

Restoring the Jewish Roots of our Faith

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WHY THE JEWS?

Many believers hold this view that the Church has replaced Israel in God's plan, meaning that the blessings, privileges, and covenant promises originally given to Israel in the Hebrew Bible now belong to the Church. In this belief, the "New Covenant" through Jesus Christ is seen as superseding the "Old Covenant" with the Jewish people, implying that God's favor has shifted from Israel to the Christian Church.

Is this view biblical? I believe not and I have 4 biblical reasons that prove the opposite:



1) God has not rejected Israel

For anyone back then who was thinking that God had rejected the Jews, already 2000 years ago Paul wrote black and white "I ask then: Did God reject his people? No, let this never happen! ... God did not reject His people, whom He knew in advance." (Romans 11:1-2). He even goes further by saying that they might be your enemies now, but "as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and His call are irrevocable." (Romans 11:28-29)

And God is not just saying things. He proves them:

2) The supernatural blessings on Israel prove it

If all the blessings of Abraham had been stopped and transferred to the Non-Jews how can we explain that after 2000 years the Jews are still immeasurably more blessed than any other group on planet earth? From whatever angle you look at it, Jews have a supernatural favor that cannot be explained in human terms. Just look at history: wherever Jews were given an opportunity to thrive, they "ruled" far above anyone else, and this has been true everywhere and in every single area of life. (For instance, American Jews are only 2% of the population and yet they make up one third of all American millionaires and billionaires, one third of all actors, two thirds of producers, etc....The same "disproportion" can be found everywhere else). The sheer fact that they are only 0.2 % of the human race and yet a quarter of all the Nobel prizes in history have been attributed to them cannot find a rational human explanation!

Mark Twain himself said it better than anyone else: *“The Jews constitute but one quarter of one percent of the human race...but his importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk...His contributions to the world’s list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine and education are also very out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him.All things are mortal but the Jews; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?”*



The answer should be obvious: They are still the apple of God’s eye! The blessing of Abraham is still heavily on them! (Genesis 12:2-3: "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"). Paul himself summarized it all when he wrote: "Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises." (Romans 9:4-5). They had it all back then, they still have it today, and with the exception of the Temple, all the promises that God gave them are still valid today!

3) The strategic plans of God prove it

If you study the history of Jews, you see one irrefutable pattern. Every time when things go bad, God turns around their situation and makes it better! This is true in the Bible and has been true for the last 2000 years.

Those who remove the Jews from God’s plan do not understand His heart and His wisdom. From the very beginning of the Bible until the end, God is specialized in one trick: every time we try to cheat Him, He outsmarts us! Every time we do something bad, He turns it around in something better for all

of us! And this is especially true for the Jews! No wonder Paul writes in this very context, “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out!” (Romans 11:33)

With this perspective, we can easily understand the paraphrased version of Romans 11:15 “When most Jews rejected their Messiah, it still brought an amazingly positive result for the whole world, can you imagine what will happen when they finally accept Him? It will be as powerful and shocking as a resurrection from the dead!!!”

Yes, God hid Himself 2000 years ago from most of His People, but it was just temporary. The day is soon coming when He will fully reveal Himself again! And then, as Paul wrote, “if their transgression brought such a richness to the world, can you imagine how much more richness will their full inclusion bring to the world?” (Romans 11:12) These are the themes of Ezekiel 39:21-27 and Deuteronomy 32:17-21, 43 which are underlined in Romans 9 - 11. **There is a rebellion, God hides Himself, so the hearts are hardened, but eventually He reveals Himself and turn everything around for our absolute best result!**

This is why the apostle writes: "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.’" (Romans 11:25-26).

2) The prophecies of Jesus prove it

Anyone can pull out any prophecy of the Old Testament and make it say whatever they want for today, but no one can do this with 2 specific prophecies of Jesus:

1. “Jerusalem, Jerusalem...look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see Me again until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord’.” (Matthew 23:38-39)

Here Jesus said that He would not come back until Jerusalem would welcome Him. In other words, there has to be enough Jews in Jerusalem who believe in Him for this to happen. For two thousand years this was impossible as Jews were dispersed across all nations. But this has started to change as more and more are coming back to their homeland, and more and more are believing in Him.

2. “They (the Jews) will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations until the times of the nations are fulfilled.” (Luke 21:24)



This too is starting to change as Jews were “prisoners to all the nations” but they are now coming back. (Zechariah 8:7-8 "I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem.") Jerusalem was trampled by all the nations, but this too is starting to change.

In other words, the return of the Lord on earth will happen:

- **When Jerusalem will no more be trampled by the nations (time of nations will be fulfilled)**
- **When the Jews have returned to their homeland.**
- **When there will be enough Jews to welcome Jesus’ return.**



This is the main reason Satan wants to eliminate Jews and Israel! From Pharaoh, Haman to Hitler, He has tried numerous times to exterminate the Jews but since He failed over and over again, and now they are back in the land, his time is very short. So now His main goal is to eradicate Israel from the map so Jesus prophecy will not come to pass. If He fails Jesus will come back! (Among many other reasons, this briefly explains antisemitism, the holocaust and the growing hatred against Israel). But God has not been stopped in His plans. As millions of Jews are returning to their ancestral land and more and more are recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, He will protect them for the sake of His covenant in order to reach the whole world.

Paul wrote that when this will happen, it will be for the whole world like a resurrection from the dead! (Romans 11:15). In other words, not only has God **NOT** rejected Israel (Romans 11:2), but He has strategic plans to use them to revolutionize the world! **The redemption of the world started with the Jews, and with them it will all finish!**

WHY THE JEWISH ROOTS?

The Church and Israel remain inseparably bound to each other. In Jeremiah 31: 36, which is implied in Hebrews 8, it says that “if these decrees vanish from my sight, declares the Lord, will Israel ever cease being a nation before me”. This verse promises that as long as the New Covenant will last, Israel will keep on existing as a nation! This is why the Church’s very existence is tied to Israel and here are 5 other reasons, all taken in Romans, that support this view:

1 **Israel opens the door of salvation to the Church:**

It was precisely through Israel's failure that salvation came to the nations (Rom. 11:11) and that the Gentiles were brought into Israel's history of election (11:13-24).



2 **Israel warns the Church against pride :**

Israel's failure is depicted to the Church as a permanent warning. No one who is called may become arrogant; God will not spare an unbelieving Church more than he has spared an unbelieving Israel (11:20-22)

3 **Israel gives the Church a solid hope:**

Israel's failure confers a stable, indestructible hope. The Church can learn from Israel that God is faithful and that He never withdraws His grace. Despite its failure, Israel remains called (11:29). It is not rejected (11:1) but forever loved by God (11:28).

One day it will again become the true Israel (11:26-27) and then through its salvation it will bring life to the entire world (11:12).

4 **Israel forces the Church to become a living example:**

The Church has the ultimate priority of making Israel jealous (11:11, 14). It must live its existence so convincingly that Israel will abandon its reserve and come to His Messiah.

The unbelief of Israel is thus a permanent question for the Church, as it asks if the church makes real in a credible manner its existence as people of God. Thus according to Paul the Church cannot exist without Israel.

5 **Israel reminds the Church of its spiritual roots:**

In Romans 11, Paul uses the metaphor of grafting olive trees to explain how the Gentiles are included in God's people. Normally, cultivated branches are grafted onto wild trees, but God grafted the wild branches (Gentiles) into the cultivated tree (Israel).



This shows that **Gentiles are nourished by the Jewish spiritual roots and therefore they should discover the source and the heritage from where they came from.**

POSITIVE aspects of the Law

Before we try to tackle the whole idea of restoring Jewish roots, **we must first have a very clear understanding of the role of the law in the New Testament** because no other subject has more influence on Christianity and how we view Judaism.

Did you know that there are more than 230 references in the New Testament regarding the law? This is not a small concept. In fact it is one of the most debated and repeated themes in all the letters of Paul. So when you think of the law, what first comes to your mind? Something good? Something bad? Or something not really clear because you are not even sure what it is?

Let me first define how the apostle Paul used the term. By law I mean the compilation of all the moral laws and decrees found in the first five books of Moses, what we usually call the Torah. But to a larger extend it is everything that is contained in the Old Testament, particularly when it concerns biblical feasts, customs and anything that is still applied in the Jewish world today.

So how does the Bible view the law? Of course, the Old Testament presents the Torah as being the very best thing that ever happened to Israel! In essence it says that

- **If practiced, the law brings prosperity:**

- Joshua 1:8 "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful"
- Deuteronomy 6:24 "The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today."

- **The law defines the greatness of the Jewish people:**

- Deuteronomy 4:8 "And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?"
- Deuteronomy 28:1-2 "If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all His commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth".



But the verse that summarizes it all is

Psalms 19:7 "The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul."

Now what does the New Testament say?

- **The law is good, holy, righteous, wise, true, spiritual and perfect:**

- Romans 2:20 "In the law is the embodiment of knowledge and truth"
- Romans 7:12 "So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good."
- Romans 7:14 "The law is spiritual"
- And now you have all heard of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 "ALL Scriptures equips us for every good work and of course you immediately think that it is the whole Bible. Well stop for a second: the New Testament did not exist! When Paul wrote all Scripture he only meant the Old testament! In other words read this differently: Paul wrote that the Torah equips us for every good work!



- **This is why it fits our deepest human aspiration to practice it:**

- Romans 7:22 "For in my inner being I delight in God's law"
- Romans 7:25 "In my mind I am a captive of God's law"
- Romans 8:4 "In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us".

- **The law is perfect because its ultimate expression is in love:**

- Romans 13:8, 10 "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law...therefore love is the fulfillment of the law"
- Galatians 5:14 "For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

- **This is why the law is not abolished but perfectly exemplified in Christ:**

- Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."
- Romans 3:31 "Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold (establish, make stronger) the law."
- Romans 10:4 "Christ is the culmination of the law".

- **Its biblical feasts and customs reveal God's character and His redemptive plans:**

- Leviticus 23 The various feasts all have a spiritual and a prophetic meaning that are excellent for both Jews and for Christians. This is why Paul wrote:
- Colossians 2:16-17 "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day."
- 1 Corinthians 5: 8 "Therefore let us keep the Feast"

- **At the same time, the law reveals what is sinful and therefore brings true justice:**

- Romans 2:15 "They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them."
- Romans 3:19 "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God."
- Romans 3:20 - "Through the law, we become conscious of our sin."
- Romans 5:13 "Sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law"
- Romans 7:7 "I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law."

- **The law can bring restraint and control, and as such it can lead us to Christ:**

- 1 Timothy 1: 9 "We also know that the law is made not for the righteous, but for those who break the law".
- Galatians 3:19-22 "Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed (Christ) to whom the promise referred had come."
- Galatians 3:23 "Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed."
- Galatians 3:24-25 "So the law was our guardian (In Greek it means "pedagogue" or tutor, teacher for children) until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian."



Paul followed the Law 100%

In the light of everything positive mentioned above, it is no surprising that Paul and Jewish believer all followed the law. They never gave up their practice of the law when they believed in Jesus!

We see this very clearly exemplified in the life of Paul the apostle:

- **1 Corinthians 5:8** He observed the Passover feast, and this is why he called the believers in Corinth to all celebrate it! (read it yourself in context, Paul said let us keep the feast!)
- **1 Cor. 16:8** When it was not possible to celebrate Pentecost in Jerusalem he did it in Corinth.
- **Acts 16:3** He circumcised Timothy because of the Jews around.

- **Acts 17:2** He kept the Shabbat and therefore attended the synagogue service as it was his regular habit.
- **Acts 20:6** He kept the feast of unleavened bread.
- **Acts 20:16** He made every effort to go to Jerusalem in order to celebrate Shavuot because this was a specific command addressed to all Jews to celebrate Pentecost in Jerusalem.
- **Acts 18 and 21** He did the Nazirite vows two times, which was not drinking wine and cutting his hair.
- **Acts 21** He underwent 7 days of purification rituals and even paid for the vows of others, which was an expensive act of devotion to the Temple.
- **Acts 21** He did everything to prove that he was following the Law because some people had doubts about it
- **Acts 24:17** He gave money to the Temple in favor of the poor (he did not bring it for the poor of the Church, as most Christians wrongly interpret it, but for Jews who were not Christians).
- **Acts 27:9** He might even have kept Yom Kippur!



Those many examples above should be enough to show that Paul lived like an observant Jew!

This is why he repeated at least 6 times in the book of Acts that he had never done anything wrong against the Jewish law, against Jewish customs or against the Temple. (Acts 22:3,12 / 23:6 / 24:14 / 25:8 / 26:22 and 28:17). He even claimed in Philippians 3:6 that “as for righteousness based on the law, he was faultless”!

In fact, he was so blameless in the way he lived his Jewish lifestyle that when he appeared before the Sanhedrin, he could confidently declare that until that very day he had fulfilled his duty before God in all good conscience! (Acts 23:1). If that was not the case, he could have never dared to make such a bold claim to people who were looking for every possible way to accuse him. If that was not the case, he would have never dared to make such a claim!

In other words, Paul continued to live as a Jew even after believing in Jesus! The same was true of the other Jewish believers of the first century. The New Testament even shows that some Pharisees had believed in Jesus, while still being described as belonging to the party of the Pharisees:

“Then some of the **believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees** stood up...” (Acts 15:5)

In other words, for a first-century Jew, believing in Jesus did not mean abandoning Jewish identity or rejecting the Torah. This is exactly what this surprising verse also shows:

“You see, brother, how many **thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law.**” (Acts 21:20)

And yet, it seems that Paul wrote certain things that present the Law in a negative way:

“NEGATIVE” aspects of the law

- **The law’s expectations are never enough.**

- Romans 8:7 “The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.”
- Galatians 2:14 “I said to Cephas in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew”.
- Galatians 5:3 “I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.”
- Galatians 6:13 “Not even those who are circumcised keep the law”
- James 2:10 “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it”



- **So the law leads to frustration so that ...**

- Romans 5:20 “The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase.”
- Romans 6:14 - “For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.”
- Romans 7:5 “For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.”
- Galatians 2:19 “For through the law I died to the law.” Romans 8:3 - “For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh”

- **The law is a burden.**

- Galatians 5:1-6 if we put ourselves under the law we are under a "yoke of slavery"
- Romans 7:6 "But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code."
- Romans 10:5 "Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them.""

- **The full practice of the law cannot ever make us righteous.**

- Galatians 2:16 "Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified."
- Galatians 2:21 "For if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"
- Galatians 3:11 "Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because "the righteous will live by faith.""
- Galatians 5:4 "You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace."
- Romans 3:20 "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law"
- Romans 3:28 "For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law."

- **It cannot give us the Spirit.**

- Galatians 3:2 "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?"
- Galatians 3:5 "So again I ask, does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?"

- **It leads to pride and self-righteousness.**

- Luke 18:11 "God I thank that I am not like other people"
- Romans 3:27 "Where then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith."
- Romans 10:3 "Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness"
- Galatians 6:3 "If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves."



- **Therefore, to divisions.**

- Galatians 5:15, 16, 18 "If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other...walk by the spirit ...you are not under the law"

- **And finally, it brings curse, wrath and death.**

- Romans 4:15 “The law brings wrath”
- Romans 7:10 “I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.”
- Galatians 3:10 “For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’”



If the law is described in “positive” and “negative” terms then how can we explain this apparent contradiction ?

The answer is so simple that few have fully understood it:

Paul was not against the law, but against LEGALISM!

All the verses above seem to lead to one shocking conclusion: there is nothing good to be under the law! So, if the law is good as we saw last time, then how can we explain this apparent contradiction?

I will give you an answer that is very simple and which explains everything:

Paul was not against the law; he was against legalism!

Now let me ask you a challenging question: What is legalism? How do you define it? The webster dictionary will tell you that legalism is a strict, literal, or excessive conformity to the law. Others will tell you that it is to keep external laws without having a living relationship with God. Some will argue that it is putting your own laws above God’s law, or to depend on your own discipline instead of being totally motivated by grace, by faith or by humility. In my view all those definitions are wrong! The reason is that they all present a strict obedience to the law as being legalistic and bad. They all end up saying that either you follow the law, or you follow grace and faith, you cannot do both at the same time. I believe that when people get caught in this dichotomy, they completely misunderstand what Paul wrote.

Let me give you the key verse that perfectly defines legalism. Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 1:8** "**We know that the law is good if one uses it properly**". Or as the complete Jewish Bible translates it, "We know that the Torah is good, provided one uses it in the way the Torah itself intends."

In other words, **legalism is NOT in following the law, even to the letter, but in the wrong application of the law.**

We see this when some believers in Galatia and in Rome tried to impose the Mosaic law on others so that they could appear more righteous before God and before others. This in turn gave them the right to condemn others and in turn it led to all kinds of tensions within their communities.

To this Paul answered the following: "OK. You want to obey the law to its maximum in order to become the most super-righteous Christians? I warn you it will never be enough. There will always be something more, you will feel increasingly burdened and enslaved by your desire for more obedience, and eventually you will fail. The bottom line is you will never be fully righteous, neither before yourself, before men nor before God, so you should stop with your attitude of self-righteousness and judgement! If you want to live out the law, do it with completely different motivations".



In other words, Paul wrote that legalism is not having many difficult laws by which you try to sincerely live by. **Legalism is trying to impose those very laws on yourself and on others so you can elevate yourself before God and before others. And when they fail, you can judge them and exclude them.**

Let me give you an example from my personal life to explain what legalism is: When I was a young believer, I joined a denomination that called all their members to have the following lifestyle: Every day you were encouraged to pray and read your Bible. Every day you were supposed to go out, evangelize and find disciples whom you would baptize and personally train. Every day you had to build relationships of discipleship. Most people sincerely practiced those principles, lives were radically changed, and our churches all grew at a phenomenal rate.

But with our numerical "success" those expectations slowly became unwritten laws, and they became the spiritual norm by which we could define true disciples. This in turn gave us the right to put any kind

of pressure on weak members and judge every other Christian outside of our denomination. The spirit of love and enthusiasm of the early years slowly left, and heavy legalism came in.

So eventually I left but I felt very confused. The reason is that their rules were biblical, but the spirit in which they practiced them was not. They had biblical expectations, but they were all infected by a spirit of control, self-righteousness and judgment.



This, in my view is exactly the same problem that Paul faced. In essence he said: **“The law is good, but your motivations and its applications are not”**.

This is why Paul came up with a lengthy and elaborated theological filter against legalism:



But the genius of his theological model is that it goes beyond the law of Moses. Paul was against any system of rules that would bring any righteousness outside of Christ! He saw legalism everywhere, whether it was in following a certain pagan calendar (Col. 2: 8), in keeping a certain ascetism (Col.2:20), in eating only certain foods (1 Cor. 10), in having a certain social status or even in being a man or a woman! (Galatians 3:28). We humans love to create rules so that we can makes ourselves look better than others.

Yes legalism is one of the most deeply ingrained problems of the human race. You will find legalism in every branch of Christianity, where people have taken verses from the New Testament and come up

with all kinds of rules that have created thousands of denominations. You see it in Judaism where the Orthodox have burdened themselves with all kinds of traditions and laws that have absolutely nothing to do with the Bible, and you will discover it in every religion on earth.

And what makes it so powerful and so **dangerous is that most of us are completely blind to its influence!** We can easily see around us sins like greed, immorality or laziness, but how often do we see legalism? Have you ever heard in your life someone confessing that he is struggling with legalism? Or self-righteousness? Personally, I have never heard it, and this shows how deceitful and invisible this sin is. This is why Paul took so much time and wrote so many warnings against it.



We are free
to follow the law or not.
But either way,
it does not make us
RIGHTEOUS
OR
give us the right
to judge others.

So, what is the conclusion of all this? If you want to follow the feasts, the customs and all the ethical precepts of the law you will definitively experience the blessings that are attached to them. But as you do so, be careful:

With great discipline and success comes the temptation of pride, self-righteousness and condemning others. So, you can follow the Torah, and even any other religious “laws” according to your conscience, but don’t fall into the trap of legalism.

Misunderstood passages regarding the law

1 Corinthians 9:19-22 = When Paul said that at times he became like a non-Jew, he made compromises and therefore he did not always follow the law

The first problem with this view is that it makes Paul a hypocrite and a liar since he repeatedly claimed that he was following the law! (The book of Acts shows this 6 times and even the verse 21 shows this! (“I am not free from the law”). In fact, in Acts 21, he performs a public act at the Temple to demonstrate that the rumor of compromise he was accused of was unfounded.)

The second problem is that people assume something that cannot be proven. We cannot find a single example in Paul’s life where he made compromises with the law. If this had been the case, his adversaries would have immediately discovered it and accused him.

The third problem is that people have a wrong understanding of what it means to be “all things to all men”. Every missionary will tell you that to be effective, you have to make all kinds of radical cultural

adaptations, but it will only go up to a certain level. For instance, a western missionary can live, dress and talk like a Chinese and yet still choose to not eat snakes and bugs or practice ancestor worship!!

The same was true for Paul: he adapted to non-Jews while still obeying all the obligations of the Law, including the kosher laws. This is how he explains his missionary approach among non-Jews: on the one hand, he says he became “as one without the Law,” but on the other hand, he immediately clarifies that he was not actually “without the Law.” In other words, he was flexible, but only within the limits of the Law. (In fact, this is what the school of Hillel was teaching ,Talmud, Shabbat 31a).



1 Timothy 4: 1-5 = When Paul wrote that all foods are good and he opposed those who forbade certain foods, he clearly showed that he rejected kosher food.

Absolutely not! Most people assume that this text talks about Jews or Judaizers who promoted a kosher lifestyle, but it is wrong for 2 reasons.

The first one is that those people forbade to marry (verse 3). Now, if there is one thing we can be sure about Jews or Judaizers is that they NEVER forbid people to marry, so it is clear that those people were not Jewish but pagans!

The second reason is that if those people taught against eating pork, Paul could never have said that their teaching was demonic (verse 1), or else he would have implied that the law was demonic! In other words, in this text Paul is not speaking against the law but against some non-Jews who taught some form of religious ascetism.

1 Cor. 10: 27-33 = Food sacrificed to idols was against the law, and yet Paul said it was acceptable to eat it when invited by unbelievers: therefore, he was encouraging people to break the law

No. Paul always taught against eating food sacrificed to idols, but he had to address one particular situation, which was:

- The believer wants to go to the unbeliever’s home, and is not being forced to do so, because...
- the meal is an ordinary social occasion, not an act of idol worship.

- the invited believer does not know the origin of the food, because...
- the host himself never mentions any connection to idol worship.

In this particular situation, Paul says that the believer is innocent and advises him not to ask about the origin of the food, because doing so creates an unnecessary conflict with the unbeliever and could potentially push him away.

This aligns with the central theme Paul presents in this chapter, which he summarizes at the conclusion: he wants as many unbelievers as possible to be saved. That is why, in verses 21 and 22, he encourages us to recognize that all things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial, and this why, according to verse 32, we should never become a stumbling block.



Take the following example: you are invited to dinner at an unbeliever's home, and in the middle of the meal you ask him, "By the way, is the meat you are serving me from animals raised under cruel factory-farming conditions?" Wouldn't such a question be inappropriate and risk pushing him away from Christ?

Colossians 2:16-17 = We should not follow the law and all its Jewish customs

This verse does not criticize Jewish customs or suggest we should abandon them. It simply states that no one should judge us, leaving us with only two interpretations:

1. "Do not let anyone judge you **if you do not practice** these Jewish things", because you are not obligated to observe them. In other words, anyone who tries to impose them on you is acting legalistically, just as some did in Galatia.
2. "Do not let anyone judge you **if you practice** these Jewish things", because in fact they are good for the following 2 reasons:
 - Christ is the ultimate source of all Jewish customs
He is the substance, while those feasts are the shadow. Thus, through Christ, Jewish customs gain even greater meaning and richness.
 - Those feasts are a foretaste of the next world
They are "a shadow of the things to come." Notice that the Greek uses the present tense: Paul does not say that the feasts were a shadow, but that they are a shadow of the things still to come. This means they have not been abolished and still have value today.

Galatians 4:8–11 = Paul condemns the observance of the Jewish calendar

Not at all. When Paul laments that some are observing “days, months, seasons, and years,” some people think he is condemning believers who had returned to the Jewish calendar. But the text says that before their conversion, these people did not know God and served “gods that are not gods.”

So he is clearly not speaking about Jewish converts, because Jews, whether converted or not, all know God and do not serve idols ! Paul is speaking here about former pagans. In other words, he is not condemning Israel’s biblical calendar, but their return to the old pagan religious cycle, with its many days, pagan observances, market cycles, and imperial celebrations.

Colossians 2:20–23 = Paul condemns Jewish dietary laws

Not at all. Some use “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch” as if Paul were condemning Jewish dietary practices. But the context is not speaking about the

Torah: Paul clearly says that these rules come from “human commands and teachings.” Yet kashrut, in the Torah, is not a human invention: it comes from God. Therefore, this passage is not aimed at the biblical dietary laws, but at human, ascetic, and religious prohibitions linked to an old pagan framework and presented as a superior form of piety.



Ephesians 2:15–16 = Jesus cancelled the Law

The verb “cancelled,” *katargeō*, does not always mean “destroy,” “remove,” or “abolish”, but can also mean to render ineffective, deprive of force, neutralize, or put out of operation. That is why the CSB translates it well: “he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations.” Paul is therefore not saying that the Torah was abolished, but that its **separating effect** between Jews and Gentiles was cancelled.

This is indeed what the whole context shows: Paul moves from a dividing wall of hostility to peace and unity. The idea, then, is that the separating effect of the Law was rendered inoperative, so that Jews and Gentiles could be united in one body.

Hebrews 8:6–13 = “We no longer need the Torah or the Old Testament because they were temporary and have now become obsolete.”

No. God’s covenant relationship with Israel was not temporary but eternal. It was not abolished or replaced; it was made NEW through Christ in the promised new covenant. What became obsolete was its former Sinai administration—especially its Levitical, sacrificial, and Temple-based order.

- The new covenant continues God’s covenant with Israel because it is made with Israel and Judah—not with another nation.
- In fact, when Gentiles are included, they do not replace Israel; they are added to the commonwealth of Israel and grafted into Israel’s olive tree.
- Even after Christ, Paul says that the covenants and promises still belong to Israel. They were not taken from Israel and transferred to another nation.
- Israel broke the covenant, but Israel’s unfaithfulness did not cancel God’s faithfulness. The new covenant is God’s answer to the broken covenant.
- God calls His covenant with Abraham everlasting, and Paul says that the Torah, given 430 years later, could not cancel it or its promises.
- Christ came to confirm the promises made to Israel’s patriarchs, not abolish them; through their fulfillment, God’s mercy was extended to the nations.



In fact, the wording of Hebrews 8:13 itself proves and strengthens this argument. It says that the old covenant would “soon disappear.” If the author meant that the Old Testament would disappear at some future point, this creates serious problems: When exactly did it disappear? And how could that fit with Jesus’ statement that not even the smallest part of the Torah would disappear?

Obviously, the author is speaking about something visible and historical that did disappear soon afterward: the Temple, together with its Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system, in AD 70. Hebrews 9:1 confirms this context by immediately connecting the first covenant with its worship regulations and earthly sanctuary. Therefore, what was about to disappear was the Temple-based administration of the covenant—not the Old Testament or God’s eternal covenant relationship with Israel.

Implications for today

The Early Church was so heavily influenced by the law and Jewish practices that it often created tensions with non-Jews. But by the third century non-Jews had become the majority and as antisemitic tendencies grew, this Jewish influence was completely removed. So today we are left with two groups:

One group, which is the vast majority, are Christians who have absolutely no clue how Jewish the Early Church was, and what this could practically mean for them. The other group is made of Christians who so much believe in the Jewish roots that they easily judge others for not wanting to be like them. So what should we do? The answer is as clear today as it was 2000 years ago:

Paul formulated a universal rule for all the churches: (1 Corinthians 7:17-24).

- **If you are Jew, remain a Jew!**

In other words, fully enjoy and keep your Jewish lifestyle! In fact, don't call yourself a Christian, not even a messianic Jew, but simply call yourself a Jew who believe in Jesus! If you grew up as a secular Jew, you are free to adopt any kind of Jewish lifestyle, or...not!.



- **If you are not a Jew, don't try to become one!**

In other words, if you are not a Jew, there are many Jewish things you don't have to mimic, and this is especially true of all the Jewish traditions that are not commanded in the Bible! (There is a reason why Non-Jews were given only 4 rules! (Acts 15:28-29)). Having said this, if you want to discover and restore many of the Jewish elements of the Early Church, like for instance the feasts, then you are free to apply them as well. Paul did not encourage nor discourage those who wanted to practice Jewish things, as long as they did not condemn others

Practically, it means the following:

- 1. Do not judge and condemn those who want to follow Jewish customs and laws!**
- 2. Do not judge and condemn those who do NOT want to follow Jewish customs and laws!**

3. **Whatever you choose, do it with conviction but with cultural sensitivity towards others (Romans 14:22-23)**
4. **You are free to follow any Jewish or Non-Jewish rules and traditions, as long as they are not opposed to the Bible and do not lead you to become legalist (judging others and seeing yourself superior to them)**



Restore the JEWISH ROOTS if you want to restore the EARLY CHURCH !

It is a historical fact that for the first 2 centuries the disciples of Christ lived in coexistence with the synagogues where the law of Moses (the Torah) was being preached (Acts 15:21). As a result, the whole religious culture of the Early Church was Jewish. As the Church grew in numbers and as Jews became increasingly hostile to Rome, which culminated in the Bar Kokhba revolt, Christians progressively distanced themselves from them to be better accepted by Rome. (See for instance “The dialogue with Trypho” that tried to prove to Rome that Christians were the true people of God, not the Jews). With this, every Jewish element got slowly purged out, and today’s Church has very little in common with the Early Church. So, if we want to restore that original model, it is imperative to go back to the Jewish sources of Christianity.

Before doing this let us remind you that **it is not a sin if you don’t want to go back to the Jewish roots of our faith, and this is especially the case if you are not Jewish.** You have everything you need in

Jesus and His salvation. But if you really are committed to reestablish the pattern, the life and the practice of the Early Church today, you must discover and restore its original Jewish identity!

My experience as an Israeli Messianic believer has taught me that there are 3 main areas in which believers can restore Jewish elements which will draw them closer to the model of the early church:

1. There are minimal obligations for all.

This is for all believers, whether they want to restore the Jewish roots or not.

2. If you want to restore the Jewish roots there are 7 basic principles and other commandments.



In this second category you only have elements that are commanded or clearly mentioned in the Bible and their practice is attested historically. Because of this, they not only have a particular relevance for Messianic Jews, but a biblical authority for any church that wants to restore the Jewish roots of our faith. That being said, not every biblical command, however, applies to everyone or can still be practiced today. Some were given specifically to Jews, priests, men, women, farmers or those living in Israel, while others depended on the Temple. And beyond these biblical commands, there are also Jewish traditions that were developed later and were never commanded in the Bible.

This brings us therefore to the third category:

3. Not a must but culturally recommended if you live among Jews or in Israel.

In this third category, you have elements that are NOT commanded in the Bible, but they are deeply established traditions within the Jewish world. As such, they are only culturally relevant for Messianic Jews, especially in Israel, and churches really have no need to practice them if they want to restore the Jewish roots.

Minimal obligations for all

If you are Jewish = circumcision. (This is a command of God and the covenant sign that separates Jews from Non-Jews, and this is why it should NOT be imposed on non-Jews! This explains why Paul was upset with the Galatian believers who tried to impose this on non-Jews!)

If you are not Jewish= Keep the 4 laws of Acts 15. (In essence these were the laws for the foreigners in Leviticus 17-18, but as well a strong call for Non-Jewish Christians to be sensitive towards Jews)

7 basic principles if you want to restore the Jewish roots (commanded in the Bible)

The following 7 guidelines give a general foundation for Jews who want to start a messianic congregation or for non-Jews who want to be closer to the ideal of the New Testament.

1) Have a strong connection and identification with Israel.

“Your people will be my people”. Practically, it means the following:

a) Accept the divine order of priorities:

Even if Israel might at times behave negatively, God will directly deal with them, our priority is to respect them and understand our place. We, non-Jews, have been added in the lineage of Abraham, we have been included in the New Covenant He made with the Israelites, we have inherited all the promises made to Jews and have become



fellow citizens with them; In other words, it is not them who become part of “our” church; it is we who become part of their family, the commonwealth of Israel. They are the natural branches; we are just the wild ones grafted in. We do not support the root, but the root supports us. In other words, let us never become arrogant by somehow considering ourselves superior to them.

b) Love the Chosen People and their God and live in such an exemplary way that they become jealous of us. After 2000 years of antisemitism, the best way to convince Jews are not words only, but to show them that we love Israel AND sincerely love all the Jews.

- c) **Protect, stand up and even collaborate with Jews and Israel.** (Defend synagogues, manifestations against anti-Israel and antisemites, hide them when persecutions come, do business partnerships with them, etc...). This will not only be beneficial for the Jews, but it will bring tremendous blessings in return for the Non-Jews! History clearly proves that all the kingdoms that were more tolerant towards the Jews all experienced great prosperity.



Can you imagine if the Protestant Reformers had come up with a theology that deliberately respects, protects and works with the Jews? This could have been a win-win that would have changed the course of history! (Jews would have been more open to Jesus and churches would have benefited from the gifts and the supernatural favor that rests on the Jews!)

- d) **Support Messianic Jews.** The Bible shows that in God's plan they have a strategic importance greater than any other nation on earth ("To the Jews FIRST!"). This is why we should support them financially. "If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?" (1 Corinthians 9:11). Romans 15:27 "For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings."
- e) **Learn from educated Messianic Jews.** The first century church had Jewish values and priorities which turned the whole world upside down! If we want to see a spiritual revolution today, we must discover them again! Learn especially from messianic congregations in Israel that live like Jews among the Jews. They are the ones that are the closest to the original model that we see in the New Testament.

2) Use a Jewish theological and cultural filter to understand the New Testament.

Since the entire New Testament was written by Jews (and yes Luke was Jewish, contrary to the assumed tradition), it is therefore profoundly Jewish. This is why we should make every effort to discover and read it through its Jewish background. Without being aware, we can have views that are not influenced by a Jewish filter, but by Greek lenses. (Hellenized Church Fathers, Neoplatonism and Aristotelian philosophy deeply influenced western theology).



Here are a few examples:

- The Greeks had a dichotomy of either good or bad, while the Jewish worldview is more nuanced: at sukkot Jews wave 4 species, which symbolize that Israel has four kinds of people: one is good, one is bad, and the 2 others are variations of good and bad; exactly the same can be said of the 4 seeds that Jesus mentions.
- The Greeks view God as perfect in the fact that He never changes, He is emotionally impassive and always knows absolutely everything He will do and decide, while the Jewish view of God is more “human” in the fact that He can easily change His moods and decisions and adapts Himself as He goes along.
- The Greeks believe in the immortality of every single soul, but it is not the focus of the Jews. The righteous may resurrect and go back to God, but for the unrighteous everything ends up with death.
- The Greeks emphasize the next life, while the Jews seek mostly this life and the legacy they will leave behind.

The few examples above show how much the Greek thought has influenced our Christian theology! (Many Christians have a black and white view of people and life, a view of an impassive and never changing God, an emphasis mostly on hell or the next life, etc....).

Here are more examples that show how a Jewish filter gives different interpretations:

- Matthew 9:20 the “fringes” of Jesus were actually “tzitzit” which completely changes the way we look at this passage if you know what Tzitzit meant to Jews.
- Matthew 6:22 having a bad/good eye means being stingy/generous.
- The “Son of man” is not the human, but the glorious side of the Messiah (Book of Daniel).
- Taking Jesus “yoke” means taking His teaching, the mustard seed is the nation of Israel, etc..



- When Jesus said “my God why have You forsaken me” he was inviting His hearers to look at Psalm 22 and make the parallel with Him (Back then chapters and verses did not exist so the only way to remember and locate a passage was to quote the first phrase of that passage = “My God why have you forsaken me” is the first line of Psalm 22)
- Jewish methods of biblical interpretation. The New Testament frequently uses Jewish interpretive methods such as midrash, typology, allusion, and hints in the text. Later Jewish tradition organized several of these into the **PaRDeS** system: Peshat, Remez, Derash and Sod.

For example, Matthew 2:15 quotes Hosea 11:1, which originally refers to Israel, not directly to Jesus. Matthew uses it allusively, what later Jewish terminology would call **Remez**, to connect Israel’s exodus from Egypt with Jesus’ return from Egypt and link Jesus’ life with Israel’s history and destiny.

- Many events in Revelation, in the Gospels, and particularly in Matthew, are only understood with a Jewish filter. (For instance, the ritual of the cups in the Lord’s supper are aligned with the Passover meal, all the symbolism of Revelation is Jewish).

3) Keep the Shabbat rest.

“Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.” (Luke 23:56)

Whatever you may do or not do on that day, it is different and separate from all other days, and this is why it is called “holy”.



If for practical reasons you might not be able to keep the Saturday but only the Sunday, the most important is to keep the spirit of Shabbat by having no physical work, buying/selling, long travel, cooking, laborious activity, rest from TV, phone and internet, etc...

Enjoy your family and have relaxing fun and spiritual activities, and more than anything else, learn to fully stop and rest! Receive! Stop the stress of packed Saturdays or Sundays with tons of activities! (which is why everything should be prepared in advance before the shabbat, so that your wife does not stress out). You are obviously free to practice any of the traditional “39 laws” of Judaism.

You can do this sometimes as a congregation but make sure that every Friday night (or Saturday night), you have a special shabbat meal with your family. Nothing will unite you more with your family and friends than keeping this religious ritual every week!

This seder meal is the heart and strength of Judaism; it has kept Jews together for centuries! (Traditions vary, but usually the lighting of candles by women before the shabbat starts, the kiddush, blessing the children, the challah, songs and prayers are all elements worth retaining).

You might close the shabbat with the Havdalah:

This is a special ceremony involving blessings over wine, spices, and a braided candle. After Havdalah, there is also a traditional Saturday-night meal called Melaveh Malka. Interestingly, Chassidic tradition connects this meal with David and the coming Messiah.

This is a ritual that the early Christians kept. We see this clearly in Acts 20:7 “On the first day of the week, we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people...until midnight”. This is proven by the following three facts:



1. First of all, it mentions Sunday according to the Jewish calendar and not according to the Roman schedule. (For Romans or the Western world, a day starts at sunrise whereas for the Jews it starts on the evening of the day before. In other words, for Jews Sunday starts Saturday evening)
2. Secondly, they met to eat. “Breaking the bread” was in that case more than just the Lord’s supper, it was a collective meal to mark the end of the Shabbat. (This is what the Havdalah ceremony is all about).
3. Thirdly, the fact that they celebrated the Havdalah shows automatically that they kept the Shabbat as well. (This very ritual is to mark the end of the Shabbat)



4) Celebrate the seven biblical feasts.

Celebrating those feasts is one of the greatest spiritual revolutions happening in the Church today. They give us a yearly routine so we can better understand God and ourselves in a very practical way. Some see in them a prophetic calendar while others see surprising parallels with events around them.



They deeply strengthen the unity of our communities and our families; they transmit spiritual lessons to our children and create bridges from one generation to the next. Many of those feasts directly command us to intentionally remember certain principles or even command us to be happy. As a result, they contain instructions that are life changing!

Feasts like Tisha B'av, Simchat Torah, Hannukah, Purim or the receiving of the Torah at Shavuot could be optional since they are not explicitly commanded in the Bible. And obviously the way the 7 feasts are celebrated will greatly vary according to the traditions. Some will use the whole Haggadah at Passover, others will build and stay under tents at Sukkot and wave the Four Species, some will count the Omer (the 49 days between Passover and Shavuot), some will use the Machzor (a special prayer book) at Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah, etc....

5) Read the weekly Torah portions and preach accordingly.

You read out loud a section from the Law (called Parashat), then from the Prophets (called Haftarah), you can add a corresponding text from the New Testament and then have a sermon on any of the texts you read.

Although the liturgy was not fixed as it is today, the synagogues both read and preached the law and the prophets. ("For the law of Moses has been preached ...AND read in the synagogues every Sabbath"(Acts 15:21)), and the early Church followed that very pattern. We see this clearly in Acts 13:14-15 "On the Sabbath Paul and his companions entered the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak."

First of all, this ancient model brings a systematic and much deeper knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. (It is proven that people remember the Bible better through textual preaching than thematic preaching). Secondly, the Jewish traditional schedule of readings is adapted around the biblical feasts throughout the year, so it gives you harmony.



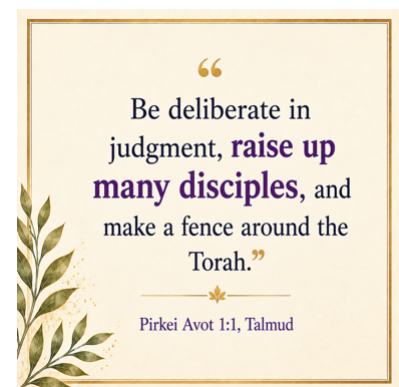
6) Return to the Jewish model of organization.

The early Christian church adopted the model of the first-century synagogue. As they held an essential yet secondary role to the Temple, the synagogue's primary focus was on prayer, study, and communal life. Consequently, they were not governed by a centralized authority. Their leadership rested in the hands of local elders, teachers, and scribes, rather than being concentrated in one recognized spiritual leader, as is often the case with the modern synagogue rabbi. (In fact, rabbis during that time held secular jobs, and this practice persisted until the 19th century!)

Restoring an organizational structure where a select few local leaders make decisions based on consensus not only aligns more closely with the early church model but also better reflects the Jewish temperament. (As the saying goes, "Where you have two Jews, you have three opinions and four political parties!")

7) Make disciples the Jewish way.

- **Rabbinic Schools and Teachers:** By the first century, there were already established rabbinic schools (yeshivot) where Jewish teachers (rabbis) taught students (talmidim). Famous rabbinic figures from this era, such as Hillel and Shammai, led schools that engaged in rigorous study and debate over Jewish law (Halacha) and interpretation of the Torah as well as the Oral Law. (Jesus himself was honored and called Rabbi 16 times and Teacher 63 times).



- **Imitate the teacher's life:** Rabbis would choose and mentor their disciples closely, not only instructing them in the details of the law but also modeling ethical behavior and piety. This mentorship was integral to the discipleship process, as students would often live with their teachers, observing their behavior and learning from their daily practices. As such the whole process was not merely academic, but it shaped the character and actions of the disciples.



- **Collective Learning:** The Jewish approach to study emphasized collective engagement with texts. Disciples would often study in pairs or small groups (chavruta), fostering a dynamic environment where discussion and debate were encouraged.
- **Practical Application:** Disciples were expected to apply their learning in everyday life, observing the mitzvot (commandments) and living according to the ethical standards taught by their mentors. This focus on action and practice distinguished Jewish discipleship from purely theoretical study.

Much of the same remains in many yeshivot today, and we could restore this Jewish approach if we want to make well trained disciples.

Bonus: Integrate some Jewish liturgical elements in your worship

With possibly the exception of the Aaronic blessing on children and families, this eighth and last principle is mostly relevant for messianic congregations, especially in Israel. If churches want to use the elements below, they will have to use much creativity and flexibility to integrate some of them into their worship services!

It is a historical fact that the early church used all the Jewish elements that we find today in synagogues like singing Psalms, the Amidah, the Shema, the Aaronic blessing and other liturgies. For instance, in Romans 11:33-36 and Ephesians 3:20-21, Paul is indirectly quoting the Kaddish, which is an ancient group of prayers used in Jewish liturgy that exalts God's greatness, sovereignty, and eternal glory and express a hope for the establishment of His kingdom.

So spontaneous prayers certainly have their place and value, but there is also a great power in reciting and memorizing the biblical truths that those various elements contain, particularly with the children.

The **Amidah** includes:

- Three opening blessings of praise.
- One middle blessing specific to Shabbat, focusing on the day's sanctity.
- Three closing blessings of gratitude.

The **Shema** is a central Jewish prayer that proclaims the oneness of God, expresses devotion, and includes commandments about loving God and teaching these principles to future generations.

The **Aaronic Blessing** is a biblical prayer for protection, grace, and peace, recited to bless the community and families. It has a very powerful influence on children that they will remember all their lives. (In traditional Judaism, only male descendants of Aaron (kohanim) can formally recite the Aaronic blessing).

Jewish liturgies for life-cycle events encompass the prayers and rituals associated with key milestones in a person's life, such as birth, coming of age, marriage, and death.



For all the above congregations could use different kinds of **Siddur**. (It is prayer book containing the daily, Shabbat, and holiday prayers). The “Koren Siddur” is very good, even if a few elements need to be filtered (like singing “there was no one greater than Moses”). Some messianic believers have come up with their own messianic Siddur.

Obviously, the format in which this is recited can vary. In most synagogues, particularly orthodox ones, it is all sung acappella, but you could use instrument with melodies of you own and have diversity and creativity for the whole order of the service.



More biblical commands if you want to go deeper

- **Non-Kosher food.** It includes pork and animals without split hooves and that do not chew cud, shellfish (such as shrimp, crab, and lobster, which lack fins and scales), and carnivorous animals (including predators like lions and bears). If not for religious reasons, at least do it for health reasons as it is scientifically proven that they are not good for your health!
- **Forbidden fats (chelev)** around the liver, kidneys, spleen, rumen, and other digestive organs, as well as fats surrounding the intestines.
- **Do not eat as well the sciatic nerve** (in Hebrew the “Gid Hanasheh”).
- **Do not eat blood** (It is even forbidden for non-Jews according to Acts 15:20). For this reason, have the meat slaughtered through the **shechita** ritual so it drains most of the blood and avoid some parts.
- **New moons/new months.** This one-day celebration included sacrifices in the temple, but even after its destruction, it was still kept (Colossians 2:16). Just like the moon renews itself every month, people are called to an introspection and to a fresh start every month. As with all Jewish feasts, it reinforces communal ties, and in some communities, it has a special significance for women who gather for prayer, worship or social events.
- **Charitable giving in an anonymous way (tzedakah).** For Jews it is more than an act of compassion, but an obligation that contributes to the Tikkun Olam (repairing the world). Unlike the public collections of many churches, doing it anonymously is the highest form of charity. Jesus Himself taught us this (Matthew 6:3). Much can be learned from Maimonides (Rambam) who outlines eight levels of charity, the highest level being in helping someone become self-sufficient. For instance, food stores could give almost expired products to the poor and declare them in a tax-deductible way. This could be a win-win for all.
- **Providing interest-free loans** is part of the above approach. In fact, it is forbidden to charge interest so all loans to fellow Jews should have zero interest.
- **Purity laws for women and men’s behavior with them** (no sexual relationships during menstruations and after childbirth). The bed (“Koite”) of Hebrews 13:4 seems to point out to this, and since the letter to Hebrews was written to Jewish believers, this would make sense.



- **Do not wear clothes from the opposite sex.** Obviously, the cultures vary, but do not dress with clothes that are typically associated with the opposite gender, underscoring the importance of maintaining traditional gender roles (Deuteronomy 22:5).

5 laws tied to the land of Israel

(That nevertheless can have a universal application, as you will see).

- **Give rest to the land every 7 years (Shemith karkaot).** This has relevance not only for Israeli farmers, but anyone wanting to do organic agriculture and yes... save the planet! The reason is that letting the land rest every seven years replenishes soil nutrients, improves its structure, controls weeds and pests, boosts microbial health, prevents erosion and even helps increase its carbon content! In other words, it not only enhances the fertility and productivity of our soils, but it prevents their long-term destruction and desertification!



- **Laws of pe'ah** (leaving the corners of fields unharvested for the poor), **leket** (leaving gleanings for the poor) could have relevance for so many poor countries.



- **Terumot and Ma'aserot, the agricultural tithes and offerings,** consist of setting aside certain portions of the harvest for the priests, the Levites, the poor, or sacred use. Even today, religious Jews separate them from produce grown in the Land of Israel, although these portions are generally no longer consumed as they were in the time of the Temple.
- **Cancelling debts every 7 years (Shemith kesafim).** Doing it could have tremendous consequences not only for individuals, but for businesses and even entire countries.
- **Jubilee Year (Yovel).** Beyond giving rest to the land, canceling debts, and freeing slaves—practices with practical relevance even today—it had a striking feature with potentially significant modern implications: the return of land to its original owners. For example, the “Jubilee 2000” campaign led to the cancellation of over \$100 billion in debt for 35 of the world’s poorest countries.

Commanded, but only Jews follow them

The laws below are commanded in the Bible, so that some could argue that they should have the same universal application as the laws above, but most people will admit that they are strictly limited to the Jewish culture, so we should keep it this way. (Imagine if Non-Jewish Christians all started to wear tzitzit and talit!)

- **Living in the Land of Israel** is considered by many Jewish authorities to be a biblical commandment, based on Numbers 33:53: “You shall take possession of the land and settle in it.” While its exact status has been debated, the Land of Israel has always held a unique place in Jewish faith, identity, and practice.
- **Birkat Kohanim, the priestly blessing.** Biblical command for the priests to bless Israel. Still practiced in Jewish communities, but only by Cohanim.
- **Brit Milah, circumcision,** is the sign of the covenant with Abraham, commanded for Israel but not imposed on non-Jews in Acts 15.
- **Pidyon HaBen (Redemption of the Firstborn)** is a ceremony still practiced today in which a firstborn son is symbolically redeemed from a Cohen thirty days after birth, in accordance with Numbers 18:15-16.
- **Mezuzah** (Parchment scroll with Torah verses affixed to doorposts)
- **Tefillin** (Leather boxes with Torah passages worn on the arm and forehead during prayers) are commanded in the Torah, but since there are no specific instructions on how to make and practice them, we are left with various traditions.
- **Tzitzit** (Fringes attached to the corners of a garment as a reminder of the commandments). The bible verses leave freedom so tradition defines the frequency (every day or only certain days?), the gender (Numbers 15:38 = Bene Israel includes all, so women could wear them), the age (under 13 allowed?), the color of a thread (blue, blue purple?) and even the length (Matthew 23:5 = what is too long?)



- **Tallit Gadol** (large prayer shawl worn during prayer services). It is not explicitly commanded in the Bible but developed on the basis that tzitzit have to be attached to something. Additionally, there is as well a **tallit katan** (small prayer shawl) that can be worn daily to fulfill the same commandment.

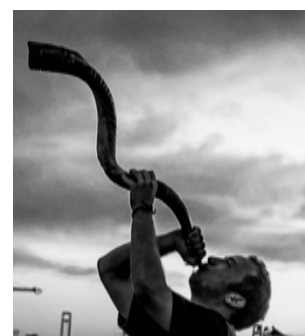


- **Hafrashat Challah.** There was a command in Numbers 15:19-20 to offer a portion of food to the priests and to God. Even after the destruction of the temple, the tradition was maintained to separate a portion of dough when making bread (called Challah). It is a way to acknowledge God's blessings and sanctify the act of preparing food. It is also an opportunity to gather people, especially women, before shabbat or any particular events to make bread and have special prayers.

- **Mikvah immersions** (Ritual baths, preferably in running water) are required for women for ritual impurity, including after menstruation, childbirth, and before marriage. It is even required for anyone touching dead bodies. It is often practiced before major festivals like Yom Kippur or certain spiritual activities, and for converts to Judaism (of which Christianity took baptism).



- **Blowing the shofar** is commanded in the Torah and primarily associated with Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but it has also been used in other contexts such as to alert the community in times of war or national crisis, during Sukkot, in the Jubilee year, historically in the Temple, and occasionally in wedding ceremonies or for special announcements. It is a call to repentance, reflection, renewal, and even a call to arms and prayer! It serves as a reminder of the divine sovereignty and the importance of spiritual awakening.



Biblical commands which could have implications today

- **Nazirite vows** are voluntary and strictly personal commitments described in Numbers 6:1-21 involving abstaining from wine, cutting, and avoiding contact with the dead. It can be done for any purpose and for any length of time. At the end of the vow period, they are required to shave their heads. (Acts 18:18). The purpose is to dedicate oneself to God for a period of heightened spiritual devotion and separation.
- 
- **Return lost property** to their rightful owner and do not ignore them if found.
 - **Return a Borrowed Item Promptly.** You must return borrowed items before sunset, ensuring fairness and avoiding causing hardship to the lender.
 - **Make restitution for stolen property**, including paying back more than what was stolen as a form of repentance and restoration.
 - **Levirate marriage** (Yibbum). If a man dies without a son, his brother is commanded to marry the widow to continue the deceased brother's lineage. In a few countries in Africa and Asia, where there is polygamy, levirate marriage is still practiced as a way to support widows and preserve family lineage.
 - **Cannot remarry his ex-wife** if she has married another man after their divorce. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). In other words, it goes against the very idea that if you divorced you must go back to your first spouse. (which the verse says it is an abomination!)
 - **Must be free from any military obligation or stressful situation during the first year of marriage** (Deuteronomy 24:5)
 - **Set clear boundaries for children.** (=Build a parapet (guardrail) on your roof to prevent falls.)
 - **Respect nature.** Do not make cuts or mar a fruit tree; for the first three years, fruit from newly planted trees is considered "orlah" and may not be consumed.
 - **Treat animals kindly.** Send away the mother bird before taking eggs or chicks, slaughtering an animal and its offspring on the same day, not boiling a young goat in its mother's milk, not muzzling an ox while it is treading grain, allowing the animal to eat as it works, not using an ox

and a donkey to plow together. Some interpret some of the above verses as showing “**transitional support**” to parents when their children leave the family nest.

- **Do not bring objects associated with idol worship into your home.** Some see this as anything that might have a spiritual connection with evil things (Deuteronomy 7:26).
- **Practice social justice.** Cities of refuge for accidental killers, prohibition against returning a runaway slave who seeks refuge, treat a woman captive in war with dignity, no false witnesses, harsh punishments for kidnapping.
- **Just weights and measures** were mandatory in commerce. This commandment teaches honesty in business dealings and condemns all forms of fraud, deception, and economic exploitation.
- **Wages must be paid on the same day** the work is completed, ensuring fairness and justice for laborers. Obviously today no one does this, particularly in the western world, but the principle remains: never delay paying your employees!
- **Do not put together what does not go together.** Not planting different kinds of seeds in the same field, breeding different species of animals, or wearing garments made from mixed fabric. (Some people and things are not meant to be together)
- **Make war justly** (offer peace first, no destruction of the environment, treat prisoners and animals fairly, etc....)

Not commanded in the Bible, but culturally recommended for Jewish believers, especially in Israel

- **Meat-milk separation.** One can easily argue that it is a wrong interpretation as the biblical text speaks against animal cruelty or against pagan rituals (compare it with Abraham who gave meat and butter to angels in Genesis 18:8) and groups like the Karait e Jews do not practice this, but as it is the standard practice among religious Jews, it is culturally needed if we want to reach out to them. The same can be said of all the subjects below:



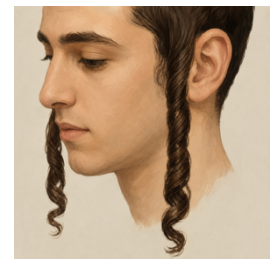
- **Tattoos.** Commanded in Leviticus 19:28 but since it is the contexts is associated with practices related to idolatry and pagan rituals; some do not accept it as a binding rule.
- **Bar/Bat Mitzvah.** It is not commanded in the Bible, as the tradition only appears in the Middle Ages. Obviously, since you can only do it if you are Jewish, it has no validity for Non-Jews.
- **Simchat Bat.** Celebration for the birth of a girl, similar to a Brit Milah (circumcision).



- **Wearing a kippah.** It is not commanded in the Bible. Its practice is historically absent in the first century and only comes later in the Middle Ages. This may explain also why men in the early church did not cover heads (1 Corinthians 11)



- **Peyot** are sidelocks or sideburns grown by men, following the commandment in Leviticus 19:27 not to shave the sides of the head. Since it is bound to a prohibition against practices associated with pagan mourning rituals or idolatry, some do not see this as being a binding rule. (Karaite Jews do not follow this).



- **The major fast of Tisha B'Av, together with the five minor fasts** (the Seventeenth of Tammuz, the Tenth of Tevet, the Fast of Gedaliah, the Fast of Esther, and the Fast of the Firstborn). Fasting on these specific days can have genuine spiritual value. Unlike Yom Kippur, these fasts are not explicitly commanded in the Bible but originate from Jewish tradition.

- **Jewish daily prayers**

Shacharit: Morning prayers with psalms, Shema, and Amidah.

Mincha: Afternoon prayers with Ashrei and Amidah.

Maariv: Evening prayers with Shema and Amidah.

There is also Musaf on special days and the Bedtime Shema before sleep.

- **The Siddur** is an excellent Jewish prayer book with the set order of prayers for daily, Sabbath, and holiday services. Much of its content comes from the Bible, especially Psalms, along with passages from the Torah and rabbinic additions like blessings and the Amidah. It reflects different traditions (e.g., Ashkenazi, Sephardi) and is used for both communal and personal worship.

- **Funeral customs:** The body is purified (tahara), buried usually within 24 hours, and followed by a 7-day mourning that is deeply communal (shiva), and an annual remembrance (Yahrzeit)).
- **Wedding ceremony:** Before: ritual bath to achieve spiritual purity (mikveh), ketubah (marriage contract that is read aloud during the ceremony), 7 specific blessings recited under a Chuppah (wedding canopy), breaking of the glass. After: the couple spends a short time alone (yichud))



THE ORAL LAW CONTAINS GREAT BLESSING BUT FALSE DOCTRINES AND LEGALISM!

- **All the rabbinical traditions**, called the “**Oral Law**” is the body of all the Jewish legal and interpretative traditions passed down orally. They complement the written Law of the Bible and are codified in the Mishnah (written codification of oral laws), the Talmud (rabbinic discussions on the Mishnah) and the Midrash (interpretative commentaries on the Bible).
- They have produced the “**Halakhah**”, the body of rules that practically governs Jewish life. Halakha is based on the commandments of the Torah, traditionally counted as 613, as well as many later rabbinic interpretations and rulings.



We must thoroughly filter all the elements of the Oral law, particularly those that are legalistic!

- **Some are GOOD,**
- **Some are NEUTRAL,**
- **But some are BAD!**

For instance, the same can be said of the **Kabbalah**, which has some interesting insights, some even claim they secretly reveal Jesus, but it has as well many esoteric elements that are close to witchcraft and heresy.



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