

Nuwe Lied Bediening

En Hy het 'n nuwe lied in my mond gegee, 'n lofsang tot eer van onse Elohiem (Ps. 40:4)

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TO JUDAIZE

In the August 2010 edition of Joy Magazine there is an article written by Dr Peter Hammond with the title, *The Return of the Judaizers*, in which he not only criticises Christians for what he considers *Judaizing*, but also warns the reader against them. He describes these Christians as *a movement which is hostile to the Christian calendar and vehemently insisiting that to be a true Christian you have to adopt the Jewish culture and calendar*.

For the informed reader of Joy Magazine this article is proof of the ignorance regarding the grace of YHVH (God) and the purpose of His law (Torah) in the life of the born again and Spirit filled believer of the new testament. This article is written believing that Christians are under grace and, therefore, they are free from the law of YHVH (The Lord). Therefore, and according to Peter Hammond, Christians that still live according to YHVH's law are Judaizing. The Christians he is referring to are generally known as Messianic believers and are part of the Messianic Movement (Awakening).

The purpose of my article is not to refute or debate the views of Dr Hammond, but to give perspective on the true meaning of Judaize.

The verb *Judaize (to Judaize)* is derived from Judaism. A short definition for Judaize is to practise Judaism. The question is, therefore, what is Judaism?

A short definition of Judaism is *the faith (religion) of the Jews* and according to Jewish tradition the roots can be traced back to Abraham. However, one must make a clear distinction between the faith of Abraham and Israel ("traditional Judaism") and *Rabbinical Judaism* of today which originated from *Pharisaic Judaism* prevalent in the days of Yeshua (Jesus) and the Apostles. It is, therefore, clear that Judaism, as well as to Judaize has different meanings.

However, according to Scripture the meaning of Judaize is to become a Jew. This is clear from Esther 8:16 and 17:

The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his

*decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land **became Jews**; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.*

The Hebrew word for *became Jews* is *yahad* (Strong's H 3054) and means to accept the Jewish faith and, therefore, to Judaize. Such gentiles are also known as proselytes.

To Judaize is also mentioned in Gal. 2:14 where Paul writes:

*But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles **to live as do the Jews**?*

The Greek word for *to live as do the Jews* is *Ioudaizo* (Strong's G2450) and means to become a *Judaeen*, namely to Judaize by accepting the Jewish faith and lifestyle.

Keeping the above in mind, we may then ask: Do Messianic believers (Christians) Judaize if they believe that the law of YHVH, namely His teaching and instruction, is to be kept by all new covenant believers? The answer is an unquestionable "NO", because such Messianic believers (Christians) did not accept the Jewish faith and do not try to become Jews!!! The fact that they keep the Shabbat (Sabbath) and the feasts of YHVH, as well as following certain "Jewish" customs, do not make them Jews. These things are to acknowledge the Hebrew roots of our faith and to follow in the footsteps of Messiah. This is all part of our heritage, but many Christians do not realise or accept it.

The fact that many Christians believe the words of Yeshua when He said that He did not come to destroy (annul) the law but to fulfil (confirm, renew) the law (Matt. 5:17) is not to Judaize. No, this is to return to the Hebraic Roots of our faith. To explain this, as well as the true meaning of the words of Yeshua (Jesus) in Matt. 5:17, one must first get clarity of what was the "faith" (religion) of Israel of the old covenant and as was revealed by YHVH to them. On this matter it is necessary to distinguish between "Judaism" of Torah as revealed to Moses and written in the first five books of the Scriptures and Pharisaic Judaism in the time of Yeshua and the Apostles.

The return to the Hebraic roots of Christianity is to consider "Judaism" of Torah as the foundation of our faith in Yeshua Messiah. Our Hebraic roots are not founded in Pharisaic Judaism or the present Rabbinical Judaism, but goes back to what YHVH revealed to Moses and even to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Therefore, the question is: What is the pattern (shadow, image) that YHVH established in the Torah and which is fulfilled in Yeshua Messiah? The answer

may surprise many Christians, namely: Faith and grace was part of the old testament (covenant)!! Yes, because Israel was delivered from Egyptian slavery by faith!! Not only did they believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but also in the blood of the slain lamb. In faith they had to slaughter a lamb and in faith they had to apply some of the blood on the two side-posts and on the lintel of their houses wherein they ate the lamb (Ex.12:6 and 7). The slain lamb and the blood was their salvation (redemption)!! Israel did nothing to deserve the grace of YHVH. No, all they had to do were to believe in the provision YHVH had made.

Israel stood at the foot of Sinai as a people believing in the God of their forefathers and in the saving grace of YHVH. At Sinai they received the law (the Torah), which is the teaching and instructions of YHVH on how to live as a free people serving Him. Every Israelite, and the gentiles that joined them, was already saved by faith in the grace of YHVH when they arrived at Sinai. Can you see that obedience to the law (the Torah) had nothing to do with their redemption!! Faith in the grace of YHVH was their salvation (righteousness)!!

The law was given afterwards so that Israel may know and learn how to keep on living in the right relationship with their Savior. By obedience to Torah YHVH promised them all His blessings. Therefore, Torah was not given to Israel for their salvation, but for the blessings that come from obedience. Obedience was their guarantee of their daily wellbeing. This is YHVH's pattern (blueprint) for man, namely: First faith for salvation and then obedience for blessings!!

This pattern was already established in the days of Abraham who was saved by faith according to Gen. 15:4 to 6:

And, behold, the word of YHWH came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in YHWH; and he counted it to him for righteousness. (Renewed King James Version)

However, Abraham only received the promise of the blessings by obedience:

*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.
Gen. 26:4 and 5.*

Do you see the pattern, the blueprint that YHVH established? First faith followed by obedience!! Do you see the shadow in the old covenant pointing to the new (renewed) covenant? Salvation is only by faith in the Lamb of

YHVH, Yeshua the Messiah, and the redemption by His precious blood (1 Pet. 1:18 and 19). The pattern (order) in the old and the new (renewed) covenants are the same: First salvation through faith in the grace of YHVH and then obedience to His law (Torah). **Salvation is not by the works of the law!! The law is never above mercy and grace!! We are only saved by faith!!**

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Rom 3:28

*For by favour are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of YHWH:
Eph 2:8*

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of YHWH in him. 2 Cor. 5:21.

However, we must understand that our faith does not make the law void!! Listen carefully to the words of Paul in Rom. 3:31.

Do we then make void the law through faith? By no means: yea, we establish the law.

Now we can understand the true meaning of the words of our Messiah as it is written in Math. 5:17, and which is in agreement with what Paul said:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

When Messianic believers (Christians) return to their Hebraic roots, they are returning to the pattern that YHVH established in His Torah, namely: First faith in the grace of YHVH followed by obedience to his teaching and instructions which is the same as what Israel received at Sinai. **This is not to Judaize!!! No, this is to follow the pattern (plan) that YHVH established from the beginning!!** Faith is for salvation and obedience for blessings. First faith and then obedience.

What do Jews Believe?

What Jews believe is called Judaism. However, Judaism has no dogma; no formal set of beliefs that one must hold to be a Jew. But according to various sources a set of thirteen principles of faith, compiled by Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (Maimonides), are considered to be the minimum requirements of Jewish belief. These thirteen principles include the following:

- ❖ Moses' prophecies are true, and Moses was the greatest of the prophets.
- ❖ The written Torah (first 5 books of the Bible) and Oral Torah (teachings now contained in the Talmud and other writings) were given to Moses.
- ❖ There will be no other Torah.
- ❖ God will reward the good and punish the wicked.
- ❖ The Messiah will come.

Therefore, to accept these thirteen principles, and to live accordingly, is to Judaize. This is to adopt the Jewish religion. From a Jewish point of view it is, therefore, clear that Messianic believers who believe that Yeshua Messiah has already come, and who only live according to the written Torah, is not Judaizing!!! The differences between Judaism and Messianic beliefs are clear. The most important difference is the fact that Messianic believers, as all Christians, believe that Messiah has already come. Secondly, Messianic believers believe the written Torah to be YHVH's teaching and instructions, but do not accept the oral Torah (Talmud). Messianic believers also believe that salvation is by faith in the death and resurrection of Yeshua Messiah as the Lamb of YHVH offered for our sins. **These differences make it clear that, from a Judaism point of view, Messianic believers are not Judaizers!!**

Pharisaic Judaism

What were the false teachings that Yeshua and the apostles encountered? Why the ongoing disagreement between Yeshua and the Pharisees concerning interpretation of Torah? Was it because Yeshua taught something different from Torah? Why did Paul in his letters warn believers against certain false teachers that bring confusion and wanted to place certain bondages on their freedom in Messiah? Was this because the newcomers to faith in Messiah still considered the law (the Torah) to be YHVH teaching and instructions?

The answer to all this is that the problem that Yeshua and the apostles encountered was Pharisaic Judaism that placed the law above the grace of YHVH. Pharisaic Judaism no longer followed the pattern that YHVH established, namely salvation through faith and not by keeping the law. They changed YHVH's pattern and taught that salvation is by obedience to the law. This is legalism – Pharisaic legalism. They rejected grace in favour of obedience!!

This is what the whole dispute in Acts chapter 15 was about. Therefore, we read the following:

*And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said,
Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*

*But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying,
That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the
law of Moses. Acts 15:1 and 5*

This dispute was about salvation and not really about keeping the law as such. The question was whether salvation also required gentile believers to keep the law, including circumcision to be saved? To this the "first church conference" in Jerusalem replied with a definite "No". However, these new comers to the faith were reminded of certain fundamental things that Torah requires to abstain from (Acts 15:19, 20 and 29). But also take note that these gentiles had to go to the Synagogue every Shabbat (Sabbath) for further teaching in Torah (Acts 15: 21). Acts 15 is also proof that salvation and obedience is seen separate.

We may argue that those from the gentiles who believed in Yeshua as the Messiah and that were circumcised, were Judaizing, because they followed the teaching of Pharisaic Judaism.

The Letters from Paul

The letters from Paul to the Galatians, Romans and the Colossians speak of similar problems than what was the situation in Acts 15, namely legalism – the exaltation of the law above faith and grace. It is, therefore, important for the letters of Paul to be seen as addressing a very similar problem of false teachers who are perverting the true gospel.

Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians that he marvels that they are so quick to turn back from the grace of Messiah to another gospel (Gal. 1:6 and 7). When this letter is read in context, together with the historical background, it is clear what the problem was. After Paul's successful mission to Galatia, some false teachers insisted that gentile converts to Christianity should follow Torah, especially circumcision, to be saved. They argued that Paul was not a true apostle and that he was making the gospel more appealing by removing certain legal requirements.

From Galatians 2:1 to 5 it is clear that circumcision was the big issue (corresponding to the same problem in Acts 15). As already discussed, there were a certain group of Pharisees that taught the gentile converts that they had to be circumcised to be saved. They wanted the gentiles to Judaize by keeping their version of the law in order to be saved. Paul warned that these false teachers wanted to take away their liberty in Yeshua and place them again in bondage (Gal. 2:4).

The letter of Paul to the Colossians was written due to a heresy that existed that contained elements of Gnosticism and extreme legalism. From Col. 2:20 to 23 we can conclude that this heresy was a religion of asceticism, but only had the appearance of wisdom and of piety and regard for the will of God. Therefore, Paul exhorts the Colossians to seek the things that are above, in Yeshua Messiah, and not the things upon the earth which will perish (Col. 3:1 and 2). Nowhere does he refer to the law (Torah) as being done away with (annulled)!

In the letter to the Romans, Paul emphasises the fact that salvation is through faith and not through the works of the law (Rom. 3:21 to 24 and 28). However, he makes it very clear that faith has not annulled the law, but has established the law (Rom. 3:31). He also underlines the fact that without the law (the Torah) there can be no sin (Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13 and 7:8). Therefore, Paul confirms the pattern established in Torah, namely that salvation is through faith which is then followed by obedience to YHVH's teachings and instructions.

The letters of Paul to the Galatians, the Romans and the Colossians is a warning against false teachers who do not follow YHVH's pattern of faith first and then obedience. He warns against legalism that places the law above faith and grace.

Summary

By faith in Yeshua as the Messiah we are made the righteousness of YHVH and, therefore, we are in the right relationship with our Father. This has been made possible by the grace of YHVH who made provision that the guiltless (innocent, sinless) may pay the penalty for the sins of the guilty. This is the pattern that was established in Torah and which was fulfilled in Yeshua the Messiah. He was the one sacrifice offered for sin forever (Heb. 10:12) so that we can be reconciled to YHVH our Father by faith. Yeshua was the sinless that died for the sins of the world!!

After salvation by faith, we show proof of our faith by obedience to Torah – obedience to the teaching and instructions of a loving Father for His children. Obedience to Torah is the works (fruit) of our faith. Faith without works are dead (James 2:14 to 26). Obedience to Torah is, therefore, to follow in the footsteps of Yeshua our Messiah. Obedience is the gateway to YHVH's blessings.

YHVH's mercy and grace go even further than salvation by faith!! Yes, even when we sin because of weakness of the flesh, YHVH will bless us. YHVH knows our hearts and when we whole heartedly embrace His Torah and submit ourselves willingly to His teaching and instructions, He will bless us. This is mercy upon mercy and to live from faith to faith!!

Obedience to Torah is not to Judaize but to follow the pattern that our Father has demonstrated in His Torah. Salvation by faith is always followed by obedience!! This was established in the beginning and will be the pattern for ever.

Does the church of today follow this pattern? Is this what they teach? No, the church is no longer following this pattern, but teaches that faith has annulled the Law (the Torah). The church teaches that believers are not under the law, but under grace. They are teaching a faith message, but reject the obedience part of the gospel message.

The church is not following YHVH's pattern of faith in His mercy and grace, followed by obedience to His teaching and instructions – His Torah. Therefore, the question is: Who is not listening to the voice of YHVH? Who is following their own pattern? Who are false teachers? Is it the church or the Messianic believers? The answer should be clear!!

Receive the word of YHVH with all readiness, but search the Scriptures to see if these things are the truth. Acts 17:11

Shalom
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