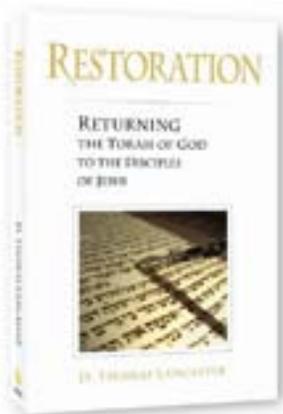


“OUR JOURNEY AWAY FROM TORAH”

(THE TRIP THEY DIDN’T TEACH YOU ABOUT IN SUNDAY SCHOOL)



This portion of Ch 2 quoted from D. Thomas Lancaster's book "Restoration" deals mostly with the first 500 years of early Church history. Something to keep in mind is that thousands of Jews (including many of the priests) became believers and followers of their Messiah; Yeshua; Jesus the Christ. Act 6:7 "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith". According to Romans 11 that cultivated "Olive Tree of God's Eternal Promise", (alive and doing well) is the one into which Gentiles and repentant Jews alike are still being grafted as they come to faith in Jesus. That was the position of the first century Church that should be upheld today. As you ponder this material consider why and how did the "Christian Church" become so distanced from our Hebrew Roots?



THE GOSPEL IN EXILE

The Jewish people have lived in exile since the age of the Apostles. So has the Gospel.

Like the Jewish people, the Gospel began in the land of Israel. Like the Jewish people, the Gospel spread out into every nation during times of great persecution. Like the Jewish people, the Gospel now resides among the nations of the *Diaspora*. It is as if the Gospel is in exile because, like the Jewish people, it has been removed from its context and disconnected from its points of origin. We Gentile Christians have in some ways misunderstood and misapplied the Gospel because we have been ignorant of the Jewish origin and Torah context of the Gospel.

These years of exile have been productive for both the Jewish people and the Gospel. Like the Jewish people in exile, the Gospel has flourished. Like the Jewish people in exile, it has entered every nation and every culture on the globe. Like the Jewish people in exile, the Gospel has impacted the entire world.

But the time is high for the exile to come to an end.

Moses foresaw a time of restoration. He foresaw a time when the people of Israel would return from exile and turn back to the commandments of God. "And you shall again obey the Lord, and observe all His commandments which I command you today." (Deuteronomy 30:8) One component of that restoration is certainly a return to the Gospel of Messiah. Now, at the culmination of the ages, Jews are returning to the land. They are returning to the Torah. In a similar way, they are returning to the Gospel, and the Gospel itself is returning from exile. New Testament scholars are returning the Gospel to its Torah context and reconnecting it with its Jewish origins. Let me explain what I mean. In the days of the Apostles, Christianity was not yet a separate religion from Judaism. An honest reading of the New Testament from a biblical-Jewish perspective makes it clear that the first century church never thought of herself as separate and excluded from Judaism. Rather, she considered herself as part of the whole of Israel. She never imagined herself as replacing Judaism. She might have conceived of herself as a reform within Judaism, but not as a separate entity.

The writings of the Apostles assume the believers to be a sect within the larger religion of Judaism. Jesus was actually a Jewish teacher of Torah. His Hebrew name-that is, His real name-was Yeshua. He kept the Torah, taught the Torah, and lived by the Torah. He taught His disciples to keep the Torah in imitation of Him. He argued with the teachers of other sects of Judaism. He denounced the Sadducees, rebuked the Pharisees and brought correction to errant teachings, but He did not institute a new religion, nor did He cancel the Torah. Instead, He sought to bring restoration to the ancient faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He diligently sought after the lost sheep of Israel-those who had turned away from Torah. He affirmed the words of Moses and brought clarification regarding the proper observance of God's Law. His followers, the Apostles and the believers also remained within the parameters of normative,

first-century Jewish expression. They met daily in the Temple. They congregated in synagogues. They proclaimed the Scriptures of Israel. They kept the biblical festivals, the Sabbaths, the dietary laws and the whole of Torah as best they were able.

When non-Jews began to enter the faith through the ministry of Paul of Tarsus, they too congregated in synagogues and embraced the standards of biblical Judaism. They understood themselves to be “grafted in”³ to Israel and made citizens of the larger “commonwealth of Israel.”⁴ They were allowed certain dispensations. Ritual conversion through circumcision was not required of them. Neither were they required to forsake their ethnic identity and ‘become Jewish.’ Yet their faith was the faith of Israel, placed in the Messiah of Israel, and they henceforth practiced the religion of Israel. But things were changing.

The inclusion of Gentiles in the big tent of Judaism was unpopular. Jewish authorities in local synagogues pressured the non-Jews to undergo formal conversion. So did many of the Jewish believers. In his epistles, Paul argued vociferously for the right of non-Jews to be recognized as “fellow heirs” with Israel.⁵

At the end of the book of Acts, we see a picture of the Yeshua movement still in the cradle of Judaism, still a sect within it. It is about the year 65 AD, Paul was a prisoner in the city of Rome and ministering to the believers there. Within two years, Paul went to meet the Master when Nero the Emperor had him beheaded. Nero began an open persecution against the believers, blaming them for the burning of Rome. A short time later, Peter too found martyrdom in Rome when Nero had him crucified. Nero then added to his infamy by launching a massive military campaign against the Jewish state. He sent the dreaded Tenth Legion, under the famous General Vespasian, to put down the revolt in Judea. Suddenly, Jews were regarded as enemies of the state.

After Nero died and Vespasian was made emperor, Vespasian’s son Titus carried on the war by bringing the Roman army against Jerusalem. Our brothers and sisters in Jerusalem heeded the words of the Master. He had forewarned them, saying:

When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. (Luke 21:20-22)

The armies came and the believers fled. The Roman legions destroyed the city of Jerusalem and burned the Temple. The Jewish believers in Judea and Jerusalem either fled east across the Jordan River or were carried off into captivity and sold as slaves along with their countrymen. In one sense, the Gospel went into exile with them, scattered among the nations.

SEPERATING FROM JUDAISM

The Jewish War gave rise to the politics of anti-Semitism. Imagine a Gentile believer living in the Roman colony of Philippi, attending a Jewish worship service on the Jewish day of worship and keeping Jewish rituals when suddenly his nation goes to war with the Jews. Previously he might have been known simply as ‘Tony the Believer from Philippi.’ Subsequent to the revolt his neighbors began to refer to him as ‘Tony the Jew lover, enemy of the state’ from Philippi, or even just ‘Tony the Jew.’

Emperor Vespasian followed up the Jewish War by imposing a heavy, punitive annual tax upon all Jewish households in the empire. He determined Jewish households as those who worshipped after the Jewish manner. With the addition of the Fiscus Judaicus tax, Gentile believers had financial, political and cultural incentives to distance themselves from Judaism.⁶

Shortly after the Jewish War and the destruction of Jerusalem. synagogues throughout the world introduced a new benediction in the daily liturgies that was actually a curse on believers in Yeshua and other heretics.⁷ The synagogue authorities expelled worshippers who would not pray the curse. Thus the believers found themselves expelled from the Jewish assembly. The Master had foreseen this. He warned His disciples that “they will make you outcasts from the synagogue.” (John 16:2)

The Gentile pagans resented the non-Jews because they were essentially Jewish. The Jewish authorities resented

them because they were believers Excommunication from the synagogue was deeply offensive and create sharp animosity toward Jews (even among Jewish believers), who were already none too popular throughout the empire. What is worse, the expulsion left believers with no place to assemble on the Sabbath, or to assemble at all.

Years went by as the church, now largely dominated by Gentiles, struggled to identify herself. Heresies and persecutions plagued her throughout those formative years. Around the turn of the century, the new emperor, Domitian. the son of Vespasian, afraid of another Jewish revolt, unleashed a series of new persecutions against the believers—again because of their Jewish association. In that wave of persecutions, John, the last Apostle, was exiled to Patmos.

Put yourself in the sandals of the average non-Jewish believer. On the one hand, the synagogue has thrown you and your family out because you are offensive to Judaism. On the other hand you are seeing your friends and family imprisoned, even tortured and killed, because they are being identified with the Jewish religion. You are guilty by association with a religion that doesn’t want you associating with them.

THE SECOND CENTURY

By the time the second century began, anti-Jewish sentiment was so high in the church (especially the Roman church) that most non-Jews no longer wanted to be identified with Jews at all. The first-century believers were long dead and gone. A new generation had been raised to view Jews and even Jewishness as the antithesis of Christianity. It is not unlike the bitter hostility many Protestants hold for Catholics. It fills some deep psychological need to define oneself against something. Unfortunately that something is often one’s parents, which is what Catholics were to Protestants and what Judaism was to Christianity.

Theologically, the church leaders decided that the Christian church had replaced the Jews as the true Israel of God. They decided that they were now the true people of God, and that Jews were consigned to damnation and everlasting cursedness from God.

The new generation (second century) was the generation that lived through the Second Jewish Revolt. In the third decade of the second century, the Jews of Judea revolted against Rome again, this time during the days of the pagan Emperor Hadrian. They banded together under the leadership of the rebel warrior Shimon Bar Kokba. Rabbi Akiva declared him to be messiah. All of Bar Kokba’s men were told that they must swear allegiance to his messiahship, even proving their allegiance by maiming themselves for him. Their refusal to declare Bar Kokba as the Messiah surely alienated the last Jewish believers among the Jews of Israel. It was the last break between the believers and Judaism.

Of course, Bar Kokba was not the messiah. Rome quickly crushed his rebellion. Jerusalem was again destroyed. and the Jews again faced imperial persecution. The Talmud calls it the Age of the Great Persecution. In those days, Emperor Hadrian made laws declaring it illegal to keep the Sabbath, to ordain rabbis and to practice Judaism. Believers could be arrested for keeping the laws of Torah. Those who did were arrested and martyred along with the faithful among the Jewish people. Rome made no distinction between Jews and believers practicing the Jewish faith. To survive, it became necessary for believers to further disassociate from Judaism. Unfortunately, Paul’s compiled letters, when read outside their original context, provided ample justification for that disassociation. The emerging Christian movement read Paul’s arguments for the inclusion of Gentiles in the Kingdom backward to imply the exclusion of Torah.

THE CHURCH FATHERS

We call the leaders of the generation of Gentile believers who lived through the Second Jewish Revolt the Church Fathers. They were godly men doing the best they could with the understanding they had. Unfortunately, their understanding of Torah was largely a misunderstanding. One of the Church Fathers, Ignatius, wrote an epistle to the congregations of Asia (where John had lived and served just three decades before). He said to them:

Let us therefore no longer keep the Sabbath after the Jewish manner, and rejoice in days of idleness... But let every one of you keep the Sabbath in a spiritual manner... not in relaxation, not in eating things prepared the day before, not in finding delight in dancing and clapping which have no sense in them.⁸

What did he mean? Why did he have to prohibit second-century believers from keeping the Sabbath? He had

to prohibit them because despite all the adversity, John's and Paul's congregations were still keeping Sabbath.

In the same era, men like the author of the epistle of Barnabas arose. The epistle of Barnabas is a known forgery that is alleged to be written by Barnabas, Paul's traveling companion. It is actually a deeply misguided, anti-Semitic justification for replacement theology. The author of this pseudo-epistle describes the Jews as wretched men deluded by an evil angel (that is, the God of the Hebrew Scriptures) and abandoned by God. In the epistle of Barnabas, the laws of Torah are allegorized and Judaism is condemned.

It was in this era that we have the first record of Christians proselytizing Jews. There is a famous Christian-Jewish dialogue in the form of a polemic between a Hellenist Jew named Trypho and the Church Father Justin Martyr. It is a testament to how far the Roman believers had already divorced themselves from Judaism and even from the Scriptures. Justin Martyr explained to Trypho (and all the Jews) that the Torah was given to Jews as a punishment for their exceptional wickedness and because of God's special hatred for the Jewish people. He said, "We, too, would observe your circumcision of the flesh, your Sabbath days and in a word all your festivals, if we were not aware of the reason why they were imposed upon you, namely, because of your sins and your hardness of heart." Yet even Justin Martyr admitted that, in his day (153 CE); there were believers who still practiced the laws of Torah, both Jewish and non-Jewish believers. These "weak-minded" brothers, he reluctantly conceded, were still saved, despite their foolish insistence on observing the laws of Moses.⁹

At the same time that men like Ignatius and Justin Martyr were holding their sway over the developing church, the believers saw the rise of the great heretic Marcion. He came sweeping through the church with his refined doctrine that the Jesus of the New Testament had defeated and unseated the evil god of the Jews. Therefore, the Hebrew Scriptures (what we call the Old Testament) and any Jewish relics in the Christian faith needed to be expelled. He compiled the first version of the 'New Testament.' Marcion's Bible consisted of portions of the book of Luke and ten of Paul's epistles, which he edited to remove what he termed as "Jewish corruptions." He discarded the rest of the books of the Apostles, as well as the entire Old Testament, on the basis of their Jewishness. Marcion's anti-Jewish anti-Torah version of Christianity caught on quickly. Though the Roman church denounced him as a heretic in 144 CE, Marcionite churches, bishops and communities sprang up throughout the empire. Tertullian compared the Marcionites to "swarms of wasps building combs in imitation of the bees."¹⁰ He was wildly popular and stunningly influential, and his teachings remained deeply rooted—even after he was denounced for his heresies.

RESURRECTION SUNDAY

By the early second century, Sundays were already being observed as 'the Lord's Day' in Christianity, but Sunday had not yet eclipsed the Sabbath. Meanwhile an annual remembrance of the resurrection of Messiah had emerged in Christian practice. It occurred every year on the Sunday that followed Passover. The Roman Christians celebrated Passover only as a one-day commemoration of the resurrection. Passover Sunday replaced the observance of Passover and the seven days of Unleavened Bread. The Roman church ordered believers to quit reckoning Passover by the traditional Jewish method and to only keep this annual resurrection festival. It was a great controversy because the churches of Asia, the congregations of Paul and John did not want to play ball with Roman authority. They wanted to keep Passover as they always had. But in the end the authority of Rome prevailed.

Part of the fallout of the controversy was that Sunday was elevated while all the biblical (i.e. Jewish) elements, festivals and days were eliminated. It became a Christian innovation to fast on the Sabbath and rejoice on Sunday as a weekly celebration of the annual Sunday resurrection festival. The church began to celebrate Sunday as a weekly commemoration of the resurrection.

CONSTANTINE AND NICEA

By the time Constantine converted to Christianity and declared it the official state religion, most of the Jewish elements were gone. Except for hold-out sects of Jewish believers like the Nazarenes and the Ebonites, the observance of Torah had been largely eliminated from the faith. Constantine made the divorce from Judaism final with the Council of Nicea (325 CE). His official policy regarding Torah observance is expressed in his words: "Let us have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish rabble."¹¹ The decisions made at Nicea defined the course the church would take henceforth. Later church councils followed suit, and new legislation was introduced to forbid Christians from observ-

ing Torah. The Council of Antioch (314 CE) prohibited Christians from celebrating Passover with the Jews, while the Council of Laodicea (363 CE) forbade Christians from observing the biblical Sabbath. The edicts of these various councils make it clear that many believers were still, even in the fourth century, keeping Torah.

In the late fourth century, John Chrysostom delivered a series of sermons in Antioch against the Jews and against the Judaizers among the Christians. "Judaizer" is a term that the Church Fathers applied to anyone who practiced the laws of Torah. Chrysostom's sermons contained an abundance of hateful, anti-Jewish venom. He singled out the observance of Torah as a disease in Christianity.

"What is this disease? The festivals of the pitiful and miserable Jews are soon to march upon us one after the other and in quick succession: the Feast of Trumpets, the Feast of Tabernacles, the fasts [i.e., the Day of Atonement]. There are many in our ranks who say they think as we do. Yet some of these are going to watch the festivals and others will join the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts. I wish to drive this perverse custom from the church right now...But now that the Jewish festivals are close by and at the very door, if I should fail to cure those who are sick with the Judaizing disease ... [they] may partake in the Jews' transgressions."¹²

Chrysostom went on to denounce Christians who participated in the festivals, the Sabbaths and the dietary laws. He rebuked them for attending the synagogue. In total, he delivered eight consecutive sermons on the subject, ample testimony that even in the fourth century many believers were still obedient to Torah. Yet in the end, the will of the Church Fathers prevailed, and the divorce between Christianity and the Torah of Moses was completed.

These things had been foreseen. The Master warned His disciples that, in the troubled times to come, "Many will fall away...False prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased..." (Matthew 24:10-12) Paul had warned the Ephesian elders that "after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." (Acts 20:19-30) In writing to the Thessalonians he warned them of an apostasy to come, an apostasy Torahlessness: "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first...For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work." (2 Thessalonians 2:3,7)

As time went on, and the (Dark Ages began, the Christian church turned violent toward the Jewish people. Synagogues and holy books were burned, whole communities were slaughtered. Jewish men and women were tortured—all in the name of Christ. The pages of church history are stained red with the spilled blood of the Jewish people.

The church tightened her grip on her own people by forbidding laity from possessing a copy of the Scriptures. The Holy Book was forbidden. A person caught with a copy of the Scriptures could be sentenced to death. Like the Jewish people, the Gospel was truly in exile, lost among the nations.

THE REFORMATION

Almost 500 years ago, the return from exile began. I want to take you back there for a moment. Imagine yourself in Germany, a German Christian, in the year 1517. When you attend church, you go into a beautiful building with high stone spires and vaulted ceilings, stained glass and marble, candlelit masses, monks chanting in Latin, a priest to hear your confession, another priest to sing the mass, incense and votives, Mary, the baby Jesus, Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint Ann, and the Holy Father in Rome. The masses are inspiring. The architecture is captivating. The liturgy is lofty, high and holy. We have come a long way from the simple, first century sect of Judaism that proclaimed the man from Nazareth to be resurrected from the dead.

But there are some things amiss here. The mass proclaiming the mystery of Christ is beautiful—but you can't understand a word of it, unless you have a university education and can speak Latin, which isn't likely. The pictures of the Madonna, the Christ Child, Saint Peter and Saint Paul are as much of the Scripture as you are likely to really know because there is no Bible available for the common person. Bibles are all written in Latin, and the laity is forbidden to possess a copy.

When you go to the priest to say your confession, there is a charge. You are expected to pay for forgiveness. For an extra donation you can buy grace for dead relatives to release them from torment faster. Relief sculptures, mocking

and ridiculing the Jewish people, are carved tight into the architecture of the church. This is what you know about the Jews. Utter contempt and utter disdain.

But listen to that pounding sound.

Outside the door, someone is stand in on a ladder. He is nailing something to the door. It is the year 1517, the year Martin Luther, a disillusioned Augustine monk from the Black Monastery in Erfert, nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the church door in Wittenberg.

If you take the time to read his Ninety-five Theses, It may surprise you to discover how benign it is. This is not a list of radical reforms that Luther sought to impose on the church. It is not a statement against the authority of the papacy or Rome, an indictment of images or the worship of saints. It does not call into question the theology of worshipping Mary as the mother of God. It is not very radical at all. It is a continuous sustained argument against the selling of indulgences- that is, charging people for grace and forgiveness.

But it was enough. Someone had dared to question the authority of the church to impose its own man-made rituals and doctrines. Someone had dared to say, “Hey, wait a second. That’s not in the Bible. That’s not part of the original Christian faith.”

Once that point had been made, there was no way to stop the inevitable. Thanks to Gutenberg it was not long before Bibles were being printed in common languages so that anyone who wanted could read what was written. The average person could read and understand the stories in the Gospels, the words of the Master, the words of Paul, and the whole of the Scriptures. We call it the Protestant Reformation.

But did Luther go far enough? Clearly the myriad daughter denominations of the Protestant Reformation do not think so. Each subsequent Protestant movement has contributed its own set of further reforms. Ostensibly, each reform is an attempt to reach further back to the original first-century church of Yeshua and His disciples.

The effort to return to the first-century church is praiseworthy. It comes from a desire to conform our lives and congregations to the authority of the Word of God. The motives of these reformers were pure and good. Their methodology however, has been flawed. An important piece of the puzzle is missing.

What the various Protestant reformers have failed to recognize about the first-century church is that she was Jewish. She was a part of first-century Judaism. Yeshua, the disciples, the first believers, the worship system, the Scriptures, the interpretation of the Scriptures, the teaching, the vernacular and even the very concepts of faith and grace, Messiah and God were all patently Jewish.

Any attempt at church reformation, any attempt to return to the original New Testament church falls short as it refuses to acknowledge the essential Jewishness of our faith.

Why did the Protestant Reformation stop where it did? If it was really all about throwing out the unbiblical church traditions that had tainted Christianity, why did it retain the Roman calendar and Roman theologies? Why do Protestant churches still call Sunday the Sabbath and eat ham on Easter instead of unleavened bread on Passover?

It seems that during Luther’s lifetime, hopes were high in the Jewish community that the Protestant Reformation would put a stop to Christian persecution of the Jewish people. In fact, the opposite happened. Martin Luther issued an encyclical called *Against the Sabbath Keepers* and another one called *Against the Judaizers*. In these papers, he admonished Protestant Christians for keeping Sabbath and adopting Jewish customs. In 1543, Luther published *On the Jews and Their Lies*, in which he advocated burning down synagogues in every town and forcing Jews to convert or die.

What was the reason for his rage against the Jewish community? Most scholars agree that he was disappointed that Jews did not embrace Protestant Christianity. He had hoped the Jews would share his excitement over stripping back Roman Catholic tradition. When they did not respond with mass conversions, he turned against them. But another part of his ire arose from things that were happening within his own movement. The Protestants were reading their Bibles and concluding that authentic, biblical Christianity was indeed Jewish. They were returning to Jewish practices, returning to Torah, keeping Sabbath and festivals. The result was even more bitter persecution by the reformers to try and stop the ‘Judaization’ of the Protestant movement.

It is true. The Renaissance Age boasted a strong Hebrew Roots movement.

As early as 1538, just 21 years after the Wittenberg door incident, Oswald Dlaitd and Andreas Fischer launched a radical return to the Hebrew roots of the faith from within the Anabaptist church of Moravia. Fisher translated

Jewish liturgy out of the Hebrew for use in services and even went so far as to write a Christian *Siddur*, essentially a translation of the Jewish prayer book. Once again believers were praying the ancient blessings before eating and offering thanks after meals and praying the basic prayers of the Jewish expression. It was against these Moravian Hebrew Rooters that Luther wrote *Against the Sabbath Keepers*, which condemned Sabbath observance as sinful. By means of stiff resistance from Luther and persecution from the larger Protestant world, the Moravian Torah movement was stopped.

A reformer by the name of Paul Fagius gave a historical interpretation of the New Testament by explaining the Lord’s Supper in the context of Passover and the sayings of Yeshua in the context of rabbinic literature. Luther and his associates labeled him a Judaizer. For Luther and his followers, refuting the radical reformation became synonymous with rejecting Judaizers. The reformation was spinning out of control and, in some places, rapidly returning to Jewish form and practice.

Wherever the Bible was read without theological manipulation, believers were returning to Torah. In the end, however, the Protestants largely prevailed. The return to Torah was stifled. The Gospel would remain in exile. The time was not yet ripe. Several more centuries would pass before the momentum returned.

END OF THE EXILE

From 1938 to 1945, the Jewish people endured a seven-year great tribulation, the culmination of the horrors of exile. The long years of persecution reached a demonic crescendo. Blackness. Utter despair. Ruin in the face of naked evil. Six million dead. Yet the people of Israel lived.

As the world emerged from the travails of World War II, stories of the Holocaust began to circulate. Slowly, the realization sank in. Christians all over the world began to understand what had happened. Theologians and churchmen were abashed to realize that their own religious prejudices and bigotry had contributed to the greatest human travesty of all time.

Though he was a self-proclaimed pagan, Hitler justified the genocide by pointing to Christian writings and Christian history. He even quoted Luther. “Whole libraries of books have been published which show how Hitler translated Luther’s idea’s into action.”¹³ Ashamed and mortified, Christian thinkers and theologians began to publicly swear off anti-Semitism. As a part of that process, they reexamined old church theologies that had allowed for and even encouraged the historic brutalization of the Jewish people. Bible scholars began to reexamine the assumption that the church had replaced the Jewish people. They also reexamined the assumption that Jews are cursed by God and enemies of Christ. This process was the beginning of a renaissance in Christian thought and theology. A new breed of scholars emerged, willing to examine the origins of Christianity in light of Jewish sources. We are only now beginning to reap the harvest of post-Holocaust biblical research.

At the same time, two other remarkable events added momentum to the return to biblical Christianity. Sometime in late 1946 or early 1947, Muhammed edh-Dhib (“The Wolf”) and two of his cousins from the Ta’amirah Bedouin tribe were seeking a stray goat when they discovered the mouth to a cave near the Dead Sea. Throwing a stone into the cave, they heard the sound of breaking pottery inside. They later returned to the cave and discovered several clay jars. Three of them contained ancient scrolls, including scrolls of the prophet Isaiah. At the time the boys did not understand the value of their find.

They had discovered what would come to be called the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Dead Sea Scrolls are an ancient library of biblical and Jewish religious literature dating from the days of the Apostles. They have revolutionized the way we understand first-century Judaism and the origins of Christianity.

In March of 1947, these Bedouin boys sold the scrolls to Kahil Iskander Shahin, a shoemaker in Bethlehem, presumably so that he might utilize the parchment in his trade. Kahil recognized that the documents were ancient and perhaps valuable. He sold four of them to Mar Athanasius Samuel of St. Mark’s Monastery in Jerusalem. Professor Eleazar Sukenik of Hebrew University was allowed to see the scrolls and attempted to purchase them, but Mar Samuel did not want to sell the scrolls to the professor.

Sukenik disguised himself and made a secret trip to Arab Bethlehem to pay a visit to Kahil the shoemaker. On November 29, 1947, he purchased the remaining scrolls, one of which was a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Coincidentally, November 29, 1947, is the day the United Nations voted to partition Palestine and allow Israel statehood. On

the same day, the ancient prophecies of Isaiah and the ancient land of Israel were returned to Jewish hands. These two seemingly unrelated events have launched a revolution in the way we understand our faith and the way we understand the Bible.

The Jewish return to the land of Israel and the reestablishment of a Jewish state came as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. After those two events, it was no longer possible for Christians to dismiss the Jewish people. The ancient prophecies concerning Israel were coming true. Christian thinkers and theologians needed to reconsider the Israel question.

THE MODERN JEWISH ROOTS MOVEMENT

The modern-day Jewish Roots movement is born out of an intersection of these things. The Holocaust, the formation of the State of Israel and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls all combined to spark a complete renaissance in the way that early Christianity is studied and understood. Through the work of Jewish Roots scholars, we are now able to read and understand the Gospel from its Jewish context for the first time since the days of the Apostles. The followers of Yeshua are returning to the ways of Torah. Believers are uncovering the original shape and form of the faith. It is a prophetic reawakening, coinciding with the return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland.

The long exile of the Jewish people is at its end. In the same way, the long exile of the Gospel is at an end. Just as the Jewish people are returning to their native soil, we are returning the Gospel to its original matrix of the Torah of Moses.

More than three thousand years ago, Moses foresaw the time of restoration. “And you shall again obey the Lord, and observe all His commandments which I command you today.” (Deuteronomy 30:8)

CHAPTER 2

3 Romans 11:17

4 Ephesians 2:12-13

5 Ephesians 3:6

6 O’Quinn, Chris “Fiscus Judaicus,” *Bikurei Tzion*, #72, p. 28.

7 b.Berachot28b-29a.

8 Pseudo-Ignatius, *Epistle to the Magnesians*

9 Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter 47.

10 Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 4.5.

11 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, v. 3, c. 18-19.

12 Chrysostom, John, *Against the Jews*, Homily 1.5.

13 Weiner, Peter E, *Martin Luther, Hitler’s Spiritual Ancestor*, Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., London: New York: Melbourne: Sydney. Online version at www.tentmaker.org/books/MartinLuther-HitlersSpiritualAncestor.html#jews

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