves from the House of Joseph:

4 I made my works great. I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.

5 I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

6 I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove.

7 I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house.

Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me.

[Kohillet (Ecclesiastes) 2:4-7]

King Solomon took multitudes of slaves from the Northern House of Joseph. However, we never read of his having taken slaves from the House of Judah.

26 Then Solomon's servant, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zereda, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king.

27 And this is what caused him to rebel against the king:

Solomon had built the Milo (the Citadel) and repaired the damages to the City of David, his father.

28 The man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor; and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the (slave) labor force of the House of Joseph (i.e., the House of Ephraim). [Melachim Aleph (1st Kings) 11:26-28]

The main problem, though, was Solomon's idolatry. In verse 11 (above), YHWH had promised to punish Solomon for serving his wife's foreign gods by tearing the reign out of Solomon's son's hand (thereby leaving only two tribes for Solomon's son to rule over). In verse 29, then, we see how this tearing-away of the reign would be carried out:

29 Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahiyah the Shilonite met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment; and the two were alone in the field.

30 Then Ahiyah took hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. 31 And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces (one piece for each of the ten tribes), for thus says YHWH the Elohim of Israel: 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to you;

32 but (his son) shall have one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and (one more) for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel,

33 because they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth (Easter) the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the elohim (god) of the Moabites, and Milcom the elohim (god) of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways, to do what is right in My eyes, and keep My statutes and My judgments, as did his father David.

34 However, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and My statutes.

35 But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you — ten tribes. [1st Kings 11:29-35]

YHWH tells Jeroboam (through Ahijah) that he loved David, because David kept his Commandments. Ahijah prophesied that if Jeroboam will also keep the Commandments, then the House of Israel will be established as the new lead house:

37 So I will take you, and you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel.

38 Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David; and will give Israel to you.

39 And I will afflict the descendants of David (i.e., the Jews) because of this, but not forever'."

[Melachim Aleph (1st Kings) 11:37-39]

Notice that the curse over Judah is not forever. Also notice that YHWH's promise that He would make Ephraim into the 'New Israel' was only conditional. Israel would only be the new lead house as long as they kept His Commandments.

Then, in First Kings Chapter Twelve, the House of Israel rebelled out from under Solomon's son (Rehoboam). After they did this, they established Jeroboam as their new king.

Jeroboam knew that he had to lead the people to keep the Torah, but he had a problem in that the Torah calls for the people to go up to Jerusalem three times a year. Jerusalem, however, was back in King Rehoboam's country (in the Southern Kingdom):

26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the House of David (Judah),

27 (For) if these people go up to offer sacrifices in the House of YHWH at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah; and (then) they will kill me, and (then) go back to Rehoboam, (the) King of Judah."

Jeroboam knows he must teach his people to go up to Jerusalem, if Israel is to remain the new lead house. However, if his people go up to Jerusalem, his people will ultimately kill him.

Jeroboam, then, comes up with a plan:

28 Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem (for the festivals). Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" 29 And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.

31 He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.

32 Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made.

33 So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense. [1st Kings 12:25-33]

We will see a number of parallels here between the Northern Kingdom, and the Christian Church.

Notice what happened: Jeroboam pushed the fall festivals backwards (from the seventh month, to the eighth). He set up false houses of worship, and then set up visible objects (idols) for the people to worship. He made priests of just anyone; and not only the sons of Levi. He told the people that his new religious system was legitimate, even though it departed from the Torah. Point for point, this is the exact same pattern that the Christian Church would later follow.

The Church pushed the fall festivals backwards from the fall, into the winter. They moved the center of worship from Jerusalem to Rome, set up a false Temple, and established idols (in the form of statuettes and graven images) within it. Next, they made priests out of just anyone, rather than the sons of Levi.

The pattern established in the Garden of Eden is this: When we obey YHWH's Laws, we get to live in His special Land, and He Himself takes care of us. However, when we disobey His Laws, He kicks us out of His Land and then draws out the sword after us, until we repent. For Israel, this is what would soon happen.

Much like the Torah-less Christians (who would later claim to be the 'New' Israel), Jeroboam's Ephraim had become the new lead House; but only for a time. Since they no longer obeyed the Eternal Covenant, they would no longer be allowed to dwell in the Covenant Land (because they were defiling it).

Just as the Christians would later be scattered to the four corners of the Earth, Jeroboam's Northern Kingdom of Israel went before them. They would be scattered from the Land of Israel for their failure to obey YHWH's Torah.

However, as we will see, all this was to fulfill the promises given to the Patriarchs.

The Final Warnings

YHWH sent prophets to the Northern Kingdom, warning them of the disasters that awaited them if they did not repent. Among these prophets was Hosea:

**1 When YHWH began to speak by Hosea, YHWH said to Hosea:
"Go! Take yourself a wife of harlotry, and have children of harlotry; for the land has committed great harlotry, by departing from YHWH." [Hosea 1:1]**

Idolatry is spiritual adultery against YHWH; and because the House of Ephraim had consorted with other elohim (other gods) Hosea had to take a harlot as a wife. This was symbolic of Ephraim's harlotry:

3 So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim....

The name Gomer means *'finished.'* YHWH was saying that even His great patience was at an end.

**3 (continued), and she conceived and bore him a son.
4 Then YHWH said to him: "Call his name Jezre'el, for in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezre'el on the house of Jehu (Judah), and bring an end to the kingdom of the (northern) House of Israel.**

The name Jezre'el means *'YHWH shall scatter'*, or *'YHWH will sow'*, as wheat is sown into the ground. This is the concept to which Yeshua refers in His many agricultural parables.

But notice: YHWH did not say He would destroy the Ephraimites themselves: only that He would bring an end to their kingdom. We will also see references to this, in the New Covenant:

**6 And she conceived again and bore a daughter. Then Elohim said to him:
"Call her name Lo-Ruhamah; for I will no longer have mercy on the House of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.**

The name Lo-Ruhamah means *'No mercy'*, or *'No compassion.'* YHWH was implying that He was finished (Gomer) with His adulterous wife. He was going to scatter Ephraim into the ground like wheat seed (Jezre'el), and would no longer have compassion (Ruhamah) on her, because she refused to relent.

Next, YHWH says that Ephraim will no longer be His people (Ammi). Instead, they will become *'Not (His) people'* (Lo-Ammi):

**8 Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore (another) son. 9 Then Elohim said:
"Call his name Lo-Ammi, for you are not My people, and I will not be your Elohim. [Hosea 1:8-9]**

And yet, despite all the terrible idolatry of the House of Ephraim had committed against Him, YHWH still promised to redeem them:

10 'Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or counted. And it shall be in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people', There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living Elohim.'

If Ephraim refused to keep the Torah, it would be like a repeat of the Garden of Eden: YHWH would kick Ephraim out of His special Land, and then draw the sword out after her, until she repented.

Many generations later, after she repented, YHWH would bring her descendants back to His Land, and re-unite them with their Jewish brothers:

11 Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the Land, for great will be the day of Jezre'el! [Hosea 1:10-11]

This happy re-union, however, would not take place for another 2700 years. In the mean time, the Torah specifies that before judgment can be enacted against a sinner, there must be two or more witnesses to the sin. Therefore, in addition to Hosea, YHWH also sent a prophet named Elijah (or Eliyahu) to witness against the House of Israel (or Ephraim).

Many Christians are familiar with Eliyahu's famous showdown with the priests of Ba'al. Few of them, however, realize how the Names have been tampered with in almost all of the Western translations.

In Scripture, names are always prophetic. In addition, if we think about it, we ought to be able to see how, in a Word-created world, the sounds of words would have specific meanings. And indeed, as will be shown in *Nazarene Scripture Commentary*, the sounds of words contain important spiritual information which modern physicists and string-theorists are only just beginning to understand. (What they have learned is that specific resonances carry spiritual information, much like DNA carries genetic information.)

However, for our purposes here, let us consider that if names are always prophetic, and if the world was created through sound (or energetic resonance), and if the sounds of words have spiritual significance, then how important would the Name of our Creator be?

Most Christians are unaware of the fact that the Creator's true Name (Yahuwah or YHWH) has been hidden (or substituted) almost 7,000 times in Scripture. This is strictly against the Third Commandment, which tells us:

7 "You shall not take the Name of YHWH your Elohim in vain, for YHWH will not hold him guiltless, who takes His Name in vain. [Exodus 20:7]

Although the classic English translation is not to take His Name in vain, in the Hebrew, the word 'vain' is actually Strong's H#7723, "I'shavah." This word does not translate into English directly, but the real meaning of this passage is actually somewhat more akin to:

7 "You shall not desolate the Name of YHWH your Elohim, for YHWH will not hold him guiltless, who desolates His Name. [Shemot (Exodus) 20:7]

If we study out the root of the word “l’shavah,” we see that in addition to not taking His Name in vain, the commandment is not to desolate, not to cover over, not to disguise, not to substitute for, and not in any other manner hide His Name.

While we certainly must be careful not to take His name in vain, YHWH tells us in many places that He wants His true Name made known in all the earth:

***16 And indeed, for this purpose I have raised you up: that I may show My power in you, and that My Name may be declared in all the earth!
[Shemot (Exodus) 9:16-17]***

There are many places in Scripture where YHWH poetically emphasizes the incredible importance of loving Him, and knowing His true Name:

***14 "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him on high, because he has known My Name.
15 He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him and honor him.
16 I will satisfy Him with long life, and show him My Salvation (Yeshua)."
[Tehillim (Psalms) 91:14-16]***

Since YHWH repeatedly tells us how much He wants people to know His true Name, it is surprising how few people know that His Name is not ‘LORD.’ In fact, the name ‘LORD’ actually translates as “Ba’al.”

Some Christians are shocked to learn that when they call on the name of ‘The LORD’, they are actually calling upon the name of the pagan deity, Ba’al.

Christians find this fact very confusing, because they have received so many blessings by calling upon the name of ‘The LORD’ in the past. However, without condemnation or judgment, once we have learned that the name ‘LORD’ translates as Ba’al (both in ancient and modern Hebrew), then is it not superior just to use YHWH’s true Name, instead?

If names are not important, and if it is OK to call YHWH by the names of other deities (such as Ba’al), then why not simply call Him “Satan”?

***30 Truly, these times of ignorance Elohim overlooked, but now (He) commands all men everywhere to repent....
[Ma’aseh (Acts) 17:30]***

That Christians do not intend to sin by calling upon the name of Ba’al, and that YHWH has overlooked their transgression in the past is not a good reason to continue breaking the Third Commandment. Once we know YHWH’s true Name, we should use it; for as we will see, YHWH does not hold them guiltless, who call Him LORD (or Ba’al):

***17 Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah that Ahab said to him, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?"
18 And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's (Jeroboam's) House have, in that you have forsaken the commands of YHWH, and have followed the Ba'als (or 'the LORDS').
[Melachim Aleph (1st Kings) 18:17-18]***

Genesis One tells us that living beings pattern themselves after their parents; and Eliyahu is here rebuking Ahab for encouraging Israel to continue in the false practices of his father, King Jeroboam:

19 Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Ba'al (The LORD), and the four hundred prophets of Asherah (or Easter), who eat at Jezebel's table."

[Melachim Aleph (1st Kings) 18:19]

Since most Christians never learn Hebrew, most of them never learn that the name LORD means Ba'al. They are also typically ignorant of the fact that the name *Asherah* means *Easter*. However, most of those that do learn the difference usually still 'hop between two opinions', calling Him both YHWH and LORD, in an attempt to simultaneously please Him, and man:

20 So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel.

21 And Eliyahu came to all the people, and said, "How long will you keep hopping between two opinions? If YHWH is Elohim, follow Him; but if The LORD, (then) follow him!"

But the people answered him not a word. [1st Kings 18:20-21]

People are creatures of habit. Once they get comfortable with a certain name, they do not like to change, be they right, wrong, or indifferent.

Once told that the name LORD means Ba'al, many today similarly answer not a word. Perhaps they are not really sure which name is correct, or if it really makes any difference; but as we will see here, it does:

22 Then Eliyahu said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of YHWH; but The LORD's prophets are four hundred and fifty men!

23 Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. 24 Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of YHWH; and the Elohim who answers by fire, He is Elohim."

So all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken." [1st Kings 18:22-24]

The people have agreed to the showdown:

25 Now Eliyahu said to the prophets of The LORD, "Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your Elohim, but put no fire under it."

26 So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of The LORD from morning even till noon, saying, "O LORD, hear us!"

But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made.

YHWH winks at times of ignorance; but once we learn the truth we must obey it, unless we want to be mocked in the Day of Judgment, like Eliyahu mocked the Ephraimites:

27 And so it was, at noon, that Eliyahu mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a mighty one (a god)! Either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey; or perhaps he is sleeping, and must be awakened!"

28 So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.

29 And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice.

But there was no voice; no one answered: no one paid attention.

YHWH gave the Ephraimite priests plenty of time to admit they were wrong:

30 Then Eliyahu said to all the people, "Come near to me;" so all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of YHWH that was broken down.

31 And Eliyahu took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of YHWH had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name."

32 Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of YHWH; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed.

Eliyahu made the trench large enough to hold two seahs of seed. The seed represents the Israelites, who are divided up into Two Houses:

33 And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four water-pots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." 34 Then he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time; and he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. [1st Kings 18:33-34]

Eliyahu poured a total of twelve jars of water.

35 So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water.

36 And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Eliyahu the prophet came near and said, "YHWH, Elohim of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are Elohim in Israel, and I am Your servant; and that I have done all these things at Your word.

37 Hear me, YHWH! Hear me, that this people may know that You are YHWH Elohim; and that You have turned their hearts back to You again."

YHWH may wink at our ignorance, but when He is put to the test, He only answers by fire when we call upon His true Name:

38 Then the fire of YHWH fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust: and it licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "YHWH, He is Elohim! YHWH, He is Elohim!"

40 And Eliyahu said to them, "Seize the prophets of The LORD! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them, and Eliyahu brought them down to the Brook Kishon, and executed them there. [1st Kings 18:35-40]

In answering Eliyahu by fire, YHWH showed the Ephraimites who was Elohim. However, since living beings are creatures of habit, the Ephraimites kept on calling Him LORD.

It is therefore not surprising that modern-day Christians should also call Him 'LORD', as their Ephraimite fore-fathers did the same:

1 When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling. He was exalted in Israel; but he incurred guilt through The LORD, and he died. [Hosea 13:1]

Breaking the Third Commandment is no small sin. It is the Third Commandment, and is listed in order of importance even before the Sabbath.

"Israel is Swallowed-Up"

In the early 700's BCE, YHWH had the Kings of Assyria make several incursions into the Land of Israel. Around 722 BCE, the Ephraimite capital city of Samaria fell, and the Assyrians then carried the Ephraimites out of the Land, and deposited them in the lands that now make up modern-day Syria and Iraq:

6 In the ninth year of Hosea, the king of Assyria took Samaria (the capital of Ephraim) and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

7 For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against YHWH their Elohim, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods, 8 and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom YHWH had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

9 Also the children of Israel secretly did against YHWH their Elohim things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city.

10 They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill, and under every green tree.

11 There they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom YHWH had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke YHWH to anger, 12 for they served idols, of which YHWH had said to them, "You shall not do this thing."

13 Yet YHWH testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets."

14 Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in YHWH their Elohim (i.e., they did not obey Him).

15 And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom YHWH had charged them that they should not do like them.

16 So they left all the commandments of YHWH their Elohim, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served The LORD (Ba'al).

[Melachim Bet (2nd Kings) 17:6-16]

Verse 14 tells us that because the Ephraimites did not keep YHWH's Commandments, they were like unto their fathers, who did not believe in YHWH either. While their fathers may have 'believed' in the Greco-Roman intellectual sense, since they did not obey YHWH's Commandments, YHWH tells us that they did not (truly) believe.

The Assyrian policy was to assimilate newly conquered peoples by re-settling them in other lands, and bringing in others, to replace them. Therefore, when the Ephraimites were taken out of their Land (Samaria), other peoples took their place:

24 Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities.

[Melachim Bet (2nd Kings) 17:24]

The Assyrians took away all but a few of the poorest Ephraimites, and then brought in other peoples to inter-marry with them. The result was a new half-breed race called the 'Samaritans.'

The Samaritans were a double-hybrid. They were the seed of Ephraim (which was itself a mixture between Joseph and Asenath), and now they became mixed with still more peoples. Being a double-hybrid, the Samaritans were wont to keep all sorts of practices that are not found anywhere in Torah.

Some of the Samaritan practices were very strange, and so YHWH sent lions to attack the people. Realizing that the Elohim of the Land (YHWH) was upset, the King of Assyria had one of the Ephraimite priests sent back into the Land, to teach the people the worship that Jeroboam originally concocted (not realizing that it was corrupt, and that it was the reason for Ephraim's exile to begin with):

27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the Elohim of the land." 28 Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear (i.e., obey) YHWH. [Melachim Bet (2nd Kings) 17:27-28]

YHWH did allow Himself to be appeased, but verse 33 tells us that even though the Samaritans feared YHWH, they were still serving their own elohim (exactly as the Church would later do):

33 They (Samaritans) feared YHWH; but they were serving their own mighty ones, according to the ruling of the nations to whom they had been exiled.

34 To this day they are doing according to the former rulings: They are not (truly) fearing YHWH, nor do they (truly) follow their laws or their right-rulings, which YHWH had commanded the children of Ya'akov, whose name He made Israel...." [Melachim Bet (2nd Kings) 17:33-34]

Since these departures from the Torah basically amount to apostasy, the Jews generally avoided the Samaritans. This is why the woman at the well was so astonished that Yeshua would even speak to her:

9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. [Yochanan (John) 4:9]

We will read more about the woman at the well in future chapters, but at the moment we need to know that while the Assyrians encouraged the Samaritan immigrants to learn Jeroboam's worship, the converse was also true. The Assyrians encouraged the Ephraimites to adopt the religious practices of the lands to which they had been scattered; and (perhaps not wanting to suffer persecution or discrimination) they did so.

None of this escaped the attention of the Ephraimites' Jewish brothers. When Israel was carried away for practicing false worship, the Jewish sages recorded their impressions of what had transpired in an important historical document called the *Talmud*.

At Talmud Tractate Yebamot 17A, the Jewish sages record that once the Ephraimites had been deposited in their new Assyrian lands, they had begun fathering what the sages called '*strange children.*' The Jews called these strange children 'strange' because they no longer kept the Torah, or spoke Hebrew.

Since the Ephraimites were no longer living in the Land of Israel, no longer spoke Hebrew, and no longer kept the Covenant, the Jewish sages ruled that Ephraim's children were no longer worthy to be called '*Israelites.*' The sages ruled that since they were indistinguishable from the gentiles, they were legally classed as gentiles, and that they should be thought of as '*Gentiles.*'

Since the Jews considered the rulings of the Sages to be inspired, they also believed these rulings to carry the weight of law. For this reason, the Ephraimites were now officially thought of as *Gentiles* from the time of their Dispersion right on up through the First Century, when the New Covenant was written.

Scripture only concerns itself with Israel. It does not concern itself with the other nations of the world, except insofar as they form the backdrop of events happening to the Nation of Israel. Therefore, we can surmise that the references to the *Gentiles* of the New Covenant are actually references to the *Gentile* children of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel.

As Ephraim rapidly assimilated into the Assyrian national culture, the tribal genealogies that had always been so highly valued were soon lost. This had to happen, in order to fulfill Hosea 8:8:

***8 Israel is swallowed up;
Now they are among the Gentiles
Like a vessel in which is no pleasure.
[Hosea 8:8]***

When you swallow something, it soon becomes impossible to tell the difference between the food you swallowed yesterday, and you. This was fast becoming the case with the Children of Ephraim, who were being assimilated into the Assyrian Empire.

The Jewish sages knew from the Torah that the Lost Ten Tribes would have to be scattered to the ends of the earth, in order to fulfill the promises given to the Patriarchs. What they could not understand, however, was how the Lost Ten Tribes would ever be brought back to the Land, when their genealogies were so rapidly (and so completely) disappearing.

The classical definition of a *messiah* is that of a divinely-appointed leader who brings the lost and the scattered of Israel back to the Land, and to the Eternal Covenant. But how could any human being ever bring the Children of Ephraim back to the Land, when their genealogies were being erased?

How would anyone ever bring the Children of Ephraim back to the Land (and to the eternal Torah), when no one could any longer tell who they were?

Establishing the Pattern

The Ten Tribes were banished from the Land of Israel for sinning against their Creator: that much is clear. However, if Divine Providence tells us that all things ultimately stem from the hand of the Creator for a divine purpose, then what was that purpose? Why did the Tribes have to sin, and be banished? Is there any kind of a logical sequence, or a pattern?

In the Beginning, YHWH formed the man Adam from the dust of the ground:

***7 And YHWH Elohim formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
[Breisheet (Genesis) 2:7]***

Many Christians believe that Adam and Eve (actually Adam and Havvah) could have avoided their fall from grace, simply by making better choices:

***13 And YHWH Elohim said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"
[Breisheet (Genesis) 3:13]***

But is that really so? Even though Adam and Havvah appeared to have free will and choice, the Apostle Shaul tells us that our Salvation was fore-ordained from before the foundations of the world:

***4 Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be set apart and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Yeshua Messiah to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.
[Ephesians 1:6]***

If Salvation was fore-ordained, then surely it was also necessary for Adam and Havvah to fall, so they could be saved. One wonders, then, if there might be a parallel with the House of Ephraim...and if so, what?

Many Christians believe that man will ultimately return to the Garden of Eden, from whence he came. This, however, is contrary to the Scriptures, which tell us that mankind is headed for life in a city:

***2 Then I, Yochanan (John), saw the set-apart city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from Elohim, prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband.
[Revelation 21:2]***

If dusty man began in the field, but will ultimately progress to the city, can we infer that YHWH did not create Adam and Havvah as finished products? They may be finished in the physical, material sense; but they still had to undergo a spiritual refinement. Like a rich metal ore, dusty man has to be crushed, and then sluiced, and then refined as silver and gold are refined: in the fire and the furnace of affliction.

But if mankind must undergo spiritual affliction, then what is the ultimate goal of all of his spiritual refinement and learning? Could it be to train this dusty, materialistic man to become more of a spiritual being? Or what is the purpose of it all?

After Adam and Havvah (Eve) first broke His Commandments, mankind began to be corrupt:

11 The earth also was corrupt before Elohim, and the earth was filled with violence.

12 So Elohim looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

[Breisheet (Genesis) 6:11-12]

At this time, YHWH told a man named Noah (or Noach) that if he obeyed the voice of Elohim, he would save his own life, and the lives of his immediate family:

17 And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. 18 But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark — you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. [Breisheet (Genesis) 6:17-18]

Next, Avraham was asked to obey YHWH's voice, even though it meant he would have to leave his home and his extended family, and everything he knew; and then sojourn in a Land not his own:

1 Now YHWH had said to Abram: "Go yourself out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a Land that I will show you. [Breisheet (Genesis) 12:1]

This same Avraham later agreed even to slay his only son, in obedience to YHWH's voice:

2 Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." [Breisheet (Genesis) 22:2]

Notice, then, that Noach obeyed YHWH's voice; but his reward was that he would save the lives of himself and his family members. In contrast, however, Avraham's obedience would cost him his relationships with his extended family; and later would even threaten to cost him his only son.

What the Scriptures reveal, then, is that YHWH continually raises the cost of being loyal to Him. Whereas Noach would deliver his family through his obedience, from Abraham on forward, such obedience would begin to take an increasing personal toll. This pattern of raising the cost of obedience, then, carries forward to the incident with the golden calf.

When the children of Israel sinned against YHWH by making a visible object of worship, YHWH wanted to destroy Israel's children, and make a new-and-superior nation out of Moshe's better seed. However, although Moshe would have personally gained just by consenting, he pleaded with YHWH to spare the lives of his Israelite brothers and sisters:

9 And YHWH said to Moshe, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! 10 Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them, and I may consume them; and I will make of you a great nation."

11 Then Moshe pleaded with YHWH his Elohim, and said: "YHWH, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people, whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

12 "Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people.

13 "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever'."

14 So YHWH relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people. [Shemot (Exodus) 32:9-14]

Even though a man's carnal nature is to sire as many children as he can, Moshe sought to save his brothers' and sisters' lives, even though it meant he would have to forego siring such a nation himself.

Moshe, then, traded away his own personal success for an opportunity to serve others in a spiritual way. In this he was a shadow of the coming Messiah, who laid down His life to save others:

13 Greater Love has no man than this, that he should lay down his life for his friends. [Yochanan (John) 15:13-17]

What we see, then, is that the Israelite religion is not just a religion, but also a spiritual path. In contrast to the value systems of the world, Israelite worship asks one to learn to place others ahead of oneself:

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than (themselves).

4 Let each of you look out not only for (your) own interests, but also for the interests of others.

[Philippians 2:3-4]

The pattern, then, is that YHWH is training His dusty bride to nurture an ever-increasing devotion and love towards others. One must learn to do only good, even though it will cost one dearly, in the material sense. One must learn not to rely on one's own might and power; but to turn to YHWH for support. One must learn to listen for the voice of the Bridegroom, and then obey it, no matter what personal cost one might have to incur.

From Noach, to Abraham, to Moshe, and then to the Messiah, the material cost of obeying YHWH's voice would only increase.

Despite ever-increasing personal sacrifice, the bride becomes both filled and adorned with love, by letting love be the central core motivation for every aspect of everything she does. This is true religion, and this is the heart of the Law. The Apostle Shaul addresses this beautifully in his writings, at First Corinthians Chapter Thirteen:

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love suffers long, and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself; is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part; 10 but when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things; 12 for now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then (we shall see) face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know, just as I also am known.

13 And now abide faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

[First Corinthians Thirteen]

Love truly is the greatest of all things, for we know that the Spirit is Love:

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of Elohim; and everyone who loves is born of Elohim, and knows Elohim.

8 He who does not love does not know Elohim; for Elohim is love.

[Yochanan Aleph (1st John) 4:8]

However, we are also told that without keeping the Bridal Instructions, our love is not complete:

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of Elohim is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. [Yochanan Aleph (1st John) 2:3-6]

What YHWH is trying to fashion from his dusty lump of clay, then, is a bride who listens intently for the sound of His voice, and who keeps His Covenant in a heart of perfect love, no matter what it may cost her. However, YHWH knows that dusty old mankind is still a little dull around the edges, and is only able to learn just-so-quickly. Therefore, He has been giving her everything she needs to grow, in stages, as if He has been raising her up from her childhood.

Up until this point in history, Christianity has not needed to know anything about the need to fulfill the Marital Covenant, as the Christians have been busily spreading their version of the Good News outward, and making disciples in all nations. However, now that Ephraim's Exile is nearing its end (of which we will speak in the next chapter), the Christians are finally beginning to realize that there is more to being a follower of the Messiah than just loving Him in a purely idealized, intellectual sense. Rather, one must also learn to walk just as He walked; and do as He did.

Before mankind was able to accept the true Good News, mankind was only able to accept the Christian variation. Fallen Adam was so far fallen that he was not ready to accept the whole truth. And while Christianity is not the end-goal of the belief in Yeshua, let us give Christianity its due. While the Christians did persecute the Jews, and while they exterminated the Nazarenes, they also brought great advancements to the world. Even their religion of intellectual-only love wrought a dramatic civilizing effect upon all of man's prior corruptions.

Apart from their barbarous acts against the Jews, the Christians (and even the Catholic Christians, to some extent) helped bring civilization to the world. For example, they stopped pagan earth-worshippers (such as the Druids) from sacrificing their children at human-life-sacrifice sites such as Stonehenge.

After Catholicism became the official religion of the Roman Empire, instead of burning their children to demons in bone-fires (bonfires), the Roman citizens were now encouraged to come inside of the Catholic Churches, where they could simply burn candles to their demons (who had been turned into figurines, and canonized by the Pope): Hence the children lived.

From a Torah perspective, Christianity was just one desolating abomination after another. However, from an objective point of view, the Christians (and even the Catholic Christians) brought a great deal of advancement to the world. Even though the Pope would claim to be Elohim's representative on earth, the world was made into a much better place than before. This is one reason Yeshua tells us:

38 And John answered Him, saying, "Rabbi, we saw someone casting out demons in Your Name, who does not follow us. And we stopped him, because he does not follow us."

39 But (Yeshua) said, "Do not stop him! For there is no one who shall do a work of power in My Name, yet be able to speak evil of Me quickly! For he who is not against us is for us."

41 For truly I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you are of Messiah, he will by no means lose his reward.

[Marqaus (Mark) 9:38-41]

Though the Christians would persecute the Nazarenes unto death, even the Christians would have their reward, for Christianity needed its day in the sun that the promises to the Patriarchs might be fulfilled.

Some Christians would be truer to the principle of Love than others would be, but YHWH would know the difference; and all would be held accountable for what they knew, in the Day of Judgment.

Christianity's day in the sun, however, is rapidly being brought to a close. As we will see in the following chapter, the prophecies tell us that Ephraim's long period of exile has reached its finishing-point, and the time for the regathering is at hand.

Fulfilling the Prophecies

Ezekiel was told to lie on his left side for 390 days; each day symbolizing a year that Ephraim was to remain in exile, outside of the Land of Israel:

4 "Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the House of Israel upon it. According to the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity.

5 For I have laid on you the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days: three hundred and ninety days; so you shall bear the iniquity of the House of Israel (or Ephraim).

[Yehezqel (Ezekiel) 4:4-5]

Israel was to remain in exile 390 years, but there was a catch: Leviticus tells us that those who do not perform all His commandments after being punished will have their time of punishment multiplied seven-fold:

14 "But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, 15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My Covenant, 16 I also will do this to you: 17 I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your

enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you.

18 And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you (even) seven times more, for your sins.

[Vayiqra (Leviticus) 26:14-15, 18]

If the Assyrians began invading around 734 BCE, then 390 years later brought us to 344 BCE. Ephraim apparently did not begin keeping all the Commandments at that time; and therefore his punishment was multiplied out seven times more.

Seven times 390 years of punishment is 2730 years of punishment. Therefore, 734 BCE plus 2730 more years brings us to 1996 CE. If this calculation is correct, we should be able to see the nascent beginnings of an Ephraimite movement at this time; and this is in fact what we do see.

While it was established a few decades prior to 1996, the Ephraimite movement began to flourish in-and-around the mid-to-late 1990's. This phenomenon can only be explained by Scripture Prophecy.

Lest anyone say that the Ephraimite movement was devised by men, rather than YHWH, there are other Scriptural witnesses. One major one we will look at here is in the Book of Hosea.

The Book of Hosea speaks primarily of Ephraim. Therefore, speaking of the Lost Ephraimites, Hosea prophesies:

**2 After two days He will revive us;
On the third day He will raise us up,
That we may live in His sight.
[Hosea 6:2]**

Kefa (Peter) tells us not to forget that a prophetic day with YHWH is equal to a thousand years:

8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with YHWH, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. [Kefa Bet (2nd Peter) 3:8]

If a prophetic day is actually a thousand years, then the two prophetic days of Hosea 6:2 represent two thousand years. In context, then, Hosea 6:2 tells us that after two thousand years, the Ephraimites would be raised up (in the third day), so that they might live in YHWH's sight.

The only question is, "When does the third day begin?" The phrase '*the third day*' ought to give us a hint that this prophecy somehow relates to Yeshua:

31 And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." [Marqaus (Mark) 9:31]

By definition, a *Messiah* is a Divinely-Appointed Leader who brings the lost and scattered of Israel back to the Land of Israel, and to the Covenant. Yeshua is the only historical person who fulfills that role.

Modern scholarship tells us that the Messiah was actually born in or about 4 BCE. Two thousand years after 4 BCE brings us to 1996 CE, which is the same year that the Ephraimite and Nazarene Israel movements began to gain popularity.

But was there a deeper meaning to the scattering of the Ephraimites? If Divine Providence tells us that everything happens by the hand of the Creator, then what was His purpose?

YHWH made a number of prophetic promises to the Patriarchs. For example, Avraham was told that all the families of the earth would be blessed in him (meaning, in his descendants):

**1 Now YHWH had said to Avram:
"Go out of your country, from your family, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.
2 "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.
3 "And I will bless those who bless you, and curse the one despising you; and in you (meaning, in your descendants), all the families of the earth shall be blessed." [Genesis 12:3]**

Then Avraham was told that he would father not just one nation; but that he would father many nations:

**4 "As for Me, look! My covenant is with you; and you shall become a father of many nations.... 6 And I shall make you bear fruit exceedingly, and (I shall) make nations of you, and sovereigns shall come from you.
7 And I shall establish My covenant between Me and you, and your seed after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be Elohim to you and to your seed after you.
8 And I shall give to you all the Land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan; and I shall be their Elohim." [Breisheet (Genesis) 17:4-8]**

Who are these many nations? The Muslim peoples also descend from Avraham; but these are not the people of the Covenant, because the Promise was specifically to come through Yitzhak (Isaac):

**19 Then Elohim said: "No! Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Yitzhak (Isaac). I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.
20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.
21 But My covenant I will establish with Yitzhak (Isaac), whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year." [Breisheet (Genesis) 17:19-21]**

Ishmael also has an inheritance, in that Ishmael was to become twelve princes: and indeed, there are twelve Islamic nations. However, Salvation is not of Ishmael, but of the Jews (meaning Yeshua, John 4:22); and the Promise was prophesied to come through Yitzhak, and then through Ya'akov (or Israel).

Genesis 35:10-12 also tells us that Israel would father a nation, and a company of nations:

10 And Elohim said to him, "Your name is Ya'akov (Jacob): Your name shall not be called Ya'akov anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel.

11 Also Elohim said to him: "I am El Shaddai. Be fruitful and multiply: A nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.

12 The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land."

[Brisheet (Genesis) 35:9-12]

While there has been much genetic immigration and emigration, the Jews of today's time are essentially the direct prophetic descendants of the Jews of Yeshua's time. Therefore, when verse eleven speaks of a nation and a *company of nations* that descend from Ya'akov, we can assume that the singular nation that is spoken of is the Jewish nation; but who is the *company of nations*?

The Muslim nations do not qualify, in that they descend from Ishmael (and not Israel). Therefore, the only reasonable candidates are the Protestant Christian nations, from whom the Ephraimites are now (not coincidentally) beginning to emerge.

Notice that this also makes sense. Despite Muslim claims to the contrary, the Christians are the only other people on Planet Earth who worship the same Elohim, and who read the same book. That there has been fighting between Judah and Ephraim is easily ascribed to the fighting that has always existed between the Two Houses (since ancient times).

Next, in the Dream of Jacob's Ladder, we will start to see the prophecies that could only be fulfilled by the dispersing of the Tribes. There are some very important aspects mentioned in this prophecy, which both Orthodox Jewish and Christian scholars miss:

10 And Ya'akov (Jacob) went out from Be'er-Sheva and went toward Haran. And he came on a place and stayed the night there, for the sun had gone. And he took stones of the place and placed them at his head; and he lay down in that place.

12 And he dreamed; and behold! A ladder was set up on the earth, its top reaching toward the heavens. And behold! The angels of Elohim were going up and down on it!

13 And behold! YHWH stood above it and said, "I am YHWH, the Elohim of your father Avraham, and the Elohim of Isaac. The Land on which you are lying, I give it to you, and to your Seed.

14 And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you (meaning Israel's descendants) shall spread to the west, and to the east, and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you (meaning genetically); and (in) your Seed (meaning Yeshua).

15 And behold! I will be with you and will guard you in every place in which you may go, and will bring you back to this Land. For I will not forsake you until I have surely done all that I have spoken to you." [Genesis 28:10-15]

Verse 14 is a very special verse, and there is a two-fold promise contained within it.

At Galatians 3:16, the Apostle Shaul tells us that this word 'seed' is singular; and that it refers to Yeshua:

16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds", as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed", who is the Messiah. [Galatians 3:16]

This is another one of those frequent instances where the Apostle Shaul's words have thrown so many Christians off track for so many years, because it was not yet time for the truth to be revealed.

In context, the Dream of Jacob's Ladder tells us that the whole world would be blessed in Yeshua. This is obviously true. All nations have benefited from the tremendous technological and industrial achievements that have been wrought by the Protestant Christian peoples. Many nations have also benefited from the numerous societal freedoms that were originally initiated in Protestant Christian society (and which some say can only survive in a believing society).

However, if we check the language carefully, we will see there are actually two blessings given in verse fourteen. In addition to being blessed in Yeshua, all the families of the earth were to be blessed *in Ya'akov* (or Israel). Taken at its strictest, most literal meaning, this means that all of the families of the earth would be blessed in that they would intermarry with Israel's descendants. (This cannot possibly refer to Yeshua, because Yeshua never had children.)

What the passage states, then, is that all the families of the earth would be hybridized with the literal seed of Jacob; and that once all the families of the earth had literally become of Israelite stock, then they would be subject to the Promise.

Once they were subject to the Promise they would have the option to receive Salvation by Grace through faith, by accepting Yeshua as their Messiah.

Many Christians find the genetic component to be a challenge, in that Christianity has always focused exclusively upon the gift of Grace through faith:

26 For you are all sons of Elohim through faith in Messiah Yeshua. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Messiah have put on Messiah. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek (meaning a Hellenized Jew), there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua. 29 And if you are Messiah's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. [Galatians 3:26-29]

Not understanding the role of a Messiah, the Christian misreads Galatians 3:26-29 as saying that just because one believes in Yeshua, that the genetic component is no longer important. That is not what this passage actually says. Remembering that Shaul's letters can be confusing, what this passage actually says is that the Messiah came to bring the Israelites back to the Promises (the Covenant). In other words, He came for Avraham and Israel's descendants.

The question then typically arises, "Why would the Messiah come only for those who were subject to the Promises?" It is because this is the very definition of a Messiah: a Divinely-Appointed Leader who brings back the lost and scattered of the Children of Israel.

Christianity's definition is actually anti-Messiah: one who does away with the Children of Israel in favor of those who were never heirs to the Promise at all. This interpretation is entirely contrary to Scripture.

The next question that usually arises is one of utter astonishment: "What if there was someone in the inward-reaches of the Brazilian jungle who never received Jacob's genetics? Would he or she be able to graft into the Covenant by grace through faith?"

The simple answer is that this question goes directly against Scripture. We are told (in multiple locations) that every family, every nation, and every clan would be blessed in Avraham's seed (through Ya'akov). Unless we are willing to call YHWH a liar, we must believe every word of His Word.

The detailed answer is that there are records of the Israelites being on both the North and South American continents since before the Babylonian Exile, circa 586 BCE. Modern archaeologists have also replicated ancient Phoenician trans-Atlantic voyages (re: Thor Hyerdahl and the Ra I and II expeditions); and since the Israelites were also seafaring merchants, there is no reason to believe that they did not also number among those who crossed the Atlantic.

Further, there were three major (and many minor) exiles in the Nation of Israel's long history. The vast majority of the Israelites never returned from these exiles; and given the many thousands of years that these exiles had to merge, migrate, drift and assimilate, it only seems reasonable that they had ample time to fulfill the letter of YHWH's Word.

When we remember that the ancient Israelites were also seafarers, almost three thousand years is plenty of time for the dispersed of Jacob to have spread to the four corners of the earth. To visualize how long such migrations might take, all we need to do is to imagine pouring three cups of chlorine bleach into an Olympic-sized swimming pool. It might take some time for the chlorine bleach to disperse, but one can rest assured that it will.

The Jews have been known to be at the center of world commerce in all ages. Scripture also records for us that Jewry had penetrated into the heart of Africa by or before the first century CE. For example, an Ethiopian Jew had come up for the pilgrimage:

***27 And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the Queen of the Ethiopians (who had charge of all her treasury) and had come to Jerusalem to worship, and was returning.
[Ma'aseh (Acts) 8:27]***

We should remember that Ethiopia is fully one-third of the way to South Africa; and that Nigeria is similarly distant. Remembering that the word 'Niger' means black, there was also apparently a Nigerian Jew numbering among the prophets and teachers:

***1 Now in the assembly that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Shimon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Shaul.
[Ma'aseh (Acts) 13:1-2]***

However, despite the migrations of Israel's children, genetics is only a prerequisite to Salvation. One is not saved by genetics, but by faith in Yeshua:

***7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.
[Galatians 3:7]***

Judah and Ephraim were scattered to the four corners of the earth, to be mixed with the children of every tribe and tongue and people. Once every family, every nation and every clan was blessed with Israel's genetics, the whole world was now heir to the Promise of Salvation. At that point it became only a question of who would decide to hear Yeshua's voice (and heed it), and who would not.

Yeshua tells us that His sheep will hear His voice, and will rejoin their brothers (the Jews):

14 I am the Good Shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock, and one Shepherd.
[Yochanan (John) 10:14-16]

When His sheep hear His voice calling them back to the Land after two thousand years, it will fulfill other prophecies as well. For example, in Jeremiah 31:6, the word 'Watchmen' in Hebrew is *Notzrim*. This is also the Hebrew word for the *Christians*:

6 "For there shall be a day when (the Christians) on Mount Ephraim shall call out, "Arise, and let us go up to Mount Zion, to YHWH our Elohim!"
[Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 31:6]

The Two Houses in the New Covenant

If we want to understand the references to the Two Houses in the New Covenant, then we need to understand Israel's three main exiles.

Israel's first and greatest exile was the Assyrian Diaspora, in which Israel's ten northern tribes were taken away, and sown into the earth like wheat seed. Indeed, the word Diaspora means *The Seeding*, and the first fruits of the dispersed Ephraimites are only just now beginning to return.

The Diaspora is also called *The Great Dispersion*. This Great Dispersion began in a series of invasions that took place from approximately 734 BCE until 722 BCE. However, while the Dispersion mainly concerned the Ephraimites, the Assyrians were not very particular about whom they took into captivity. When they came to take away the Ephraimites, they also took away a great many of Judah. This is why Ya'akov (or James) writes his epistle not just to the Ten Tribes of the Dispersion, but to the Twelve:

1 "Ya'akov (James), a servant of Elohim and of the Master Yeshua Messiah, to the Twelve Tribes who are in the Dispersion: Greetings."
[Ya'akov (James) 1:1]

The term 'Dispersion' normally refers to the ten tribes of the Northern House of Israel (or Ephraim). That Ya'akov addresses the Twelve Tribes (instead of just the ten) simply makes him more correct.

Ya'akov, however, is not alone in addressing his lost Ephraimite brethren. The Apostle Kefa (or Peter) also addresses the Dispersion:

1 “Kefa, an emissary of Yeshua Messiah to the Chosen: strangers of the Dispersion in Pontos, Galatia, Kappadokia, Asia, and Bithunia;”
[Kefa Aleph (1st Peter) 1:1]

In his epistle, Kefa tells the Gentiles that they are not ‘gentiles’ as one thinks of gentiles in the West. Rather, he calls them an ‘elect race’ and a ‘set-apart nation’, something that gentiles in the Western sense of the word never were. Not only that, but he quotes Hosea to tell them they are actually the restored House of Ephraim being called back to the Covenant:

9 But you are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a set-apart nation, (and) a people for a possession, so that you may openly speak of the virtues of the One who has called you out of darkness, into His marvelous light.
10 You who were then not a people (Lo Ammi), but now are the “people of Elohim” (Hosea 1:10); the one not pitied then (Lo Ruhamah, Hosea 1:8), but now pitied (Ruhamah, Hosea 1:10).
[Kefa Aleph (1st Peter) 2:9-10]

Kefa calls the Gentiles ‘Ammi’ (My people), and Ruhamah (pitied). This is because while Ephraim was once *not a people* (Lo Ammi), they are once again the sons of the living Elohim (in fulfillment of Hosea 1:10).

The Apostle Shaul also quotes Hosea to show the Gentiles that they are actually the Ephraimites:

24 ...whom He also called; not only of us Jews, but also out of the nations (meaning Ephraim).
25 As also He says in Hosea, “I will call them (who were once) ‘not My people’ (Lo Ammi) ‘My people’; and them (who were once) ‘not having been loved’ (Lo Ruhamah) ‘beloved.’
26 And it shall be in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people’ (Lo Ammi), there they will be called ‘Sons of the Living Elohim”
[Romayah (Romans) 9:24-26]

Shaul quotes Hosea to tell the returning Gentiles that they are not ‘gentiles’ without a past; but that they are actually the lost sheep of the House of Israel (or Ephraim). Then he tries to tell them that their Jewish brethren have not been cast away forever:

1 I say then, has Elohim cast away His people (forever)? Elohim forbid; for I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the Tribe of Benjamin.
2 Elohim has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.
[Romayah (Romans) 11:1-2]

What we see is a repeat of the same pattern that had taken place earlier, in Jeroboam’s time. Israel was to become the new lead House, while the Jews would be afflicted; but not forever:

39 And I will afflict the descendants of David (i.e., the Jews) because of this, but not forever.’”
[Melachim Aleph (1st Kings) 11:39]

However, while the Jews would be afflicted, Shaul tries to make it clear that this affliction would not be permanent:

11 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not!
[Romayah (Romans) 11:11]

Shaul tells Ephraim that Judah will be grafted back in to her own Root (i.e. she will accept Yeshua) as soon as Ephraim has spread the Good News to the ends of the earth:

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this secret, lest you should be wise in your own estimation: that blindness in part has happened to Israel (meaning both Houses here) until the fullness of the Gentiles (Ephraim) has come in.

26 And so all Israel (meaning both Houses) shall be saved, as it is written:

"The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away iniquity from Jacob (quoting Isaiah 59:20);

27 “For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins (quoting Isaiah 27:9).”

[Romayah (Romans) 11:25-27]

Both Houses were to be blinded for a time. Ephraim would know Yeshua (or ‘Jesus’), but would not know the Torah. This would allow them to carry the Good News to the ends of the earth much faster than the Nazarenes would have been able to spread it.

Judah, conversely, would be blind to Yeshua, because they were to remain focused on the Torah, so that Ephraim would have an Inheritance to come back to.

The big secret, then, is that the Two Houses were given two different tracks. YHWH placed the Ephraimites on the Christian track, which meant that they would have belief in Yeshua (or ‘Jesus’), but they would be blind to the need for the Covenant. While this would be entirely their fault, YHWH would also make use of it, for good.

Judah, conversely, would try to keep the Torah, but because they would be blind to Yeshua, they would never be able to experience the true fullness of it. However, Shaul tells us that Judah would ultimately be recovered to the Covenant, because their blessing and election as Children of the Covenant was irrevocable:

28 Concerning the Good News they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; 29 for the gifts and the calling of Elohim are irrevocable.

[Romayah (Romans) 11:11-29]

However, neither the Christian nor the Orthodox track would be sufficient to gain one entrance into the Kingdom. The people Satan is really out to get are those who both have the Testimony of Yeshua, and keep the necessary Commandments:

17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring; (those) who keep the Commandments of Elohim and have the Testimony of Yeshua Messiah.

[Manifestation (Revelation) 12:17]

The Prophets also speak to the need to both keep the Torah, and to believe on Yeshua:

20 To the Torah and to the Testimony (of Yeshua)! If they do not speak according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.

[Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 8:20]

Yeshua is the Bridegroom, and the Torah is a record of His Instructions. Until we both believe on Him and keep His Instructions, our worship of Him is far from complete.

The worship of the Two Houses, then, is curious. Ephraim is like a woman who insists she loves her Husband, but does not want to do what He asks. Conversely, Judah more-or-less does what Yeshua asks; but she uses her partial obedience to His Instructions as an excuse to lock Him out of her house. Both of these expect to be taken in marriage.

More Two House References

There are other references to the Two Houses hidden in the New Covenant. However, because the language is symbolic, most Christians do not recognize them for what they are.

More than a hundred years after the Lost Ten Tribes were taken away in the Assyrian Diaspora, the Jews of the Southern Kingdom were carried away in an exile of their own. This second (Jewish) exile became known as the Exile to Babylon.

The Babylonian Exile lasted approximately seventy years. At the end of that time, roughly ten percent of the Jews came back to the Land, in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The other ninety percent of the Jews remained out in Babylon, where living conditions were easier. Like the Ephraimites, they also intermarried, and ultimately assimilated into the surrounding culture. Then, as a result of military conquests, commercial trading and the like, Judah's seed also spread to the four directions, just like the chlorine bleach in our earlier example. Because of this, Kefa likened their calling to that of their Ephraimite brothers:

13 “She who is in Babylon (meaning the 90% of Judah still out in the Babylonian Exile), *chosen together with you* (meaning the Lost Ten Tribes still in the Diaspora) *greet you: also my son* (meaning, my disciple), **Mark.”**

[Kefa Aleph (1st Peter) 5:13]

Kefa is not alone in writing in symbolism. In his second epistle, Yochanan (or John) uses Leah and Rachel as symbols of their respective children, Judah and Joseph. These two sons are, after all, symbolic of the Two Houses.

1 *“The elder (brother, meaning the House of Judah), to a chosen lady (Rachel) and her children (meaning the House of Yosef/Ephraim), whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also those who have known the truth.”*
[Yochanan Bet (2nd John) 1:1]

And remembering that Yochanan (John) was Jewish, and that Judah was born to Leah, we read:

13 *“The children (meaning the House of Judah) of your chosen sister (Leah) greet you: Amein.*
[Yochanan Bet (2nd John) 1:13]

Yeshua also gives us a prophecy about the return of the lost Ephraimites in the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*. The Church has always taught that this parable is nothing more than a beautiful story about a backslidden sinner who repents of his sin, and turns back to YHWH. However, when we understand the Two Houses, we see that it is much more.

Remembering that the name Ephraim literally means *Prodigious*, and that Judah is older than Ephraim, let us try to understand this parable as a prophetic picture of the Protestant Reformation, and the return of the Lost Ten Tribes. (The certain Man in the parable is YHWH):

11 *And (Yeshua) said, “A certain Man (YHWH) had two sons. And the younger of them (Ephraim) said to the Father, “Father, give me that part of the goods falling to me;” and He divided the Inheritance between them.*

13 *“And not too many days after, gathering up all things, the younger son (Ephraim) went away to a distant country (in the Assyrian Dispersion); and there he wasted his goods (the Law and the Language), living dissolutely (and becoming a lawless “gentile.”)*

14 *“But having lost all his goods, a severe famine (meaning a famine of spiritual food, prophesied in Amos 8:11) came through that country; and he began to be in need. And going, he was joined to one of the citizens of that country (referring to the Pope); and he sent him into his fields, to feed the pigs (idols). And he longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs ate; but no one gave him anything (that would sustain him spiritually).*

17 *“But coming to himself (in the Protestant Reformation), he said ‘How many of my Father’s servants have plenty of loaves (as bread is symbolic of the Torah); but I am perishing with famine!*

18 *‘Rising up, I will go to my Father and I will say to Him, “Father, I have sinned against the Heaven and against you, and am no longer worthy to be called Your son. (Please) make me as one of your hired servants!’ [Luke 15]*

As we will show in the study *Migrations*, the Lost Ten Tribes did disperse to all four directions, fulfilling the Dream of Jacob's Ladder. However, the bulk of Ephraim moved north and west by three separate migration routes. These three separate migration routes ultimately converged in what later became known as Protestant Northwestern Europe.

After the Ephraimites in Northwestern Europe threw off the Dark Ages of Catholicism (some 1260 years after they were given into the Little Horn's hand) they began to seek YHWH more directly. As a result of this, YHWH blessed their entire culture with prosperity and technological achievement that had never before been known by man:

20 "And rising up (in the Protestant Reformation) he came to his Father; but he yet being far away (from the original Nazarene faith and the Torah) his Father saw him, and was moved with pity; and running, He fell on his neck and fervently kissed him (though he was still as yet only a Protestant Christian).

21 "And the son (Ephraim) said to Him, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before You, and no longer am worthy to be called Your son.'

22 "But the Father said to His slaves, 'Bring out the best robe and clothe him (literally, Joseph's coat), and give a ring for his hand, and sandals for his feet! And bring the fattened calf, and slaughter it! And let us eat and be merry; for this son of Mine (Ephraim) was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found! And they began to be merry. [Luke 15:20-22]

In the parable, the Father saw Ephraim a long ways off, ran to him, fell on his neck, and kissed him. This is symbolic of how YHWH has blessed the Protestant nations beyond all others, simply for seeking His face. This, of course, is a source of frustration and resentment for Judah, who has kept the Torah for millennia without ever having received the same kinds of blessings of safety and easy prosperity:

25 "But his older son (Judah) was in the field; and coming, as he drew near to the House (i.e., the Temple) he heard music and dances.

26 "And having called one of the children to him, (Judah) inquired as to what this might be; 27 and he said to him, 'Your brother (Ephraim) came, and your Father killed the fattened calf, because he received him back in health.'

28 "But (Judah) was enraged, and did not desire to go in. Then coming out, his Father begged him. [Luke 15]

Notice Judah's indignation at Ephraim's being welcomed back to the Land of Israel, in spite of having previously despised the Covenant (like Esau):

29 "But answering, he (Judah) said to the Father, 'Behold, how many years have I served you, and never did I transgress a commandment of yours! But you never gave me a young goat, so that I might rejoice with my friends! 30 But when this son of yours came (he does not even call Ephraim his

brother), the one having devoured your livelihood with harlots (idols, icons, false religious traditions, false feast dates, false feast sites, and etceteras) you killed the fattened calf for him!

**31 “But He said to him, ‘Child, you are always with me, and all of My things are yours. But to be merry and to rejoice was right! For this brother of yours was dead, and is alive again! And was lost, and is found.
[Luqa (Luke) 15:29-31]**

Understand Judah’s incredulity. He has been faithful to the Torah for thousands of years, and has even suffered persecution at his brother’s hand in the many massacres, pogroms, Inquisitions, and Christian Crusades. His brother Ephraim walked away from the Covenant, worshipped golden calves, and tried to change the Torah; and yet the Father still orders His servants bring out the best robe (meaning Joseph’s multi-colored coat), give him a signet ring, and bring sandals for his feet, as only slaves went barefoot. Judah is furious and aghast at all this: How can such an injustice possibly be?

The key to understanding this unimaginable turn of events is to understand the allusion to Joseph’s many-colored coat, and all that it signifies.

In Scripture, it is sometimes said that the end is known from the Beginning. In the Book of Genesis, then, Joseph was sold into slavery due to no fault of his own; and was subsequently sent to prison for a crime he did not commit. This is symbolic of how the Nazarenes were driven from the synagogues and from the Temple in punishment for believing on Yeshua (which is the very farthest thing from a crime).

Joseph served Pharaoh honorably, and his Elohim-given abilities brought him great power and prestige. He was eventually able to use his position to save the lives of many people; including his father and other brothers. This can be seen as symbolic of the fact that the Christians are essentially the number-two power in America; and how they have even threatened to turn out of office any president who does not support their Jewish brothers in the State of Israel.

It might also be noted that separation from one’s own people (‘consecration’ in some versions) is highly regarded in Scripture, and it always carries a huge blessing. The reason for this is simple: YHWH created man as a social animal. It was not good for the man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). However, there are some circumstances in which men must be separated from their brothers (and even from normal life) in order to serve YHWH better. In the language of Scripture, these individuals are thought to be ‘*set apart from the world*’ (which is the actual meaning of the word ‘holy.’)

In the Hebrew mind, to be in the world but not of it, is to be ‘*set apart*’ from the world. Moreover, the greater the degree of separation (or set-apartness), the greater is the reward that accrues. This is because greater set-apartness requires greater devotion and effort to maintain the ‘living sacrifice.’ (These kinds of living sacrifices will be explored more fully in the study, *Covenant Relationship*.)

When set-apartness (or separation) is taken on voluntarily, it carries an enormous blessing. However, Joseph’s separation from Israel’s family was thrust upon him; and still he served honorably. An immense reward accrued to him, because of this.

The blessings spoken over Joseph indicate that Joseph would inhabit a land that strongly resembles America, with all its manifold blessings:

25 By the Elohim of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb.

26 The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.

These shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separated from his brothers.

[Breisheet (Genesis) 49:22-26]

Moshe the Prophet also gives Joseph a special blessing, for having been consecrated to his task:

13 And of Joseph he said:

"Blessed of YHWH is his land, with the precious things of heaven, with the dew, and the deep lying beneath,

14 With the precious fruits of the sun, with the precious produce of the months,

15 With the best things of the ancient mountains, with the precious things of the everlasting hills,

16 With the precious things of the earth and its fullness, and the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush.

Let this blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the crown of the head of him who was separated from his brothers.'

[Devarim (Deuteronomy) 33:13-16]

These blessings certainly do seem reminiscent of the land of America, that multi-colored (multi-racial) Protestant land that has been blessed above all others. It also harmonizes with what we know about America being the modern-day representative of the Tribe of Ephraim, serving as the lead tribe for the House of Ephraim worldwide (for more details, see the upcoming study *Migrations: The Lost Ten Tribes of Israel*).

At the human level, Judah sold Joseph into slavery. At the level of Divine Providence, However, YHWH had Judah send Joseph into Egypt ahead of his brothers, so that life could be preserved, by means of a great deliverance:

5 But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for Elohim sent me before you to preserve life....

7 And Elohim sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth; and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

[Breisheet (Genesis) 45:5, 7]

Joseph's great deliverance is a prophetic shadow of Yeshua, the blessing that would be given to Joseph's multi-racial children so that they could provide for all the people of the world; as well as the Jews and the Nation of Israel. It also tells us why America's Protestant (Ephraimite) Christians are basically the only friends that the modern-day State of Israel has. And, as galling as the Jews may find the fact, Ephraim will be welcomed home to the Land of Israel by a rejoicing and dancing Father, whose shouts of merriment will be heard above His elder son's protests.

To extend the analogy further, we can also surmise that Ephraim's sin in leaving the Covenant was not altogether his own fault. Ephraim did sin, but Ephraim was also a hybrid child. His mother Asenath was the daughter of the Egyptian High Priest, and her Egyptian priestly genetics essentially gave Ephraim's multi-racial children a genetic predisposition to stray from the Covenant.

YHWH allowed Joseph to be sent into Egypt so that he would marry Asenath; thereby ensuring that Ephraim would sin (and be spread to the four corners of the earth). This would give all of Adam's fallen children the opportunity to take hold of Yeshua.

However, in being spread to the four corners of the earth, Ephraim suffered a continuous backward slide. In order to stop their backslidden sinning, they needed a New Covenant to be written on their hearts, so that they might once again turn back to Zion.

On the one hand, everyone needs Salvation in Messiah Yeshua. On the other hand, however, the lost and scattered Ephraimites needed Yeshua far more desperately than the Jews did. This is why Yeshua tells us that He was only sent for the House of Ephraim (or Israel) on His first trip: because Joseph's pluralistic children were much more in need of His help:

24 And answering, (Yeshua) said, "I was not sent (at this time), except to (call) the lost sheep of the House of Israel (back to the Covenant)."
[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 15:24]

We have already seen that the Apostles were aware of Ephraim's role in fulfilling Scripture Prophecy. It is also clear that the Apostles knew the Two Houses would some day be re-united, which is why:

6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked (Yeshua), saying, "Master, will You at this time restore the kingdom to (House of) Israel?"
[Ma'aseh (Acts) 1:6]

The time to restore the literal Kingdom to the House of Israel was not then at hand. It was only then time for Yeshua's disciples to begin regathering Joseph's children, who had been sent ahead of them to the four corners of the earth. When the descendants of the disciples had found Ephraim's lost and wayward children, they would begin bringing them slowly back into the Covenant, generation by generation, by means of Yeshua, the Great Deliverance.

Why the name, 'Christians?'

We already know that the Christians and the Nazarenes were two separate groups by the time of the Fourth Century CE. We also know that the Christians eventually came to persecute not only the Nazarenes, but all other sects within Israel.

But why was the name 'Christian' chosen? Why *Christian*, and not some other name? And does this name *Christian* have any special significance?

A number of passages in the New Covenant tell us that there was more than one theological faction in the first century Body. For example, the Book of Acts tells us that there were the *Hebrews* and the *Hellenists*:

1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. [Ma'aseh (Acts) 6:1]

In the King James Version, this word 'Hellenists' is translated as 'Grecians':

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. [Acts 6:1, King James Version]

The Church tells us that the word *Hellenists* (or *Grecians*) is a reference to ethnic Greeks. The reason this cannot be correct is that the Apostles were not allowed to take the Good News to non-Jews until Acts Chapter Ten (four full chapters later). Acts Chapter Six describes only the history of the early Jerusalem Assembly, before the *Gentiles* were brought in. Therefore, the terms *Hebrew* and *Hellenist* must refer to sub-divisions within the early Jewish assembly.

However, if there were *Hebrew* and *Hellenist* sub-factions in the early all-Jewish assembly, then who were these *Hebrews* and *Hellenists*? Could it be that these terms were just early (or alternate) names for the *Nazarenes* and the *Christians*, (respectively)?

The disciples were first called 'Christians' at the Jewish synagogue in Antioch (in modern-day Turkey), in Acts Chapter Eleven:

26 And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. [Ma'aseh (Acts) 11:26]

The Church has always taught that this should be taken as a simple statement of fact: that the disciples were legitimately called *Christians*; and that the terms *Christian* and *Nazarene* are therefore synonymous (and can be used interchangeably).

The fatal flaw with this argument is that even the Church Father Epiphanius tells us that the Nazarenes were a separate entity, from the Christians. Further, we never see the Apostles referring to themselves as Christians: only other people call them that. That the Apostles do not correct others for calling them *Christians* does not make the two terms synonymous: It simply means that there is some hidden drama:

25 But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. 26 For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner.

27 "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."

28 Then Agrippa said to Shaul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

**29 And Shaul said, "I would to Elohim that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am (i.e., a Nazarene); except for these chains."
[Ma'aseh (Acts) 26:25-29]**

The Apostle Shaul was in chains, and King Agrippa was almost persuaded to become a Christian. This was hardly the time for Shaul to begin a discourse on the differences between the Nazarenes and the Christians; especially when Shaul understood that the Ephraimites would be gathered into Christianity first:

**3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the Man of Sin (i.e., the Pope) is revealed, the son of perdition....
[2nd Thessalonians 2:3]**

By the time Shaul wrote Second Thessalonians, he understood that the Body of Messiah was going to have to fall away from the Torah for some time. For two prophetic days (i.e., two thousand years), the Ephraimites would be brought into the temporary vehicle called *Christianity*, rather than becoming fully-fledged Nazarenes. Since that was the case, it would have made very little sense for Shaul to stand there and insist that King Agrippa consider becoming a Nazarene. That he was in the process of becoming a *Christian* was enough.

Kefa (or Peter) also apparently understood that the dispersed Ephraimites would have to be brought back into Christianity first, before they could be brought the rest of the way back to the original Nazarene faith. Although he addresses his first epistle to the Dispersed (i.e., Ephraim), Kefa then writes:

**16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify Elohim in this matter.
[Kefa Aleph (1st Peter) 4:14-16]**

Kefa understood that the Dispersed of Ephraim would first become *Christians* before their descendants ultimately became Nazarenes. However, even so, he did not refer to himself as a Christian: He only told the Ephraimites that if they suffered for believing on the Messiah, that it would not be a shame to them.

But this is curious. Why should the Apostles not refer to themselves as *Christians*, when Christianity was to be the up-and-coming thing? If Ephraim was to be swallowed-up in the Church, then why did the Nazarenes continue to cling tenaciously to the 'Jewish observances' until the *Christians* exterminated them?

Westerners typically have difficulty relating to eastern concepts. This is tragic, for the Israelite faith is actually somewhat more of an eastern than a western religion, just as the Land of Israel lies in the Middle-East (and not in the Mid-West).

Westerners tend to see the West as the center of everything, at least insofar as the vast majority of industrial and technological advancement has been made in the Protestant West for the last several hundred years. For this reason, when Middle-Eastern concepts come to western ears, westerners have a tendency to discard them as either being irrelevant, unimportant, or strange. This is a mistake.

The world was created when YHWH spoke:

6 Then Elohim said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters."

7 Thus Elohim made the firmament (by speaking), and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.

[Breisheet (Genesis) 1:6-7]

Not only was the world created when YHWH spoke, but it was put into specific form. From this we can see that even the sounds of Words are important. Modern physicists are only now beginning to understand these concepts by application of String Theory, and a principle known as Spiritually Bounded Harmonics. These concepts will be explored more fully in *'Nazarene Scripture Commentary*, but for the moment, let us consider computer programs.

Just exactly as a computer programmer uses specific commands in a specific programming language to cause a computer to do certain things, YHWH applied specific Hebrew Words to the material realm, in order to cause it to do certain things. In a sense, then, YHWH uses Hebrew as His programming language.

Programming languages require one to be quite precise. If one takes a specific command from one of the more elegant (higher-level) computer languages (such as Cobol, or C++) and tries to use them in a program written in the foundational Machine Language (or even Unix), the commands will not be recognized.

In much the same way, while the term *Christian* may be considered a legitimate reference to a believer in the Jewish Messiah in Greek, the term is meaningless in Hebrew. It translates to literally nothing; which, in the Hebrew mind, is a good reason not to call one's self a *Christian*.

However, far more importantly, Israel's children were always commanded to avoid worshipping, or even speaking the names of foreign elohim (gods):

**13 "Now concerning everything which I have said to you, be on your guard! Do not mention the names of other elohim. Do not (even) let them be heard from your mouth!
[Shemot (Exodus) 23:13]**

While Israelites were forbidden to worship other elohim, it was common practice for the Greeks, the Romans and/or the Babylonians to adopt foreign elohim into their pantheons. One of the foreign gods that had been adopted into the Greek and Roman pantheons, then, was the Hindu god of war, Krishna.

In Hindu religious literature, Krishna is a human incarnation of their god (Vishnu). On the eve of battle, Krishna tells a young man (Arjuna) not to be reluctant about killing his brothers and family, but to do his duty as a warrior, and to kill them without regret.

Any scholar can tell you that the reason the Greeks called Yeshua *Christ* instead of *Messiah* is that the term 'Christ' is allegedly the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term 'Messiah.' Since Krishna was also supposed to be a physical incarnation of a supreme deity (Vishnu), scholars suggest that the terms *Messiah* and *Christ* are equivalents.

However, in a world where words and their sounds have specific meaning, and in a world where the worship of foreign elohim (gods) is prohibited, it should not be too difficult to see that there is a difficulty with calling the Hebrew Messiah the *Christ* (i.e., Krishna).

However well one might intend it, at least in terms of spiritually bounded harmonics, to call Yeshua the *Christ* is to equate Him with Krishna, the Hindu war god who encouraged young men to do their sacred duty, and to kill their brothers and family members in war, without regret. It should also not be impossible to draw spiritual parallels to the Christians, who did what they felt was their sacred duty, and killed their Jewish brothers and sisters (and others of the Israelite family) without regret.

The Christian soldiers marched onward to war in persecutions, pogroms, Inquisitions and Crusades. The death toll among the Jews (and the Nazarenes, both Jewish and Ephraimite) ultimately reached into the millions.

More Jews, Greeks, and Gentiles

Ephraim had been in Exile for over a hundred years when a prophet named Jeremiah began to tell the Jews that unless they turned back to the Torah, they too would be taken into exile. However, rather than being taken to Assyria (as Ephraim had), they would be taken to a place called Babylon.

Judah would be in their Exile for seventy years, after which time YHWH would bring them back home:

For thus says YHWH: "After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform My good Word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. [Jeremiah 29:10]

The Babylonian Exile differed from the bondage Israel had suffered in Egypt. Rather than being taken slaves, the Jews were free to trade, own businesses, and even to intermarry. Since the Babylonian economy was strong and their 'captivity' was relatively luxurious compared to their former life in Israel, most of the Jews forgot all about their Inheritance, and began thinking of themselves only as Babylonians.

Considering the relative ease of life in Babylon, one had to be relatively committed to the Torah and the Inheritance, to want to come back to the Land. To go back to a Land that lay in ruins was not an easy thing; and the hardy remnant that did decide to return must have known that they would face attacks by the surrounding peoples:

7 Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, 8 and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem.... [Nehemiah 4:7-8]

Understand what happened: At the end of three or four generations in Exile, the Jews' grandchildren were given a choice. Those who cared deeply about their Inheritance could forsake their relative comfort in Babylon and return to the Land of Israel, where they would have to re-assume the Levitical Law, and the tithe. It would be much harder than staying in Babylon, but their children would inherit the Land of Israel and four-hundred-eighty-three years later, their children's children would get to see the Messiah:

25 "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. [Daniel 9:25]

History records for us that Artaxerxes, King of Babylon, sent forth the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem in 457 BCE. From that time, there was to be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks until Messiah the Prince. Seven weeks plus sixty-two weeks makes for sixty-nine prophetic weeks.

Sixty-nine prophetic 'weeks' of years is equal to sixty-nine 'weeks' times seven prophetic days in each week. Sixty-nine times seven, then, equals four-hundred-eighty-three literal earth years.

When we add four-hundred-eighty-three literal earth years to 457 BCE, we arrive at 26 CE, which is the year that Yeshua began His ministry. No other historical personage fulfills this requirement; and therefore only Yeshua can be the Messiah.

The rabbis also knew the Messiah had to arrive in or about 26 CE, which is not only why the Pharisees wanted to know if John the Baptist was the Messiah (see John One), but it was also the reason many of the Jews ever left their relatively luxurious Exile to Babylon in the first place: This hardy remnant wanted their children to see the long-awaited Messiah, and to have a continuing part in the Israelite Inheritance.

This, however, hardly meant that the ten percent of Judah which returned to the Land was all just one big happy group of faithful Torah seekers. To the contrary; while there were some dedicated believers, rabbis and even prophets (such as Zechariah and Haggai, re: Ezra 5:1), many of the returnees had taken foreign wives who had never converted to the Israelite faith; and these practiced idol worship. Things were so bad that the leaders were "foremost in this trespass."

1 When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

2 For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the set-apart seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass!"
[Ezra 9:1-2]

Ezra and Nehemiah tried to get the people to turn back to the Torah, but only with relative success. While some of the people did repent and turn back, others never did. This caused an identity problem.

The Torah specifies that those who despise the Covenant are to be cut off from the Nation of Israel:

31 Because he has despised the word of YHWH, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be upon him.
[Numbers 15:31]

Despite how the Torah reads, the religiously devout did not really want to 'cut off' (i.e. kill) those Jews who did not keep the full Torah. In the first place, the marginally-observant were far more numerous than the devout. And, in the second place, the rabbis hoped that when the Messiah finally did arrive (in 26 CE) that He would turn everyone back to Phariseism.

However, since Numbers Fifteen did indicate that those who despised the Torah were to be cut off from the Nation, the rabbis could not call the partially-observant 'Jews'; nor could they call them *Gentiles* (as they had called Ephraim), since the partly-observant were still readily identifiable as Israelites.

The rabbis needed to come up with some other name; and therefore they decided that since these Hellenized Jews kept the customs and traditions of the other nations, that they should be called *Hellenized* (or *Greek*) Jews. This would indicate that while they were still readily identifiable as being of Jewish descent, they were no longer part of the Nation.

Remembering also that the terms (Assyrian) *Dispersion* and (Babylonian) *Exile* are frequently (albeit incorrectly) used as synonyms, now we can understand why the (devout) Jews wondered why Yeshua said that where He went, the rabbis would not find Him. Did this Messiah intend to teach amongst those in the Exile, and regather them to the Nation in that way?

35 Then the Jews said among themselves, "Where does He intend to go that we shall not find Him? Does He intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?"
[Yochanan (John) 7:35]

The King James, however, renders this word 'Greeks' as 'Gentiles':

35 Then said the Jews among themselves, whither will He go that we shall not find Him? Will He go unto the Dispersion among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?
[Yochanan (John) 7:35, KJV]

While these two differing translations seem to present an objection to the objective Western mind, this is not really a problem for the (religious) Jew, because the word 'Gentile' here is Strong's #1672, a 'Hellen':

NT: 1672 Hellen; a Hellen (Grecian) or inhabitant of Hellas; by extension a Greek-speaking person, especially a non-Jew: (KJV - Gentile, Greek).

If we want to understand what Scripture really says, we must always remember that Scripture was not written by objective Western scholars, but by subjective religious *Jews*. Since it was written by subjective religious *Jews*, Scripture is full of slang terminology.

In Acts Chapter Six, then, we read there were two subsets within the first century Body: The *Hebrews*, and the *Hellenists*:

1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. [Acts 6:1, NKJV]

Remembering that the Good News was not taken to non-Jews until Acts Chapter Ten (four full chapters later), we can see that the first group, the Hebrews, must have been a reference to the Nazarenes. The latter group must have been a reference to the *Christians* before the term *Christian* was first used, in Acts Chapter Eleven.

Understanding Circumcision

Circumcision is one of the most misunderstood aspects of Scripture, but it need not be. The concept of circumcision is simple, straightforward, and it makes perfect sense. However, a great deal of confusion has developed because of wide-spread misunderstanding of the Apostle Shaul's letters.

We have already seen that Nazarene Israel was the original faith of the Apostles. The Church Fathers also tell us that the Nazarenes continued to practice physical circumcision into the Fourth Century CE, when the Roman Christians stamped them out:

“The Nazarenes do not differ in any essential thing from them [meaning the Orthodox Jews], since they practice the customs and doctrines prescribed by Jewish Law; except that they believe in Christ. They believe in the resurrection of the dead, and that the universe was created by God. They preach that God is One, and that Jesus Christ is his Son.... They are very learned in the Hebrew language. They read the Law.... Therefore they differ...from the true Christians because they fulfill till now [such] Jewish rites as the circumcision, Sabbath, and others.” [The Church Father Epiphanius in his doctrinal work, “Against Heresies”, Panarion 29, 7, Page 41, 402]

We also know that the Torah was given to Israel as a Bridal Covenant; and Yeshua tells us plainly that He did not come to do away with even the smallest aspect of His bride's Covenant:

17 "Think not that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets! I did not come to destroy, but (only) to fulfill!

18 For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, nothing at all shall pass from the Torah (the Law), till all is fulfilled!

19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever does and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven!"

[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 5:17-19]

Despite the fact that Yeshua clearly tells us not to think that even the smallest aspect of the Torah has been done away with, the Church attempts to use Shaul's writings to suggest that the Bridal Covenant is in fact now null and void. This is clearly a violation of Yeshua's own Words.

While there is any number of things right with the Church's thesis that the heart of the Law is the main thing, there is also any number of things wrong with the Church's assumption that the heart of the Law does away with the letter.

Did Shaul suggest that Love destroyed the Law? It cannot be, for near the end of his ministry, Shaul plainly told us that he still believed everything that had been written in the Torah:

"According to the Way which they say is a sect (or a heresy), so I worship the ancestral One; believing all things that are written in the Torah and the Prophets!"
[Acts 24:14]

Shaul also parted with a great deal of money to pay the animal sacrifices to separate not just his Nazirite vow, but also the vows of four other men:

23 "Then do this, what we say to you: There are four men (here, besides yourself, also) having a (Nazirite) vow on themselves:

24 Take them, be purified with them, and pay their expenses (so) that they may (also) shave their heads: And then all shall know that what they have been told about you is nothing; but that you yourself walk orderly, keeping the Law (of Moses!)" **[Acts 21:20-24]**

The reason Shaul parted with such a large sum of money was simply to demonstrate (by his actions) that he still believed in keeping even 'the least of the commandments.' It was intended as a visible display of his continuing commitment to the Torah. By this act, he and the other Apostles hoped to dispel the rumors that Shaul taught against the Covenant.

However, despite the fact that Shaul spent the equivalent of thousands of dollars to prove that he still kept the Torah, Kefa tells us that there were those in his time (in the First Century) who used Shaul's words to suggest that the Torah (including circumcision) was abolished:

15 And think of the long-suffering of our Master as Salvation (literally: Yeshua), as also our beloved brother Shaul wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him;

16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable twist, to their destruction, as also the rest of the Scriptures.

17 Then beloved, you being forewarned, watch; lest being led by the error of Lawlessness you should fall from your own steadfastness.

[2nd Peter 3:15-17]

It was, of course, the Christians who were twisting Shaul's words, and using them as an excuse to do away with the Torah.

While Elohim forgives ignorance (Acts 17:30), Yeshua was quite clear that whosoever should relax even the least of the commandments would be called the least in the Kingdom of heaven:

19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven!"
[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 5:19]

Circumcision, however, is far from being one of the 'least' of the Commandments. To the contrary, it is one of the three eternal signs of the Covenant, and whoever did not keep it was to be cut off:

9 And Elohim said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

10 This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; 11 and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.

13 He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

14 And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

[Breisheet (Genesis) 17:9-14]

Circumcision was not the Covenant itself. It was only called a *sign* of the Covenant in that it reflected a willingness to submit one's body and life to Elohim; and yet it was called an *eternal* sign, in that whosoever was not willing to circumcise himself was to be cut off from among the people, for disobedience.

Another one of the eternal signs of the Covenant was the Seventh-day Sabbath:

And YHWH spoke to Moshe, saying, 13 "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am YHWH who sets you apart.

14 You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is set-apart to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.

15 Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, set-apart to YHWH. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.

17 It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days YHWH made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed'."

[Shemote (Exodus) 31:17]

The third of the eternal signs is the Passover:

13 Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are.

And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

14 'So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to YHWH throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.

15 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

[Shemote (Exodus) 12:13-15]

There are other signs of the Covenant, but these three are eternal. Whosoever failed to keep these three signs in all of their generations was to be cut off from the Nation of Israel.

However, understanding that Love is the heart of the Law (as they do), Christians tend to view outward manifestations of the Covenant with disdain. They wonder how important such things as the Sabbath, the Passover and the Circumcision can possibly be, when Love is the thing that matters most.

What Christians tend to forget is that, in Hebraic thought, obedience is the proof of love. Just as John the Baptist told us that he who does not obey does not truly believe, the Apostle John said that the proof of our love is shown by our observance of His Commands:

2 By this we know that we love the children of Elohim: when we love Elohim, and keep His commandments.

3 For this is the love of Elohim: that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome (to us). [1st John 5:2-3]

Further, Yeshua said plainly that He did not come to do away with even the smallest part of the Covenant. Not one jot, not one tittle would pass away, as long as heaven and earth still existed:

18 “For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not one jot, not one tittle shall fall from the Torah (of Moshe) until all is fulfilled!” [Mattithyahu (Matthew) 5:18]

In spite of the fact that Heaven and earth are still here, the Church tells us that these three eternal signs of the Covenant have gone by the wayside. The Church tells us that the Son came to countermand His own Father.

But did Yeshua actually do that?

The Church’s attempts to use Shaul’s words to show that these signs of the Covenant are done away with also implies that Shaul’s words should be taken more seriously than Yeshua’s: But does that really make any sense?

What we will see in the next several chapters is simply that the Apostle Kefa was telling us the truth: The Apostle Shaul’s words are easily misunderstood; and we need to guard ourselves, so that we will not be led astray by the error of Lawlessness, and fall from our own steadfastness in the Covenant:

17 Then beloved, you being forewarned, watch; lest being led by the error of Lawlessness you should fall from your own steadfastness. [Kefa Bet (2nd Peter) 3:15-17]

What the Scripture will show us, time and again, is that the New Covenant had to be easy to misunderstand, because certain misperceptions had to exist for the two thousand years it would take for the Christians to spread their modified version of the Good News to the ends of the earth.

We will also see that Shaul was a first century religious Jew. As such, he commonly used slang terms to describe certain groups of people. When we identify these terms as slang, then their true meanings become clear. However, when we do not know that these words are slang, then his words are very easy to misunderstand.

If you are one of the many who believe that physical circumcision is no longer for today, ask yourself if your belief is not based upon your interpretation of Shaul’s letters.

Alternately, ask yourself if your belief is not based upon what the Church taught you about Acts Chapter Fifteen (the so-called ‘Jerusalem Council.’) We will see that this passage also had to be misunderstood for a long time.

Before we talk about Shaul’s letters, we should understand Acts Chapter Fifteen. However, in order to understand Acts Chapter Fifteen we must first back up to Acts Chapter Ten, when the very first Gentile was brought back to the Nation.

Cornelius, the Returning Ephraimite

Up until Acts Chapter Ten, the disciples had been permitted to take the Good News to Jews only. They took the Good News to all different kinds of Jews, (including gentile converts to Judaism such as Simon the Canaanite, listed at Mark 3:18): However, in all cases they had taken the Good News to Jews only.

By Acts Chapter Ten, however, the Good News had already been taken throughout Judea, and it was time to extend it to the Gentiles of Ephraim. For this reason, we are introduced to Cornelius:

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a (Roman) centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment,

2 a devout man and one who feared Elohim with all his household, who gave alms generously to the (Jewish) people, and prayed to Elohim always.

3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of Elohim coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, Master?"

So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before Elohim. 5 Now send men to Joppa (Jaffa), and send for Shimon whose surname is Kefa (Peter)." [Ma'aseh (Acts) 10:1-5]

Cornelius was a devout man who feared Elohim, and did good deeds towards the Jews. However, despite his good deeds, Cornelius did not convert to Judaism; and was therefore reckoned as a Gentile.

As a general rule, religious Jews do not consider themselves free to associate with Gentiles any more than they are free to associate with Samaritans; and at this early stage, the Nazarenes still obeyed this rule. However, just after Cornelius was told to seek out Kefa, Kefa was also given a vision which told him that it would be all right to preach to Gentiles. The Church, however, misunderstands this vision:

9 The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Kefa went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.

10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.

12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

13 And a voice came to him, "Arise, Kefa! Slay and eat!"

14 But Kefa said, "Not so, Master; for I have never eaten anything common, or unclean!"

15 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What Elohim has cleansed you do not call common."

16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

17 Now while Kefa wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. 18 And they called and asked if Shimon, whose surname was Kefa, was lodging there.

19 While Kefa thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you.

20 Arise therefore, go down, and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them." [Ma'aseh (Acts) 10:9-20]

The Church tells us this vision means that after Acts Chapter Ten, the clean food laws in the Torah suddenly became null and void; and that it is now lawful to eat snakes, slugs, pigs, caterpillars, and whatever else one wants to eat. This, however, is not what Kefa said the vision means.

As Kefa meditated on the vision, the Spirit told him to go and take the Good News to Cornelius. This is why Kefa realized that all of the many different animals in the vision were a reference to all the many nations of the world. What this vision meant was that he was no longer supposed to call another human being common, or unclean:

28 Then he said to them, "You know how it is unlawful for a Jewish man to keep company with, or go to one of another nation. But Elohim has shown me that I should not call any man common, or unclean. [Ma'aseh (Acts) 10:28]

Notice, however, that Kefa's statement is confusing. The Torah does not prohibit preaching to those of another nation; but actually encourages it. Therefore, what is the 'law' that Kefa refers to here?

Notice also that Kefa's vision was not about food, but about people. The vision only included food because Elohim was overruling the man-made rabbinical laws regarding eating and fellowship.

Scripture suggests that one tends to become like the company one keeps. Those who make friends with the world also tend to wind up cursed (e.g. Proverbs 13:20, and others). For these reasons, one can easily infer from Scripture that it is a wise general policy not to relax around those who do not worship Elohim.

Particularly in Hebrew culture, eating and fellowship tend to be highly social activities. Therefore, as a good general rule, one should avoid making a habit out of eating (i.e. fellowshiping) with non-believers, lest one become like them. One hates to make a solid rule out of this, however, because it is not difficult to imagine certain situations where the Good News might be advanced if one were to go and eat with those who do not believe.

The rabbis, however, took a good general rule and made it into a traditional law for all those of the Southern Kingdom. Rather than simply educating their people not to relax around the wrong sorts of (other) people, the rabbis issued a blanket policy saying that the Jews were not permitted to eat with non-Jews, period. This traditional rule is still in place today.

Notice, however, that for Kefa to continue on in this man-made rabbinic law would have meant that he would not have been free to take the Good News to non-Jews. It would have prohibited Kefa from fulfilling the Great Commission:

18 And Yeshua came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, immersing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." [Matthew 28:18-20]

It did not matter how many good deeds Cornelius had done for the Jews: Since he had never officially converted to Judaism (but remained a Roman) the man-made rabbinic laws prohibited Jews such as Kefa from eating or fellowshiping with him. This rabbinic law did not cause a problem so long as the Good News was only to be preached in Judea. However, once the Jews had been preached to, this rabbinic addition now stood in the way of the Great Commission; and therefore it had to go.

At the level of Divine Providence, there was a reason this passage was so easily misinterpreted. Elohim wanted the Good News to be spread to the four corners of the earth just as quickly as possible, so that Salvation could be extended to all of Adam's fallen children. The nations of the world would not have been very likely to accept the Good News if it meant they would have to follow the whole Torah right from the start. Therefore, Elohim inspired the Apostles to write the Good News in such a way that the Church could easily water it down, so that people would more readily accept His Son's sacrifice. Then, two thousand years later, one by one, YHWH Elohim would slowly start awakening the House of Ephraim to the whole Truth.

Tradition and Inspiration Clash

With Cornelius' acceptance of the Good News, the House of Ephraim had taken the first step of their two-thousand-year-long journey back home. However, as Kefa returned to Jerusalem, he was immediately accused of having eaten with uncircumcised men; which is against the rabbinic law:

1 Now the Apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of Elohim. 2 And when Kefa came up to Jerusalem, those of The Circumcision contended with him, 3 saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!" [Ma'aseh (Acts) 11:1-3]

The group that accuses Kefa is called 'The Circumcision.' This is the same group of men that will show up in Acts Chapter Fifteen; and we will talk more about them in the next chapter of this book.

When accused of breaking the rabbinic law (in that he went to, and ate with 'Gentiles'), Kefa defends himself by relating the vision he was given, and by recounting how Cornelius and his countrymen had all been given the same gift of the Spirit as the Apostles had. Therefore, he asked, how could he possibly withstand what Elohim had brought to pass?

The Prophecies all spoke of the return of Ephraim. Perhaps Cornelius was but the first of these returning Gentile Ephraimites?

17 "If therefore Elohim gave them (i.e. the Gentiles) the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Master Yeshua Messiah, who was I, that I could withstand Elohim?"

18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified Elohim, saying, "Then Elohim has also granted to the Gentiles (i.e. Ephraim) repentance to (eternal) life."

[Ma'aseh (Acts) 11:17-18]

We will talk more about the specific beliefs of the group called 'The Circumcision' in the next chapter. For now, however, it should be apparent that they believed on Yeshua, because they were among those with whom Kefa related the events regarding Cornelius. Remembering that, let us continue the narrative:

19 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over (the death of) Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.

20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Master Yeshua. 21 And the hand of YHWH was with them, and a great number believed, and turned to YHWH.

22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the assembly in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.

23 When he came and had seen the favor (or grace) of Elohim, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with YHWH.

24 For he was a good man, full of the Set-apart Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to YHWH.

25 Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Shaul.

26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they gathered with the assembly and taught a great many people.

And the disciples were first called 'Christians' in Antioch.

[Ma'aseh (Acts) 11:19-26]

The Christian mythology is that Acts Chapter Eleven is when the disciples first began to share the Good News with ethnic Greeks. This is a beautiful theory, but it does not really work.

Verse 20 tells us that the disciples had been witnessing to 'Jews only.' Remembering that the New Covenant is full of slang (idiomatic language), what this really means is that the disciples had been witnessing only to other *Hebrews* (meaning other religiously-observant, Torah-zealous Jews).

Even Shaul went primarily into the synagogues on the Sabbath. Therefore, what actually happened in Acts Chapter Eleven was that the disciples first shared the Good News with the *Hellenized* Jews in the synagogue in Antioch.

This is far from the picture the Church paints.

Rather than visiting the Temple of Apollo in an effort to convert cult-sun-worshippers to Christianity, the Apostles did the logical thing: When they came to Antioch, they went to the local synagogue to worship, and there they felt led to witness to some Hellenized Jews. These *Greek* Jews believed on Yeshua, and the Spirit was poured out on them also.

One of the reasons Hellenized Jews are some times (derisively) called *Greek* Jews is that they do not always place much emphasis on the Hebrew language. More than just never having learned it, a *Greek* does not believe there is any real need to learn the original divine tongue (just as Christianity teaches).

In other words, while *Greeks* might like to learn Hebrew, they feel it is not really important. Therefore, so long as a reasonably good translation exists in a language they already know (for example, the Greek Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, or even the English King James Version), they find no compelling reason to learn to read the Word in YHWH's original divine tongue. Because they feel that Greek is every bit as good a language as Hebrew, the *Hebrews* (derisively) called them *Greeks*.

Having no zeal for the Hebrew tongue, *Greeks* will readily substitute foreign words for the original Hebrew terms. Therefore, the Greek-language term *Christ* (which is derived from Krishna) is readily substituted for the Hebrew word *Messiah*; and the *Greek* finds no problem with this practice.

However, while Hellenists and their Christian descendants may find nothing wrong with considering pagan tongues the equivalent of Hebrew, *Hebrews* find this practice repulsive. We should remember, then, that the Nazarene authors of the New Covenant were definitely *Hebrews*; and the Hebrews traditionally kept a discreet distance from all others.

We can only imagine why the disciples originally felt led to share with the Hellenists in the synagogue at Antioch. However, share they did, and the Spirit was poured out on the *Hellenized*, as it had been on them.

The profoundly stunning impact of this event is lost on the average modern Christian because, in Christian society, the ability to graft into the Nation of Israel by belief is taken completely for granted. However, back in the First Century, this was still real news, and so Shaul wrote about it:

For you are all sons of Elohim through faith in Messiah Yeshua. 27 For as many of you as were immersed into Messiah have put on Messiah.

28 There is neither Jew (Hebrew) nor Greek (Hellenist), there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua. 29 And if you are Messiah's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

[Galataya (Galatians) 3:26-29]

Shaul is not equating Hellenistic and Hebrew worship practices. Rather, we must remember that Shaul was a *Jew* (a *Hebrew*), and the *Jews* always considered that since living beings reproduced after their own kinds (see Genesis One), that it was of the utmost importance to pay strict attention to parental lineages. Indeed, the Orthodox Jews still pay close attention to this today.

Contrary to this, Shaul tells us that if one accepted Yeshua's sacrifice, He could regather you back to the Covenant, regardless of whether your parents were *Jewish*, *Greek*, or *Gentile*.

The returnees from Babylon had taken great pains to keep their children set apart from the pollutions of the Gentile nations. They had also taken pains to set their children apart from their *Greek* Jewish brothers (whose forefathers had not shown enough zeal for the Torah to return from Babylon). In fact, the *Hebrews* looked at these *Greek* Jews as criminals, in a sense, because they had broken the Laws of Elohim.

In modern society, if one comes from a family where the parents live a life of crime, one might expect that the children will also turn to crime. However, if the children make a clean break with the past, turning their hearts back to Elohim, then Elohim accepts them, and so must we. That is all the Apostle Shaul was really trying to say.

However, the ruling of the rabbis had been (and remains) that one must never eat (or even associate) with those from bad families (i.e. with those whose forefathers disregard the Torah). To the *Jews*, then, such association was (and is) strictly forbidden by rabbinic Law. So strong is the influence of these laws that even the Apostle Kefa got confused when he came out to see what Shaul and Barnabas were doing:

11 Now when Kefa had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from Ya'akov (James) he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and set himself apart, fearing those who were of The Circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the Good News, I said to Kefa before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? [Galatians 2:11-14]

The rabbinic ruling was that one must never eat with those whose parents have left the Torah; but that *Jews* must eat at a physically separate table.

The problem was, however, that if Elohim had accepted the *Gentiles* and the *Hellenized* back into His Covenant based on their repentance, then how could Kefa justify setting his table apart (i.e. eating at a separate table), in accordance with the rabbinic ruling?

Especially, how could he do this after he had been told to minister the Good News to Cornelius?

Even though Kefa was Spirit-filled, he was still only human. Being human, he feared what 'The Circumcision' (verse 12) might say.

As we will see in the next two chapters, 'The Circumcision' was a sect of believing Pharisees (who are the forerunners of the Orthodox Jews) who believed that Yeshua was the Messiah, but yet they still believed the rabbinic doctrine that Salvation derives from the works of one's hands (with regard to the Torah). It is interesting to note that many modern-day Orthodox Jews who secretly believe on Yeshua (and also many Messianic Jews) still believe similarly.

As we will see in the next chapter, the problem with *The Circumcision's* doctrine is that the rulings of the rabbis frequently contradict Yeshua's Words, as well as the Torah (and even themselves, on occasion).

Although we will see later that Yeshua kept many of the rabbinic traditions, we cannot believe that the words of the rabbis are 'inspired.' This is because Yeshua tells us that the rulings of the rabbis (here called the 'traditions of the elders') frequently go against the Torah (making it of no effect):

1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Yeshua, saying, 2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of Elohim (the Torah) because of your tradition (Talmud)?"

4 "For Elohim commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

5 "But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to Elohim 6 then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of Elohim of no effect by your tradition.

7 "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

8 "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

9 "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commands of men (the Sages in the Talmud)'."

[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 15:1-9]

The Church teaches us that Yeshua was speaking against the Torah in this passage. This is hardly the case. Yeshua was actually defending the Torah against the traditions of the elders (the rulings of the rabbis), a fact that the Christian elders would also do well to consider.

Another reason the Jews rejected Yeshua was that Yeshua taught that one's parental lineage was not really critical. He said it would be possible for Ephraim to come back to the Covenant at the last hour; and that returning Ephraim would still receive the same eternal reward as the Jews:

1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 Now when he had agreed with the laborers (Jews) for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the third hour and saw others (converts) standing idle in the marketplace, 4 and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others (i.e. Gentiles) standing idle and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?'

7 They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'

8 "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.'

9 And when those (Gentiles) came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.

10 But when the first (Jews) came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.

11 And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, 12 saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day!'

13 But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' 16 So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 20:1-16]

After all the sacrifice the Jewish nation had endured in coming back from Babylon, and after all the many persecutions, Pogroms, Inquisitions and Christian Crusades (at the hand of their brother Ephraim), this message does not sit well with Judah.

Was it a Greek Inspiration?

In Acts Chapter Eleven, in verse 22, the report of the election of the *Hellenized* Jews first came to the ears of Apostles in Jerusalem.

Although the Apostle Kefa later came to Antioch to see how Shaul and Barnabas were doing, he did not go there straight away. Rather, he and the other Apostles initially decided to send out Barnabas:

22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the assembly in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.

23 When he came and had seen the favor (or grace) of Elohim, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with YHWH.

24 For he was a good man, full of the Set-apart Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to YHWH.

25 Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Shaul.

26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they gathered with the assembly and taught a great many people.

And the disciples were first called 'Christians' in Antioch.

[Ma'aseh (Acts) 11:19-26]

Why the Apostles decided to send out Barnabas (or Bar Nabba) instead of going to Antioch themselves is not clear. There could be any number of reasons, but one reason might be that since the Apostles were uneducated *Hebrews*, they had probably never learned any other languages than the synagogue languages of Hebrew and Aramaic.

Jews are very insular, and as we will see below, insular *Jews* do not prefer to learn any of the gentile languages, as they consider them to be perversions of the original divine tongue. If Bar Nabba already spoke some Greek, then the Apostles may have decided to send him out, as a fellow Greek-speaker would have been able to communicate with the *Hellenized* just that much more effectively.

Arriving at Antioch, Bar Nabba was delighted to see so many *Greeks* filled with the Set-apart Spirit. He then set out to Tarsus (in southern Turkey) to find the Apostle Shaul, as Shaul (being educated) may have also spoken some Greek. Together, Bar Nabba and Shaul then spent roughly the next year teaching the *Hellenized* more about the Hebrew form of worship.

While religious *Jews* (such as the Nazarene Apostles) have always written Scripture in Hebrew (and/or in its sister tongue, Aramaic) in Acts 11:26 we read something very peculiar. Here we are told that the Apostles were first called by the Greek linguistic term '*Christians*', at Antioch:

26 And the disciples were first called 'Christians' at Antioch. [Acts 11:26]

The Church teaches us to accept this passage as simple factual information; but this statement should any real scholar serious pause.

The Oracles of Elohim were entrusted to the *Jews* (meaning religiously devout *Hebrews*):

***1 What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?
2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of Elohim. [Romaya (Romans) 3:1-2]***

As we will verify below, the *Jews* have always spoken Hebrew; so why are we told that the disciples were called by a Greek linguistic term, when *Jews* consider the Greek language abominable?

If one believes in the divine inspiration of all Scripture, then it should be obvious that nothing in the Scripture was put there by accident, or for general light reading purposes. Nothing is there for our entertainment. Rather, each and every word was chosen for a singular perfect cause. Therefore, in the case of Acts 11:26, what was that cause?

Why are we told that these Torah-zealous *Hebrew* disciples, who had purposefully never learned to speak any other language than the synagogue languages of Hebrew and/or Aramaic (and who despised all other languages as errant corruptions) would first be called by a Greek-linguistic term at Antioch, when they would have found the use of a Greek term in a religious context abhorrent?

We do not know exactly at what point Shaul came to the awful realization that there first had to be a great falling away (2nd Thessalonians 2:3), but logic should inform us that the only reason the Spirit would bother recording that the disciples were first called by a Greek linguistic term at Antioch is:

1. If the Apostles spoke Hebrew and/or Aramaic as their daily language; and
2. The New Covenant writings were inspired in Hebrew and/or Aramaic; and
3. The *Hellenized* Jews spoke Greek; and
4. The Spirit was leaving an encrypted clue as to what had happened, so it could be deciphered two thousand years later.

Acts Chapter Eleven takes place perhaps ten years after Yeshua's Ascent. If the Jews had spoken Greek as their day-to-day language, and if Greek had been just as good to their ears as Hebrew, then the disciples would have called themselves 'Christians' long before Acts Chapter Eleven.

The Western Church informs us that Greek was the lingua franca (the common day-to-day language) of first century Judea; but this is contrary to history. Josephus spoke Greek, but that was only because he had been educated as an aristocrat. He was far more educated than the majority of the other Jews of his day, and although he eventually wrote most of his works in Greek, he tells us he was just one of a handful of Jews who could read or write the language; and even then, he was unable to speak it fluently. He tells us that the *Hebrews* did not like to learn Greek:

For those of my own nation freely acknowledge that I far exceed them in the learning belonging to Jews; I have also taken a great deal of pains to obtain the learning of the Greeks, and understand the elements of the Greek language, although I have so long accustomed myself to speak our own tongue, that I cannot pronounce Greek with sufficient exactness;

For our own nation does not encourage those that learn the languages of many nations, and so adorn their discourses with the smoothness of their periods; because they look upon this sort of accomplishment as common....
[Flavius Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, Book 20, Chapter 11, paragraph 2]

If even scholarly Josephus had difficulty in pronouncing Greek with sufficient exactness (though he had taken great pains to learn it), then how are we to believe that the uneducated fishermen who later became the Nazarene Apostles would have had either the time or the inclination, to learn how to speak it? Moreover, why would they write their epistles in it? Are we to assume that the Nazarenes wrote their epistles in a language that they did not speak, read or write, and which they found morally repugnant?

Is it not far more intelligent to assume that the uneducated *Jewish* (i.e. religiously-observant) Apostles wrote their epistles in the only languages that they knew; which would have been the synagogue languages of Hebrew and/or Aramaic?

Jews have always maintained that Scripture is only properly written in the original divine tongue of Hebrew; and/or its sister Semitic tongue, Aramaic. For this reason, Hebrew and Aramaic have always been the only official languages of the synagogue.

Remembering that the Nazarenes were *Jews* (in the religious sense of the word), they would have known that if they wanted their epistles to be read aloud in the synagogues, then their epistles would have to have been written either in Hebrew, or in Aramaic.

The Apostles would have known that if they wrote their epistles in Greek, they would not have been taken seriously; and they would not have been read in the synagogues.

However, that the Apostles would have written their letters initially in Hebrew or Aramaic would not have stopped their almost immediate translation into Greek. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that the physician Luke may have been the one to translate Shaul's epistles into Greek; and that the translation was almost immediate (below).

The majority of the Dead Sea Scrolls (which also date from the first century) were written in Hebrew and Aramaic. Only a few of the Dead Sea Scrolls are written in Greek, which (in addition to Josephus' letters) tells us that Greek was not the lingua franca (the common every-day tongue) of Yeshua's time.

In fact, most scholars now accept that a version of Aramaic called 'Syriac Aramaic' was the lingua franca of the Galilee region in the first century, which tells us that this is likely the language the majority of the Apostles spoke. Hebrew continued to be the lingua franca of both the Temple and the synagogues; and for this reason, Hebrew was probably more-widely spoken in and around Jerusalem.

That Yeshua and His Apostles spoke Syriac Aramaic is becoming widely accepted by scholars. Although the two languages are different, the speakers of the one language could often understand the speakers of the other, particularly since the languages are related, and both were used in the synagogue.

If that is true, then it would also explain why the Hebrew speakers in Jerusalem were able to identify Kefa as being one of Yeshua's disciples, merely from having listened to his speech (which would have been in Aramaic):

***70 And a little later those who stood by said to Kefa again, "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it."
[Marqaus (Mark) 14:70]***

It should also not be seen as a coincidence that the Church of the East has had an Aramaic version of the New Covenant since ancient times. The lore of the Church of the East even goes so far as to say that their Church fathers received this Aramaic version straight from Aramaic-speaking Kefa (Peter). Whether this legend is true or false is not really the point: but the material fact is that an ancient Aramaic New Covenant manuscript exists, and has been in continuous use for centuries by the Church of the East.

However, even though Galilean Yeshua and the majority of His Apostles probably did speak Aramaic, several of the Church fathers (Papias, Ireneus, Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Jerome, et al) tell us that the Apostle Matthew (who may have been from Jerusalem) first penned his epistle in Hebrew; and that it was then translated into other languages. Eusebius says:

Matthew composed the words in the Hebrew dialect, and each translated as he was able. [Papias, 150-170 CE, quoted by Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. 3:39]

Ireneus tells us:

***Matthew also issued a written gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect.
[Ireneus, 170 CE, Against Heresies 3:1]***

And Origen also states:

The first [Gospel] is written according to Matthew, the same that was once a tax collector, but afterwards an emissary of Yeshua the Messiah, who having published it for the Jewish believers, wrote it in Hebrew. [Origen circa 210 CE, quoted by Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. 6:25]

There are many other examples that the Book of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew; and when we think about it, this only makes sense.

If Matthew was from Jerusalem, then his primary language would have been Hebrew, since that was the lingua franca (the common everyday tongue) spoken in the area of the Temple at that time. It would have been natural for him to write his epistle in Hebrew (as opposed to Syriac Aramaic).

Beyond this, the Church fathers Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Jerome all tell us that the Apostle Shaul originally wrote his epistle to the Hebrews not in Greek, but in Hebrew:

The epistle to the Hebrews he asserts was written by Paul, to the Hebrews, in the Hebrew tongue; but that it was carefully translated by Luke, and published among the Greeks. [Clement of Alexandria, Hypotyposes, referred to by Eusebius in Eccl. Hist. 6:14:2]

And:

He (Shaul) being a Hebrew wrote in Hebrew, that is, his own tongue and most fluently; while things which were eloquently written in Hebrew were more eloquently turned into Greek. [Jerome, 382 CE, 'Lives of Illustrious Men', Book V]

There are many more examples, but rather than fill many pages with them, let us ask ourselves just one simple question: Why would a native Hebrew speaker (such as Shaul) write a letter to the Hebrews in Greek? The idea just simply makes no sense; especially not when ancient manuscripts of the New Covenant exist in the Aramaic the Apostles actually spoke; and this Text has been in continuous use since ancient times.

What is more, while the New Testament writings make perfect grammatical sense (and flow smoothly) in Hebrew and/or Aramaic, they often read like clumsy translations in Greek. As an example, Greeks never begin a sentence with a conjunction such as "And..." or "For..." However, this practice is perfectly acceptable both in Hebrew, and in Aramaic. For example:

9 "For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of YHWH, to serve Him with one accord. [Zephaniah 3:9]

There are many other linguistic reasons why the New Covenant was not inspired in Greek. The Church, however, likes to use one passage in Matthew as proof that the Book of Matthew was written in Greek. This is interesting, considering that even the Church Fathers tell us that Matthew was originally written in Hebrew (above); but let us revisit the passage:

15 (Yeshua) said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

16 Shimon Kefa answered and said, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living Elohim."

17 Yeshua answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Yonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

18 And I also say to you that you are Kefa (Petros), and on this rock (Petra) I will build My assembly, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. [Mattithyahu (Matthew) 16:17-18]

As we saw in the chapter, 'The Papacy as Anti-Messiah', the name Kefa, in Greek, is *Petros*. In contrast, the rock upon which Yeshua would build his assembly is *Petra*. Even if we assume a Greek inspiration for the purposes of argument, this passage does not support the idea of a Papal Apostolic Succession. What it says, rather, is that Yeshua is building His assembly upon the rock (Petra) of divine revelation from the Father (see verse 17) as to who Yeshua really is. It is this revelation that is this 'rock.'

The Church's claim to an Apostolic Succession is sheer nonsense, even in Greek. However, the Church then claims that the existence of a word-play in the Greek (Petros/Petra) somehow proves that the New Covenant was written in Greek. This argument falls apart when we realize that there are similar word-plays in the ancient Hebrew versions of Matthew.

In the Shem-Tov Hebrew Matthew there is a word-play between the word for 'stone' (*eh-ven*) and the Hebrew word for 'build' (*ev-neh*):

18 And I also say to you that you are Kefa (eh-ven), and on this rock I will build (ev-neh) My assembly, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. [Matthew 16:18]

There is also a word-play found in the DuTillet Hebrew Matthew manuscript, in which the word *Kefa* is a masculine, and the word *rock* (*kefah*) is a feminine:

18 And I also say to you that you are Kefa, and on this rock (kefah) I will build My assembly, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. [Matthew 16:18]

A Greek inspiration is one of the most cherished of all Christian myths. It was a necessary myth, in that only by telling their people that the Hebrew language was unnecessary was the Church able to spread the Good News so far, so rapidly.

It was a great kindness on Elohim's part that He allowed the *Gentiles* and the *Hellenized Jews* to come back to a New Covenant while still speaking their pagan tongues. The ability to ease back into the Covenant may have encouraged many more of them to adopt the Christian variation of the Good News. Although this Christian variation was not entirely correct, it still taught them about the heart of the Law, which was the most important thing.

Now, however, the Christian phase of history is coming to a close. As Ephraim begins to return, Elohim is calling them into an ever-closer walk with Him. He asks them to come back not just to the true Covenant, but also to His eternally divine language.

The World's Most Beautiful Puzzle

Scripture is the world's most amazing book. Not only does it read as if the same author (the Spirit) wrote the whole thing, but it reads like a new book every time.

What fascinates some scholars, however, is how Scripture pieces together as the world's most amazing puzzle. With most puzzles, when you piece 85-90% of it together you have an idea what the final picture looks like. With Scripture, however, when one has pieced some 85-90% of it together, one usually ends up with an inverted picture. No other puzzle is like that.

Christians understand that all they have is some 85-90% of the puzzle; but in understanding so much, they think they understand it all. For this reason they refuse to learn the other 10-15%, because to do so would upset the cozy mistaken picture they have gotten so accustomed to.

The Church is quite comfortable with their belief that the Messiah to do away with physical circumcision. Notice, however, that there was never any prophecy the Messiah would come to do away with physical circumcision (or the Law of Moses). In fact, quite the opposite is true.

There are other passages which tell us that it is still important to keep the law. The Book of Revelation, for example, indicates that the 'saints' are those who both believe in Yeshua, *and* keep the Commandments:

***12 Here is the patience of the saints:
Here are those who keep the
commandments of Elohim and the
faith of Yeshua [Revelation 14:12]***

The Church insists that the Apostles were given the ability to re-write these Commandments to suit. This, however, is based upon the same passage in Matthew which the Catholic Church uses to justify their claim to a so-called 'Apostolic Succession':

***17 Yeshua answered and said to him,
"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Yonah,
for flesh and blood has not revealed
this to you, but My Father who is in
heaven.***

***18 "And I also say to you that you are
Kefa (Petros), and on this rock (Petra) I
will build My assembly, and the gates
of Hades shall not prevail against it.***

***19 "And I will give you the keys of the
kingdom of heaven, and whatever you
bind on earth will be bound in heaven,
and whatever you loose on earth will
be loosed in heaven."***

[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 16:17-19]

The Church tells us that this passage means the Apostles were demigods, given the ability to bind and loose things upon earth; and that Heaven would respect whatever the Apostles bound and loosed, since they now had Yeshua's authority. However, as we saw in the chapter titled 'The Papacy as anti-Messiah', the correct translation of this passage actually is:

***19 "And I will give you the keys of the
Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you
bind on earth will already have been
bound in heaven; and whatever you
loose on earth will already have been
loosed in heaven."***

This passage does not indicate that the Apostles were given supernatural powers to bind things in the Heaven. What it indicates is that the Apostles would listen to the Voice of the Spirit so well, that whatever Elohim had already ordained, they would bind.

This passage does not indicate that the Apostles would be 'loose cannons', justified by the Father in doing their own will. Rather, what it indicates is that they would be obedient vessels of His will.

However, once again, the Spirit had the Apostles write Scripture in such a way as to allow it to be easily misinterpreted. The purpose of inspiring it this way was just exactly so that misunderstandings could exist (and the Church could easily expand) until the prophesied two-thousand years of Hosea 6:2 was over.

The Church needed to be able to misinterpret the 85-90% of the Scriptures they understood, in order that the Good News of Yeshua might be spread to the ends of the earth just that much faster.

The truth, however, is that there is no prophecy that the Messiah would do away with any of the laws of the Torah. In fact, just the opposite is true. YHWH tells us that even his minor ordinances could never depart, or else Israel would be destroyed forever:

36 "If those ordinances depart from before Me, says YHWH, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever."

37 (For) thus sayeth YHWH: "If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says YHWH." [Jeremiah 31:36-37]

The Church uses this prophecy to tell us that the Jews really were wicked and sinful; and that YHWH cast them away forever. However, we know that this is one of the stumbling-blocks hidden in the prophecies, because YHWH also tells us (us in several places) that Jacob's seed would not come to an end:

6 "For I am YHWH, I do not change: Therefore you, O sons of Jacob, shall not come to an end." [Malachi 3:6]

At the time of the Dream of Jacob's Ladder, Elohim promised that He would bring all of Israel's many tribes back to the Land of Israel; and that He would give them that Land:

15 "And behold! I will be with you and will guard you in every place in which you may go, and will bring you back to this Land. For I will not forsake you until I have surely done all that I have spoken to you." [Genesis 28:10-15]

Therefore, unless we are prepared to call YHWH a liar, we need to believe that His people are still here, and that His Laws still apply to them.

There are, however, some who believe that while the Christians are the prophetic (and/or the literal) descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes, that not all of the Torah still applies. These generally believe that even though the Messiah said that not even the least thing would pass from the Torah, that somehow the Torah was changed at the time of Yeshua's death.

What can we say about this?

We know from Genesis One that living beings reproduce after their own kinds. We also know that Joseph and Asenath's children were hybrids; and that Asenath's pagan priestly genetics led the Ephraimites to want to be spiritual, but in other than *Hebraic* ways.

We also know that Jeroboam's Ephraim wanted to do modify the Torah to suit their own pleasure, and still have it reckoned as the true worship, simply because they wished it to be so.

It is not therefore very surprising that the Christians also refuse to obey Elohim's Laws. They want to worship in their own way, rather than obey. That is Christianity, in a nutshell.

And, more than any other, if there is one commandment the Christians do not want to obey, it is the requirement of adult male circumcision. Christian pastors can misquote Shaul's letters seemingly ad-infinitum, to tell us that physical circumcision has now been done away with, despite the fact that Kefa tells us Shaul's epistles are easy to misunderstand:

15 And think of the long-suffering of our Master as Salvation (Yeshua), as also our beloved brother Shaul (Paul) wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him;

16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable twist, to their destruction, as they do the rest of the Scriptures.

17 Then beloved, you being warned beforehand, watch; lest being led by the error of Lawlessness you (should) fall from your own steadfastness.

[Kefa Bet (2nd Peter) 3:15-17]

Let us also not forget Acts 21, in which the Apostle Ya'akov (or James) confronts Shaul directly, telling him that the Apostles in Jerusalem had heard that he taught against physical circumcision; and then instructed Shaul to clarify his position through a public act of Torah observance, so that all Israel would know that he still taught all the Laws of Moses (including physical circumcision):

20 And when they heard it, they glorified YHWH. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; 21 but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, nor to walk according to the customs.

22 "What, then, is it? At all (the pilgrimage festivals), a multitude must come together; and they will (surely) hear that you have come."

[Ma'aseh (Acts) 21:20-22]

The reason this passage was included in the Book of Acts was to tell us that the Apostles had heard that Shaul taught against physical circumcision, but that the rumors proved to be false.

In order to demonstrate publicly that the rumors against him were false, Shaul publicly demonstrated his continuing allegiance to the whole Law of Moses (including circumcision) by paying to publicly separate not only his own Nazirite vow, but also the Nazirite vows of four other men:

23 "Then do this, what we say to you: There are four men (here, besides yourself, also) having a (Nazirite) vow on themselves:

24 Take them, be purified with them, and (you) pay their expenses (so) that they may (also) shave their heads: And then all shall know that what they have been told about you is nothing; but that you yourself walk orderly, keeping the Law (of Moses)." [Acts 21:20-24]

Since this episode takes place near the very end of Shaul's ministry, what this passage ought to tell us is that if any man thinks to use any of Shaul's epistles as so-called 'proofs' that physical circumcision has been done away with, he is in violation of Scripture.

The Christians, however, point to Acts Chapter Fifteen (the so-called 'Jerusalem Council') as proof that physical circumcision was done away with, since Acts was written by Luke. The Church tells us that Acts Chapter Fifteen is where the Apostles ruled that physical circumcision no longer applies to the gentiles (but only to the Jews).

But is that really what Acts Chapter Fifteen says? What sense would it make?

If the Apostles ruled that physical circumcision only applies to the Jews, then does that not seem to imply that the Jews are still a Covenant people? How does this jive with the Church's dogma that the Jews are now done away with, as a people?

But did the Apostles rule against the eternal Covenant? Or is the Church's interpretation similar to the serpent's lie, telling Havvah (or Eve) that she no longer had to obey all of Elohim's Commandments?

Rabbinic Tradition and Torah Law

We know that the group called *The Circumcision* believed in Yeshua, because they were present when Kefa shared his experiences regarding Cornelius:

2 And when Kefa came up to Jerusalem, those of The Circumcision contended with him, 3 saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men, and ate with them!" [Ma'aseh (Acts) 11:1-3]

Kefa also feared this *Circumcision* when he visited Shaul and Bar Nabba in Antioch, because these 'believing Pharisees' had been sent from Ya'akov (or James, who was the head of the Jerusalem Assembly at that time). We will talk more about this a little later:

11 Now when Kefa had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from Ya'akov he would eat with the [Ephraimites]; but when they came, he withdrew and set himself apart, fearing those who were of The Circumcision. [Galatians 2:11-12]

We might also infer that this *Circumcision* is the same group of 'certain men' we read of in Acts Chapter Fifteen, because the issue at hand is still the very same one (of physical circumcision):

1 And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

2 Therefore, when Shaul and Bar Nabba had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Shaul and Bar Nabba and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the Apostles and elders, about this question. [Acts 15:1-2]

The Church teaches that the reason Shaul and Bar Nabba disputed with *The Circumcision* is because Shaul and Bar Nabba knew that physical circumcision was no longer required. While this may sound good at first, we will see it does not hold up under scrutiny.

We already know (both from the last chapter and from the writings of the Church Father Epiphanius) that the Nazarenes continued to practice physical circumcision right up until the Fourth Century, when the Roman Christians finally stamped them out:

**"Therefore they differ ...from the true Christians because they fulfill till now [such] Jewish rites as the circumcision, Sabbath, and others."
[The Church Father Epiphanius in his doctrinal book "Against Heresies," Panarion 29, 7, Page 42, 402]**

Shaul also told us in Galatians Two that *The Circumcision* had been sent by Ya'akov (or James), the head of the Jerusalem Assembly:

12 For before certain men came from Ya'akov, he [Kefa] would eat with the [Ephraimites]; but when they came he withdrew and set himself apart, fearing those who were of The Circumcision. [Galatians 2:12]

The Church tells us that Acts Fifteen is just one more piece of evidence that physical circumcision was done away with at the Cross. However, if the Church dogma is correct (and physical circumcision was done away with) then the head of the Jerusalem Assembly sent out emissaries to teach a doctrine that Shaul no longer believed, and Shaul successfully rebuked them. This, however, is impossible, because we have already seen that both Shaul and the Nazarenes (in general) continued to teach physical circumcision.

However, that the Nazarenes continued to practice circumcision also leaves us with a dilemma. There was obviously some kind of a heartfelt dispute between Shaul and *The Circumcision*; so if the issue was not physical circumcision per se, then what was it?

Christians are taught to believe that the New Covenant developed in a vacuum, but this was not the case. The New Covenant was written primarily by first century religious Jews; and for this reason, the New Covenant is filled with slang terms that most Christians misunderstand. With that in mind, we must interpret the New Covenant from a first century Jewish angle.

Is it possible that the argument between Shaul and Ya'akov's emissaries was not about whether physical circumcision was still valid; but that instead it was about some technical point-of-doctrine regarding just exactly *how* physical circumcision had to be carried out, in order to be considered valid?

The Jews are well known for arguing endlessly over the finer details of their rabbinical rulings and procedures. According to Orthodox Judaism (and also its forerunner, *Phariseeism*), unless one performs the Commandments precisely in accordance with the rabbinic ordinances, one has not properly performed the Commandments (and by extension, one has not performed them; and therefore one is not 'saved').

Could it be, then, that *The Circumcision* argued not that the Gentiles had to be physically circumcised (for Shaul would have agreed with that); but that the Gentiles had to be circumcised exactly in accordance with the rabbinical ordinances and decrees governing Gentile conversion to Israelite worship (and that Shaul disagreed)? As we will see in the chapters that follow, this is exactly what the dispute was about.

Contrary to popular Christian myth, the term *Circumcision* actually refers to a now-extinct sub-sect within the first century Body of Yeshua. These *Circumcised* continued to believe as they had been previously taught by the *Pharisees*: That even though Yeshua was the Messiah (and was regathering the Lost Ten Tribes), Salvation still derived from one's own performance of the Commandments.

It may seem incomprehensible to a modern-day believer that any follower of Yeshua would ever have believed that Salvation derives from the works of one's hands. However, when we consider how the Pharisees taught their people, it is not difficult to see how *The Circumcision* arrived at this misconception.

Today's Orthodox Jews are the direct spiritual descendants of the Pharisees of the New Covenant. The name has changed, but the lineage is direct. Therefore, it is often possible to get a feel for what the Pharisees believed back in the first century by learning what their descendants (the Orthodox) believe now.

Today's Orthodox, then, believe that Salvation derives because one is genetically Jewish (or Israeli), and because one has *properly* performed the works of the Torah Law. However, in Orthodox Jewish (and hence *Pharisaic*) thought, the emphasis is on the *proper* performance of the Torah Law.

To the Orthodox rabbis, in order for a Commandment to have been performed *properly*, it must have been performed exactly according to all of the rules and regulations stipulated by rabbinic decree. If the Commandment was not performed exactly in accordance with these rabbinical ordinances, then the rabbis consider the performance to be invalid.

As we will show in a later chapter, it may be that Yeshua taught His disciples to keep those rabbinical ordinances which did not conflict with the Torah. However, whenever (and wherever) the rabbinical laws did conflict with the Torah, Yeshua taught that these man-made additions were wrong. One example is found in Matthew Chapter Fifteen:

1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Yeshua, saying,

2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders (the rulings of the rabbis)? For they do not wash their hands (according to the rabbinic procedure) when they eat bread."

3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the Commandments of Elohim because of your (rabbinic) tradition?"

4 "For Elohim commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

5 "But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to Elohim," 6 Then he need not honor his father or mother.'

Thus you have made the commandment of Elohim of no effect by your tradition!"

[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 15:1-9]

Most Christians believe that by rejecting the rules of the rabbis, Yeshua was rejecting His Father's Torah; but the converse is actually true. What Yeshua rebuked were those rabbinical rulings that contradicted the Torah, thereby making it of no effect:

6 "Thus you have made the commandment of Elohim of no effect by your tradition!" [Matthew 15:1-9]

The Torah teaches cleanliness; but the rabbinic hand-washing ritual has little to do with actual physical hygiene. As is still practiced in Jewish synagogues and homes everywhere, the rabbinic tradition is that one must wash one's hands with a certain special ritual cup, following a certain special ritual sequence, and saying a certain special ritual prayer, or else one is not ritually clean (to eat).

This commandment of ritual hand-washing is not found anywhere in the Old Covenant, but is a later rabbinic addition. The Son of Elohim believed that His hands were clean enough to eat without going through the rabbinical procedure, and when the rabbis asked Him why He did not keep it, he asked them why they made rules that go against the Torah:

3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the Commandments of Elohim because of your (rabbinic) tradition? [Matthew 15]

The Church teaches that Yeshua was rebuking the Pharisees for keeping the Torah, but the converse is actually true. Yeshua rebuked the Pharisees for pretending to keep the Torah, while they were actually doing something other than His Father's Torah. This is a thought that many Christian pastors would do well to consider, as most Christian pastors also teach something other than the Torah.

The Christian wants to walk at total liberty, and feels that the performance of the Commandments is bondage (or worse). King David, however, wrote that he actually walked at liberty precisely *because* he kept YHWH's precepts:

**45 And I will walk at liberty,
For I seek Your precepts.**

**46 I will speak of Your testimonies also
before kings, and will not be ashamed.**

**47 And I will delight myself in Your
Commandments, which I love.**

**48 My hands also I will lift up to Your
Commandments, which I love,
And I will meditate on Your statutes.**

[Tehillim (Psalms) 119:45-48]

More than just saying he kept the Torah, King David called His Law a delight:

**92 Unless Your Law had been my
delight, I would have perished in my
affliction. [Tehillim (Psalms) 119:92]**

However, while David found the Torah to be a delight, it is extremely unlikely that he would have found the rabbinical ordinances delightful.

It may be difficult for Westerners to understand the extent to which rabbinical decrees constrict the lives of religious Jews, but there are rulings and ordinances for everything. Just to give a feel for the degree of constriction the Jews live with, there are ordinances telling the righteous how to tie their shoes:

A person must first put on his right shoe, but not tie it. Then he must put on his left shoe, and tie it, and (then) go back and tie his right shoe.
[Shulchan Aruch, Orach Hayim 2:4]

Orthodox Jews consider these man-made additions to the Law of Moses to be inspired; and when the rabbis speak of *Torah Law*, they also mean these kinds of man-made rabbinic additions.

The rabbinic literature also states that once Elohim gave Israel the Torah, it was now under the jurisdiction of the rabbis, and Elohim no longer had any say in what the rabbis did with it (Talmud Tractate Baba Metzia 59b). They even teach that rabbinical authority is higher than that of Elohim:

Even if they tell you that right is left or left is right, you must listen to them.
[Sifrei Deuteronomy 154 (11)]

While the Nazarenes considered the Torah of Moshe a delight (as King David did), they found the rabbinical version of *Torah Law* to be a yoke and a burden, and they called it just that (see Acts Fifteen, verses 10 and 28, in the next chapter, below).

The classical Israelite definition of a *Messiah* is a divinely appointed leader who vanquishes Israel's enemies, regathers the lost and scattered of Israel's children, and brings Israel's children back to the Torah. The Apostles understood this to be the role that Yeshua was (and is) fulfilling.

In contrast, the modern Christian believes that a *Messiah* is a divinely appointed leader who vanquishes the Children of Israel, and sets the gentiles free from bondage to the Marital Covenant; not that true gentiles (in the sense they use the word) were ever heir to the Marital Covenant, to begin with.

However, as opposed to both of those, *The Circumcision* defined their Messiah as a divinely appointed leader who was regathering the lost and scattered of Israel's children, but was teaching them to keep the exact same rabbinic *Torah Law* as the Pharisees had always taught. The Apostle Shaul took great exception to this.

For the reasons we will detail below, Shaul and Bar Nabba clashed fiercely with *The Circumcision*, and insisted that Yeshua's followers need not keep the rabbinic additions to the Law; but that only the Law of Moses was required. And, as the record will show, Shaul and Bar Nabba won the argument.

But how did they win the argument? And on what grounds did they win it?

Let's take a fresh look now at Acts Chapter Fifteen, and see what was really discussed at the so-called 'Jerusalem Council':

Understanding Acts Chapter Fifteen

The Church teaches that Acts Chapter Fifteen is when the Apostles decided that physical circumcision was no longer required. As we will see, this is not what Acts Chapter Fifteen says at all.

However, unless one understands that Acts Chapter Fifteen was written using first century *Jewish* religious terms, it would be very easy to misunderstand even the first verse:

1 And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." [Acts 15:1]

The issue here is not circumcision according to the *Torah* of Moses, but the *Custom*. As we will see, the *Torah* of Moses and the *Custom* of Moses are not synonymous terms.

The term *Custom* of Moses refers to the set of rabbinical rulings governing circumcision as part of the process of Gentile conversion to Israelite worship. Therefore, when *The Circumcision* came to Antioch, they attempted to teach that the returning *Hellenized* Jews and *Gentiles* had to follow the traditional rabbinic rulings with regard to Gentile conversion. What they were saying, in other words, was that the rabbinic decrees were still 'binding' on these Gentile converts; and that these decrees had to be followed to the letter if the Gentile converts were to become 'saved.'

Shaul and Bar Nabba, of course, knew that the Gentile converts had already been saved because they had seen the Spirit poured out on them. Yeshua also had said nothing about having to keep the rabbinic decrees, and so Shaul and Bar Nabba could see no good reason why the salvation of the Gentile converts was invalid.

2 Therefore, when Shaul and Bar Nabba had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Shaul and Bar Nabba and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the Apostles and elders, about this question.

3 So, being sent on their way by the assembly, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren.

The phrase 'conversion of the Gentiles' in verse 3 tells us that the Apostles considered that the Gentiles were (in fact) being 'converted' to Israelite worship. This, however, brings up another interesting point.

By the time of the first century, the rabbis had developed a highly involved procedure for Gentile conversion; and this process has continued to develop until this day. In the modern day, then, before the rabbis will officially accept a convert into the Jewish nation, one must become circumcised, be immersed ('baptized') and then attend official conversion classes, where one learns to obey the precepts of Orthodox Judaism (as described in the last chapter).

This conversion process had been established long before Yeshua's arrival:

**15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte; and when he is won you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."
[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 23:15]**

In contrast to this involved rabbinic procedure, the process outlined in the Torah is very simple. One puts away all foreign worship, becomes circumcised, and then learns the Torah. That is the extent of the 'ritual conversion process':

**48 And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to YHWH, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land; for no uncircumcised person shall eat it.
49 One law shall be for the native-born, and for the stranger who dwells among you."
[Shemote (Exodus) 12:48-49]**

Here was the extent of Ruth's 'conversion':

**16 But Ruth said:
"Entreat me not to leave you,
Or to turn back from following after you;
For wherever you go, I will go;
And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;
Your people shall be my people,
And your Elohim (shall be) my Elohim."
[Ruth 1:16]**

However, despite the simplicity of the procedure described in the Torah, the rabbis had other ideas. By the first century, then, the conversion process was already complex.

Shaul and Bar Nabba had seen the Spirit fall on those *Gentiles* and *Hellenized Jews* who had turned their hearts to Elohim; and based upon that material fact, they could no longer support the idea of a formal rabbinic ritual. Or, perhaps if there did have to be a ritual (for the sake of order), then the procedure would have to be modified, to reflect the present reality.

Christians often fail to appreciate that Judaism is run according to the military model; and despite widespread Christian opinion to the contrary, Shaul did not have the authority to issue precedent decisions, as neither he nor Bar Nabba were the official head (or even elders) of the Jerusalem Assembly.

Even though Shaul was the most religiously educated of all the Apostles, rather than simply making his own decision, Shaul took this matter to the Jerusalem Assembly. In Jerusalem, the elders and Apostles could discuss this matter, come to the correct consensus, and issue a precedent decision:

**4 And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the assembly and the Apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that Elohim had done with them.
5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed (i.e., 'The Circumcision') rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and (then) to command them to keep the Law of Moses (immediately)."
[Ma'aseh (Acts) 15:4-5]**

In verse 5 we see the phrase, 'some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed.' This is another name for *The Circumcision*, because it was the *Circumcision* that argued for the continuance of the rabbinic rituals. Also, remembering from verse 1 that the men called *The Circumcision* argued in favor of the *Custom of Moses* (i.e. the rabbinical decrees), here we see what the *Custom of Moses* was.

One of the rules for interpreting Scripture is that order is very important. The procedure that *The Circumcision* advocated is very similar to today's procedure, which calls for converts first to be physically circumcised, and then begin obeying the whole Law of Moses (immediately).

However, if strangers could partake of the Passover simply by becoming circumcised, and if Ruth could be accepted into the Nation simply because her heart was right, then why should the *Gentile* converts have to go to special classes, and learn to keep all the Commandments immediately in order to be saved, when they had already been given the gift of the Spirit?

6 Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.

7 And when there had been much dispute, Kefa rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago Elohim chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Good News and believe.

8 "So Elohim, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Set-apart Spirit, just as He did to us, 9 and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.
[Acts 15:6-9]

Since Elohim gave the Gentiles the Spirit before they were physically circumcised, Kefa argues that the rabbinic procedure (of first becoming circumcised, and then going to special classes to learn how to keep the whole Torah immediately) is unnecessary. In fact, he likens the rabbinic injunctions to a yoke:

10 "Now therefore, why do you test Elohim by putting a yoke (meaning the rabbinical rulings) on the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 But we believe that through the favor (or grace) of the Master Yeshua Messiah, we shall be saved in the same manner as they!"

12 Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Bar Nabba and Shaul declaring how many miracles and wonders Elohim had worked through them among the Gentiles.

King David called the Commandments a delight, and John had said that the Commandments were not burdensome (1st John 5:2-3). What Kefa is calling a 'yoke' in verse ten, therefore, is the idea that one must perform all the Commandments exactly according to the rabbinical decrees. The 'yoke' is the necessity of looking up to the rabbis as an authority higher than Elohim, when all the rabbinical rulings really did was to make things much harder than they had to be.

While believers today might take it for granted that the rabbinical rulings are unnecessary, to First Century Jews, this was really news. This was a major landmark decision that had to be recorded in the pages of Scripture:

13 And after they had become silent, Ya'akov (James) answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me:

14 "Shimon (Kefa) has declared how Elohim at the first visited the Gentiles (meaning Ephraim) to take out of them a people for His Name.

15 "And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

16 "After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, 17 so that the rest of mankind (meaning the rest of fallen Adam) may seek YHWH; even all the Gentiles who are called by My Name, says YHWH who does all these things.' (quoting Amos 9:11)

18 "Known to Elohim from eternity are all His works!"

[Ma'aseh (Acts) 15:13-18]

Up to here, Ya'akov (or James) just says that YHWH is restoring Ephraim, just as He promised (so that the rest of fallen Adam can also inherit Salvation). However, next he issues a landmark departure from the rabbinical conversion procedure, overturning *The Circumcision's* belief (which was also held by the rest of the Pharisees) that the rabbinic writings are inspired:

19 Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are returning to Elohim (by telling them that they must learn to keep the whole Torah right from the moment they join the Nation),

20 but that we write to them to (tell them that they should start with four things. They should) abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.

21 For Moses has had from ancient generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

Notice the language here very carefully. In verse 21, Ya'akov says that Moses has been preached in every city throughout the Dispersion for many generations. Why is this part of Ya'akov's argument? Surely it is included for a specific reason.

If the Church is correct (and the Law of Moses and physical circumcision are no more) then there is no reason we would be told that Moses had been preached in every city throughout the Dispersion since ancient times. If the Church is correct, then Ya'akov's statement is completely irrelevant. It is non-sequitur. It is completely unrelated to what comes before it, or after it, which would make the Apostle Ya'akov a babbling.

If, on the other hand, we assume that Ya'akov is arguing that the rabbinic legal procedure for Gentile conversion is backwards, then his argument makes perfect sense.

What Ya'akov is actually saying is that if the returning Ephraimites will abstain from these four necessities (see verse 28) at the start of their ritual conversion process, then they can be permitted to go into the synagogues, because they will not be defiling the fellowship (dining) table. Then, they can learn to keep the rest of the Torah over the course of a year; just as the Torah had been taught since ancient times.

Modern-day students of Judaism may notice a distinct similarity to the Jewish procedure for the conversion of so-called 'Sons of Noah' (B'nai Noach). Due to the similarity of the two procedures, it seems likely that the Apostles probably drew from the rabbinic literature with regards to the B'nai Noach, when they established their official procedure for returning Gentile Ephraimites.

The Bnai Noach procedure is that those Gentiles coming close to the Nation of Israel have one year to learn to keep all the Commandments found in the Torah. The reason this period of time was chosen is that almost all Jewish synagogues read the Torah on a one-year cycle. If the converts would simply abstain from these four *necessities* (verse 28, below) then they could be allowed to go into the synagogues, where they would hear the Torah read aloud over the course of the next year. Rather than having to go to special classes so that they could learn to keep all of the Commandments immediately, the converts would simply go into the synagogues, find good fellowship, and come up to speed in a year.

The Apostles merely tailored this procedure:

22 Then it pleased the Apostles and elders, with the whole assembly, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Shaul and Bar Nabba, namely, Yahudah (Judas) who was also named Bar Sabba, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

23 They wrote this letter by them:

"The Apostles, the elders, and the brethren, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles (Ephraim) in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.

24 "Since we have heard that some (believers) who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law" (and according to the rabbinic procedure, before you can be saved), to whom we gave no such commandment,

25 It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Bar Nabba and Shaul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the Name of our Master Yeshua Messiah.

27 "We have therefore sent Yahudah (Judas) and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.

Notice the words *necessary things* in verse 28:

28 For it seemed good to the Set-apart Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

[Ma'aseh (Acts) 15:28-29]

If the Gentile converts would abstain from blood, adultery, idolatry, and strangled meats, then they could be allowed into the synagogues that had existed in the Dispersion since ancient times (verse 21):

21 For Moses has had from ancient generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

Based on this new information, then, we can see that these last two verses could well be paraphrased:

**28 For it seemed good to the Set-apart Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden (at the start of your conversion process) than these necessary things,
29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled (i.e., unclean/non-kosher meats), and from sexual immorality.
If you keep yourselves from these (and then learn to keep the rest of the Torah in the synagogues, where it has been preached since ancient times) you will (ultimately) do well. Shalom.
[Ma'aseh (Acts) 15:28-29]**

As we will explain in the next chapter, the Apostles expected that the returning Ephraimites would not just go into the synagogues and ‘hear’ the words of Moshe (in the Western Hellenic sense). Rather, in accordance with their modified B’nai Noach procedure, the Apostles expected that the returning Ephraimites would go into the synagogues to hear the Bridal Covenant read aloud every Sabbath; and through the Spirit would develop a burning desire to obey it.

The Gentile Return Procedure

The Apostles overturned the rabbinic procedure with regard to Gentile conversion, based on the fact that the allegedly inspired rabbinic rulings did not address the reality which Elohim had brought to pass. Having overturned the rabbinic procedure, the Apostles then had to establish a new one, so that all things could continue to be done decently, and in order.

The reason the Apostles’ decision is recorded in Scripture is that since the majority of Judah was under the impression these rabbinical rulings are inspired (as most Orthodox and many Messianic Jews still believe) the Apostles had to give a written legal accounting of their departure from the rabbinic tradition. It was only because the Jews are so very sparing with their words and the Christians are so ignorant of Judaic precepts that the passage has been misunderstood for so long.

The Apostles’ deliberations may have taken into account the way Abraham had become circumcised:

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, YHWH appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Elohim El Shaddai; walk before Me and be blameless.

2 And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.”

3 Then Abram fell on his face, and Elohim talked with him, saying: 4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.

5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.

6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be Elohim to you and your descendants after you.

8 Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their Elohim.”

9 And Elohim said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you, throughout their generations.

[Brisheet (Genesis 17:1-9)]

Abraham had been called into Covenant before he had been told to circumcise himself and his house; which was the opposite of the rabbinic tradition:

10 This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; 11 and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

Since Abraham had already been called into the Covenant, physical circumcision had only been given to him as a ‘sign’ of that Covenant. However, it was a sign that had to be obeyed in all generations. Whosoever from among Israel’s descendants would not circumcise the flesh of his foreskin was to be cut off:

12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised , every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.

13 He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

14 And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

[Brisheet (Genesis 17:10-14)]

Abraham had been brought into the Covenant in an uncircumcised state. It was only after he had already been brought into the Covenant that he had been given the Commandment to physically circumcise himself and his household. Based upon that fact, the believing Pharisees’ assertion that one had to become physically circumcised before one could be ‘saved’ made no sense, not only because it did not align with the reality that Elohim had brought to pass, but also because this was not the pattern given in the Torah. In other words, the ruling of the rabbis was un-Scriptural.

The Apostles overturned the un-Scriptural rabbinic procedure; but this was not enough. Jews are a very Law-oriented people, and they understand that it is necessary to have some kind of a procedure, if all things are to be done decently, and in order:

40 Let all things be done decently and in order. [1st Corinthians 14:40]

The old procedure had to be abolished, and a new procedure had to be founded, in its place. But what procedure should that be?

Physical circumcision is a painful procedure; and the Apostles were probably glad that they had been circumcised while they were still infants. They must certainly have known that physical circumcision is not anything that any convert would look forward to, because of the extreme pain involved.

The Gentiles and Hellenized Jews who had received the gift of the Spirit probably knew that they wanted to become Israeli, no matter what it cost. However, for others who had not yet received this free gift, the need to become physically circumcised before they could even go into a synagogue and check out the fellowship probably seemed like too much or too huge of a hurdle to clear all at once; and it may have scared people away.

Since the *Gentiles* and *Hellenized* Jews had received the gift of the Spirit without first becoming circumcised, the Apostles saw no reason why new believers had to become circumcised the moment they became saved. While they certainly had no power to do away with any of the Commandments in the Torah (Matthew 5:17-19), they could at least do something to give the people more time to make the transition.

The Torah tells us that there are three eternal signs of the Covenant: The Sabbath, Circumcision, and the Passover. There were more signs than these, but these three were considered to be 'eternal' in that they had to be obeyed in all of Israel's generations.

Notice, then, that while the Apostles had not ruled that the returning converts had to be circumcised in order to go into the synagogues on the Sabbath (to hear the Torah of Moshe read) they did have to be circumcised before they could partake of the Passover, because the Torah of Moshe required it:

43 And YHWH said to Moshe and Aharon, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it.

44 But every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it.

45 A sojourner (one not yet converted) and a hired servant shall not eat it.

46 In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones.

47 All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.

48 And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to YHWH, let all his males be circumcised and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.

49 One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you."

[Shemote (Exodus) 12:43-49]

If the returning Ephraimites would begin by abstaining from the four most serious defilements (of idolatry, adultery, unclean meats and eating blood), then they could be permitted to go into the synagogues on the Sabbath, because they would not be defiling the Sabbath fellowship table. Once in the synagogues, they would be able to hear the Torah read aloud over the course of the next year, as most synagogues are in the habit of reading the Torah aloud on a one-year cycle. This would mean that the returning Gentiles would be able to transition into Torah obedience slowly, over the course of the next year:

21 For Moshe has had since ancient generations those who preach him in every city, being read (aloud) in the synagogues every Sabbath.”
[Ma’aseh (Acts) 21:19-21]

In the West, the verb ‘hear’ does not necessarily imply any kind of obedience, and so Westerners might take the mistaken impression that the only requirement was to ‘hear’ the Torah being read.

In Hebrew, however, the verb ‘to hear’ is the verb ‘*Shema*’; and this word does imply obedience. To *Shema* is to hear-and-obey, as one might hear one’s King utter a commandment.

Scripture does not record for us if the Apostles considered the potential linguistic difficulties between Hebrew and the world’s other languages. However, from an analysis of the Text, we can see that while the Apostles wanted to give the Gentile Ephraimites time to become physically circumcised, they in no wise ever intended for their writings to be used as an excuse to do away with physical circumcision.

Exodus Twelve requires that in order to be considered a part of the Nation of Israel, one must partake of the Passover (verse 47); and before one can partake of the Passover, one must become physically circumcised (verse 48). Therefore, if the returning Gentiles would just start with the four necessities of verse 28, they would eventually be brought into full Torah compliance.

It is also interesting to note that the Torah itself seems to give clues that the Lost Ten Tribes would be brought back to the Nation by a procedure such as this:

48 And when a stranger (Ephraimite) dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to YHWH, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land; for no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.
49 One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger (i.e. Ephraimite) who dwells among you.”
[Shemote (Exodus) 12:47-49]

In Scripture, the terms ‘stranger’ and ‘foreigner’ refer to those who are strangers *to the Covenant*. This was perfectly the case with the Ephraimites.

To wit, Kefa addressed his epistle exactly to these Ephraimite ‘strangers’ in the Dispersion:

1 “Kefa, an emissary of Yeshua Messiah to the Chosen: strangers of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Kappadokia, Asia, and Bithunia;”
[Kefa Aleph (1st Peter) 1:1]

However, although Ephraim had become a stranger to the eternal Covenant, in his epistle to the Ephesians, Shaul tells these Gentiles that even though they were once strangers, they are stranger no longer; but have become returning Israelites:

***Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of Elohim....
[Ephesians 2:19]***

YHWH knew what He would do for Ephraim right from the very start. At the moment He gave His Instructions on how to perform the Passover, he was simultaneously providing a Way for those Ephraimites who would later become estranged from His Covenant, to return to it.

Acts Chapter Fifteen, then, is where Yeshua's Apostles considered all the evidence, rejected the existing rabbinical Gentile return procedure and, drawing from the rabbinical return procedure for the so-called 'Sons of Noah', bound on earth the legal return procedure that had already been bound in heaven (Matthew 16:19). And, we should note, since the Apostles merely bound for us on earth what had already been bound in the heaven, this legal precedent decision is still binding on the Body today.

Shaul on Circumcision:

Both Acts Chapter Fifteen and Acts Chapter Twenty-One show us that the Apostle Shaul continued to teach physical circumcision. However, since Shaul's writings are so easily misunderstood (2 Kefa 3:15-17), some readers will still wonder what certain passages of Shaul's writings actually mean.

While we do not have space to address all of the common misunderstandings about Shaul's writings here, one of his more commonly misunderstood passages is found in Romans Chapter Four:

***9 For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while (he was) uncircumcised!
11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal (or sign) of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are (as yet) uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also;
12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while (he was) still uncircumcised. [Romans 4:9-12]***

Does this passage suggest that physical circumcision is no longer required? No, it does not. What it says is that Avraham was brought into Covenant before he became physically circumcised. YHWH only required him to physically circumcise himself as a seal (or a sign) of that Covenant.

Notice verse twelve:

12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while (he was) still uncircumcised. [Romans 4:12]

Avraham is the father of physical circumcision not only to those whose forefathers were physically circumcised (i.e. the Jews), but also to those whose forefathers were uncircumcised (i.e. the Gentile Ephraimites). Avraham is the father of the requirement of physical circumcision to both of these parties.

What Shaul says is that no matter whether one's parents were circumcised or not, as long as one begins walking in Avraham's footsteps (by believing, as he did), then one can be brought into the Covenant (as Avraham was). Then, once one has been brought into the Covenant, one can physically circumcise oneself (as Avraham did); and thereby receive the seal (or the *sign*) of righteousness.

Physical circumcision is only the seal, the mark, or the *sign* of righteous belief. Such a mark does not lead to Salvation, or else the Muslim people would also be heirs to the Covenant (as they circumcise their sons at thirteen years of age). However, while such marks (or *signs*) are not the cause of Salvation, they are by no means unimportant (or no longer required).

Next we should look at Galatians, one of Shaul's most misunderstood letters. In this letter, Shaul uses the term 'circumcision' as a poetic reference to the House of Judah (and the term 'uncircumcision' as a reference to the House of Ephraim):

7 But on the contrary, when they saw that the Good News for the uncircumcised (meaning Ephraim) had been committed to me, as the Good News for the circumcised (meaning Judah) was to Kefa

8 [for He who worked effectively in Kefa for the apostleship to the circumcised (meaning Judah) also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles],

9 and when Ya'akov, Kefa, and Yochanan (John), who seemed to be pillars, perceived the favor (or grace) that had been given to me, they gave me and Bar Nabba the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles (meaning Ephraim) and they to the circumcised (meaning Judah).

10 They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

[Galatians 2:7-10]

This passage does not say that the Apostles intended that Shaul's students were to *remain* physically uncircumcised. Rather, Shaul was to go to those whose forefathers had been *historically* uncircumcised (i.e. Ephraim), and bring them back into the Covenant (which calls for physical circumcision).

Then, three chapters later we come to Galatians Five, which is perhaps the most misunderstood of all of Shaul's writings:

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Messiah hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

2 Behold, I, Shaul say to you that if ye be Circumcised, Messiah will profit you nothing!

3 For I testify again to every man that is Circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole Law.

4 Messiah is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from Grace. [Galatians 5:1-4]

Does Shaul say that if we become physically circumcised, Messiah's sacrifice will profit us nothing? No, he does not. Both Scripture and the writings of the Church Father Epiphanius tell us that the Nazarenes continued to practice physical circumcision. Therefore, there must be another meaning.

The secret to understanding Galatians Five is to remember that the word *Circumcised* is a reference to *The Circumcision*; that group of 'believing Pharisees' (i.e. believing Orthodox Jews) who thought that the works of their own hands saved them.

If *The Circumcision* believed that Yeshua was the Messiah, but still they believed that they were *justified* (i.e. 'saved', verse 4) by works of the Law, then they were not trusting in Yeshua's sacrifice; and if that was the case, then yes, it literally profited them nothing.

Remembering also that *The Circumcision* (i.e. the believing Pharisees/Orthodox Jews) believed that the rabbinical rulings also constitute 'Torah Law', Galatians Five might well be paraphrased:

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty (from rabbinic additions to the Law) wherewith Messiah hath made us free; and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage (meaning needlessly restrictive rabbinic traditions).

2 Behold, I, Shaul say to you that if ye be Circumcised (meaning believing Orthodox), Messiah ('s sacrifice) will profit you nothing!

3 For I testify again to every man that is Circumcised (meaning believing Orthodox) that he is a debtor to do the whole Law (which, to the Orthodox includes the rulings of the rabbis).

4 Messiah ('s sacrifice) is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you (believe you) are justified by the (works of your own hands with regards to the) Law. You are fallen from (the King's) favor (or grace, as you have not accepted the sacrifice that His Son made for you). [Galatians 5:1-4]

Does this passage say that we should never become physically circumcised? No it does not. Rather, it says we must be careful not to trust that it is the works of our own hands (with regard to the Torah) that leads to justification (Salvation). Salvation comes only by accepting Yeshua's sacrifice.

Shaul spelled this out two chapters earlier, (in Galatians Three) but most scholars misunderstand Shaul's use of the word *justified*:

10 For as many as (believe they) are (justified because) of the works of the Law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the Law, to do them."

11 But that no one is justified by the (works of the) Law in the sight of Elohim is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." 12 And the Law is not of faith, yet "the man who does them shall live by them."

13 Messiah has redeemed us from the curse of (believing that we are saved by the works of) the Law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree," 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Messiah Yeshua, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (and not through the false promise of salvation due to works). [Galatians 3:10-14]

Shaul does not say that the Covenant is a curse. Rather, what he says is that if you think you can justify (i.e. save) yourself by doing great works of the Law (like the Pharisees did/do), then you really are under a kind of a curse; because it is not possible for human beings to justify themselves before Elohim:

6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our (human) righteousneses are like filthy rags. [Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 64:6]

The curse Messiah came to set people free from was not the Torah, for we know that the Torah is a delight (e.g. Psalm 119). The curse Messiah came to set people free from was the rabbinic delusion that they could save themselves by the works of their own hands. Yet even though the Messiah came to set His people free from this delusion, *The Circumcision* (and others) did not understand:

16 ...knowing that a man is not justified (or saved) by the works of the Law, but by faith in Yeshua Messiah, even we (Hebrew Jews) have (also) believed in Messiah Yeshua, that we might be justified by faith in Messiah, and not by the works of the Law; for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified ('saved.')

17 "But if, while we seek to be justified by Messiah, we ourselves also are found sinners (keeping the Law), is Messiah therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!

18 For if I build again those things which I destroyed (i.e. belief in salvation by the works of my own hands), I make myself a transgressor (of the necessary trust in Elohim).

19 For through the Law I died to the (idea that I was saved by works of the) Law, that I might live to Elohim.

20 I have been crucified with Messiah; (therefore) it is no longer I who live, but Messiah lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of Elohim, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

21 I do not set aside the favor of Elohim! For if righteousness comes through (works of) the Law, then Messiah died in vain.”

[Galatians 2:14-21]

Does Shaul suggest disregarding the Law? No: He only says that if righteousness comes through the works of men’s hands, then Messiah died in vain. Yet, despite Shaul’s warnings, *The Circumcision* still insisted on trying to justify (i.e. save) themselves by physical circumcision. Shaul likens this to mutilation:

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the Mutilation!

3 For we are the (true) circumcision, who worship Elohim in Spirit, rejoice in Messiah Yeshua, and have no confidence in the flesh; 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh.

If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the assembly; (and) concerning the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless. [Philippians 3:2-6]

If anyone had a reason to believe that the works of his own hands might save him, it was Shaul. In the eyes of the rabbis, his walk was blameless. And yet, after his Damascus experience, even he realized that trying to justify oneself before Elohim by cutting off one’s foreskin was utter foolishness. Without Yeshua’s sacrifice, one has nothing.

Another commonly misunderstood passage is Romans Two. The key here is the same as before: that Shaul uses the term ‘circumcised’ as a euphemism for the Jews, and the term ‘uncircumcised’ as a euphemism for the Ephraimites and Hellenized Jews:

17 Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the Law, and make your boast in Elohim,

18 and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the Law,

19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the Law.

21 You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?

22 You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

23 You who make your boast in the Law (as a Jew), do you dishonor Elohim through breaking the Law?

**24 For "the Name of Elohim is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written.
[Romans 2:17-24]**

While the Christian may believe that Shaul's questions are rhetorical, they are actually quite pointed. While in theory the Orthodox Jews teach that one must keep all the Commandments, in practice the belief is that so long as one performs the 'more important' Commandments, one earns some leeway or 'slack' in the eyes of Elohim, so that others can be broken, if one desires.

The reason this kind of thinking prevails is that the Orthodox rabbis teach that genetic Jews can earn their way to favor with Elohim through the works of their own hands. Since it is understood that no one can perform all the Commandments (especially in the absence of a Temple), many Jews believe that Elohim can be appeased by the performance of 'enough' of the 'more important' Commandments.

Orthodox Jews believe that so long as one is physically circumcised, keeps the Sabbath, the Feast days and certain of the rabbinic additions, he or she is doing 'good enough' before Elohim. Based on that, they feel they can do whatever else they want (since on the whole they are already justified before Elohim).

In verse twenty-five, Shaul tells us that physical circumcision is indeed profitable: but only if we do not use it as an excuse to break other parts of the Law (as we just described above):

25 For (physical) circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the Law; but if you are a breaker of the Law, your circumcision has become (as) uncircumcision. [Romans 2:25]

The Church then suggests that the next two verses (twenty-six and twenty-seven) justify remaining physically uncircumcised; but we already know that this is impossible.

Remembering that the Orthodox Jews descend directly from the Pharisees, and that the Orthodox Jews reckon genetic lineage of the utmost importance, Shaul is only trying to say that since uncircumcised Ephraim is being brought back by the Messiah, family history is irrelevant. What matters is whether or not one keeps the Commandments right now.

In verse twenty-six, the 'righteous requirements of the Law' entail physical circumcision:

26 Therefore, if an uncircumcised man (an Ephraimite) keeps the righteous requirements of the Law, will not his (prior) uncircumcision (now) be counted as circumcision?

27 And will not the (historically) physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the Law (which requires him to become circumcised), judge you, who even with your written code (Talmud) and (physical) circumcision are a transgressor of the Law (in other ways)? [Romans 2:26-27]

This next passage confuses many people, because Shaul is trying to be poetic (or perhaps ironic). What he really means is that the heart condition is the main thing; which is absolutely correct:

28 For he is not a Jew (a Hebrew) who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;

29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men, but from Elohim. [Romans 2:26-27]

However, even while the heart condition is the main thing, physical circumcision profits:

1 Then what advantage has the Jew, or what is the profit of (physical) circumcision?

2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them (the circumcised Jews) were committed the oracles of Elohim.

3 For what if some (of them) did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of Elohim without effect?

4 Certainly not! Indeed, let Elohim be true but every man a liar. As it is written:

"That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged." (Ps. 51:4) [Romans 3:1-4]

Note clearly: Shaul says that even though the heart condition is the main thing, there is still an advantage to becoming physically circumcised.

Then in verse nineteen:

19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it says to those who are 'under' the Law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before Elohim.

The phrase 'under' the Law means one who believes that he is saved (or justified) by works of Law:

20 Therefore by the deeds of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin.

Shaul points out that no one can be justified by the works of one's hands; for justification (Salvation) only comes by believing on Elohim's Son (to the point of obeying Him). Justification (Salvation) is of faith alone: not of works:

21 But now the righteousness of Elohim apart from the (works of the) Law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even the righteousness of Elohim, through faith in Yeshua Messiah to all and on all who believe.

For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of Elohim, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Messiah Yeshua,

25 whom Elohim set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance Elohim had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Yeshua.

[Romans 3:21-26]

Shaul says that those who have performed the Law have no reason to be boastful, for the Law of Faith excludes their boasting.

If Salvation was due to works, they might have cause for boasting. However, when they understand that Salvation is not due to their own merit, but is a free gift that came from an election not their own, then there is no cause for such arrogance:

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded.

By what law? (By the law) of works?

No, but by the Law of faith.

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the Law. [Romans 3:27-28]

One is justified (saved) by one's faith, apart from one's deeds (or works) of Law. This, however, does not change the fact that once one becomes justified by faith, it then becomes one's duty to keep the Covenant, regardless of whether one's heritage is Jewish, or Gentile Ephraimite:

29 Or is He the Elohim of the Jews only? Is He not also the Elohim of the Gentiles?

Yes, of the Gentiles also, 30 since there is one Elohim who will justify the circumcised (i.e. Judah) by faith and the uncircumcised (Ephraim) through faith. [Romans 3:29-30]

Shaul concludes that our faith does not do away with the need to keep the Law; it establishes the Law:

31 Do we then make void (the need to obey) the Law through faith?

Certainly not!

On the contrary, we establish the Law (for ourselves because of our faith).

[Romans 3:31]

Christianity twists and contorts verse 31 beyond all recognition. Christian doctrine says that faith in Messiah Yeshua establishes the Law; and therefore their faith does not make the Law void. However, the fact that they have faith in Messiah Yeshua does make the Law void, even though Messiah Yeshua taught that He did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets:

17 "Think not that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets! I did not come to destroy, but (only) to fulfill (or only in fulfillment of the first part).

18 For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, nothing at all shall pass from the Law, till all is fulfilled.

19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever does and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."

[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 5:17-19]

Yeshua clearly said that He did not come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets. Words do not get much plainer than these.

The Church, however, tells us that Acts Chapter Fifteen is where the Apostles ruled against the need for physical circumcision; and that in Galatians Five, Shaul tells us that physical circumcision denigrates Yeshua's sacrifice to the point that it profits us nothing.

However, if Shaul actually taught that physical circumcision denigrates Yeshua's sacrifice to the point that it profits us nothing, and if the Apostles actually ruled against physical circumcision in Acts Chapter Fifteen, then why did Shaul circumcise Timothy in Acts Chapter Sixteen? It was almost the next thing he did:

1 And behold! A certain disciple named Timothy was there, the son of a certain believing Jewish woman – but his father was Greek (meaning, a Hellenized Jew, who may not have been physically circumcised).

2 This one was being testified of the brothers in Lystra and Iconium.

3 Shaul desired this one to go forth with him, and taking him he circumcised him (physically), because of the Jews being in those places – for they all knew his father, that he was a Greek (meaning an uncircumcised Hellenized Jew). **[Acts 16:1-3]**

The Church teaches that Shaul denigrated Yeshua's sacrifice for Timothy immediately following the so-called 'Jerusalem Council' because Shaul was afraid of the Pharisees. This is ludicrous. Shaul had been raised as a Pharisee (an Orthodox Jew), and had shown himself more than willing to contend with the Pharisees on a number of occasions. He did not fear death, and he did not fear the Pharisees.

But if Shaul was not really the coward that the Church says he was, then what was Shaul's true motivation for circumcising Timothy immediately after the so-called 'Jerusalem Council' of Acts Chapter Fifteen?

What probably happened was that although the Apostles and elders had ruled that those coming closer to the Covenant technically had until the Passover to become physically circumcised, Shaul chose to circumcise Timothy right then and there, because he hoped to use Timothy in a ministerial capacity. If Timothy was going to minister Elohim's Word, then he needed to be in compliance with that Word.

Furthermore, while the Jews that Shaul hoped to reach might listen to a formerly uncircumcised Greek Jew who was now in full compliance with the Torah, they would almost certainly have refused to hear any Good News coming from an uncircumcised man. Therefore, in order to make Timothy more effective as a minister, the best thing to do was just to go ahead and circumcise him.

But then, what about Titus? Does not Shaul tell us that not even Titus was compelled to become *Circumcised*? Yes, he does; but once again we must remember that the word is used as slang here. Not even Titus was compelled to join *The Circumcision*:

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.

2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.

3 Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek (Jew), was compelled to be Circumcised (meaning a believing Pharisee).

4 And this (question only) occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (The Circumcision), who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty (from Talmud) which we have in Messiah Yeshua, that they might bring us into bondage (to the Talmud),

5 to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the Good News might continue with you. [Galatians 2:1-5]

Remember that the Book of Galatians is all about *The Circumcision*: those believing Pharisees who continued to believe that the rabbinical rulings were inspired. These tried to convince the returning *Greeks* (such as Titus) that Salvation depends upon keeping the rabbinical laws. However, even though Titus had Jewish blood, not even he was convinced that the rabbinical injunctions were required.

But then, what does Shaul mean in Colossians Two, about the 'circumcision made without hands'? Does he mean that physical circumcision is no longer required? No, he does not. Notice the phrase 'tradition of men' in verse 8:

8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men (Talmud), according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Messiah.

9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Messiah,

12 buried with Him in immersion, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of Elohim, who raised Him from the dead.

[Colossians 2:8-12]

This passage is commonly used to suggest that the supposedly 'new' rite of immersion (or baptism) has done away with the need for physical circumcision. There are multiple problems with this thesis.

In the first place, immersion has long been a part of the Torah lifestyle. Yochanan HaMatbil's (John the Immerser's) mission was not so much to immerse people, as it was to get them to repent, and to turn their hearts back to Elohim. Since the Torah requires one to become ritually clean before coming before YHWH, Yochanan (John) used this as a symbol of repentance. The main thing, though, was the repentance itself.

In like manner, physical circumcision is only a seal (or a sign) of the submission of the flesh to Elohim. Physical circumcision itself is nothing: The only thing that is important is the keeping of Elohim's Commands:

19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of Elohim is what matters. [1st Corinthians 7:19]

The Church uses this passage to suggest that since circumcision is nothing, the only Commandments that one should keep are the Two Great Commands, to love the Father, and to love one's neighbor. However, as we have already seen, the Apostles kept all of the Bridegroom's Torah.

We should take a look at the whole passage in context, remembering that the words 'circumcised' and 'uncircumcised' are used in a poetic sense; first as euphemisms for Judah and Ephraim, and then as symbols of the callings of the Two Houses:

18 Was anyone called while circumcised (meaning Jewish)? Let him not become uncircumcised (meaning, an Ephraimite). Was anyone called while uncircumcised (an Ephraimite)? Let him not be circumcised (Jewish).

19 (Physical) Circumcision (Judah) is nothing and (physical) uncircumcision (Ephraim) is nothing, but keeping the commandments of Elohim is what matters. [1 Corinthians 7:17-19]

We do not have room to detail all of Shaul's misunderstood and misapplied writings here. However, it should be clear that while Shaul taught that the heart of the Law was the main thing, never did he suggest that the letter of the Law was unimportant. Neither did he teach against the customs and traditions of the Patriarchs, which have always held a place of central importance in the Patriarchal Hebrew mind.

Why the Hebrew Customs?

The Hebraic customs and traditions remained so important to the Apostles that when Ya'akov (James) found it necessary to find out if Shaul had been teaching against circumcision, he also wanted to know if Shaul had been teaching against the Hebrew customs and traditions:

21 "But they were informed about you, that you teach against (the Laws of) Moshe, telling all the Jews throughout (all) the nations not to circumcise their children, nor to walk according to the (Hebrew) customs.

22 "What, then, is it? [Acts 21:21-22]

Shaul, however, had not taught against the Hebrew customs and traditions. Rather, he had praised the Corinthians for keeping the Hebrew customs and traditions, just as he had delivered them:

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. [1st Corinthians 11:2]

Shaul also exhorted the Thessalonians to hold fast to the Hebrew customs and traditions, whether they had learned them from Shaul himself, or from one of the Apostles' letters:

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. [2nd Thessalonians 2:15]

In fact, Shaul felt so strongly about the Hebrew customs that he even commanded the Thessalonians to pull away from any brother who did not keep them. (This is perhaps because religious Jews consider that anyone behaving as a Greek is 'walking disorderly'):

But we command you, brethren, in the Name of our Master Yeshua Messiah, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly (i.e. in a Hellenist fashion), and not according to the tradition which he received from us. [2nd Thessalonians 3:6]

What should it say to us, that Shaul would even command the brethren (in Yeshua's Name) to withdraw from any believer who did not walk according to the Hebrew traditions? Does it not seem to indicate that these Hebrew customs and traditions are important?

But why are they so important?

Yeshua did speak out against some of the rabbinic traditions, but we should note carefully that He only spoke out against those customs and traditions that went against His Father's Torah:

3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you (therefore) transgress the Commandments of Elohim, because of your tradition? [Matthew 15:3]

While a majority of the rabbinic traditions may go against the Father's Torah, there are many Jewish and Scriptural cultural traditions that harmonize beautifully with the Torah; and while Yeshua probably kept few of the rabbinic traditions, He probably kept most (if not all) of the cultural and Scriptural ones.

For one example, John 10:22 tells us that Yeshua kept the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) even though it is only a traditional time of celebration:

10 Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. [Yochanan (John) 10:22]

Further, as we will explain in *Nazarene Scripture Commentary*, the Last Supper was probably held in the manner of a traditional Jewish Passover ceremony, called a Passover 'Seder' service. This Seder service traditionally concluded either by singing or chanting Psalm Number 118.

The fact that Yeshua and His Apostles kept the Last Supper as a Passover Seder is not reflected in any of the major English versions (which almost all derive from the Greek Textus Receptus). For example, the New King James Version (which draws from the Greek) says nothing about Yeshua and His Apostles reading Psalm 118:

26 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. [Matthew 26:30, NKJV]

However, remember that the Church Fathers tell us the Book of Matthew was not inspired in Greek, but in Hebrew. For example, Papias wrote:

Matthew composed the words in the Hebrew dialect; and each translated as he was able. [Papias, 150-170 CE, quoted by Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. 3:39]

How interesting, then, that two of the existing Hebrew manuscripts of the Book of Matthew (the DuTillet and the Munster) tell us that Yeshua and His Apostles did not just sing any old song, but that they recited *'the'* Psalm:

**26 And reciting the Psalm, they went out to the Mount of Olives.
[Matthew 26:30, Hebrew]**

These may seem like small, niggling points to the average person, who feels that all they need to get a person saved is contained in any of the mainstream commercial *Christian* versions of the Good News. However, when we consider that these mainstream commercial versions have been sanitized, Hellenized, and stripped of their Hebraic content, we would do well to consider again the Apostle Shaul's commandment to the Thessalonians (in the Name of Yeshua) that the true brethren had to withdraw from any believer who walked disorderly (according to Hellenized, *Christian* ways):

**But we command you, brethren, in the Name of our Master Yeshua Messiah, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly (i.e. in a Hellenist fashion), and not according to the tradition which he received from us.
[2nd Thessalonians 3:6]**

The lie the Church has always taught is that since Yeshua allegedly came to do away with the Jews, 'their' Torah and 'their' traditions, Yeshua and the Apostles then instituted a whole new set of customs and traditions in their wake. The Church teaches that it was this all-new body of traditions that the Apostle Shaul was attempting to teach the Gentiles.

However, when we study the Word for what it really says, we see that the Church message is false. Rather than attempting to teach the Gentiles to be Hellenic *Christians*, the Nazarene Apostles were attempting to impart an ancient Torah culture to the Gentiles.

Why teach the Gentiles Torah culture? Because when one lives the Torah culture, one automatically keeps the majority of the Torah, without even having to think about it. The Law of Moses no longer appears as some imposing list of legal do's-and-don'ts, but is simply the Way one lives (and teaches one's children to live).

If the Gentiles could begin to identify with Torah culture through their initial acceptance of the Hebraic customs, then the newly returning Gentiles would eventually be able to merge seamlessly into Israelite society, right alongside their Jewish brethren.

When that happened, there would no longer be any difference between the *Jews*, the *Greeks* and the *Gentiles*; but they would all be just One New Man in the Messiah, walking as the Messiah walked (keeping the Torah and the Hebrew customs as a Way of life).

Restoring Torah Culture

Since leaving Catholicism in the 1500's, the Protestants have come a long way towards restoring the *Christian* variation of the original Nazarene faith. Some people therefore argue that if the Protestants simply keep reforming, they will eventually return to the original apostolic faith (keeping the customs and traditions the Apostles commanded the Gentiles to keep). However, there is a problem with this scenario.

As beneficial a transformation as the Protestant Reformation has been, the reason Protestantism is unlikely ever to recreate the original apostolic faith is not just because Christianity does not really descend from the Nazarene Israelite faith: It is also because Christianity is based upon the Hellenic principle; and Hellenism and Hebraism are ultimately polar opposites.

Nazarene Israel was created when the Messiah of Daniel Nine came to earth, and certain Israelites were given divine revelation of who He was. Having accepted and realized their Messiah, these blessed individuals rejected any Talmudic tradition that conflicted with the Torah of Moshe (but kept all other Talmudic traditions), and behold! They had become Nazarene *Israelites*, keeping the Torah and the Hebrew traditions.

The Hellenism of Mark 9:38 was created when other believers in the Messiah decided to cast out demons in Yeshua's Name, but did not walk according to the Torah or the Hebrew customs. In other words, while they believed in Yeshua, they did not *follow* the Messiah, or *walk* as Messiah walked.

While the Nazarene Israelite faith was created when the Messiah was revealed to certain devout Israelites, Catholic Christianity was created as a political response in the fourth century CE.

Roman Emperor Constantine was revered as the demigod of his empire, but found himself losing power over his people as they continued to convert to Hellenic Christianity. In order to bolster his power and authority among his own people, he took the Mithraic sun-worship that called him a demigod and dressed it in the trappings of the Hellenic *Christianity* of that day. By simply re-naming the Mithraic customs, traditions and holidays in honor of 'Christ,' he was not only able to preserve his position as demigod, but he was also able to keep his same familiar sun-centered calendar, his same sun-centered days of worship, and the same Luciferic style of service.

Even while some of the more avant-garde Protestant denominations have rid themselves of some of the more obvious pagan elements of Catholicism, they still fail to re-create the original apostolic faith, because the worship style is still based upon Emperor Constantine's Mithraism.

Attempting to re-create the original apostolic faith by ridding Protestantism of its paganism is like attempting to clean up a toxic waste dump enough to turn it into a nursery: No matter how much you clean it up, it is never really going to be acceptable, and one has to wonder why anyone would even want to try.

Rather than attempt to detoxify Christianity, a much more logical, practical and direct solution is just to do as the Apostles did. Start with Pharisaic (Orthodox) Judaism, accept Yeshua as the Messiah, discard any rabbinic custom or tradition that conflicts with Torah, and behold! You will have become not a Nazarene *Christian*, but a Nazarene *Israelite*.

Because the Apostles were raised as Jews of the First Century, after they had accepted Yeshua as the Messiah, they still practiced a worship that was fundamentally Israeli (or Hebrew) in nature. This is why Epiphanius was able to write:

“The Nazarenes do not differ in any essential thing from them (meaning the Pharisees/Orthodox Jews), since they practice the customs and doctrines prescribed by Jewish Law; except that they believe in Christ.”
[Epiphanius, “Against Heresies,” Panarion 29, 7, Page 41, 402]

Epiphanius said that the Nazarene faith did not differ “in any essential thing” from the Pharisaic (Orthodox) one, except that the Nazarenes believed in Messiah. In contrast, the Hellenic Christian variations of the faith do differ from the Pharisaic (Orthodox) faith in many ways that Epiphanius would have considered “essential.”

How exactly are the Nazarene and the Christian faiths different? Precisely this: The Hellenic *Christian* variations of the faith are all based upon Mithraic customs and doctrines, rather than practicing “the customs and doctrines prescribed by Jewish Law,” as Epiphanius said (above).

The Apostles were attempting to teach the returning Gentiles to keep the Hebraic customs and doctrines (wherever they did not conflict with the Torah). The purpose of this was so that the returning Gentiles would learn to follow the Israelite Messiah, rather than the Christian ‘Christ.’ While this may seem like a nonsensical distinction to the Western Gentile mind, to the Hebrew, it makes all the difference.

So how are we to figure out what the customs and doctrines of the original Nazarene faith were, some seventeen hundred years after the faith was rubbed out by the Church of Rome? The only way we can do this is to do as the Apostles did.

The Apostles were just devout religious Jews who came to believe on their Messiah. After they had rejected those traditions that conflict with the Torah, they continued to practice the rest of the Hebraic culture (and even taught it to the returning Gentiles).

Thankfully, the Jews are a highly traditional people, and most of the customs and doctrines they practice today are identical to those they practiced in the First Century. Therefore, in order to reconstruct the original Nazarene Israelite faith, all we must do is (first) to make the decision to leave the Mithraic customs and doctrines of Christianity behind. Then (second) we come back to the Hebrew culture that the Pharisees (the Orthodox Jews) have maintained in Ephraim’s absence for thousands of years. Finally, we accept that Yeshua is the prophesied Messiah (and the Son of the Living Elohim), throw off those few customs and traditions that conflict with the Torah, and behold! We too will have become Nazarene *Israelites*.

But why is Hebrew culture so important?

The word ‘Hebrew’ means ‘crossed over.’ In the historic sense, this ‘crossing over’ refers to when Avram (later Avraham) left his home and his father’s house, and crossed over the River Euphrates, to sojourn at YHWH’s Word. In a metaphoric and spiritual sense, it also refers to how Avraham ‘crossed over’ from seeking after the things of the material world, to follow after the things of the Spirit. Thus, the word ‘Hebrew’ also essentially means ‘transcendent;’ and the term *Hebrew* refers to ‘one transcends their focus on material world, in favor of following YHWH.’

YHWH gave the Children of Israel His Torah to help them learn to transcend the things of this material world. It would be a slow process, but eventually YHWH would discipline a people who could be in the world, and yet not of it; who could be tempted by the things of the flesh, and yet choose the things of the Spirit.

Many Christians have been taught that the whole point of being spiritual is 'just to be nice,' and to 'love your neighbor' in some generalized, non-specific sense. However, while YHWH certainly does want His people to be loving and kind, Torah is far more than just simple 'niceness;' and so is Torah culture.

The Israelite faith is more Eastern than Western, just as the Land of Israel lies in the Middle East (and not in the Mid-West). In the Eastern spiritual traditions, then, transcending the material world implies a certain amount of abstention (or denial) of the things of the flesh. While this concept is not spelled out in the Word, this concept underlies several fundamental key passages, both in the New Covenant, and in the Old.

MattithYahu (Matthew) 16:24-25

24 Then Yeshua said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

While certain persons in Scripture had wealth (e.g., Avraham, King Solomon and Job) material things are not highly prized, in Scripture. Rather, the things of the material world are described as being 'unclean,' in comparison with the things of the Spirit.

That a spirit-filled believer can just take a shower and still be ritually unclean is a difficult concept for many to accept, even on the intellectual level. At the emotional level, we want to think of ourselves as wonderful, beautiful creatures; especially after having accepted Yeshua as our Messiah and Savior.

However, despite what we mortal human beings might like to believe about ourselves, the Torah does stipulate that certain persons, places or things will defile anyone, rendering them ritually unclean. This is simply because these things have to do with the (impure) material realm.

We will spend more time talking about why the things of the material world are so inherently unclean in the upcoming study *Nazarene Scripture Commentary*. However, for the time being, if we can simply accept that the spiritual realm which Elohim inhabits is inherently superior to the material realm (which man inhabits), it can make it much easier for us to understand why the Torah places so much emphasis on ritual defilements, and the actions which are necessary to restore us to a ritually pure state.

And, if we can understand what it takes for us humans to purify ourselves enough to commune with the Most High Elohim, it will also make it much easier for us to understand why the Orthodox Jews have maintained their peculiar customs and traditions for so long; and what we can safely learn from them.

Tradition and the Laws of Niddah

The Torah spends a lot of time discussing the requirements for ritual purity and cleanliness. Many of these requirements make sense to the Christian mind, while many others (at least initially) may not. However, if we hope to be taken as part of His bride, we must do our best to keep His Torah. Even if we are not able to keep His Torah perfectly, it may be that what He really wants to see is who strives to do his or her utmost.

One particular set of commands that newcomers often find confusing are called the *Laws of Niddah* (or the 'Laws of Family Purity'). Among the requirements these Torah laws set forth is a prohibition against married couples having sex on the Festival Days, and against touching whenever a woman is menstruating.

Most Christians can typically understand why the Torah would prohibit unmarried people from having sex, but why does the Torah require even married couples not to touch during the Festivals, or during a woman's regular time of monthly cleansing?

Indeed, why abstain from touch? Psychology would say it is bad for married couples to abstain from regular touch. Psychologists might suggest that there are many modern studies demonstrating a variety of health benefits to regular loving touch; and they might also suggest that normal marital relations actually strengthen the bonds of commitment and love between a man and his wife. Therefore, why does the Torah say there are times that a man and his wife should not touch?

We will explore this topic in much more detail in *Nazarene Scripture Commentary* and in *Covenant Relationship*. However, there are hidden benefits to short periods of abstention from sex (which we will explain near the end of this chapter).

Additionally, while marital relations can indeed be very beautiful, and while regular loving touch between married couples can lead to better, stronger and longer-lasting relationships, physical touch is still very much a thing of the flesh; and therefore it is still very much a thing of man's (impure) material world.

In contrast to the impure material world that man inhabits, YHWH is pure Spirit; and pure Spirit does not desire contact with the things of the material realm. To Elohim, even the cleanest and most beautiful aspects of the material realm are still very much undesirable.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 64:6

***6 But we are all like an unclean thing,
And all our righteousness as filthy
rags....***

Therefore, since the material world is repulsive to Elohim, on the days He has set aside for His people to commune spiritually with Him, YHWH asks His people to 'set themselves apart' from physical things, so as better to focus their undivided attentions on Him.

While abstaining from physically communing with one's spouse does represent a sacrifice for us, this sacrifice is well-pleasing to our jealous Elohim.

The specific Commandments for abstinence are found in Leviticus Chapter Fifteen. We will deal only with the basics of them here, but for one example, a man who has had an emission of semen is considered to be ritually unclean until the evening after he washes.

16 'If any man has an emission of semen, then he shall wash all his body in water, and be unclean until evening.

17 And any garment or any leather on which there is semen, it shall be washed with water, and be unclean until evening.

18 Also, when a woman lies with a man, and there is an emission of semen, they shall (both) bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

[Vayiqra (Leviticus) 15:16-18]

We can understand why an emission of semen would make a man ritually unclean until he washed; but why would the Torah say that a man who has had an emission of semen remains ritually unclean until the evening *after* he washes? Why would he not be clean the moment he steps out of the tub?

We will not be able to answer this question fully until the study *Nazarene Scripture Commentary*. However, if one is willing to look at things from a spiritual and energetic perspective, one should be able to sense the correct answer (if one wants).

The reason a man remains ritually unclean until the next Hebrew day begins, following his physical washing, is that an emission of semen is indicative of a degree of separation between a man and his Maker.

While it is true that an emission of semen can be a reflection of the desire to fulfill the commandment to procreate (Genesis 1:28), typically a seminal emission is the result of a desire (conscious or unconscious) for sexual pleasure. Even if this desire for sexual pleasure is that of a man for his dearly-beloved wife, such an emission of semen is reflective of a desire for pleasure here, in the (impure) material realm.

As beautiful, wonderful, nurturing and tender as loving marital relations can be, if we are honest with ourselves, we must acknowledge that a desire for physical pleasure in the material realm is not the same thing as a desire for spiritual communion with YHWH. In fact, the two are mutually exclusive.

As we will show in *Nazarene Scripture Commentary* and *Covenant Relationship*, one of the requirements of ritual cleanliness is that we keep our focus on Elohim. To take our focus off of Elohim automatically makes us unclean.

Just as soon as Kefa (or Peter) allowed himself to be distracted from keeping his focus on Yeshua, he began to sink.

MattithYahu (Matthew) 14:28-31

28 And Kefa (Peter) answered Him and said, "Master, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."

29 So He said, "Come." And when Kefa had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Yeshua.

30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Master, save me!"

31 And immediately Yeshua stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

As Eastern thought holds that the material world essentially reflects the (underlying) spiritual world, this passage is also allegorical (symbolic). When we 'take our eyes' off of Elohim, we begin to 'sink.' We become unclean, both in our spirit, and in our flesh.

When a man desires to commune with his wife, he cannot be actively desiring communion with YHWH. Some might not want to accept it, but the truth of this statement should be obvious enough.

By allowing his attentions to turn from a focus on YHWH to a focus on his wife, a man (either knowingly or unknowingly) has turned his attention from the spiritual realm, to the material one. This alone makes him ritually unclean; and the subsequent seminal emission merely serves as a physical indicator (or sign) of that underlying spiritual reality.

It is true that YHWH gave man the inclination to procreate (Genesis 1:28); and it is also true that when this urge to procreate is fulfilled inside of loving, lifelong marriages where the children are raised to serve YHWH, that marital relations are a necessary thing.

In fact, the majority of Israel needs to get married, and bring up the next generation of Israel in the way they should go; or else there would be no next generation of Israel.

However, all of that notwithstanding, as we will explain in *Covenant Relationship* and in other studies, while most people do need to follow the married path, what YHWH likes most is when His people desire to transcend their flesh. This is why the Apostle Shaul counsels celibacy for those who are called to that path (but not for those who are not).

Qorintyah Aleph (1st Corinthians) 7:1-2

1 Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

2 Nevertheless, because of (the need to avoid) sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

This is also why Yeshua says that those who can accept the call to be 'eunuchs' (a Hebraic idiom meaning 'celibate') should accept this call.

MattithYahu (Matthew) 19:3-12

3 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what Elohim has joined together, let not man separate."

7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

8 He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

10 His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry."

11 But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given:

12 For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."

That YHWH wants His people to overcome (or transcend) the desires of their flesh is also why Isaiah promises a place and a name "better than that of sons and daughters" to those who follow the celibate path.

YeshaYahu (Isaiah) 56:4-5

4 For thus says YHWH:

"To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant,

5 "Even to them I will give in My House and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters.

"I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

The reason for the superior reward is because a 'eunuch' makes a commitment to overcome the fleshly desire to procreate, meditatively focusing his or her attentions full-time on communion with the Spirit.

Not all are called to a lifetime of celibacy, and only those who feel called should attempt it; but for those who are called, the increased challenge provides a much greater opportunity for spiritual refinement, because it provides a much more profound set of obstacles to overcome (with His help).

The majority of Israel, however, is not given to lifetime celibacy. Although these should not attempt to follow the celibate path, YHWH nonetheless asks them to abstain from marital relations during those times that He has appointed to commune with them. In practical terms, this means the Sabbath and Festival Days.

Because Israel dares approach the Most High during the Sabbath and Festival Days, ritual cleanness is absolutely commanded during these times.

So important is ritual cleanliness that when King David was not present at King Shaul's New Moon Festival, King Shaul assumed that the only plausible reason for David's absence was that he had become ritually unclean, on accident.

24 And when the New Moon had come, the king sat down to eat the feast.

25 Now the king sat on his seat, as at other times, on a seat by the wall. And Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Shaul's side, but David's place was empty.

26 Nevertheless Shaul did not say anything that day, for he thought, "It is an accident; he is (not here because he is ritually) unclean. Surely he is (ritually) unclean."

[Shmuel Aleph (1st Samuel) 20:24-26]

King Shaul reasoned that a man as devoted to YHWH as David would certainly not have missed an opportunity to commune with Him unless he had been accidentally ritually defiled (and was unable). That is why King Shaul thought "It is an accident," and that "surely" David was unclean; for had David not been unclean, "surely" David would have been present.

However, this begs another question. Is it a sin, to be ritually unclean? As we will explain in *Nazarene Scripture Commentary*, the answer is “Not usually.” However, it is sinful to be intentionally or negligently unclean during YHWH’s Set-apart times, because it reflects a lack of zeal to commune with YHWH.

It was vitally important for Israel’s children to be ritually clean (and in a heightened spiritual state) when the Torah was handed down in the Wilderness of Sinai:

14 So Moshe went down from the mountain to the people and set the people apart, and they washed their clothes. 15 And he said to the people, "Be ready by the third day: Do not come near your wives."
[Shemote (Exodus) 19:14-15]

The men had to set themselves apart from their physical desires for their wives. This represented a challenge, but one essential for ritual cleanness.

And if men must not desire their wives on the Set-apart days, then women also have a challenge, which pertains to their monthly times of menstruation.

During her times of regular blood cleansing, any woman who wants to be considered a part of Israel must set herself apart (i.e. physically separate herself) from others, and not go to set-apart places of worship:

19 If a woman has a discharge, and the discharge from her body is blood, she shall be separated seven days; and whoever touches her shall be (ritually) unclean until evening.
[Vayiqra (Leviticus) 15:19]

As we will explain in *Nazarene Scripture Commentary*, unless a woman’s time of cleansing lasts longer than the usual seven days, her time of cleansing is not ‘sin.’ This is because her regular times of cleansing have nothing to do with any ‘choice’ on her part. Though she may never break a meditative focus off of YHWH, menstruation still happens to her, through no fault whatsoever of her own.

Nevertheless, even though she may not have broken her meditative focus on YHWH (as a man normally does when he has an emission of semen), during her normal menstrual times, a woman is still considered ‘ritually unclean;’ and the above passage tells us that anyone touching her (or sitting where she sat) also becomes ritually unclean (and is therefore unfit to enter into any set-apart place of worship, including the Temple area, or a synagogue).

Contrary to wishful thought, a woman’s monthly time of ritual impurity is not just a health-and-hygiene-issue that is solved by modern sanitary conveniences. If all that was involved was a sanitation issue, then when someone touched her (or sat where she sat) he would not have to wait until evening to be ritually clean again. All he or she would have to do would be to go take a bath, and he (or she) would be instantly clean. However, that is not how this passage reads.

We are also told that a man must not sleep in the same bed with a menstruous woman, for if her blood comes upon him by accident, then he (and the bed he lies on) is unclean for seven days:

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 15:24
24 "And if any man lie with her at all, and her flowers be upon him, he shall be unclean seven days; and all the bed whereon he lieth shall be unclean."

Although the term “lie with her” refers to sexual intercourse elsewhere in the Torah, we know it does not refer to sexual intercourse here, because Leviticus 20:18 (below) tells us that the punishment for having sexual intercourse with a menstruous woman (here called ‘uncovering her nakedness’ and ‘laying bare her flow’) is for both man and woman to be cut off from the Nation of Israel.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 20:18

18' If there is a man who lies with a menstruous woman and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her flow, and she has exposed the flow of her blood; thus both of them shall be cut off from among their people. (NASU)

Niddah is a serious issue, and anyone who wants to be considered a part of the Nation of Israel must obey it as best they can. However, *Niddah* does not mean that women must remain isolated from society (or from their families) for seven days each month: Very much to the contrary. It only means that anyone who is not clean must not come to the places set-apart for worship during the times they are unclean.

Even though the Laws of *Niddah* are restrictive, over the years, the Jewish people have figured out how to make it possible for women to move about in society without embarrassment; and Ephraimites would do well to follow Judah’s lead in this regard.

In order to make it so that no one must disclose their *Niddah* status unnecessarily, the rule that has been adopted in Orthodox Jewish society is that unmarried men and women simply do not touch. They forego the ‘Western-style’ handshakes; and if they want to acknowledge each other, they simply say “Hello.”

In Jewish society, money is not put directly into the palm of another person, but instead it is placed either down on the counter, or else in a dish. The money is then counted twice, and any change owing is also placed back in the dish. The extra counting ensures there is no miscount, and the custom of placing money in a dish ensures that no one ever has to worry about the *Niddah* status of either the customer, or of the cashier. It simply becomes a non-issue, because all physical contact has been avoided.

In fact, Torah-observant Jews give such respect to the *Laws of Niddah* that it is not unusual to see a Torah-observant man or woman back out of a narrow aisle or walkway, rather than have unnecessary contact with the opposite sex.

The Laws of *Niddah* certainly go far beyond these simple rules, but because these kinds of rules are easy to teach, and because they help one to obey fundamental aspects of the Torah, these *Niddah* rules of ‘no contact’ are some of the very first rules taught to gentile converts to Judaism. And, since the Nazarene faith essentially arose as a kind of a derivative from Orthodox Judaism, these may be the kinds of Hebrew customs and traditions the Apostle Shaul commanded the Gentiles to keep. Not only do these customs not conflict with the Torah, they actually make it easier for people to keep Torah, since the rules are easy, and then everyone knows what is expected of them.

In Jewish society, the *Hebrew* customs for the synagogue (and other set-apart places) differ from the rules for the outside world. While in the outside world, women and men can mix, in the synagogue (and at the Temple area) men and women are segregated, with the men going to one side of the synagogue, and the women going to the other.

Since the focus in Israelite worship is not on the material world (but on the spiritual), segregating men and women helps keep people focused on Elohim, rather than on each other. Further, while men are responsible for controlling their eyes, women are expected to help the men out by concealing their looks, by covering both their body and their hair.

And, because the rule is that one does not come to the synagogue unless one is ritually clean, men feel themselves free to give each other a handshake, a hug, or even a set-apart kiss on the cheek, as (or if) they honestly feel led to do so.

RomiYah (Romans) 16:16
16 Greet one another with a set-apart kiss.

Likewise, within the synagogue, women may freely embrace or kiss other women, since people do not come to the synagogue unless they are clean.

However, even though everyone there is clean, physical contact between non-married males and females is still considered to be strictly inappropriate.

And, though it may confound modern secular psychology, numerous scientific studies have shown that married couples who keep these Laws of *Niddah* experience markedly higher rates of marital success than those who do not. Though it is not explainable by modern science, *Niddah*-observant women also experience a markedly-lower incidence of cervical cancer, as recorded in the Israeli Medical Association Journal, Volume 5, pages 120-123, 2/2003. Other studies have shown similarly related decreases in women's health problems. Such are the hidden blessings of keeping YHWH's Laws.

However, one of the best benefits of keeping the Laws of *Niddah* (and the customs and traditions that have grown up around them) is that even though married couples must physically separate themselves from each other for a short time each month, sleeping in separate beds, when that time is over they enjoy a new honeymoon each month.

After having turned to Elohim in prayer, in fasting and in supplication, they get to re-experience with newness the unique and positive qualities of the one to whom Elohim chose to join them, as man and wife; and perhaps that helps to explain why *Niddah* observant couples have a greater incidence of marital happiness and success, than couples who are not.

Torah-Tradition and Headcoverings

Contrary to Hebrew custom and tradition, Christianity has long taught that men should not cover their heads during worship. This doctrine is based on First Corinthians Eleven, and Verse Four:

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. [1st Corinthians 11:4]

If it is needed to protect them from the heat, or the cold, humans do not usually mind wearing some sort of hat on their heads. However, if there is no need for protection from the heat or the cold, humans do not generally like to wear anything on their heads. That is just animal nature.

Since our nature is to dislike covering our heads, most Christians have never bothered to study First Corinthians 11:4 in depth, since the face value of the mainstream translations is so pleasing to the ear.

The problem is that Shaul commanded the Gentiles to keep the Hebrew customs and traditions (at least, those that did not conflict with the Torah). And, as we shall see, not only does the tradition of covering the head not conflict with the Torah, it actually comes from the Torah.

Further, First Corinthians 11:4 is mistranslated.

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. [1st Corinthians 11:4]

In verse four, the word 'covered' is actually Strong's NT Number #2596, *kata*. This word is a close relative of Strong's NT #2619, *katakalypto* (below), which is used in verse 6.

***Qorintyah Aleph (1st Corinthians) 11:6
6 For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.***

Neither *kata* nor *katakalypto* mean 'to cover partially' (as with a hat). Rather, *kata* and *katakalypto* both mean 'to cover wholly,' as with a veil (or in this context, to wrap with a woman's headscarf).

NT 2619: *katakalypto*: to cover wholly, (i.e., to veil).

Plugging in the actual meaning of the word *kata*, then, we can see what the Apostle Shaul really said:

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head wholly covered (i.e. having his head wrapped in a woman's headscarf), dishonors his head (for it makes him look like a woman). [1st Corinthians 11:4]

And verse six:

For if a woman is not wholly covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be wholly covered. [1st Corinthians 11:6]

The reason Christianity's doctrine of worshipping bare-headed persists is the Church's teaching that the New Covenant arose in a vacuum. Believing that the Messiah was sent to do away with the Torah, the Jews and the Hebrew traditions, Christianity then supposes that the Apostles created entirely new customs and traditions, to fill the void created; and that these new dogmas were entirely opposite the Torah.

However, as we have seen, the Apostles were just devout religious Jews who had been steeped in the Hebrew culture ever since childhood. After believing on Yeshua as the prophesied Messiah, they simply rejected the minority of Jewish tradition that conflicted with the Torah, and continued to value the rest.

The reason the Apostles would have continued to cover their heads (and teach the Gentiles to cover their heads) is that this tradition derives from the Torah.

5 Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is set-apart ground." [Shemote (Exodus) 3:5]

In the ancient Middle East, men generally wore something on their heads to protect from the sun. Also, in Middle Eastern tradition, a servant always covered his head (and went barefoot), as a sign of submission to his master's authority.

YHWH commanded Moshe (Moses) to take off his sandals (but not his turban) to indicate that he was now YHWH's servant. Hence, Moshe was dressed as a Hebrew servant (head covered, and bare-foot).

We should also note that Aaron the High Priest was commanded to wear a turban when he served before YHWH (as a symbol of his priesthood):

6 You shall put the turban on his head, and put the set-apart crown on the turban. [Shemote (Exodus) 29:6]

And it was not just Aaron who was commanded to cover his head. Aaron's sons were also commanded to cover their heads when serving YHWH. Specifically, they were commanded to wear 'exquisite hats':

27 They made tunics, artistically woven of fine linen, for Aaron and his sons, 28 a turban of fine linen, exquisite hats of fine linen, short trousers of fine woven linen, 29 and a sash of fine woven linen with blue, purple, and scarlet thread, made by a weaver, as YHWH had commanded Moshe. [Shemote (Exodus) 39:27-29]

The description of these 'exquisite hats' is very interesting. The hat was called a Migba'ah, meaning a 'hemispherical cap':

OT4021 migba`ah (mig-baw-aw'); from the same as OT1389; a cap (as hemispherical).

When we look up the reference to OT1389, we see that this migba`ah was supposed to look like a small hill:

OT:1389 gib`ah (ghib-aw'); feminine from the same as OT:1387; a hillock: -hill, little hill.

This description of a 'little hill' sounds very much like the large traditional Jewish skull cap; except that it was made of fine linen (and not cotton).

Further, while the average Israelite was not commanded to cover his head, the act of covering the head is highly regarded, in Scripture.

When King David fled from his son Absalom, he imitated the pattern that Moshe had set in the Torah, by covering his head, and going barefoot. This was to show YHWH that David considered himself a servant:

30 So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot.

And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up.

[Shmuel Bet (2nd Samuel) 15:30]

So did Shaul really command the Gentiles to worship bare-headed? It seems highly unlikely, for the House of Ephraim was told they were a royal (i.e. a Melchizedekian) priesthood:

Kefa Aleph (1st Peter) 2:9-10

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a set-apart nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10 who once were not a people but are now the people of Elohim, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

If the Ephraimites were to be a royal priesthood, and the priesthood was always commanded to cover its head (and both Moshe and King David covered their heads), then why would tradition-oriented Shaul suddenly decree that men were no longer to cover their heads? It does not fit the pattern.

If one believes:

1. The Messiah came to do away with the Torah, the Prophets and the Jewish people;
2. That the Renewed Covenant was written in a vacuum; and that
3. One should insist on the literal face value of the mistranslation of First Corinthians 11:4 (even though it is obviously a mistranslation),

Then it makes some sense that Shaul would have commanded the gentiles to worship bare-headed. However, when we understand that the Messiah did not come to do away with the Torah, the Prophets or the Jewish people, that the Apostles were religious Jews, and that they continued to practice the same faith they had been raised with, then the idea that Shaul would have commanded the returning Gentiles to worship bare-headed makes no sense at all.

It might seem ridiculous that Shaul would have to tell the Corinthian men not to wrap up their heads in women's headscarves, but Corinth was a center for Greek temple-cult prostitution. Moral standards in Corinth were so low that one man was even having sex with his father's wife.

Qorintyah Aleph (1st Corinthians) 5:1-2

1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles — that a man has his father's wife!

2 But you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

Shaul tells the Corinthians that while adultery may have been tolerated in greater *Hellenic* Corinth, adulterers were not allowed inside of the synagogues (as the synagogues were to remain set-apart from the defilements of the regular world).

Shaul's epistle to the Corinthians, then, basically says, "Hebrew men and women are supposed to behave in this Way, according to these traditions; but here are some things that Hebrew men and women are never supposed to do (no matter how well-accepted these practices might be in the surrounding *Gentile* cultures)."

Not only are Hebrew men not to have sex with their father's wives, but they should not *kata* (wrap up their hair in a woman's head scarf). This is because no matter what kinds of strange customs and practices the *Greeks* may have allowed in their temples, the Torah forbids *Hebrew* men and women to cross-dress.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 22:5

5 "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all who do so are an abomination to YHWH your Elohim."

So was the Apostle Shaul throwing out the Torah-based Hebrew traditions, in favor of making up new ones? Or was he restoring the House of Ephraim to their heritage in the Torah, by showing them how a nation of kings and priests should behave?

But if Hebrew men are not to cover their hair with scarves, First Corinthians Eleven tells us why it is important for Hebrew women to do so.

Remembering that the word *kata* means 'to cover wholly,' or 'to wrap,' we can see the Apostle Shaul wrote:

5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head not wholly covered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.

6 For if a woman is not wholly covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, (then) let her (head) be wholly covered.

[1st Corinthians 11:5-6]

Why should a woman be shorn if her hair is not wholly covered? It is because in Hebraic thought, a woman's hair is considered to be an object of extreme beauty. The object of Hebraic worship is to transcend the desires of the flesh; but if a woman openly displays her beauty, it will be extremely distracting to the men (and this cannot be pleasing to YHWH).

Shaul confirms this by telling the Corinthians that the reason women should cover their hair wholly is because the covering serves as a symbol of authority:

7 For a man indeed ought not to wholly cover his head, since he is the image and glory of Elohim; but woman is the glory of man.

8 For man is not from woman, but woman from man.

9 Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.

10 For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

[1st Corinthians 11:7-10]

The woman was created because the man needed a helper; and a man's hair does not normally serve as the same kind of an object of desire that a woman's hair does. Therefore, it is the woman's hair that needs to be wholly covered, to prevent the man from being distracted.

But what does verse ten mean?

10 For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

Researching this verse, we find that it has also been mistranslated.

The Greek word for *angel* in this passage is Strong's NT:32, 'aggelos' (pronounced ang'-el-os).

NT:32 *aggelos* (ang'-el-os); from *aggello* (meaning, to bring tidings); a messenger; especially an "angel"; (or) by implication, a pastor: KJV - angel, messenger.

The word 'aggelos' means 'a messenger.' However, this messenger is not always a heavenly being. Some times an *aggelos* is a pastor; and this translation makes a whole lot more sense:

Qorintyah Aleph (1st Corinthians) 11:10

10 For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head: because of the pastors.

For the pastor's sake, a woman should wear a symbol of authority on her head, so as to indicate that she is also under Scriptural discipline. This is because even though pastors may be dedicated to overcoming the desires of their flesh (with His help), pastors are still prey to the same human failings and fleshly desires as everyone else.

When the woman makes it obvious that she is under the authority either of her husband, or of her earthly father, it helps the pastors to keep from being distracted by a woman's natural beauty. By not distracting the men (or the pastors) with their beauty, the women are helping the men to overcome their flesh (with His help); and so are fulfilling the royal command:

Mattith Yahu (Matthew) 7:12

12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Torah and the Prophets.

A Hebrew woman does not want to be distracted from her efforts at overcoming her own flesh; and so in turn, she does what she can to help the men.

Then, in the next verse, Shaul asks rhetorically if it is proper for a woman to pray to Elohim with her hair exposed:

13 Judge among your selves: is it proper for a woman to pray to Elohim with her head uncovered (not wholly covered)?

Modern-day Hellenic Christians might believe it is proper for a woman to pray in public with her head uncovered. However, in Hebraic society, it has never been considered proper for women (and especially believing women) to be uncovered in public.”

Hebrews believe it is very improper for a woman to pray in public with her head uncovered, for to display her earthly beauty only serves to rouse a man’s animal desire, distracting him from his worship.

14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?

15 But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering.

16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the assemblies of Elohim.

[1st Corinthians 11:13-16]

Christians commonly try to use this passage to suggest that so long as a woman grows her hair long, she does not need to wear a head covering. However, this cannot possibly have been Shaul’s meaning, for he clearly said (in verses 5 and 6) that unless a woman wholly covers her head, then she should be shaven, or shorn. In other words, one way or another, it is not proper for her to distract others by displaying her hair.

In verse 16, Shaul says that the synagogues have no custom that sisters can pray or prophesy with their hair uncovered, simply because it is long. To the contrary, if a sister does not cover her hair wholly, then she should be shaven, or shorn, as for her to display her beauty openly only serves to distract her brothers, which can keep them from worshipping fully.

Will You Do Your Utmost?

You now possess a wealth of information that your forefathers never had. However, now that you possess this new knowledge, what will you do with it?

Will you, like a noble Berean, study these things out for yourself, to see whether they are so?

10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

12 Therefore many of them believed; and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

[Ma’aseh (Acts) 17:10-12]

And, if you discover that what you have just read is true, will you do your utmost to share this truth with others? We know from Yeshua’s parables that this is really what He wants of us:

11 Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of Elohim would appear immediately.

12 Therefore He said: "A certain Nobleman (meaning Yeshua) went to a distant country (meaning Heaven) to receive for Himself a Kingdom, and (then) to return.

13 So He called ten of his servants (meaning the Lost Ten Tribes), delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'

14 But his citizens (meaning the House of Judah) hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this Man to reign over us!'

[Luqa (Luke) 19:11-14]

The certain wellborn Man is Yeshua, and He has gone to Heaven to receive His Kingdom. He will some day return; but before He left He gave His ten servants each a 'mina', which in the parable is a type of coin.

The 'mina' is not actually money (per se), but refers to our eternal Salvation; and the ten servants are the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel (or *Ephraim*).

Many believers think that since they received their Salvation freely (as a gift) that it is theirs to spend as they choose. One can see how this idea would appeal; but this is just one more desirable half-truth that Satan tempts the woman (Israel) with.

Contrary to Christian myth, the Nobleman does not just hand out 'free money.' Rather, He gives His servants the means with which to help Him build His Kingdom, and then He intentionally leaves His servants unsupervised. He tells them what they should do and then waits to see who does it, so He can see who truly wants to serve Him (and who does not).

It is only those servants who use their lives in service of Him that will be taken into His Kingdom:

15 "And so it was that when He returned, having received the Kingdom, He then commanded these servants to whom He had given the money to be called to Him, that He might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'

17 And He said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities!'

18 And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' 19 Likewise He said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'

Those who serve Him will be greatly rewarded. However, not everyone will choose to serve Him:

20 "Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is Your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief.

21 For I feared you, because you are an austere Man. You collect what You did not deposit, and reap what You did not sow.'

22 And He said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant! You knew that I was an austere Man, collecting what I did not deposit, and reaping what I did not sow.

23 Why then did you not put My money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'

This last servant did not love his Master enough to do anything with his mina (his Salvation). He did not spend it bringing others to Salvation, and he did not assist those who were (which is what Yeshua means in the parable by the expression, “putting His money in the bank, that He might collect it with interest”).

It is a sad but sobering fact that most believers are under the mistaken assumption that one needs to do in order to be taken as part of His bride is to call upon His Name. This being the case, most believers fail to dedicate themselves to building their Master’s Kingdom. This, however, is what Yeshua called ‘laying up one’s mina in a handkerchief’; and it does not lead to their being taken as part of His bride:

24 "And He said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.'

25 "“And they said to him, 'Master, he (already) has ten minas.'

26 "But I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

[Luqa (Luke) 19:24-27]

The Parable of the Minas is not really about money, but about a deep devotion to the one who died to save us all from our sins. It speaks to an abiding commitment to serve one’s Master; not out of a sense of obligation, but out of a pure genuine love, and a resolute sense of devotion:

**"But why do you call Me 'Master, Master', and not do the things which I say?
[Luqa (Luke) 6:46]**

Yeshua lived a perfect life and then died an agonizing death, in order to give us all a wonderful gift. Sadly, at least judging by their actions, the majority of people who call themselves by His Name seem to take His sacrifice for granted.

The naked, ugly truth is that while most people talk a good game about serving YHWH, at least judging from their actions, they want to give back to Him just as little as they can get away with. This does not indicate a genuine love for Elohim; nor does it indicate a genuine Salvation:

24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

[Yochanan (John) 12:24-25]

Genuine Salvation calls for dying completely to one’s own desires, and then living one’s life in total service to Him. One’s grain (one’s ego or self) must fall to the ground, and be buried.

However, rather than looking at their Salvation as an opportunity to serve their Intended (as the Apostles most certainly saw it), most believers seem to look at Salvation like they look at life insurance: They want to make sure that their premiums are covered.

Can this really be what Yeshua really wants, in a bride? Even an earthly man looks for a woman who loves him enough to try to help him in any way that she can: and if this is what even a mortal seeks, then why would the King above all Kings want to settle for anything less?

Believers tend to forget that Yeshua is free to pick-and-choose His bride from all the available virgins (the Nazarenes). He is not really under any obligation to take any of them. He is free to marry only the ones He finds pleasing.

Therefore, if Yeshua can choose His bride from among the likes of the Apostles, then why should He choose to take anyone as a bride, who does not do as much as they did?

If you were Yeshua, whom would you choose?

44 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

[Mattithyahu (Matthew) 13:44-46]

It was after these people had found the Kingdom that they sold all that they had, in order to secure it. This means that one's bridehood is not automatic. In order to gain entry into the Kingdom, one must show Yeshua that you value His free gift more than anything you have in this world.

The way that this is done, is by serving Him.

No one can tell you how to serve your Master: Only the Spirit can tell you what you should-and-should-not do. However, if your love for Him is true and genuine, no one will ever have to give you a pep-talk to get you working hard for Him.

If you truly love your Intended, you will already be looking for ways to do all you can, to help build His Kingdom.

There are many different ways one can help build the Nobleman's Kingdom: One can minister, one can feed the poor, one can help widows and orphans, or one can support those who are doing so. If one has no other resources, one can earnestly pray. All these are valid, constructive ways to show your Master that you truly care about Him more than anything else; which is really what He wants to know, after all.

To demonstrate by your actions that you value His Kingdom more than any pleasure in the world is the true test of faith. In fact, nothing else quite shows it.

24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

[Yochanan (John) 12:24-25]

May your grain also die.

In Yeshua's Name, amein.

Common Objection #1:

“But Paul said the Law was nailed to the Cross!”

The verse that is commonly misread to suggest that the Torah was ‘nailed to the Cross’ at Golgotha is found in Colossians 2:13-14. We will use the King James Version here:

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14 blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross. [Colossians 2:13-14, KJV]

Christians say that the *handwriting of ordinances* that was against us is the Law, which is why Yeshua had to be sent to nail it to His Cross.

However, if we look at this passage in the Aramaic (Peshitta), we see that what this passage actually says is that Yeshua blotted out the *handwriting of our debts*. What this passage actually means, then, is that when Yeshua died to atone for our sins (both individual and corporate) what He nailed to His Cross was *the record of our sins*. Thus our criminal record was blotted out, and we were given a clean slate, so that we could begin again:

14 He has blotted out by His commandments the handwriting of our debts (i.e. the record of our sins). [Colossians 2:14, Peshitta Aramaic]

***Write the vision
And make it plain on tablets;
That he who reads it runs.***

Habakkuk 2:2

Common Objection #2:

"I don't understand. Scripture calls it a 'New' Covenant. Doesn't the fact that it is a 'New' Covenant imply that the Old one was done away with?"

We know that the Apostle Shaul's writings are difficult to understand. One of the things that the Apostle Shaul says in the Book of Hebrews, then, is that the Old Covenant is now old; and therefore it is now obsolete, and is almost ready to vanish:

13 In that He says, "A New Covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. [Ivrim (Hebrews) 8:13]

All Scripture is true; but we have to understand that there is a hidden meaning to this passage.

In the Hebrew, the term 'New' Covenant is actually the term '*Renewed*' Covenant, because in Hebrew, the word 'New' is the word *Chadash* (pronounced '*Hadash*', with a hard Middle-Eastern 'H.')

This word *Chadash* does not imply that the Covenant is 'brand' new; but that it has been made new yet again. This word *Chadash* implies that the Covenant would be *re*-newed, meaning its principles and tenets would remain the same as before.

One useful analogy is how we talk about a 'new' moon, in English. We call it a 'new' moon, even though it is the exact same moon as before. In the same way, it is the same Covenant as before: just re-newed.

In order to understand this better, let us look at Jeremiah 31:31 (which Shaul quoted):

31 "Behold, the days are coming, says YHWH, when I will make a Renewed Covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah —

32 not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My Covenant which they broke, though I was a Husband to them, says YHWH.

33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days, says YHWH: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their Elohim, and they shall be My people.

[Jeremiah 31:31-33]

This Renewed Covenant was different in that it was to be written in the people's minds, and on their hearts: It says nothing about the adoption of different days of worship.

It is also interesting to note that while verse 31 tells us that this Renewed Covenant would be given to both Houses, verse 33 specifies that the Renewed Covenant would first be given only to Israel (Ephraim). Also, an interesting interplay between Genesis 49:10 and Deuteronomy 33:21 (which will be discussed in detail in *Nazarene Scripture Commentary*) will show us that the ability to set Halachah (the ability to bind on earth what had already been bound in the Heavens, as was done in Acts Chapter Fifteen) was transferred from the House of Judah to the House of Ephraim after the destruction of the Temple; and that it presently rests with the House of Ephraim. This will be explained in greater detail in *Nazarene Scripture Commentary*.

Common Objection #3:

“Today’s Jews don’t actually descend from the Jews of Moses’ time. The majority of the European Jews actually descend from the Khazar Republic of Russia, or else they are just grafted-in Germans.”

This argument is in all probability true; but the truth is also that it makes absolutely no difference. Irrespective of their genetic lineages, the Jews of today are at least the prophetic representatives of the Jews of Yeshua’s time.

The Book of Genesis is generally prophetic. Genesis tells us, then, that Israel had two wives (Leah and Rachel) and two concubines. These symbolize the Two Houses, Judah and Ephraim. Leah represents the blood descendants of the House of Judah, while the children of her concubine (Zilpah) represent those who were grafted in to Judah (i.e. the Khazars and the so-called ‘Germanic Jews.’) The fact is, however, that these are all nonetheless Jews (and Israelites), with an Inheritance in the Millennial Land (re: Ezekiel 47-48).

Ephraimites would do well not to point fingers at Judah’s genetic lineage, in that Ephraim was altogether swallowed up (Hosea 8:8), and is not able to prove blood lineage at all. However, Just as blood lineage is irrelevant for Judah, so it is for Ephraim. What matters is that one wants to return to the Land of Israel, and keep the Torah once again.

[For another example, the word ‘Palestinian’ means ‘invader.’ The vast majority of the modern-day Palestinians (the *Philistines* of Scripture) are really genetic Egyptians, Lebanese, Jordanians and/or Syrians; and yet they became ‘*invaders*’ when they spiritually self-identified as Philistines/Palestinians.]

Common Objection #4:

“You keep saying that you Christians are the Lost Ten Tribes. The Jewish Sages tell us the Lost Ten Tribes are hidden beyond the Sambatyon River.”

The Jewish Sages are recorded as saying that the Lost Tribes were hidden beyond the Sambatyon River, a mythical river that was impassable six days of the week (in that it spewed forth stones, thereby killing anyone who tried to cross it). The Sambatyon was supposedly passable only on the Sabbath; but since the Torah forbids travel on the Sabbath, the Jews never could cross it, to reach their brothers.

The problem with the face value of this legend is that while the whole world has been charted, no River Sambatyon exists. This, however, is not to say that there is no significance or value to the Sages’ assertion that the Tribes are lost ‘Beyond the River Sambatyon.’

In Hebrew, words and their sounds have many layers of meaning. Further, the Jewish Sages have been known to hide controversial secrets within several layers of allegory. This may be the case here.

In Hebrew, the word ‘Sam’ means a spice, or a drug. The word ‘Bat’ means ‘daughter of.’ The word ‘Ion’ is the Hebrew word for all things Greek (or Ionic). At the secret (‘*sode*’) level, then, the Sam-bat-yon River would be the *Daughter of the Greek-Drug River* (i.e., the ‘Daughter of Hellenic Thought’ River).

At the *sode* (secret) level, the Lost Tribes were exiled beyond the River of Hellenic Thought, which was impassable, except on Sabbath. However, since the Lost Tribes did not rest on the Sabbath, their Jewish brothers were never able to connect with them.

However, as we will detail in *Joseph’s Return*, Judah and Ephraim are getting ready to reconnect.

Common Objection #5:

“You people are not the Lost Ten Tribes. The rabbis have found the descendants of the Lost Tribes in Asia. There are even several thousand of them.”

The problems of the Asian-fulfillment theories are many, and will be dealt with in more detail in the study *Migrations*. The principle difficulty, however, is that the Dream of Jacob’s Ladder tells us that the Lost Tribes were to go in every direction: not just east.

Further, the few thousand Asians reportedly identified as the Lost Tribes are not nearly numerous enough to fulfill all the prophecies, which called for the Children of Israel to be as numerous as the stars of the heaven, and the sand of the seashore:

15 Then the Angel of YHWH called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says YHWH, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son — 17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”
[Breisheet (Genesis) 22:15-18]

Only the Christians are a Covenant people as numerous as the stars of the Heavens and the sand of the sea; and therefore only they fulfill this prophecy.

Common Objection #6:

“The Lost Tribes were regathered in the first century. That is why we are told in Luke 2 that Hannah (or Anna) was from the Tribe of Asher.”

The ‘One-House’ Messianic Jewish thesis is that the Lost Tribes were all recovered before Yeshua was born. The flaws with this theory are too numerous to catalogue here, although the main difficulty is that many of the Prophecies still speak to Judah and Ephraim’s coming reunion. This re-union is still a future event: It has not yet taken place.

The House of Judah was restored to the Land of Israel in 1948, when the Nation of Israel was ‘born in one day’ (fulfilling Isaiah 66:8). This restoration also simultaneously fulfills the first half of the prophecies in Ezekiel 37, which call for the House of Judah to be gathered together as one ‘stick’ in the Land, just prior to the restoration of the ‘stick’ of Ephraim. This cannot possibly be a reference to any time prior to 1948.

Further, one of the jobs of a *Messiah* is to unite the children of Israel together in the Land. If the tribes were already reunited prior to Yeshua’s arrival, how does Yeshua fulfill the Messiah’s traditional role of a Regather? How is He bringing back the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel (Ephraim), as He said in Matthew 15:24? Is Yeshua *not* the prophesied Messiah?

Messianic Judaism’s thesis also suggests that while the ‘gentiles’ took care of their Messiah for them for some two-thousand years, now that the Jews are back on the job, the gentiles have only to acknowledge (Messianic) Judah’s authority, and submit to their rule.

The fallacies of Messianic Judaism’s (incorrect) thesis are many, and will be dealt with in more detail in *Nazarene Scripture Commentary* and *Joseph’s Return*.

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Closing Prayer:

Master YHWH, King of Heaven and Earth,

We thank you for Your great kindnesses. Despite the mistakes of our fathers and ourselves, again You have chosen us to serve You.

Master, please give strength to all who receive this message. Please give them the endurance to withstand the trials that invariably come from being called to a closer walk with You. Please give them shepherds who will shepherd them according to Your heart, as you promised by Your prophet Jeremiah. Please lead Your people back to the Promised Land, and rejoin them to their brothers in Judah.

Master, please put it in the hearts of Your people to do all we can for you. Please lead us to make our service to You the real first priority in our lives. Please encourage us to do all we can with our few short days, so that we might truly be blessed, in the Judgment.

Above all, Master, please bring Your Salvation to all of mankind, and cause all those who accept Your Son to walk even as He taught us to walk. Do it not for our benefit, Master; but only for Your great Namesake.

Please restore the true worship that Your Son brought to us, Abba; and renew our days, as of old.

In Yeshua's precious Name, amein.

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."

Revelation 22:12

Notes:

About the Author:

Norman Willis was born and raised a Protestant in the greater Seattle area, but left the church at an early age, because his government school education taught him to believe in Evolution, rather than Scripture.

After graduating from the University of Washington with his bachelors in Psychology, he entered the United States Army, and served in the Republic of Panama as a commissioned officer, in the parachute infantry. Leaving military service as a captain, Mister Willis returned back to school in preparation for a doctorate in psychology. However, his experiences overseas had started him started on a long spiritual quest for truth. However, since his public school education had taught him not to believe in the Scripture, he began searching for truth in the eastern religious traditions, instead.

Having being saved at that time, Mister Willis got involved in protests against government encroachment upon civil rights. During an incident with the SWAT Team, Creator miraculously saved Mister Willis' life. Since that time, Mister Willis has given the rest of his life to serving the Messiah, and works around the clock, doing all he can to re-establish the original faith of the apostles.

Mister Willis spent almost two years in Jerusalem, researching the original faith. At the time of this writing, Mister Willis makes his home in North Central California, although he longs for the day he will be able to return to Jerusalem, this time to stay.