

**ONE LAW MOVEMENTS:
A Serious Challenge to the Messianic Jewish Community
By Daniel Juster**

“One Law Movements,” what does this mean? I have come up with this phrase to give a shorthand marker to movements that teach that Jew and Gentile in the New Covenant in Yeshua are called to keep the same Torah in all regards. The emphasis is on keeping the Mosaic Torah as well as the teaching of the New Covenant Scriptures.

There are several streams that teach this view. This includes the Ephraimite movements – those who believe that Gentiles who have come to faith in Yeshua in some way fulfill the prophecies concerning the re-gathering of the Northern Tribes and their joining with Judah. Among these are”

- Groups who teach the serious error that Gentile believers should be circumcised because they are the literal descendants of the lost tribes.
- Those who believe that all or most Gentile followers of Yeshua are literal physical descendants of the lost tribes, but exempt them from circumcision.
- A milder form (that I consider very wrong but not as seriously wrong as the above groups) espouses a seriously wrong emphasis that Gentile believers include both lost tribes people and those saved from all nations. It is added that this group has a prophetic Ephraimite (Northern Tribes) character because of the number of literal Northern Tribes descendants who are part of the Body of the Messiah. The Gentile part of the Body of Believers is said to be Ephraimite even if, as is possible, the great majority are not physical descendants of the lost tribes.

In all of these cases, it is taught that all are called to live the same Torah, with the exception of circumcision. All of these with one voice teach that all followers of Yeshua are called to live a Torah life. Some of these folks are very positive to the Rabbinic heritage and some are very negative. In addition:

- Some teach that Jew and Gentile are both called to live the same Torah (except for circumcision), but who do not hold to any special physical identity of descent from lost tribes etc. As grafted into the Olive tree, it is said, all believers are called to obey the same Scriptures, including the whole Torah. The most forceful proponents of this view are the writers of First Fruits of Zion. Their leading thinker on this point is Tim Hegg.

There are many other lesser lights teaching the “One Law” doctrine in congregations, newsletters, web pages, and books. While we have responded to the Ephraimite doctrine in other writings (and in private dialogue and letters), it should be noted that this paper is not about the Ephraim doctrine, except insofar as Ephraimite teachers espouse the “One Law” doctrine. The best of the “One Law” teachers, such as those associated with First

Fruits of Zion, make many good and important points about the Torah. So it is important to respond to all that is right before correcting what I believe is wrong.

The Continuing Value of the Torah

The best of the “One Law” people present a well formed argument on the value of the Torah. This argument is very similar to classical Reformed (Calvinist) thought. A student of Church history will note that one of the dividing issues between denominations was how they approached the place of Law in their doctrine. Reformed theologians throughout history have put forth the clearest and easiest-to-grasp doctrine of the Law. This doctrine has widely influenced classical Protestant thought, including Methodist, Congregationalist, and even later classical Lutheran thought (though earlier Lutheran thought was much more ambivalent about Law). This teaching goes back to John Calvin’s most important classical formation of the issues, in Book II of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, section 7. Here is a summary of Reformed thought on this subject:

No one can save themselves by their own good works. Salvation is only by the grace of God. When we receive this grace, we receive transforming power which is part of this grace. In so receiving such grace, there is a new inner motive of heart as described in Jeremiah 31:31 and Ezekiel 36:24 ff. whereby we desire to do God’s will from the depths of our being. As a result of this transformation, we now repent and believe.

The will of God is described by his Law, not only as taught in the New Testament, but also as taught in the Torah of Moses, though the New Testament is the greatest exposition of the Law of God. Only by transforming grace are we saved and only by transforming grace can we love. Only by the motive of love can we rightly keep the Torah. Those who teach that we only need to love and can forget the Law of God are considered heretics. Why? Because without the Law to tell us what love looks like, we will fall into sentimental indulgence that will break God’s law. True love is always according to God’s Law. Therefore, the true believer keeps God’s law and the mark of the “saved” is obedience of the Law of God.

This is so well known and emphasized in Reformed, Presbyterian (*Westminster Catechism*) and Puritan thought that it has become an unquestioned heritage. Teachers of Reformed theology note the many passages in the New Testament on these themes such as Matthew 5:17, 18 (that those who are great in the Kingdom teach people to obey the Torah); Romans 3:31 (that faith establishes the Torah); and Romans 8:4 (that the righteous requirement of the Torah is fulfilled in those who walk by the Spirit). In Reformed thought, all of the passages that seem to be contrary to embracing the Torah are interpreted as referring to ceremonial law or to the attempted use of the Torah as a means of attaining righteousness.

In the late 19th Century and the 20th century, Dispensational Theology overturned much of this view in popular Christianity in the United States and even in world missions. It was taught that the Mosaic Law had no claim on the Believer, that it was finished. The Christian was saved by grace and yet may continue to live in sin while yet being assured of heaven. Grace would even cover a life of total sin. Such a life would not be a happy one, and so believers should be exhorted to commitment and holiness. However, the committed disciple would be instructed mostly by the epistles, not Torah and not primarily even the teaching of Yeshua, which is an application of Torah.

Many of today's Dispensationalists have abandoned this severe anti-law position. However, there are still many Christians who are still influenced by this anti-Law orientation. It is reflected in popular Christian speech and is prevalent in much Christian culture. Today it is seen especially among more mystical Charismatics and Pentecostals. It is this anti-law culture that is the setting of the One Law teachings.

Much of the writing of the One Law people is a return to a more sound understanding of the matter of grace and law as taught by Reformation theology. As such themes are forcefully put forth, supported by the many texts that say that law is a standard is part of the Kingdom of God and that those in gross violation will not enter it, One Law people win adherents by putting forth a much sounder theology that is more parallel to classic Reformation theology. In reading page after page of One Law writings, one trained in Reformation theology as myself, comes away with much agreement. So why are One Law people not simply conservative Presbyterians?

Significantly, most of Reformed Theology was replacement theology. In this view, the Church, the Body of Believers, has replaced Israel in the plan of God. There were wonderful exceptions to this supersessionism, mostly among the Puritans (see Ian Murray, *The Puritan Hope*).

Classical Reformed thought divided the law into the ceremonial and the moral-social. The latter law is a guide for personal living and for guiding the laws and practices of society. The ceremonial law related only to the practices of ancient Israel and included the Temple sacrificial system, circumcision, the Feasts, the Sabbath, purity laws, the priestly tithes, and much more. Therefore, the Church developed its own tradition around the events of the New Testament, some of which are indeed rooted in the ancient Feasts (Resurrection Day and Pentecost), and revolves around the new Temple represented by the Church (I Cor. 3:16). Israel is like all other peoples, except that until they receive Yeshua, they may show special marks of both preservation and judgment. Such theology is alive and well today.

One Law people who look at Reformed theology will immediately see its glaring deficiency. If Israel has not been replaced, but is still the covenant people of God, than the division of the Torah into an easy moral/ceremonial dyad can not be sustained. As the covenant with Abraham is permanent, then so is circumcision. As the laws of the feasts not only involved sacrifices, but also are the memory of the history of God's grace, deliverance in the life of Israel, and the fulfillment of his promises to Abraham. Because

of these non-sacrificial aspects of the feasts, they must still have validity. In addition, the Sabbath is part of the ten commandments which the Reformed teach as the center of the moral law. Indeed, if this is the case, wouldn't the whole Torah still be valid where it does not depend on the actual engagement in the Temple sacrificial system?

These issues and questions act as a wake-up call to many who have been lulled to sleep in the traditional teaching of their churches. These questions and arguments are common to Messianic Jews and are fully represented in my book *Jewish Roots*.

However, One Law teachers takes another step, a crucial step that I believe separates them from the truth. They argue that since Gentiles are grafted into the Olive Tree of Israel, both Jew and Gentile are now called to keep the same Law (except for circumcision). The Law is said to apply in the same way to both. Gentiles in the Messiah are called to keep the Sabbath, Feasts, food laws, and much else that is not common in Christian practice.

The Exegetical Case for One Law

Most of the case for One Law is taken not of the New Testament Scriptures but from the Hebrew Scriptures. Some New Testament Scriptures are used, such as Matthew 5:17,18, where it is taught, according to One Law exegetes, that the least of the commandments are the responsibility of all. The law is "Holy, just and good" according to Romans 7, so why, it is asked would all not want to do what is just and good? Yet, again the key verse is from Exodus 12.48,49.

"An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the LORD's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised, then he may take part like one born in the land. Nor uncircumcised male may eat of it. The same law applies to the native-born and to the alien living among you."

The alien (*ger* in Hebrew) is viewed as the prototype of the Gentile who comes to the Messiah (or what the Northern tribes became). There are several Torah references to the same law applying to native born and alien. (Note the same language applied in Leviticus 24:22 with regard to putting both Israelites and aliens to death for murder. Numbers 15:16 is applied to those who seek to bring an offering to the Tabernacle.)

One Law people have one major hurdle to overcome in completing their argument. It is that the New Testament puts forth passages that seem to say that Gentiles are *not* called to keep the same application of Torah. It is those several passages which seemed to the Reformers to say that the ceremonial Law is past, having been fulfilled in Yeshua. Dispensationalists say that the whole Torah was ended in the coming of the Messiah. I will look at additional passages later with greater depth. At this point, certain passages should be mentioned.

Acts 15 specifically declares that nothing should be required of the Gentiles but four laws, three of them related to blood. Then Galatians 5 warns Gentiles to not receive

circumcision or they will be required to keep the whole Torah. *The clear implication here is that without circumcision, Gentiles are not required to keep the whole Torah.* Another way to say this is that Gentiles are not **covenantally responsible** to keep the whole Torah. Colossians 2 warns that no one is to judge the Colossians with regard to Sabbath, New Moons or Feasts. These are a shadow, the substance is Messiah. In Galatians 4:10 Paul writes that he fears that he labored over the Galatians Gentile congregations in vein because they were now observing “special days, months, seasons and years.”

One Law interpreters argue that these passages are only rebuking those who want to keep the Law from wrong motives, as a means of salvation. This indeed does seem to be the context of Acts 15, where the circumcision party taught that unless a man was circumcised he could not be saved. However, the decision in Acts 15 is more wide ranging than just the matter of entry requirements for salvation. .

The One Law teacher says that the issue in the book of Galatians is requirements for entry into the Kingdom of God -- after acceptance and entry, everyone should be disciplined to keep the whole Torah as the way of a blessed life. However, *Paul never qualifies his argument this way.* He never writes anything like “for a disciplined life of blessing, you all need to keep the whole Torah.” If that had been his view, he had plenty of opportunity to make it clear. If that had been his view, the context would seem to *demand* that he express it. But he did not, either in Galatians or elsewhere.

The One Law person responds to this in two ways. First, Paul is not speaking to this issue. In addition, it is said that Acts 15 does speak to it when it says, “Moses is read every week in the Synagogue.” This is taken to mean that while Gentiles have easy entry requirements, simply faith in the Messiah, over time by connecting to the reading of Moses, they will more and more adopt the same common Torah life. The process of discipleship by studying Moses in the Synagogue would make this very certain.

So this is the gist of the argument. It is repeated again and again, in article after article. All the passages on the goodness of the Law (Torah, the instruction of God) throughout the Bible are used to support this point of view.

That the Torah Applies Differently to Jews and Gentiles

To my knowledge, there are three basic exegetical positions represented in the world of Bible scholars.

- The Law has been done away for both Jews and Gentiles believers (As in Classical Dispensational Theology).
- Only the moral, non-ceremonial law remains for all (as in Classical Reformed Theology).

- The Law is applied in its universal sense to all, but that parts of the Law have specific reference to Jewish people and are rightly applied to them today. This application of Law in a unique way to Jewish people includes Jewish followers of Yeshua.

Adherents to each of these views, while disagreeing with one another, are often able to dialogue about their views with mutual respect. **However, to my knowledge, there is not one believing Bible scholar who is respected and received by his peers who holds to the views of the “One Law” movements.**

While I do not believe that intellect should be worshipped, believing Bible scholars as individuals and as a group have invested their lives in studying the Scriptures. Normally, their study is in the original languages, with all the nuances that can be lost in translation or to those who have only a superficial knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. The Bible in translation is a sure guide for life. Individuals in congregational settings can gain the wisdom and direction needed to live godly lives.

But doctrinal innovation that has no support among recognized scholars is deeply suspect. Those who make such innovations are, in a sense, declaring themselves to be scholars. They claim to have found something new in major doctrine in the Scriptures. Yet, they do not submit their findings to input from scholars. Such are the teachers of the One Law doctrine.

On the other hand, there is a growing group of renowned Bible scholars who hold to the third position, that the Law is not done away with but applies differently to Jews and Gentiles. This group includes Peter Tompson in *Paul and the Jewish Law*, Markus Bockmuehl of Cambridge University in *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches*, the late John Howard Yoder (a Mennonite who taught at Notre Dame) in *The Politics of Jesus*, and *The Jewish Christian Schism Revisited*, R. Kendall Soulen of Wesley Theological Seminary (Soulen is a Methodist) in *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, Mark Nanos in *The Mystery of Romans*, and finally Michael Wyschogrod (an Orthodox Jew) whose article on Paul in *Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation* who is also quoted extensively in Soulen, the late W. D. Davies in *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, Donald Harrink in *Paul Among the Post Liberals* and finally many supporters who are too numerous. In this regard we should mention Krister Stendhal of Harvard. Even though the ideas of these men were considered new and sometimes even radical in scholarly circles, they have received a fair hearing, their books have been published by scholarly publishers, and they have won many adherents.

Since this is the position I espoused in my *Jewish Roots*, and David Stern in *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, I am so very pleased to see growing scholarly support for these conclusions from over 20 years ago. I would urge One Law people to seriously pursue these writings as part of an in-depth dialogue.

Responding to the Doctrine

In responding to the interpretation of Exodus 12: 48, 49, I have in mind the passages that teach on the responsibilities of the alien, the *ger*, in the midst of Israel. The theologians listed above who deal with these verses come to the *opposite* conclusion of the One Law teachers. Indeed, the Torah itself, according to Bochmuel, makes allowance for aliens to live in the midst of Israel without requiring them to live the same live in all regards. Some laws apply in the same way to them. Some do not.

For example, in Leviticus 24:22 the context is that both the alien and the native Israelite are under the same prohibition against murder and both are to suffer the same penalty. If an alien decides to bring a free will offering, he is to offer it in the same way as the native born. However, there is no requirement for him to bring a free will offering. Other mandated offerings are not assigned to the alien. The Exodus 12:28,29 passage itself actually leads us to the opposite conclusion of the One Law teachers.. A more careful reading in the context of the text shows that there are two types of aliens in the land. There are those who fully join Israel's covenant. They want to keep the Passover in all regards. To do so, they must be circumcised. Then there is one law for them and for the Israelite with regard to the Passover and much else. However, an alien was allowed to live in the midst of Israel as long as they accepted the requirements of not undercutting life in the land of Israel, submitted to the governing authorities, did not spread idolatry, and did not commit crimes punishable by the civil magistrates. Jacob Milgram argues that the *ger* was only required to keep the negative prohibitions but not the positive performative ones (see Anchor Bible on Leviticus, Vol. 1 pp. 1055-56).

This is not the only interpretation of the sojourner or *ger*. Indeed, one could say that the *ger* is generally a sojourner that seeks to join Israel for life and does fully join the community in all regards and keeps the whole Torah including circumcision. In addition, there is the *nekhr* or stranger who is a temporary alien. The latter is required to live in a way that does not undermine society. It is unclear how long the latter was able to stay within Israel. The Torah does not tell us. Because the *ger* can also be interpreted as one who chooses to join the Jewish community he is subject to the rights and responsibilities of the community. However, with the coming of the New Covenant and the clear demarcation between the circumcised and those not circumcised, there is again a difference of application. Since the New Testament teachers specifically on the relationship of Jew and Gentile in the new reality of the Body of Believers, we can not simply transfer the practices of pre-Yeshua times into the New Covenant period without further reapplication on the basis of New Covenant teaching.

By the time of Yeshua, an interpretative tradition was in its early stages concerning the requirements for Gentiles to be accepted by God. This later became formulated in terms of the Noahide laws, laws binding on all people and rooted in the covenant with Noah. Bochmuehl and Harrink argue that the concept was much earlier and already pervasive at the time of Paul. Already in Judaism a distinction was made between universal requirements and Torah that was the particular responsibility of Jews. Indeed, according to some groups of Pharisees, maintaining these universal requirements was the necessary

pre-requisite for fellowship with Jews. Since first among these is the prohibition against idolatry, one can see that such fellowship with Gentiles would be very limited, since Gentiles at that time were characteristically idolaters.

That the Law has different applications for different groups is inherent in the Torah itself. For example, purity laws and requirements for priests were different than purity laws for other Israelites. There were laws for men and laws for women, laws for widows, children, etc. The Torah is not one homogenous whole, but filled with diversity. Only as each group fulfilled its own destiny in Torah (men and women, for example) could there be true unity in the nation. Likewise, unity of Jew and Gentile does not require one set of commandments for both, but each fulfilling its own identity and destiny (1 Cor. 7:17-20).

Matthew 5:17 and 18 teaches obedience to the least of the commandments. This was addressed to Jews. It was in a context of the Temple still standing and at a time when it was possible to keep the whole Torah literally to a much greater degree than now. However, to teach men to obey the least of the commandments assumes that they keep them according to the intent of the commandment. It does not mean that Gentiles should be taught to keep all the details of law given to Israelites. The Law has to be applied in the New Covenant order as is fitting for Jews and Gentiles. To teach everyone to obey Torah is to teach them to obey it *only as it is applicable to specific groups*. In the very passages which follow, Yeshua shows us that there are universal dimensions of Torah that apply to everyone, but they need to be kept in a much more intense and passionate way.

Why do we see the teaching of Yeshua as emphasizing universal Torah? First because his teaching and commandments are found in Gospels known to be addressed to Gentiles, especially Mark and Luke. **This is the general consensus of almost all scholars on the audience of address for these books.** In addition, Yeshua mostly teaches on those parts of Torah that said to be universal both in accordance with Jewish teaching on universal law in the New Testament period and the early Mishnaic period. In addition, this was the understanding of the early Church. Just a perusal of the Gospel material shows little space given to the primary concerns of the Pharisees concerning Torah's purity laws. From how to pray, to loving enemies, for lust in the heart to hatred in the heart, Yeshua teaches Torah that applies to all. There are a few passages that are specifically addressed to primary Pharisaic Jewish concerns such as hand washing and other purity laws (Matthew 15, Mark 7) The many other debates about what produces uncleanness are left unaddressed. How immersions in water are to be done, how women during their period are to be treated are left unaddressed. Also unaddressed are the specifics of land and harvest rules, leaving crops for the poor, the Sabbatical legislation on leaving fields fallow, specific requirements for adequately keeping feasts according to traditions and much more. The passages on the Sabbath mostly deal with wrong legalistic applications and assert his Lordship over the Sabbath and his right to determine the *halakhah* on its application. Aside from Matthew, it is clear that the Gospels are geared to a universal audience. However, even Matthew, while affirming the applicability of the Torah to the least of the commandments, also reflects Yeshua's concern to address universal Torah. There is also no witness in the early Church literature of any of the Apostles ever

teaching Gentiles to keep the whole Torah, but only the Torah that was perceived as universal. This was understood to be primarily the teaching of Yeshua and the epistles which were mostly addressed to churches mostly made up of Gentiles.

How Perfect is the Mosaic Legislation?

Many of the One Law people speak as if the Mosaic legislation is the perfect manifestation of the Law. Though the Torah is fully inspired by God it does not in every case give us the ideal, but sometimes accommodates the weakness of the age.

In Matthew 19, Yeshua shows us that this accommodation was involved in the permission to divorce, which is severely restricted in the New Covenant Community since the Kingdom and its power are now available to us (Deut. 24:1 ff.). While sometimes the Torah reflects the ideal standard of God, sometimes it does not. So while the Law will be preserved and not a jot or a tittle will pass away, this does not mean it is in all regards God's perfect standard. The sacrificial cultus is not to be restored with the same details in the Mosaic Torah. If it is restored, it will follow the different provisions of Ezekiel which fit the New Covenant (Ezekiel 40-48). Furthermore, we can readily see many more passages which are not to be enjoined as God's ideal. God's ideal is rather found in the interpretation of Torah in the Sermon on the Mount. Here are a few examples of Torah laws that do not fit the ideal of teaching of the New Covenant.

- All laws governing slavery are incompatible with New Covenant fellowship and faith. The New Testament allows for slavery, by calling masters to treat their slaves as equals created in the image of God, and as brothers. By the end of the first century slavery was almost obsolete among believers. It was perceived as incompatible with the spirit of the teaching of Yeshua and the reality of the brotherhood of believers.
- All laws governing polygamy are incompatible with New Covenant fellowship and faith. In the Torah it is expected that the brother will take to wife his deceased brother's widow and raise up a seed that will be counted as his. Polygamy is allowed (see Deuteronomy 25:5-10). The teaching of Yeshua is one woman for one man as long as they both live (Matthew 19:4-7, I Timothy 3:2) The monogamy rule for elders is the ideal law for all. Among all believing communities after the time of Yeshua, monogamy became the rule.
- A law concerning in Leviticus 19:30 states that, "If a man sleeps with a woman who is a slave girl promised to another man, but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed. The man, however, must bring a ram to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for a guilt offering to the LORD;" Note that if the woman is not a slave, then the penalty would be death. Do we believe that this level of inequality is the ideal law?"

- In Deuteronomy 22:28 following we read that if a man rapes a virgin who is not pledged to be married, he is to pay the girl's father fifty shekels of silver. "He must marry her because he violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives." While there is something to be said for this law, would any today, in the spirit of New Covenant order and ethics, see it as a standard to give his daughter as wife to one who raped her?
- Note again that the widow must marry within the boundaries of her husband's family? Do we believe this to be a New Covenant standard? (Deut. 25:5)

This is why I speak of New Covenant Torah, the teaching of Yeshua and the Apostles providing our foundation of Torah and then applying the Torah of Moses as is fitting to the New Covenant order. I call this New Covenant *halakhah*.

The Evidence of the Passages of the New Covenant Scriptures

Significant passages that speak to Gentile practice in the New Covenant provide clear evidence that the One Law view is not correct. Let us first look at Acts 15.

The context of Acts 15 is the assertion by some believers that a man must be circumcised in order to be saved. ***The conclusion of the Apostles and Elders (Acts 15:20), under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was to lay upon the Gentiles only four requirements:***

- not engage in fornication
- to avoid idolatry
- to avoid eating blood
- to avoid eating that which is strangled.

As has been noted, these are very similar to the Noahide laws. This is not meant to imply that Gentiles are free to murder, steal, break contracts, lie and violate oaths and dishonor their parents. The passage assumes a universal morality which is also taught in the letters of Paul, Peter, and James (who were present that day) and John. As Romans 2 notes, Gentiles can also perceive the law of God, even without the revelation of Moses, and are responsible for many standards that are also expressed in the Bible. For example, classic Roman moral law taught the ideal of monogamous marriage, honoring parents, honesty and much more. The essential addition of New Covenant ethics is to follow the sacrificial example of Yeshua. It was a new order of the ethic of love. Acts 15 clearly addresses issues beyond basic morality, issues that would not have been readily perceived in the Roman world. These added requirements were also necessary for there to be Jewish-Gentile fellowship. Some of these themes are well developed by Bockmuehl's articles on natural law, universal law and more. Acts 15 emphasizes reverence for blood (which is reverence for life), a standard that goes back to Noah. Meat strangled has far too much blood in it. Fornication was rejected by Roman ethicists, but an exception was made for cult prostitution. Idolatry was indeed the way of life in the Roman world and was part of good citizenship. **In this command the Gentile believer had to make a radical break with Roman culture.**

One Law teachers make a big point of James's statement that "Moses has been read every week in the Synagogue" (Acts 15:21). This is taken to imply that Gentile believers will, in the normal course of their new life, attend synagogue and adopt more and more of the whole Torah. Since Torah life is good and beautiful, why wouldn't he? On this basis, the verse is further taken an exhortation to further learning and the adoption of the whole Torah. **Thus, a simple and somewhat ambiguous statement is transformed into a strong and unambiguous exhortation.**

What is apparently overlooked is that, while these words were spoken in the council, *they were not included in the apostolic letter that was circulated among the congregations.* If this is seen as such a crucial exhortation to Gentiles, it is amazing indeed that the apostles, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, did not think it important enough to put in their letter!

There are several other interpretations of this passage, none of which imply Gentile responsibility to keep the whole Torah. One is that Moses has been read every week, and yet this did *not* lead to the obedience of the Gentiles. The Gospel is accomplishing this. Another interpretation is that the requirements for Jewish and Gentile fellowship have been taught in the Synagogue and fosters similar standards (this is the interpretation of Mark Nanos). In any case, it is weak and even dangerous to base Gentile obedience to Torah on words that the Holy Spirit chose not to include in directions to the Gentile churches, words that are subject to a variety of interpretations.

It is most telling that in all the epistles to congregations there is not a single direct word commanding Gentiles to adopt the whole Torah, and no direct statement of hope that they will eventually adopt a fully Torah-keeping life in the same way as the Jews. **There is no word of such an exhortation or even mild encouragement throughout the whole book of Acts, which is written in part to show the relationship of Jewish-Gentile fellowship!**

Even were we to say that Gentiles are free to embrace Torah, the calendar of Israel, and more, there is no word that there is any *covenant responsibility* for Gentiles to do so. Acts 21 reinforces this same impression. Here James tells Paul of the rumor that he teaches Jews who embrace Yeshua to forsake Torah. This of course is not true. So Paul demonstrates this to be a false rumor by his Temple involvement. James reminds Paul that for Gentiles a liberty was given with regard to the full weight of Torah. ***Neither Paul or James gives the slightest hint that they were encouraging full Torah observance of Gentiles.*** Paul could have said, "Not only do I not teach Jews to forsake Moses, but though it is not an entrance requirement, I do encourage Gentiles to embrace more and more of the Torah as they come to understand it and appreciate it." While this is the emphasis of the One Law teachers, there is not one word in the New Testament which explicitly encourages growth in keeping the whole Torah for Gentiles.

I believe that Galatians 5 is a watershed passage. Here Paul in the strongest terms exhorts Gentiles not to receive circumcision. Some One Law teachers do not want to

preclude a legitimate option of circumcision, so they add the proviso that it should not be done for the wrong reasons. ***Yet this is not in the text.*** For a Gentile to be circumcised seems to violate the witness to fully available Kingdom reality in Yeshua. There has been a change with the coming of the New Covenant Kingdom whereby the fullness of what is available is offered without the necessity of circumcision for Gentiles. This was not the case in the Mosaic order. However, Paul then gives one declaration which is truly amazing. “Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.” (v.3). I do not know how it is legitimately possible to escape the weight of this verse and its implications. ***If one is circumcised, he is obligated to keep the whole law. Thus, if one is not circumcised, he is not obligated to obey the whole law. Paul’s statement would make no sense if Gentiles were already obligated to keep the whole law!*** Again there is no qualification here. Paul does not write, “of course, I would like you to be able to keep the whole law as I do, but this should be gradual as you understand and not by the requirement that would come from circumcision.” This is exactly the kind of qualification that Paul does make for celibacy in I Cor. 7. ***But he does not make it here concerning the law.***

Paul does not say that a Gentile may not join in a feast or a Sabbath (which seems an open possibility in Romans 14). While not joining in the covenant of Passover, Gentile proselytes of the gate already celebrated Sabbath and Feasts with the Jewish community in the time before Yeshua. ***However, there is no place in the New Covenant where this is made a covenant responsibility.*** Indeed, we can say furthermore that circumcision itself is the greatest boundary marker for the continued unique calling of the Jewish people and the continuing distinction in the unity-in-diversity between Jew and Gentile. I do believe that there are Gentiles who are primarily called to live with and among Jews thus to take upon themselves a Jewish life. At the end of this article I will say a few words about the openness of the boundaries of practice.

In Romans 14, concerning matters of purity laws and special days, there is again no exhortation to appropriate Torah as one learns, but simply to be convinced in conscience concerning ones one life pattern. This portion of Romans is understood by all interpreters to be written to Gentiles, not Jews.

Another Scripture is 1 Cor. 5:7), where we are told to purge out the old leaven of malice and bitterness and to celebrate the feast in purity of heart. The context shows this to probably be a metaphor. That the feast would have been understood seems clear. Yet, its interjection in such a way when there is not context of the Feast in general being discussed, probably shows its metaphorical character. This is not to say that Gentiles were precluded from freely choosing to celebrate and enjoy the Feast.

Lastly, let us look at Colossians 2. Here we are told that no one is to be allowed to judge the Colossians for practices concerning food or drink, a new moon or a Sabbath or special feast days. These are a shadow; the substance is the Messiah. The clear and plain meaning of the text is that no one is to judge them as to whether or not they observe these days. In an Oscar-winning performance, this has been twisted by some One Law teachers

to mean that Paul is exhorting the Colossians to keep these practices so well that no one would be able to judge them!

This freedom concerning feasts led the early Church to adopt altered versions of the Sabbath and some of the Calendar of Judaism. The Calendar was applied with a focus on the events of the life and work of Yeshua. Hence Passover was kept not as a reminder of the deliverance from Egypt but as a feast of Yeshua's death and resurrection. Pentecost was kept as the feast of the Holy Spirit. For some reason Yom Kippur with all its special imagery fitting the Messiah did not become part of the Church year. Yet there is nothing in the New Testament that precluded the Church from developing its own tradition which primarily revolved around the life of Yeshua. However, the Church did freely adopt and incorporate more of a Jewish pattern than is usually acknowledged.

We conclude this section on exegesis by noting that there is no word in the New Testament that exhorts Gentiles to circumcision, feasts, purity laws, Sabbaths, fast days and more, but that these practices were, and continue to be, central to Judaism. Judaism also developed its own attendant traditions for these practices, some which I evaluate as wonderful and some as very unhelpful.

One of the serious problems with One Law interpretation is that it seems to ignore the awesome change that has come through the death and resurrection of Yeshua. The eschatological Kingdom has come and Gentiles are invited into full spiritual participation without the pre-Yeshua requirements. One can not simply apply the Mosaic Law as was the case before Yeshua. The spiritual equality of Jew and uncircumcised Gentile in the Messiah is a monumental change. **This means that the Gentile in the New Covenant does not have the same status as the uncircumcised alien and indeed that he has a better place than the pre-Yeshua circumcised because he that is least in the Kingdom is greater (in privilege) than John the Immerser. He is even raised with him and spiritually present with Him at the throne of God. (Eph. 2:5) There is no higher status.**

The Danger of Usurping Israel's Irrevocable Calling

How are Jewish people, even those in Yeshua, called to be distinct in the New Covenant order? The New Testament does not spell this out, most likely because the parameters have already been set in the Torah. However, there is a continued distinct calling of Jews to Jewish life. Even those who are Jewish but enemies of the Gospel are said to have an "irrevocable calling" (Rom. 11:29). Some of this unique calling is found in Romans 9:1-3, where it is noted that certain communal privileges would forever belong to the Jewish heritage. We are an elect nation; the Word of God was given to us; the covenants are given to us and made through us; and even the ancestry of the Messiah is from us. In the very word "covenants" comes the fact of a unique culture that belongs to us, part of which is a divinely revealed Torah-based culture. While there is no barrier to those who want to celebrate the Feasts, and as the Church has partly appropriated the meaning of the Feasts in Yeshua (Passover-Resurrection and Pentecost), in other senses the Feasts have unique Jewish content.

For example, Israel's Calendar revolves around the cycle of life that is rooted in the Promised land. Land, language, and culture are thus part of the unique calling and heritage of Israel. Therefore the Passover not only recalls our national deliverance from Egypt and then the Exodus, but is also rooted in the time of the land of Israel producing its first fruits. It is the very beginning of the agricultural year. So also with the first harvest of *Shavuot* and the great harvest of *Sukkot*. Then Jewish tradition adds to Shavuot the memory of the giving of the Torah (not explicitly commanded as the time of memory in the Bible). Dwelling in a *Sukkah* is a reminder of our desert wanderings; it is also a reminder of the agricultural harvest in Israel. Dwelling in a *Sukkah* fits the agricultural climate of Israel, not more severe southern or northern climates. The Feasts thus preserve both particularistic features that are specific to Jewish promise, life and calling while also reflecting universal meanings. Thus Passover comes to universal meaning in Yeshua and the idea of a universal Exodus. *Sukkot* looks toward the ultimate Kingdom and all nations will celebrate it (Zechariah 14). The New Covenant Scriptures provide universal meanings for the Feasts. Yet it never commands Gentiles to keep them in this age. On the other hand there are specific Jewish meanings in the Feasts that are unique to Israel's own identity. My surmise is that in the Age to Come, when the Feasts are universally celebrated, Jewish people will still more emphasize those aspects that are unique to the Jewish experience as well as universal meanings, and the rest of the world will stress the universal meanings.

However, without carefully making these distinctions, One Law people often have nothing to say concerning the unique calling and destiny of the Jewish people. In addition, some even say that Israel is now defined by those who have faith in Yeshua all who are called to keep the whole Torah, not those who are Jewish by birth and do not believe in Yeshua. Note the following quote as a case in point.

“According to Paul, Messiah alone is adequate for believers to be reckoned with the people of God, and there is only one people of God. Like it or not, the advancement of the Kingdom of Heaven has broadened the definition of Israel . . . According to Paul, the criteria defining Israel is not physical descent, nor circumcision; nor Torah observance –it is faith.” (First Fruits of Zion Magazine , Messiah Magazine p. 28, Shemot, 2004)

This is really a return to replacement theology (supercessionism) with a new twist. Again the new and true Israel is said to replace the old Israel of the flesh, but the new twist is that this new and true Israel is to keep the Torah. The arguments are the same as in replacement theology but with the addition of all keeping the Torah.

Here are features of that unique calling (see my booklet, **The Irrevocable Calling**). It includes.

1. Covenant responsibility for the whole Torah, though even here it has to be applied as fitting to the New Covenant and an age without Temple or sacrifice. Circumcision is a unique marker of this call.

2. Unless there is a special call to pioneer missions, Jewish life is life connected to the Jewish community and thrives within that community. We are part of our people.
3. Rooting in our language and land. This includes those who are called to live in the Diaspora. This includes connecting to the good aspects of the culture of Israel today.
4. Affirming the truth that our continued existence as a unique people is a uniquely important witness to the reality of God and his promises. It is a clearly implied command of the Bible that we are not to undercut the survival of our people. We are to not to assimilate, but are commanded to be Jewish.
5. We are to play a prophetic role in the last days by being that Jewish contingent that witnesses to Yeshua before our people and before the nations.
6. We are to welcome Yeshua with the words “Baruch haba b’shem Adonai,” “Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.” This must precede his coming.
7. We are to affirm and be part of the post Biblical heritage of our people where it is good and beautiful as part of our unique peoplehood. This cultural heritage is ours by the grace and goodness of God. We are indeed to shed that which is wrong and forgive those ancestors who were mistaken. However, Jewish life is not adequately expressed when 2000 years of cultural development is ignored.
8. Our prophetic priestly role is expressed when we engage in Biblical celebrations for they call into being the events of the last days and the redemption of the World.

A significant article could be written on each one of these points.

There is one additional aspect of One Law teaching that is very confusing. This teaching advocates that Gentiles keep Biblical law, such as the feasts. One would expect that they would look into the Bible to see how to celebrate those feasts. Instead, they resort to post-Biblical Jewish practices. When One Law people practice a Passover Seder, for example, they often follow the order of traditional Jewish practice: four cups of wine, salt water, hand washings, Elijah’s chair and much more. A Sukkah will often look like a traditional Sukkah. The art work in their publications is Jewish in flavor.

Since the feasts can no longer be celebrated according to the Bible, since the Temple no longer stands, the Jewish community developed distinct ways of celebrating the feasts in the synagogue and at home. Instead of being truly “Biblical,” the One Law teachers appropriate various aspects of these Jewish traditions. Unfortunately, there is very little in their literature that shows their followers the distinction between what is Biblical and what is from Jewish tradition.

Even more, the One Law teachers often use non-Biblical Jewish symbols. One interesting article on Biblical law was illustrated by a photograph of a family of four, the

father and sun wearing *kippot* (Jewish skullcaps) and looking at a Menorah. Neither *kippot* nor the Menorah at a Seder are part of Biblical Torah. Another article in the same magazine mentioned Jewish liturgical directions, not found in the Bible, as somehow applying to “us,” that is the Gentile readers of the magazine.

This mixture of post-Biblical symbols is found throughout One Law literature. All this gives the impression that One Law teachers either do not understand the difference between Biblical and post-Biblical practices or they are trying to appropriate Jewish identity for themselves

It is good for Gentile believers to understand the practice of the Jewish people and to appreciate Jewish culture. Yet when one combines One Law interpretation with the appropriation of extra-Biblical Jewish practice, and then models this as an example for everyone, we are very close to replacement theology and practice. When one is called especially to the Jewish people, then one takes up Jewish life. However, for someone in Podunk non-Jewish country town U. S. A. to be keeping Torah and Jewish culture is strange indeed.

Some One Law people (some in the Ephraimite Movement) even go so far as to usurp the unique promise of the Land of Israel by claiming that, as the ten lost tribes, believers now have right to live in the Land of Israel and deserve the portion of the ten tribes.

The Anti-Christian Dimension of Some One Law Teachers

It is true that a contextual understanding of the Bible corrects some of the historical interpretation and practice of the Church. Yet some One Law teachers go further, asserting that the Church is pagan and claiming that theirs is the only true interpretation of the Bible and also only one true form of the Church.

I have asked One Law people in what ways the Church is pagan. The first response is usually to Roman Catholic practice. While I understand the defense given by Roman Catholics of their practices, of course I do not as a Messianic Jew approve of the use of statues, saints and the role of Mary in Catholic theology. Yet, I would also note that there is a vast difference between the Roman Catholic Church and classic Paganism. Classic paganism addresses god's who are to be worshipped and appeased as powers in their own right. Augustine in his brilliant refutation of classic paganism, never the less honored Mary and the saints in ways that would be troubling to us. His **The City of God** places all powers under the sovereignty of God whom alone is to be worshipped.

However, most One Law teachers believe that Protestant Evangelicals are also paganized. They attempt to substantiate this by pointing out that Protestants do not keep the Biblical Feasts, and now celebrate pagan feasts. Let us examine this claim.

“The big three” are the substitution of Sunday worship for the Sabbath; Easter for Passover, and Christmas in and of itself. I am precluding the ultimate universality of the Sabbath in the Age to Come. I do note, however, a number of facts.

In the Torah, the Sabbath is specifically rooted not only in the creation account in Genesis, but also in Israel’s unique experience of slavery in Egypt and the liberty that God has provided. It is said to be a memorial of the Exodus, which was specifically a deliverance of Israel as a nation. The location of the command among the 10 commandments is not a sufficient case for universality of the command of Sabbath for this age. The 10 commandments is a covenant specifically with Israel, though mostly including universal commands. It begins with the very specific covenant context, “I am the Lord your God that brought you out of the land of Egypt.” As a covenant with Israel, the 10 commandments may indeed include a command specific to Israel as well as universal commands. Meridith Kline in his several books (eg. **Treaty of the Great King, The Structure of Biblical Authority**) himself notes that the Sabbath is the covenant sign of the relationship of God and Israel, as noted in Exodus 31. This is its purpose in the midst of the ten. Why is there no explicit N. T. command concerning the Sabbath day for Gentiles, while the other nine are all reflected in the N. T. ? However, my primary question is, does worship on Sunday and even keeping it as a day of rest make Christian pagan at worst or as practicing something pagan at best. Let us look at the origins of worship on Sunday.

Before the end of the first century, the Roman Empire did not mark time by weeks. For workers and slaves to be required to keep the Seventh Day Sabbath would have been impossible. To call for this would have meant terrible hardship. At the end of the first century the Roman Empire adopted the seven day week. As part of this there was a Roman empire recognition of Sunday as a weekly feast to the Sun. In the second century, Christians took this as an opportunity to give witness, not to the worship of the Sun but to the One who is the light of the world and rose from the dead on the first day of the week, *Yom Rishon*. **I can not too strongly emphasize that the meaning of a symbol or practice is its defined meaning by those who use it, not some supposed parallel or rooting from ancient times.** There is no evidence in the early Church of anything pagan being done connected to worship on the first day. It was all about Yeshua. Where the Church made its big mistake was in its later replacement theology. This included the claim that Sunday had replaced Sabbath and that keeping the seventh day was wrong. This was a terrible mistake and is now even repudiated by the **New Catholic Catechism**. Yet the observance of Sunday as the day of resurrection is a Christian tradition that is not pagan. In my view, the response of the Church was reasonable, a good witness in its culture, and not pagan.

The question of Easter is much more ambiguous than claimed. Sometimes those who have some knowledge of the Church fathers point to the great controversy between the Eastern and Western sections of the Church at the end of the second century known as the *Quarodociman* Controversy (from the latin for 14 referring to the 14th of Nisan).

According to Polycrates, Bishop of Antioch, the early Church celebrated both the death and resurrection of Yeshua from the fourteenth to the fifteenth of Nisan according to the Jewish lunar calendar. He does not mention keeping the day of First Fruits during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as the day of Resurrection. In the West, Victor, the Bishop of Rome, also appealed to apostolic tradition and sought to establish a different practice for celebrating the death of Yeshua on a Friday and his resurrection as always on First Fruits. He also argued for a solar calendar base for dating and celebrating resurrection Sunday so there would be annual time accuracy. We reject the anti-Jewish dimensions in the decision of the later councils that codified Victor's view. We object to the idea that it is important to keep the same exact time every year according to a solar calendar, rather than adding a month every several years to bring the lunar calendar into right alignment to the seasons of the Sun.

However, we should note that the New Testament never commands the lunar calendar for Gentiles. Both Polycrates and Victor argued for traditions not enjoined by the New Covenant Scriptures. **However, even with the adoption of the solar calendar, the day of the resurrection celebrated by the Church is usually, but not always, the same day as the Feast First Fruits on the Jewish calendar,** which is the day of the Resurrection of Yeshua. Yeshua died shortly before the day of Firstfruits. This was also before Passover day. It may have been a Wednesday, Thursday or a Friday depending on the interpretation of the three days in the earth like Jonah was in the whale. Part days can count as a day in ancient reckoning. At that time, the Western Church kept the tradition that Yeshua died on the Friday. To call this pagan is a terrible stretch! The **meanings** given to these days is fully Biblical. In addition, the season itself overlaps the Jewish calendar to a significant degree. Yes, by all means, let's eliminate practices like bunnies and eggs. However, this was not the tradition of the Church of the early centuries.

Lastly, we address the issue of Christmas. First of all, none other than John Fischer, one of Messianic Judaism's leading thinkers, argues with great persuasion that Yeshua was born on December 25, and that is the reason for celebrating his birth on that day. His argument is well presented and persuasive. I am not persuaded. On the other hand, it is not clear that because December 25 was a day of pagan celebration that there could not also be at the same time a memory of God's intervention in the coming of Yeshua. We can only say that something is pagan if its practices are pagan. Do Christians celebrate Christmas with pagan meanings and magic? Certainly ancient pagan meanings are preserved and recognized during this season to this day in the larger world to this day. .

While I am not a proponent of John Fischer's view, I wonder if there is not a different explanation as the Church's memory of December 25th as the day of the birth of Yeshua. It seems interesting that a Jewish celebration called Hanukah also begins on the 25th of a winter month during the same basic time of the year. It even sometimes coincides with Hanukah.

My view is that the evidence is that Yeshua was born on *Sukkot*. If Joseph and Miriam went up to Jerusalem during the season of a feast so as to both celebrate the feast and to register in the Roman census, the lack of space in the inns would make sense. In addition

the timing of his birth can be calculated according to the account of the pregnancy and birth of John the Immerser. To detail this here is too involved for our purposes. However, many have done so. Basically, we know from the Talmud the month when Zachariah, the father of John, would have served in the Temple according to his priestly division. We then can know when his wife became pregnant. We can also take into account when the pregnant Miriam came to visit Elizabeth, the mother of John. The text tells us how far along Elizabeth was and also by implication Miriam. The birth during *Sukkot* seems probable though not certain.

We should also note that Jewish tradition did not keep birthday celebrations. However, they did remember the time of miraculous events. If Yeshua was born during the season of *Sukkot*, then He would have been conceived nine months earlier during *Hanukah* season. This would have been the time of the angelic appearance as well. The miracle accounts of Matthew and Luke which emphasize this conception would have been associated with Chanukah. Chanukah sometimes overlaps Christmas. This would have been the season of the miracle of his incarnation. In a Jewish context, the miracle of the incarnation took place at conception. It was connected to the appearance of the angel, the Holy Spirit coming upon Miriam and making her pregnant. So it would seem that *Chanukah* would be the right season to celebrate the Incarnation and the reading of the stories of Matthew and Luke.

How probable is the above explanation? I do not know. It is as feasible and as probable as any other reason, for by the middle of the second century Christians really believed that Yeshua was born on December 25th. I would think that there is some explanation besides simply claiming that they adopted pagan practice. **At any rate the meaning of this day is to be defined by those who tell us what they mean in celebrating it. The meaning of a symbol is its use.** I put forth this explanation only to show that there are other besides claiming that the Church just adopted pagan practices.

So, what of Christmas trees? While the ancient pagans did use evergreens to decorate their homes, there is no evidence that they used a tree. In addition, the use of the Christmas tree is not an historic use of the Church. We only have very sporadic evidence of the use of trees before the 19th century. There are stories that Luther spontaneously brought an evergreen into his house for Christmas. The tree can not be considered the same as the tree made into an idol (carved) and brought into the home (see Jeremiah 10:3 ff.) Rather it appears that the tree was mostly a 19th century development to foster a festive atmosphere. It became connected to commercialization through the efforts of New York merchants. Some Christians have used the tree as a symbol of Yeshua as the tree of life, for an evergreen is a symbol of life. It is also remembered that He died on the tree. While the use of evergreens is documented in pagan practice, I have never met a Christian who uses a Christmas tree in a pagan way. The material excesses of a secularized Christmas seem, to me, far more contaminating than the use of a tree.

However, we must judge Christmas and its symbols is according to their use and the intention of those who celebrate, not according to uncertain connections with pagan practices. The charge that the Church is pagan because it celebrates the birth of Yeshua

at Christmas or because Christians have Christmas trees is very far from meeting any reasonable standard of proof. This type of argument that holds that a practice is to be dismissed because of its connection to ancient parallels is known as the genetic fallacy in studies of logic.

Why is this important? It is because it is part of One Law argument to not only assert that all need to keep the whole Law, but that *such a life is superior to other believers*. As part of demonstrating that superiority in positively keeping the Torah, the *One Law people sometimes find it necessary to denigrate the traditions of Christian followers of Yeshua*. I think that the denigration of the Church as pagan is wrong. This does not mean that I do not seek to correct Western and Hellenistic influences in the Church by a more accurate understanding of the Bible. However this usually has to do with contextual meanings for Bible interpretation. It also has to do with questioning some of the Greek influences on the idea of God as impassible, timeless, and abstract. I think that the One Law corrections of the Church are somewhat superficial and do not get to the heart of where real correction could be helpful.

I believe that the disunity caused by claiming that the Church is pagan is alarming and damaging. I believe that One Law teachers, though they may personally be humble, are promoting an arrogant and divisive doctrine. On a New Testament basis, the Church was free to develop its own traditions to enrich its understanding and memory of Biblical themes and events. One such tradition is the Church year built around events in the Life of Yeshua. Many Christians today are simply unaware of these rich traditions that have been developed in the history of the Church.

I do believe that the Church needs restoration, especially its reliance on the Greek philosophical conceptions of God in more abstract than personal terms. Also, I would emphasize the concreteness of salvation in history and God's working among the nations. There is an over stress on going to heaven as summing up God's purposes. Yet this is not a matter of paganism, but of adjusting a deficient biblical world view. I would emphasize the corporate meanings of salvation in Scripture over against the overly individualistic conceptions in modern Evangelical Protestantism. The whole issue of how the Church and Israel are to be related is central to this matter of correction.

Conclusion

Jew and Gentile are one with the larger Body. Jew and Gentile are one in our midst as well. However, the Messianic congregation is *not* the ideal form of congregational life which supercedes all the forms of the larger Church. It is meant as a rich form of congregational life for Jewish believers in Yeshua and those Gentiles who have a primary Jewish calling. In addition, I would add that Jewry and Israel are synonymous terms in the Bible. We must eschew that replacement theology implications of those who use Israel as a primary synonym for the Church.

Although I hold that there are many aspects of Torah that are universal, there are also aspects of Torah that are distinct to the Jewish people. The basic distinction between Jew

and Gentile is maintained in the New Covenant. Jews are called to covenant responsibilities that relate to the whole Torah. Gentiles in Yeshua are not so called, but only to the responsibility of universal Torah as typified in the teaching of Yeshua and the epistles of the New Covenant Scriptures.

This distinction is not an impermeable wall but an open border in many respects. Christians are free to remember the Feasts where they are so led by the Spirit. A Gentile believer may have an exceptional life call to the Jewish people and would then take upon himself a Jewish life.

APPENDIX I

TEN LOST TRIBES FOUND

By Asher Intrater

The kingdom of Israel reached its height at the time of David and Solomon, approximately 1,000 years before the time of Yeshua. During the reign of Solomon's son, Rehobam, the northern ten tribes of Israel split away from Judah and Benjamin. Thus the kingdom was divided into the northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribes of Judah.

This division became the object of the Messianic hope to be reunited by the future Messiah (Ezekiel 37:12ff). There is also the symbolic sense that the northern tribes represent the international church, while the tribe of Judah represents the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. However, those two viewpoints are prophetic and symbolic, not historical and genealogical.

The northern tribes of Israel were taken into captivity by the Assyrians in the eighth century b.c. and the southern tribes of Judah were taken into captivity during the sixth century. The Bible records that the captivity of Judah returned to the land of Israel during the fifth century b.c.

Since there was no major description of the restoration of the northern tribes, much speculation and curiosity have arisen over the years as to the question, "Where are the lost ten tribes?"

An interesting, yet dangerous, trend is that many Christian cult groups claim to be actual descendants of the ten northern tribes. This ranges from groups in Japan to Native Americans. There are some elements in Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses that make similar claims. It has even affected parts of the Christian Zionist movement.

The truth of the matter is that there are no lost ten tribes. During the time of the kingdom division and the captivities, a certain percentage of each of the northern tribes came down and took up residence in the area of Judah. After that time the name Judah or the Jews referred not only to the specific tribe of Judah but also to the Benjaminites, the Levites and the remnant of all the northern tribes.

There are no lost ten tribes. All the tribes of Israel are included in what we call today the Jewish people. There are seven basic biblical evidences that prove this position.

Israel Remnant in Judah

The book of II Chronicles records many times that the members of the northern tribes immigrated to Judah after the kingdom division. This happened from the very moment of the division.

II Chronicles 10:16-17 says, "So all Israel departed to their tents. But Rehobam reigned over THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WHO DWELT IN THE CITIES OF JUDAH."

It couldn't be stated more clearly that there were members of the Israeli tribes living in the territory of Judah. II Chronicles 11:3 states that Rehobam was the king not only of Judah but to ALL Israel living IN Judah and Benjamin. II Chronicles 11: 16-17 states that members of ALL the tribes of Israel who were loyal to God came down to Jerusalem and strengthened the kingdom of Judah.

II Chronicles 15:9 tells us that during the revival of King Assa that there were "great numbers from Israel" who came over to Judah. II Chronicles 24:5 speaks of members gathered from all the tribes of Israel. II Chronicles 30:21 and 25 speak of the children of the Israelite tribes who came to Judah during the time of King Hezekiah. II Chronicles 31:6 speaks of members of the tribes of Ephraim, Menassah, Zebulun, and Asher coming to Jerusalem. II Chronicles 30:18 also mentions the tribe of Issachar. II Chronicles 34:6 adds to that list members of the tribes Simeon and Naphtali. II Chronicles 34:9 states clearly that there were members of "ALL THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL" who were living in Jerusalem after the time of the Assyrian captivity. II Chronicles 35:3 mentions again that there were members of "all Israel" who were part of Judah.

Captivity Restored (Ezra and Nehemiah)

After the Babylonian captivity, the nation of Israel was restored under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. In those books are extensive genealogical records. The fact that there were careful genealogical records proves that not only were the northern Israelites part of the restoration, but that they kept records of their families and they knew which tribe they were from.

Ezra 2:2 starts the records of "the number of the men of the people of ISRAEL." Ezra 2:59 states that people had specific genealogical records not only to which of the northern tribes they were a part of, but even as to

which household: "identify their father's house of their genealogy, whether they were of Israel."

Those who had records but were not perfectly documented were disqualified and had to wait for supernatural verification by the Urim and Thumin (should they ever arise). This proves how meticulous and well documented were the great majority of the family records (Ezra 2:62-63). Ezra 2:70 again speaks of "all" Israel dwelling in Judah after the restoration of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Ezra 6:16 and 21 speaks specifically of "the children of Israel who had returned from the captivity." Ezra 7:7, 9:1, 10:1 and 10:25 speak of the problem that the Israelites had with inter-marriage.

Nehemiah 7:7-73 repeat the genealogy of the Israelite tribes that were recorded in Ezra 2. Nehemiah 9:2, 11:3 and 11:20 speak of "the rest of Israel in all the cities of Judah." Nehemiah 13:3 speaks of separating Gentiles so as not to confuse the genealogical records of Israel.

The Testimony of Anna (Luke 2)

In Luke 2:36 the prophetess Anna is listed as coming from the tribe of Asher, one of the most northern and least populated tribes of Israel. In other words, we have a clear statement in the New Testament that people who were considered Jews in the time of Jesus included people from the northern ten tribes of Israel, and that they had genealogical documentation as to which tribe they were from.

How could the tribe of Asher, for instance, be "lost" from 700 years before Jesus, if Anna knew her descendancy from Asher during the time of the New Testament?

Yeshua and the Apostles (Gospels and Acts)

Yeshua ministered all over the land of Israel. He addressed the Jewish people there. In all of His speeches, it is assumed that He is speaking to all the descendants of Israel. Yeshua never mentioned once the possibility that there was some other group or some lost tribe of Israel floating around somewhere. In preaching to the Jews of the first century, Yeshua said that He was called to go to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6).

In the same way, the apostles addressed the crowds of Jews in the first century with the assumption that they were all the descendants of Israel. In Acts 2:22 Peter turns to the "Jews" living in Jerusalem and refers to them as "men of Israel." Peter concludes his sermon addressing his

crowd s "ALL the house of Israel" (Acts 2:36). In other words, in the eyes of Peter, the Jewish people in the first century included all the tribes of Israel. Peter continued this way of addressing the people, as all the house of Israel, in his other speeches (Acts 3:12, 4:8, 4:10, 4:27, 5:21, 5:31, 5:35, 10:36).

Paul also addressed the Jews of the first century as "men of Israel" (Acts 13:16). He continued to address the Jews as Israelites throughout his messages (Acts 13:23-24, Acts 21:28, Acts 28:20).

The twelve disciples were seen to be future leaders to "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:29).

The Twelve Tribes of James

The letter of James is addressed to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" James 1:1. He is not speaking of some lost tribes, but rather to the scattered audience of Jewish believers in Jesus of the first century.

The same argument is true as we look at the letter to the Hebrews. The group here called "Hebrews" are not some tribe of Japanese or Native Americans, but rather the Jewish people of the first century.

The Remnant of Israel (Romans 9-11)

This argument has specific importance when we look to the promises of the restoration of the believing remnant of Israel, spoken of in the book of Romans, chapter 9 to 11. Here Paul expresses his prayer for the children of Israel to be saved (Romans 9:1-4, 10:1-4). This remnant that is to be restored is the biblical remnant of Israel that fulfills the prophecies. They are the same people who rejected Yeshua in the first century. It was not some lost tribe that rejected Him, but rather the Jews living in Israel at that time.

Paul states that God has not forsaken the people of Israel (Romans 11:1). There is a remnant of Israel by grace (Romans 11:5). What Israel did not achieve, the elect have received (Romans 11:7). The falling away of Israel has meant the salvation of the Gentile nations (Romans 11:11). Their restoration will be the resurrection of the dead (Romans 11:12, 15).

The whole drama off Romans 9-11 only makes sense if it is speaking about the people we know today as the Jewish people. If someone thinks that this is referring to Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, or to Christian Zionists, or to some other native people group, the whole meaning of the passage is lost. That viewpoint would destroy the promises of God to

Israel, the purpose of evangelism in Israel, and the meaning of reconciliation between Israel and the church in the end times.

The Cultic View

It is not a coincidence that so many cults have come to the conclusion that they are one of the "lost" ten tribes of Israel. That viewpoint is confusing to their members and incorrect according to scriptures. That theology is dangerous and deceptive as we try to understand the prophecies of the restoration of Israel leading up to the second coming of Messiah Yeshua (Jesus).

APPENDIX II

Key Facts about the Ger

Here are some Scriptures about the requirements and provisions for the *ger*:
Equal status of the Israelite and the Ger:

Lev 19:34 "The *ger* who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were *gerim* in the land of Egypt.

Num 15:15-16 '... there shall be one statute for you and for the *ger*... as you are, so shall the *ger* be before the LORD. One teaching and one judgment shall be for you and for the *ger* who sojourns among you.'

Deut 26:11 "...and you and the Levite and the *ger* shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given."

Various provisions of Torah that apply also to the Ger:

Exod 12:19 The *ger*, too, must not eat leaven during Unleavened Bread

Exod 20:10 The *ger*, too, must keep the Sabbath.

Lev 16:29 The *ger*, too, must fast on Yom Kippur.

Lev 17:12 No one, including the *ger*, may eat blood

Num 35:15 The cities of refuge are also for the *ger*.

Deut 24:17 You shall not pervert the judgment of a **ger** or orphan

Special provisions for the Ger (apparently because of their economic vulnerability)

Lev 23:22 The corners and gleanings are for the needy and the **ger**."

Lev 25:35 You are to sustain the poor, including the ger."

Deut 10:18-19 "He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the **ger** by giving him food and clothing. So show your love for the **ger**, for you were gerim in the land of Egypt."

Deut 14:21 "You shall not eat anything which dies of itself. You may give it to the **ger**. 28 (The third-year tithe belongs to 29 the Levite and the **ger**, the orphan and the widow)."

The children of Gerim:

Deut 23: 3 "No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD to the tenth generation 8 "The sons of the third generation [that is, the grandchildren] of an Edomite or an Egyptian may enter the assembly of the LORD."

Ezek 47:22 "And it will come about that you shall divide it by lot for an inheritance among yourselves and among the **gerim** who stay in your midst, who bring forth sons in your midst. And they shall be to you as the native-born among the sons of Israel; they shall be allotted an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel."

Another key Scripture:

Num 9: 14 [See also Exod. 12:48] 'And **when** a **ger** dwells among you and observes the Passover to the LORD, according to the statute of the Passover and according to its ordinance, so he shall do; you shall have one statute, both for the alien and for the native of the land.'"

In this verse, the Hebrew "**ki**" [meaning "if, when, because"] more sense as **when** than as **if**. In light of the radical inclusion of the **ger** in the covenantal commandments and provisions, it is unthinkable that the ger would be free not to observe the Passover, and therefore become exempt from circumcision. Since all of Torah relates to "the **gerim** among us," I can't see how they would be exempt from Torah related to Passover. If so, this verse basically says that when a male begins to dwell in the covenant community, and is thus considered a **ger**, circumcision must take place before the first Passover comes, thus including the **ger** in the covenant and the community.

Key Scriptures:

Exod 12:19 'Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is an *ger* or a native of the land.

Exod 12:43 And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat of it; 44 but every man's slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it. 45 "A sojourner or a hired servant shall not eat of it. 46 "It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it. 47 "All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this. 48 "But if (*ki*) a *ger* sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. 49 "The same law shall apply to the native as to the *stranger* who sojourns among you."

Exod 20:10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your *sojourner* who stays with you.

Lev 16:29 "And this shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble your souls, and not do any work, whether the native, or the *ger* who *sojourns* among you;

Lev 17:12 "Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, 'No person among you may eat blood, nor may any *ger* who sojourns among you eat blood.'... 15 "And when any person eats an animal which dies, or is torn by beasts, whether he is a native or an *ger*, he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening; then he will become clean.

Lev 18:22 'You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination. 23 'Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion... 26 'But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native, nor the *ger* who sojourns among you

Lev 19:34 'The *stranger* who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were *gerim* in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Lev 23:22 'When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor gather the gleanings of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the *ger*. I am the LORD your God.'"

Lev 25:35 'Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a *stranger* or a sojourner, that he may live with you.

Num 9:14 'And if (*ki*)an *ger* sojourns among you and observes the Passover to the LORD, according to the statute of the Passover and according to its ordinance, so he shall do; you shall have one statute, both for the *ger* and for the native of the land."

Num 15:14 'And if (*ki*) a *ger* sojourns with you, or one who may be among you throughout your generations, and he wishes to make an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the LORD, just as you do, so he shall do. 15 'As for the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the *ger* who sojourns with you, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the *ger* be before the LORD. 16 'There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the *ger* who sojourns with you.'" ... 29 'You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the sons of Israel and for the *ger* who sojourns among them. 30 'But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an *ger*, that one is blaspheming the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from among his people.

Num 35:15 'These six cities shall be for refuge for the sons of Israel, and for the *ger* and for the sojourner among them; that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee there.

Deut 1:16 "Then I charged your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the *ger* who is with him.

Deut 10:18 "He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the *ger* by giving him food and clothing. 19 "So show your love for the *ger*, for you were gerim in the land of Egypt.

Deut 14:21 "You shall not eat anything which dies of itself. You may give it to the *ger* who is in your town, so that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner, for you are a holy people to the LORD your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.... 28 "At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in that year, and shall deposit it in your town. 29 "And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the *ger*, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

Deut 23: 3 "No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD, 4 because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you... 7 "You shall not detest an Edomite, for he is your brother;

you shall not detest an Egyptian, because you were an *ger* in his land. 8 "The sons of the third generation who are born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

Deut 24:17 "You shall not pervert the justice due an *ger* or an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge. 18 "But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and that the LORD your God redeemed you from there ; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing. 19 "When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the *ger*, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 "When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the *ger*, for the orphan, and for the widow. 21 "When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the *ger*, for the orphan, and for the widow.

Deut 26:11 and you and the Levite and the *ger* who is among you shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given you and your household.

Deut 28:43 "The *ger* who is among you shall rise above you higher and higher, but you shall go down lower and lower.

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