
Subject: Session 1: Hebrew Roots - SA in Crisis.

Dear Saints

Below please find Session 1 of an article I've been writing during the past weeks.

This article springs from deep concerns I have concerning the current "Torah Movement" in SA. Although at present relatively insignificant in numbers, I sense an ungodly force behind this movement seriously flexing its muscles in a display of evil power.

We would be wise not to ignore this phenomenon.

As ever in the past, I will not beat about the bush.

What had triggered this series of articles?

I recently received a friendly email from a person thanking and encouraging me in terms of the work I do. At the end of the letter, he briefly mentioned that he belonged to a Torah group and was quite exited about this experience.

I replied to his mail saying that I was cautiously optimistic about his Torah involvement, due to the fact that I often encounter strange views and practices amongst these groups on my ministry visits all over South Africa. I quickly wrote down 17 questions about key issues that concerned me most in these groups - to serve as a guideline whether this person's group was on the right track or not. In retrospect, many of these questions were clumsily put and not thoroughly thought through. (Wow, what alliteration!)

This person assumed that these questions were a well thought through standard list of questions which I had pulled from my files. For reasons unknown he mentioned that Eben was "taking on" the Torah movement, and forwarded the list of 17 questions to Torah group leaders all over South Africa - of whom several responded with varying quantities and degrees of venom. Fortunately, there were also friendly and appreciative ones here and there. After the initial avalanche, these responses nowadays arrive in a trickle.

Being quite used to harsh treatment, I was more alarmed by the content of these responses than the spirit in which they were written. To be quite frank - the mindset revealed by some of the responses were hair-raising! My worst fears were utterly exceeded!

I realised that the situation concerning these groups were much worse than I had observed during my travels. It seems that there is little coordination amongst these groups as far as doctrine is concerned, and that several American, Israeli and some influential South Africans seem to call the doctrinal shots via media like DVDs, CDs and books.

Now, please don't assume that I'm on a crusade against Torah teachers. I know quite a few in SA, and count several of them as dear friends. I know that there are well-meaning, agenda-less, godly men amongst them. I've sat for hours under the teaching of several of them.

But somebody needs to speak up about the sombre, lurking, growling spirit behind much that fly under the Torah banner.

It is time.

Eben Swart

Hebrew Roots: SA in Crisis.

by Eben Swart, Cape Town, August 2011

A fundamental Shift in Church History

I see a crisis brewing in South Africa:

God is moving sovereignly in the world, and particularly in South Africa. In our day, we are witnessing a **fundamental shift** in Christendom - a shift which students of Christianity would, years from now, label as one of the most fundamental changes in Christendom in its entire history.

We are witnessing the end of an epoch which lasted almost 1600 years - the final decades of the Institutional Church. As recently as 5 years ago, I was vehemently rebuked and rejected by several ministry leaders when I dared speak out on this phenomenon. Today, a mere 5 years later, it is widely accepted as fact.

What started years ago as a trickle, leaking from tiny cracks, has now become a raging torrent of new wine gushing from old, burst wineskins: Members are **leaving the institutional church** in droves. During the last 25 years the largest denomination in SA has lost 25% of its members at ever increasing rates, counting tens of thousands.

This phenomenon is not limited to SA. Worldwide, institutional church leaders are panic-stricken due to dwindling ranks. Centuries of running a business whilst playing church has caught up with the institution. The age of information and communication has opened the eyes of its membership. And they aren't satisfied with hamster-milling their church systems any more. They simply leave.

Where to?

Pause.

This is an important question.

It hits you in the face like a wet newspaper as soon as you arrive home after huffing out of the institution for the last time.

Where to now?

Personally, I've had to deal with this question hundreds, maybe thousands of times. At present, I have to answer it almost daily - because so many people ask!

To cut a VERY LONG story VERY SHORT:

I personally believe the answer lies in **House Churches**, Home Groups, Small Groups, whatever you'd like to call them. My wife and I have been part of such a group for the past 5 years - by far our best church experience ever. We aren't the leaders; we aren't even elders. We are nothing. Hallelujah!

And ever since the Lord started to reveal his Master Plan to us in prayer with many other intercessors, we have been encouraging and teaching folks wherever we went to start such groups. And, praise Him, many such groups have started during the past 5 years. And even more are still in the process of doing so. And many thousands are still to come!

Witnessing this gives me a thrill beyond description, since we are witnessing a re-enactment of the Book of Acts. The Father is up to something BIG!

But this article is not about House Churches, Home Groups or Small Groups.

I want to zoom in on a phenomenon which I believe is part of the Father's future strategy, but currently threatens to hijack or derail everything the Father is doing:

The rise of a number of related movements; some older, and some younger; some right-winged, some left-winged; some radical, some conservative.

Large percentages of those who leave their churches get entrapped into these:

A. Sabbatarianism, Messianism, Torah Groups, Hebrew Roots and Talmudism.

Each group overlaps with at least one other group, and forms part of an even more comprehensive spectrum of movements:

B. Israel Vision, Anglo(British) Israelism, Sabbatarianism, Messianism, Torah Groups, Hebrew Roots, Talmudism, Numerology and Witchcraft, Freemasonry and Cabbala.

All have one thing in common: **Study of the Torah.**

I would restrict myself to the groups mentioned in A.

Wherever I travel in SA, I often meet up with adherents of these movements. They are usually very nice people from whom I learn much. I love their insights and true craving for more. I've talked to them, laughed with them, lived with them, dined with them and worshipped with them. Some of them count amongst my best friends and most loyal supporters.

Smelling a Rat

But **I smell a rat amongst these movements.** Not one rat, but several.

This is serious.

By the Spirit of the Father I believe the spiritual future of this country is at stake.

I believe that, whatever we would decide to do with these rats will prove to be decisive concerning the future increase of The Kingdom in South Africa.

If the people who have left the institution flock into the minefields and drift sands of these movements, the Kingdom in SA might soon find itself hopelessly stuck.

A brand new old Prison!

The Scriptures say it is stupid to pour new wine into old wineskins. You lose the wine, as well as the skins.

Scripture also deems it stupid to sew a new patch onto an old garment. The patch rips the garment apart, and you lose both.

It is also stupid to escape from one prison, just to walk straight into the next one across the road. It might look promisingly different and more homely, but it's still a prison. You're still an inmate with no freedom.

I believe many who have escaped from the prison of the institutional church **have walked straight into a different kind of prison.** Few have paid attention to the clanging of the steel doors as they locked behind them.

If you've spent your entire institutional church life in dark, murky dungeons of passivity and nothingness, some healthy exercise feels good for the first couple of days. Until you realise you're actually serving **a life sentence of Hard Labour.**

To be continued ...