

Our Hebrew Roots

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What does the Term “Hebrew Roots” mean?

The term “Hebrew Roots” is becoming a more common phrase. There are ministries that use this term to identify their beliefs. In fact, an entire movement is called the “Hebrew Roots Movement”. But what does this phrase mean? Think of a tree for a moment. The root of a tree is what nourishes the rest of the tree. The root takes in the nutrients and water from the soil to sustain the tree. The Hebrew Roots are the roots of the Church and are what has sustained it for so long. The roots of the church really start with Abraham, who is called the father of our faith (Galatians 3:26-29).

Abraham was the first person in the Bible to be called a Hebrew. The term Hebrew came from one of Abraham’s descendants, Eber (Genesis 10:24). Thus, any person descended from Eber could technically be called a Hebrew. The word Hebrew means “one from a region beyond” or “one who has crossed over to the opposite side”. In terms of our faith, the term Hebrew conveys the meaning of someone who has crossed over to serve God from serving the god of this world, the devil. Abraham did this when He was called from his homeland in southern Turkey. He had no idea where he was going. He simply trusted that the one true God was speaking to Him. He trusted and obeyed.

Abraham’s obedience became a model for all future generations. Abraham did not have a Bible or commandments on tablets of stone, yet God spoke to his son Isaac and said, “Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; Because that **Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws**” (Genesis 26:3-5). The four things listed in these verses “...my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my

laws” are the four components of the Torah or the Law of God. Abraham did not have tablets of stone, yet he obeyed the commandments of God! He became the Father of our faith because his faith and actions worked together (James 2:14-26).

Thus, the term Hebrew roots means getting back to the faith and obedience of our forefather Abraham. We have crossed over from the ways of this world, which is by human effort, into the world of God’s Kingdom, which is faith and obedience to the one True God. This means we must receive the power of God’s Spirit and submit to His Way of Life. The way of Life that Abraham lived was passed down to Issac, Jacob, and then the twelve Patriarchs. Of the twelve Tribes, the tribe of Judah, has held true to the ways of God. The Jewish people have preserved the Word of God for centuries.

Returning to our Hebrew roots also means returning to the Jewishness of Christianity. It is an undeniable fact that the early church was Jewish in nature. In fact, the early church was called a sect of Judaism in Paul’s time. In Acts 24:14, Paul said, “However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of **the Way, which they call a sect**. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets.” Paul was the Apostle sent to the Gentiles (Galatians 1:13-14). Even the Apostle to the Gentiles recognized that Christianity was not to be a separate religion, but a reformation of Judaism! The chief difference between first century Christians (followers of The Way) and Jews were the fact that Christians believed that the Messiah had already come. The Jewish people believed (and still do today) that the Messiah has yet to come.

If Christianity was so close to Judaism that it was considered a sect or group within it, then that means there were practices which made the two virtually inseparable. Getting back to our Hebrew roots is getting back to the way of Life that makes us similar to Judaism. These things will help us to understand the Bible much better. They will deepen our revelation of Jesus and the salvation we have through Him. It is the root or the beginning

of the church. Does this mean that we must follow the oral traditions of the Jewish people? Not necessarily. Where the traditions of Judaism do not conflict with the written word of God, they are good to study and apply. Paul said in Romans 3:1-2, “What does it profit to be a Jew? Much in every way! First of all, to them were given the oracles of God!” The Greek word for oracles in this verse is *ligion*, and it refers to the Commandments spoken in fire on Mount Sinai. Paul is informing the Jews and Gentiles that it is important for us to connect with Judaism because they were given the Commandments of God. In fact, the Jewish people have preserved the Word of God in the face of the worst persecutions in the history of man, such as the holocaust, the persecution of the Romans, Greeks, and Catholic Crusaders!

The believers of the first century were the first people to receive Jesus after His resurrection. They are the root of the church. For the past 1,900 years or so, the devil has used various world influences to squelch our understanding of the New Testament. It has been polluted; only by going back to the beginning will we understand our place at the end of days. As the Lord said, “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10). Unless we understand the beginning of the church, then we will be misguided here at the end of the age.

Because the Jewish people were given the Law of God and have held true to it, they have a culture that has been surrounded with it for thousands of years. This means they have thousands of years of observing the commandments of God. The Jewish people have a culture of the Word of God. It is very similar to our cultural understanding of Walmart. Because it has been engrained in our minds, we understand the term Walmart. We associate it with certain details such as lower prices and many locations. Their understanding of God’s Word is engrained in their culture, and thus gives them a deeper understanding of it.

God's way of life is so alive that it will change how we think, how we worship, what we eat, and even how we spend our money! This is why it was called "The Way" in the 1st century. It is a way of life that changes every aspect of who you are and what you do!

We must remember that Jesus is Jewish. He was Jewish because He was descended from Judah. He was also a Hebrew because the tribes of Israel descend from *Eber*. It is important for us to understand the Jewish things because they please Him. The Father chose to send His Son into a Jewish culture. Therefore, it is not just the Jewish culture; it is **His** culture. We must get back to the roots; they nourish and guide us, even at the end of the Age.

"Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls..." (Jeremiah 6:16)

Hebraic Thought

Before we can talk about the specific way of Life that was taught and lived by the first century church, we must first change the way we think. Most people in the Western world or in any culture with Western influence have been taught to think with a Greek mindset. The problem is that the Bible was not written from a Greek perspective. It was written from a Hebraic perspective, as we discussed in the first chapter. In fact, there is not a single writer of the Bible who was a Greek! They were all Israelites, which means their world perspective and thought patterns are Jewish or Hebraic! In Romans 12:2, Paul wrote, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” There is a pattern of this world we must avoid. The Greek mindset conforms to this pattern. So much of what we believe as Christians and teach has been influenced by Greek culture. This mindset can lead us to false conclusions. Our minds must be transformed to think the way the Lord thinks. Then, the proper actions can manifest!

Thought Pattern #1 that must be transformed: Linear versus Cyclical

The Greek mindset thinks linearly. For instance, someone with the Greek mindset sees things in terms of Event A is followed by Event B, which is followed by Event C, which is followed by Event D, which is followed by Event E, etc. Part of this mindset is that once we are at Event E, then Events A, B, C, and D are over with. They will not occur again. The linear thought method leads people towards believing evolution, where things are progressing and evolving into a higher state than what they were before.

The Hebraic understanding of time is cyclical, meaning that whatever occurs now has already happened before. Solomon worded it best, “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new

thing under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Thus, history is simply a series of cycles repeating themselves. Events A, B, C, and D occur, and then the cycle repeats. These cycles may have different details involved with them, but they are the same events occurring over and over again. The Bible says that God never changes (Mal. 3:6, Hebrews 13:8).

The linear, evolutionary mindset is completely opposed to creation and the Bible. Unfortunately, in America evolution is crammed into our minds from birth. Due to this, we view the Bible from a linear, evolutionary mindset. I want to give you a list of misconceptions people have about the Bible because of the linear, evolutionary mindset.

Many Christians believe that the church replaced Israel. They say this because of the word church being used in the New Testament. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Greek word used for church in the New Testament is *ekklesia*. In the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word *ekklesia* is used to describe ancient Israel. The word *ekklesia* basically means those who are called out or the called out ones. In Acts 7:38, this word is used to describe Israel! Whenever you read the word church in the New Testament, it is a direct reference to Christians being **fellow** citizens in Israel (see Ephesians 2:11-22). Christians are an extension of Israel.

Some people believe the gifts of the Spirit were used in the first century and then faded away in the fourth century. This is another evolutionary, linear mindset. The gifts of the Spirit can even be found in the Old Testament. How can a New Covenant with better promises lack the power of God’s Spirit? The gifts of the Spirit are still alive and in operation today.

It is commonly taught that God the Father created everything, but the Son came to redeemed it. John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-17 plainly state that Jesus created all things. This was done with the Father’s approval. When Jesus came, died and resurrected, it was the Creator dying for the creation.

Sometimes people believe that Christ nailed the Law to the cross in the gospels, changed the Feast days, or that Paul changed the gospel when he went to the Gentiles. These are all evolutionary thought patterns. The commandments and Feasts are found in the Old and New Testaments. In fact, even in the New Heavens and New Earth the whole world will keep the Sabbath (Isaiah 66:22-23). Jesus is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. How could He nail the Law to the cross if He was sacrificed even before the Law was given?

Too many times as Christians we profess that we believe in creation, but we view the Bible from an evolutionary stand point! When we view the Bible from an evolutionary mindset, then we fail to see the same God working the same way throughout history. The same cycles in Genesis we find repeated throughout the Bible because God never changes; His cycles never change either.

Thought Pattern #2 that must be transformed: Abstract Versus Concrete

Greek thought also views things as very abstract. The Greeks used to argue for hours about whether a table was a really table or not. Or, they might argue how we could know whether a horse was really a horse or not. They would argue as to how we could ever really know if something was a table or a horse. A table was viewed in terms of its “tableness”. They would debate about the meaning of love for hours. As you can tell, this kind of thinking is very abstract.

If you ask most people “What is God?” – They will say He is ubiquitous, omniscient, all and knowing. Well, these are qualities of God, but they are abstract terms. Terms like faith become abstract and hard to explain with a Greek mindset.

The Hebraic mindset is very concrete. Things that we might think are abstract, such as love or faith are compared to concrete objects in the visible world. For instance, God is compared to a shepherd (Psalm 23), fortress, or rock (Psalm 18:2). One of the

Hebrew words for faith means to nurse a baby in your arms! By comparing God to these physical items in our world, it helps us to understand God. God is a shepherd in that He will guide us in the way that is best for us. He is a fortress because He will protect us. He is like a rock in that He is solid and dependable.

The danger of thinking abstractly is that important concepts in the Bible are misapplied. For instance, faith in the western world is usually used as a mental acknowledgement. So many times we say we believe something, whether or not our actions line up with what we profess to believe. So many people say that they believe in God, but the actions of so many “Christians” are either slack or opposite the Bible. Faith as an abstract, mental exercise has ruined people’s faith today. The Biblical view of faith is that faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26). Our actions will prove what we really believe. If you believe there is \$100 in your checking account, you will not have a problem writing a check for \$50. If you do not believe the money is there, then you will not write the check. Abstract thinking causes us to have a lack of faith and confidence in God because everything is a mental abstraction. Thus, the Bible is not applied in our daily lives as it should be.

People say that they believe in the gifts of the Spirit, but they never try to operate in them. People say they believe in healing, but they never really pray for themselves or others to be healed. People say that they believe in the Feasts, but never keep them. If we do not practice these things, then we really do not believe in it. Believing in these things is simply a mental thought exercise when we think like a Greek. When we think from the Hebraic perspective, they are real things that we practice **because** we believe them.

Thought Pattern #3 that must be transformed: Form versus Function

The last thought pattern that we need to change is form versus function. In the Greek world, things were viewed by their form or by how they look. As Western believers, we agonize over the smallest details of things. We want things to look just perfect. In

the Hebraic world, things are often viewed from the stand point of function. In other words – “Does it work?” If it works, it is usable. In the Bible, we see God use people who were quite ordinary or even less than ordinary. They often had big problems! Gideon was from the smallest tribe in Israel; Moses and Jeremiah could not speak very well. By outward form, they were the very least – but when it comes to function, they were people who would get the job done. There is nothing wrong to have something beautiful and orderly, for in God is found order. God told Adam and Eve to dress and keep the Garden of Eden. Form has its place in our lives. At the same time, form thinking can destroy our faith.

The issue of Form versus Function often affects our worship. Too many times when we worship, we want to look a certain way. Were our movements perfect? Did we look dignified? You can look flawless worshipping God and never really worship God. Your form can look great, but you can still miss the point. The Pharisees looked great outwardly, but inwardly they were full of dead men’s bones! David worshipped God with all of his heart and even cast some of his clothing off of his body (2 Sam. 6:12-16). It did not look pretty; one of his wives scolded him for the way it looked. To God, David’s worship was beautiful and moved His heart. In fact, David is called a man after God’s own heart. As Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:5, we can be a people “...having a form of godliness but denying its power”. We can be so focused on form that we miss the function of God’s Kingdom to manifest power. That power often manifests in ways that we do not expect or consider!

To really connect to our Hebrew roots, we must change our actions. We can put a *tallit* on, blow a *shofar*, and show up to church on Shabbat and still be mixed up in our doctrine and lives. We must move from evolutionary thinking to cyclical thinking. We must start viewing God from His perspective so that we do not skew His character to other people. When our thinking changes, then our views of the Bible will change, and our lives will conform to His Word.

Worship Symbols and Tools

If our thought patterns have to change, then so does our perspective on how we worship God. There are certain symbols and worship tools that were used by the early church that are not used much today. These worship tools are much like prayer cloths and Bibles that we use on a common basis. They are important because they tie in truths of the Bible into how we worship God. They remind us of things that relate to God and what He has done in our lives. Additionally, they remind us of things to come! Whenever God uses something for His glory, then there is something more we can learn.

Tallit

The first of these worship tools is the *tallit*, also called a prayer shawl. In Numbers 15:37-41, The Lord commanded us to put tassels on the edge of a garment to remind us to keep all of the Lord's commandments and so that we will not go running after other gods. It is to remind us that we are God's people! In ancient times, the *tallit* was worn as an outer garment, similar to how it is today. It might have looked different or had a different form, but the FUNCTION is the same. A tallit today is a garment that is designed to rest on your neck and shoulders; it comes down to about thigh length.

The tassels on the edge of the *tallit* are called the *tzit-tzit*. In Numbers, the Lord commanded the Israelites to interweave a blue cord with these tassels. The blue string is called the *shammesh* string and it represents Jesus Christ, who is the servant of God Almighty. The corner of this garment is called the wing or the *kanaph*. On the wing of the prayer shawl is where the *tzit-tzit* are hung.

The tassels on the end of the prayer shawl are composed of seven white strings and the one blue string. They are tied in five double knots, with four sets of wrappings between them. The first three wrappings are 7, 8, and 11, which total 26. In the Hebrew lan-

guage, Hebrew letters have numerical values. God's name in Hebrew is spelled with four Hebrew letters: Yod, Heh, Vav, Heh. The numerical value of these letters totals 26! The fourth set of wrappings is equivalent to 13, and it is the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word *echad*. Jesus said in Mark 12:29 that, "The first of all the commandments is, **Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord**: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment." This quote comes from Deut. 6:4-5. The first part of this (which I have in bold), is called the *Shema* by the Jewish people. The knots are tied so that YHVH *echad* is spelled in Hebrew. YHVH *echad* means the Lord is one. When a Jewish person looks at the *tzit-tzit* on the end of the *tallit*, they are reminded of the *Shema*.

To take this to a deeper level, the Bible says of Jesus in Rev. 19:16, "And he hath on his **vesture and on his thigh a name written**, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." The Lord will not have a name tattooed on His thigh. The word for vesture here can refer to the prayer shawl. Jesus is coming back on a horse, and He will have his *tallit* on. Since he is sitting, the knotted tassels will rest on his thigh! Since the Lord's name is tied on the *tzit-tzit*, His name will be on His thigh!

There is a story in the Bible that highlights the use of the prayer shawl. In Malachi 4:2, the Bible reads that "...the Son of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings." These verses refer to the Messiah coming with healing in the corner or wing of His *tallit* where the *tzit-tzit* are located. In Luke 8:40-48, the Bible tells us about a woman who had an issue of blood. She spent all her money on doctors to heal her condition, but they did not help her. She touched the edge of Jesus' cloak, and she was healed! In the Greek, it says that she touched his *krapsedon*. This Greek word refers to the coils tied on the end of the *tallit*! This woman knew the prophecy from Malachi! Her healing was a proof that He was the Messiah!

Christ even calls this garment the prayer closet in Matthew 6:6 when he speaks of prayer. They did not have closets in ancient times, so when a person pulled their *tallit* over their head it served as a closed in space where they could pray alone with God. Since it is a holy garment, a tallit should only be worn during a time of prayer, reading the word, worship, or church services. It is not a toy or for show. When I wear my tallit, it feels like the Lord is putting His arms around me. It is a point of contact to help me focus on my Lord.

Shofar

A second worship instrument that ties us to the Hebrew roots is the *shofar* or ram's horn. The origin of the *shofar* comes from the story of Abraham and Isaac on the Mount. This event is called the *Akedah* by the Jewish people. In Genesis 22, God told Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, up on Mount Moriah to sacrifice him. As they are walking along, Isaac notices that there is no animal to sacrifice. He asked his father – "...where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" (verse 7). Abraham looked in the distance and told him that, "My son, God will provide for Himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (verse 8). Just as Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son, the Lord spoke to him and asked him to stop. God wanted to know that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only Son. He did not require the death of his son. In verse 13, Abraham found a ram to offer as the sacrifice. He did not find a lamb. What did Abraham realize? In verse 4, Abraham looked in the distance. When he looked in the distance, he saw Christ. Christ is the Lamb of God (John 1:29)! Jesus spoke of Abraham seeing Him in the gospels (John 8:56).

According to Jewish tradition, the left horn from the ram that Abraham sacrificed was blown on Mount Sinai in Exodus 19 and that the Messiah will blow the right horn at His return! In fact, the Lord said in Zechariah 9:14 that He would blow the *shofar* at His return! Most of the time in the Bible when you read the word trumpet, it is the Hebrew word *shofar*. It is found 72 times in the Old Testament alone! The *shofar* was used for many purposes in the Bible. It was used to call the people up to God in Exodus 19.

It was used in times of war to sound the alarm. In fact, the victories by Joshua and Gideon involved the blowing of the *shofar* (Josh. 6:3-5, Judges 6:33-35). It was used in times of repentance (Joel 2:12-17) and at the celebration of the Feast Days (Psalm 81:3).

There are four blasts that we blow: the *tekiah*, *shevarim*, *teruah*, and *tekiah hagodolah*. The *tekiah* represents the coronation of the King. The *shevarim* was used in times of repentance and sounds like brokenness or repentance. *Teruah* was often used in times of war or alarm. It means to “wake up!” The *Tekiah Hagodolah* is the last, great trump – it is the blast we are looking to hear when the Messiah returns!

When we blow the *shofar*, we are reminding ourselves and bringing to God’s remembrance that we are children of Abraham and that we desire to walk in the faith of Abraham. Because God provided a ram as the provision for the sacrifice, the *shofar* is calling forth God’s provision into our lives.

Hebrew Language

A fourth worship tool to bring us into our Hebrew roots is the use of Hebrew blessings. The use of Hebrew blessings is a vital part of the worship service. Jesus would have spoken Hebrew when He attended synagogue. According to our natural minds, these blessings may seem unnecessary, but they were used by Jesus. We have to learn to worship the way Jesus worshipped. As Paul wrote, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

In the modern Christian world, we ask God to bless everything. The Jewish or Biblical mindset is to bless God for what we have. In Deut. 8:10, the Lord said, “When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.” It is good to repeat the Hebrew blessings for the *tallit*, *shofar*, and even for food after we eat! Most prayer shawls have the blessing sewn into them in Hebrew.

It is good to learn some Hebrew because research over the past few years has shown that the Hebrew language has power in it. As the Bible tells us, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Hebrews 11:3). The Words of God uphold the very creation. The Hebrew language is the language of the Jewish people, and most of the Old Testament was written in it. There is power in using the Hebrew language. I have put three common Hebrew blessings below:

Blessing God for the *tallit*:

Baruch atah adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitvotav v'tzivanu l'hitatef batzitzit.

Blessed are you, Lord my God, King of the Universe, who sanctifies us by your commandments and commands us to wear the fringes.

Blessing God for the *shofar*:

Baruch atah adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitvotav v'tzivanu leeshmoah kol shofar

Blessed are you, Lord my God, King of the Universe, who sanctifies us by your commandments and commands us to blow the *shofar*.

Blessing God after the meal:

Baruch atah adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz. (Amein).

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the Universe who brings forth bread from the earth. (Amen) – You can always add to the end of this “... and has fed us to the full”.

Before we begin the worship music at Hungry Hearts, we speak a blessing to God for the *tallit* and the *shofar*. We also incorporate the Lord’s Prayer in Hebrew (Matthew 6:9-13), Aaronic Blessing (Num. 6:22-27), *Bar’chu* (Blessing God), *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4), *V’ahavta* (Deut. 6:5-9), *Yishtabach* (Praising the Great name of God), and *T’filah* (Psalm 51:15). These prayers are found on the prayer sheets located in each congregation.

After the worship, we have the *Avot*, which is a prayer affirming that we worship the God of our ancestors. We conclude the service with the *Aleinu* and the *Kaddish*. The *Aleinu* reminds us of our duty to praise God and serve Him. We are reminded of our responsibility as a chosen people. The *Kaddish* again affirms the greatness of God and requests that God's Kingdom be established in our lifetime.

Why have these prayers? We start with the Lord's prayer because that is how Jesus taught His disciples to pray. We then move to the Aaronic Blessing so that the blessing of God rests upon us and the service. That is followed by the *Bar'chu*, *Shema* and the *V'ahavta*. These prayers bless the name of God and profess our allegiance to hear and obey Him. We finish with the *Yishtabach* and the *T'filah*, which thank God for His great works and prepare us to praise Him in worship.

These prayers were used in the Second Temple period, which means Jesus said them. These prayers are the Jewish way to properly approach God and reverence Him. Again, we must learn to think Jewish, not Greek. "Let this mind be in you that was in Christ."

The Menorah

The seven-branch menorah is a great worship tool and symbol of our Hebrew roots. In Exodus 25:31-40, God commanded the Israelites to construct a seven branch menorah made of pure gold. It was put in the inner court or the holy place of God's Temple. In Revelation 4:5, we learn that there is a seven-branch menorah in Heaven that represents the seven fold spirit of God, which is found in Isaiah 11:1-3: "The Lord's Rest, Wisdom and Understanding, Counsel and Power, Knowledge, and Fear of the Lord."

Some churches use a model seven branch menorah in their services and light them before each service. A woman lights the menorah as a reminder that the Light of the World came into the world through a woman. It is used as a reverent way to invite the Holy Spirit of God into the services. We also use it as a reminder

that God's Spirit is with us and working among us in the service. When candles are used, you will sometimes notice some burn much faster than others. It is an indication of which aspect of God's Spirit is moving in the service.

There is also a nine-branch menorah used by Jewish people. The nine branch menorah comes from the Hanukkah story. When the Jewish people drove out the Greeks in 165 BC, the Temple of God was in ruins. The Jewish people had to restore it. To do this, they needed oil for the menorah for the entire 8-day cleansing process. They only had a one-day supply, but it lasted the entire 8 days! The Jewish people have a 9 branch menorah to remember this. The nine branch menorah represents the nine gifts of the spirit and the nine fruits of the Spirit.

Star of David

The star of David is a symbol of Judaism that can be found as late as the 7th century BC. It is a simple symbol which involves two interlocking triangles. This symbol also reminds us of God's promise to Abraham that He would be his shield (Gen. 15:1). It is found today on the flag of the nation of Israel as well as the graves of Jewish soldiers. There is some speculation as to the origins of this symbol. Some believe that there were shields used in David's time or another time shaped like this symbol. Others claim that it is a pagan symbol since it has six points. One difference between the Star of David and the six-pointed star of paganism is that the Shield of David sits on one point and has two interlocking triangles. One of the symbols of the early church is a menorah and a fish connected with the star of David.

These worship tools and symbols are extremely important in bringing us back to our Hebrew roots. When we use them, we are calling forth promises and power that they represent. We are remembering how God used these tools in the past with the expectation He will manifest the same thing in our times!

It is worshipping God the Father in a way that He understands and connects with since His son worshipped Him the same way.

The Way

As we reviewed in the first chapter, the early church was called “The Way”. One reason for this was due to “the way” in which they lived. When our thoughts change, our worship changes, then our lifestyle changes as well. There are certain aspects of the first century Christian church that we have lost.

The first of these is *Shabbat* (Hebrew word for Sabbath). The Sabbath is a weekly celebration from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. It is a time for us to rest from doing common work, such as the work from our jobs or normal household chores. God asks us to refrain from these activities to focus for 24 hours on holy work – the gospel of Jesus Christ. This would include praying, reading the word, fellowshiping with believers, teaching, praying for other people, family time, and carrying out our Kingdom assignments. The body, mind, emotions and spirit need rest from the rigors of our daily lives. It’s easy to say – “I can do that any time.” Most people who say this don’t. We should always focus on God. We have natural activities we must take care of. God told us to work six days, and then rest on the seventh. The point of not working on Sabbath is so that we spend dedicated, undivided time with Him. It is a weekly appointment to meet with our Savior. There is a tremendous spiritual and physical refreshing available on this day. The Sabbath is only 14.2% of our week – it will change your life to dedicate this time to the Lord.

Friday night is a great way to get the family together and have some time focusing on God. Throughout the week, the kids are running around and the parents are tending to business. Sabbath is a time to slow down and bring everyone together. There is a short ceremony called an *Erev Shabbat* ceremony. It literally means “the evening of the Sabbath.” In this ceremony, you spend time blessing your children, spouse, and enter into God’s Sabbath rest. Too many times, we curse our children. The Jewish people have more Nobel peace prize winners than any other people on earth. Why is this? They bless their children on Sabbath. They take the

time to rest. They honor what they know. Friday night should be the best meal for your family. It is a special time when we meet with each other to meet with our God. Wouldn't it be nice to spend more time with your family? The *Erev Shabbat* service is a powerful way to bring the family together to focus on the Lord. You can download the Erev Shabbat service from our website—www.hungryheartsministry.com. Just go to the “Free Resources” page and download it.

The second important aspect of the Way of life celebrated by early believers is the Feasts of the Lord. In Leviticus 23, there are nine feasts listed. One of them, the Sabbath, is a weekly feast. The others are annual feasts. They are as follows: Passover, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, the First Day of Tabernacles, and the Eighth Day of Tabernacles. All of these days are annual Sabbaths except the Passover. Passover is a Feast day, but not a Sabbath. These are days that reflect the mighty working of God's power to sanctify Israel as a holy nation unto God. They also prophesy the mighty working of God's power to save humanity through Jesus Christ. Jesus is called our Passover Lamb (I Cor. 5:7). Pentecost is when the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was poured out in great power (Acts 2). Tabernacles prophesies the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

There is a special anointing poured out on these days just as there was in the past. When we celebrate them, our faith is empowered. The Sabbath and Feasts are getting into God's sacred rhythm. When we celebrate them, we understand more about the times we live in than we did before. In the Kingdom of God and the New Heavens and the New Earth, everyone will keep these Feasts (see Isaiah 66:22-23, Zech. 14:16-19). We will teach other people in the Kingdom of God how to celebrate them.

A third aspect of the Hebraic lifestyle is the Hebrew diet. In Leviticus 11, God lays out a series of animals that are clean or unclean. Some animals were made for us to eat and others were not made for us to eat. In modern Christianity, most people are

taught to eat whatever they want. We think that Jesus, Paul, and Peter did away with this distinction. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The interesting thing is that the animals in Leviticus 11 still have all the characteristics listed in that chapter! This means they are still applicable today. Paul said in 2 Cor. 6:17, “Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” There are tremendous spiritual and physical benefits to obeying the dietary laws. They will protect us from unnecessary physical diseases and spiritual afflictions.

A fourth aspect of the Hebraic lifestyle is Tithing. The Jewish people in the time of Christ kept three tithes – One for the Levite, the second for celebrating the Feasts, and the third in the 3rd and 6th year of a seven year cycle for the poor. Josephus records this, and it explains why tithe is used in the plural sense in the Bible (see Deut. 12, Luke 18:12, and Hebrews 7:6 [King James Version]). Now, we teach that the first two are still very much applicable in America. In America, we have far more than 10% of our income taken every year for social welfare programs that serve the same purpose as third tithe. Self-employed people pay 15% of their income every single year for social security and Medicare. To this end, we promote the keeping of the first two tithes in America. Believers in countries without welfare programs should keep the third tithe.

In the New Covenant, the first tithe is to be used for the preaching of the gospel. The second tithe, which many Christians are unfamiliar with, is to be saved up and used during the Feast Days. In Deut. 14:22-27, this tithe is explained as something we should use at the Festival times to buy what we like. Too many times in America we operate off of a martyrdom complex. The Lord wants us to take care of our needs as well. We should help the poorer brethren in the church to keep the Feasts and those overseas (Nehemiah 8:10). The purpose of second tithe is so that we show up joyful in His presence at this Feast. The Lord said to buy what we want with it. As you practice this, the items you buy with second tithe will have memories tied to the Lord’s Holy Days. It is another way for God’s imprint to be found in our lives.

A fifth aspect of Hebraic lifestyle is having the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The early believers taught about and believed in being filled with God's Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will receive an even greater revelation of the Sabbath, Feast Days, dietary laws, and tithing. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a necessary aspect of every believer's life. God will show us how to properly walk out His Word and empower us with gifts, fruits, and a calling in Him. The first century church was a place of miracles. People were raised from the dead, healed, prophecies were given, and God moved mightily. It was a place of divine guidance and divine intervention. The infilling of God's Spirit empowers us to walk in the miraculous.

The last aspect of the Hebraic lifestyle is praise and worship. Today, the church is marred with worship that is based on form. Too often, it is rigid and programmed by men. It has form, but lacks function and power. In an earlier chapter, we discussed the worship of David. David was not concerned with the way other people thought about His worship; he just gave God his heart-felt adoration. The first century church was a place of vibrant worship. Today, we have spectator church. We watch other people sing and we have dance teams. It is not wrong to have a choir or a dance team. The point I am making is that the early church was participatory. All believers participated in worship of God.

In I Cor. 14:26, Paul wrote, "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." During worship, the Corinthian believers were all receiving something from God, and they wanted to participate in worship. They did not let someone else do all the worshipping for them. The Corinthians had a problem with order, and Paul had to straighten this situation out. Nevertheless, this verse shows us the lively environment of their worship and how alive ours needs to be today.

There are other aspects that are extremely important to the Way of life practiced by first century Christians, such as sexual purity and the cleanliness laws. God even has an entire chapter, Leviticus 18, discussing this very subject. If we are going to be one with the Lord in Spirit, then we must keep the Temple of our body pure (I Cor. 3:15-16, 6:15-20).

I have been living this way of life since 2007. I have never had a bad Sabbath or Feast Day. I have been sick less during this period than any other. I have never been so joyful about my relationship with God than I am now! My understanding of the Word has grown by leaps and bounds. While these subjects are wonderful to talk about and teach on, the greatest benefit and revelation comes when we live them. It is the Way of Life taught by Jesus and lived by the early disciples.

Let us return to our Hebrew Roots.

Meet the Author

Kelly McDonald Jr. is an ordained Evangelist at Hungry Hearts Ministries in Jackson, TN. For 21 years, Kelly attended Trinity Baptist Church in Bemis, TN, where he was saved in 1992. While at Trinity, a small independent Baptist church, Kelly learned boldness for the Kingdom of God and that being a Christian is an all or nothing experience. In June 2006, Kelly was called to his first ministry, going door to door in the Bemis community and inviting people to church. In September 2006, Kelly was called to begin a Christian men's group at his then college, Lambuth University. In February 2007, Kelly was called to preach. Less than a month later, he became introduced to Hungry Hearts Ministries.

Since becoming a member of Hungry Hearts, Kelly has taken on many roles to further the ministry's work, from going door-to-door to pass out booklets, preaching, administering the prison ministry, teaching Bible Studies, and starting churches. Due to his service in the ministry, he was ordained a Deacon during the Feast of Pentecost on May 31st, 2009. His spiritual growth and desire to serve God led to his ordination as an Evangelist during the Feast of Pentecost on May 25th, 2012.

Kelly has written for a local Christian magazine, *The Christian to Christian Connection*, the international Sabbatarian magazine, *The Sabbath Sentinel*, and the regional magazine, *The Good News*. He currently writes for and serves as the Editor for the Ministry's magazine, *Pursuit*. Kelly has written 9 books and 21 booklets on various Bible topics. Kelly graduated *summa cum laude* from Lambuth University in Jackson, TN in 2009. He earned a Bachelor of Science with a double major in Political Science and Sociology with a minor in Legal Studies. Kelly has been preaching since 2007 and is available to speak at your church upon request.

The term “Hebrew Roots” is becoming a more common phrase. There are ministries that use this term to identify their beliefs. In fact, an entire movement is called the “Hebrew Roots Movement”. But what does this phrase mean? Hebrew Roots refers to getting back to the way of life lived and taught by the early disciples. It involves changing how we think, how we live, and how we worship God. It is the Way of life taught and lived by Jesus Himself! Learn more about your Hebrew Roots!



Kelly McDonald, Jr. is an ordained Evangelist at Hungry Hearts Ministries in Jackson, TN. Kelly writes for the international Sabbatarian magazine, *The Sabbath Sentinel*. He also writes and serves as the Editor for the ministry’s magazine, *Pursuit*. He has written 40 books and booklets on pursuing Jesus Christ. He has been preaching since 2007 and is available to speak at your church upon request.