
Subject: Session 9: Hebrew Roots: SA in Crisis.

Dear Saints

Thank you for your overwhelmingly positive responses to Session 8 on the New Covenant. I praise the Father by his Spirit for everyone for whom the light has gone up!

Unfortunately, this wasn't the case for everybody.

Although I've written myself almost to a point of breathlessness in that session to express the essence of what needs to be said, some people still don't get it. They soberly and calmly tell me that they will simply carry on serving stone.

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What more can I say?

I submit to you Session 9 on the Religious spirit.

For those who have ears - let them hear!

Eben Swart

Previously in: **Hebrew Roots: SA in Crisis:**

1. We saw how the Father is moving hundreds of thousands of believers worldwide from Institutional Churches into House Churches. But we see how large percentages of these in SA get entrapped into related movements: Sabbatarianism, Messianism, Torah Groups, Hebrew Roots and Talmudism. We believe this phenomenon could have either a blessed, or dire effect on the spiritual future of the Kingdom in SA.
2. We saw how Reformed Theology has declared the Torah obsolete. We saw how Torah-truths were rediscovered in our time. And we mentioned that some of these study groups become deceived.
3. We saw how Torah groups often commit the same evil that they have originally set out to oppose. We see dishonesty amongst some Torah followers concerning their viewpoints towards the Greek mindset and language.
4. The Hebrew language is neither original, nor holy. If we've made it into an idol, we need to repent of sin. The pictograms of the Hebrew alefbet, as well as its associated concepts and numbers are, at best, speculative. Neither they, nor the *parshahs*, may ever be employed to explain scripture or to prophesy.
5. Hebrew Roots teachers teach that the Biblical feasts aren't JEWISH feasts, but THE FATHER's feasts - but then celebrate them in extra-Biblical, Jewish tradition. This is dishonest.
6. Torah and Hebrew Roots teachers reject pagan and extra-Biblical feasts, but at the same time, some teach their followers to celebrate the extra-Biblical feasts of Purim and Chanukah, and even the fulfilled Pesach. Why? Simply because these feasts are Jewish! This too, represents dishonest and irresponsible teaching.
7. In their effort to "restore" the "sacred names" of the Godhead, Torah groups have embraced and propagated half-truths, and spread the lie far and wide that the name "Jesus" is of pagan origin. Also, Torah groups have invented a myriad of "original Hebrew names" for the godhead, thereby causing gross confusion in the Body.
8. In the New Covenant, the Torah gets written on our innermost flesh and minds - circumcision of the heart. Our inner Ruach-rabbi interprets and explains the Spirit (which gives life) of this fleshy Torah unto us - as opposed to the letter of the Torah, which kills. Walking in the Spirit of the Torah might violate its letter!

In this issue:

The Religious Spirit behind most Torah Teachings

The Nature of a Religious Spirit

The **Religious spirit** is an ugly demon. It represents just one of the many faces of **pride** and **puffed-upness**.

It loves **system** and **structure**.

It loves **rule** and **ritual**.

It loves **solemnity** and **holier-than-thou**.

It loves **pompous, grandiloquous language**.

It esteems **outward display**.

It loves **tradition** and **resists change**.

It loves **exclusivity**.

It uses all of the above **to put itself one notch above the rest**.

It is **proud** and **haughty**.

It considers itself **superior** and **untouchable**.

It feels comfortable inside a **familiar cage**, and feels threatened by **freedom**.

It deems itself to be **right**, and all others **wrong**.

It is **unteachable** and **pedantic**.

It is **intolerant** and **short-fused**.

It **lacks creativity**.

It serves as a **smokescreen** for **deep insecurity**.

It is **Spirit-less**.

The Religious spirit could be **recognized by the same principles** wherever in the world one might encounter it - amongst Christians or unbelievers. Whether it

be Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Freemasonry, Roman Catholicism, Judaism or whatever – the Religious Spirit lacks the creativity to disguise itself.

Here's what it looks like:

1. **Headwear & hairstyle:**

Curiously, the use of peculiar **headgear** and **hairstyles** seems to be one of the primary symptoms of a residing Religious Spirit. It somehow loves to wear some or other form of (traditional) **headgear** or **hairstyle of recognition** on his/her head. Whether it be a miter, turban, headcloth/hijaab/niquaab, medora, fez, **kippa/yarmulke**, flower wreath, sun or moon disc, tonsure, dreadlocks, baldness, **crew cuts**, **beards**, mohawks, mullets or whatever – the Religious Spirit loves the outward display and associated elevation and exclusivity.

2. **Attire:**

For the same reasons as above, the Religious Spirit loves to make an outward display of attire: Togas, mantles, burkas/jellabas/abayas, **prayer shawls/talits**, **tsit-tsit**, habits, frocks, cowls, pallia, suits, etc.

3. **Language:**

The Religious Spirit loves the elevation and exclusivity that the use of ancient or foreign, 'original' languages allow: Latin (Roman Catholicism & Freemasonry), Arabic (Islam), **Hebrew** (Hebrew Roots & Torah Groups), Hindi (Hinduism), Mandarin (Buddhism), etc.

4. **Special symbols of authority or power:**

Titles like Professor, Doctor, Reverend, Padre, Pope/Papa, Father, Master, **Rabbi**, Lama, Prophet, Priest, Sheik, etc.
Physical instruments like crosiers, scepters, crosses, staffs, flails, **shofars**, etc.

5. **System, Structure, Ritual & Solemnity:**

Lack of Spirit life causes a **vacuum** – which is then filled with **system, structure, ritual & solemnity**. Actually, system and structure represent the crutches or wheelchair of a paralytic or lifeless body. The Religious Spirit thrives on these:

Set, prescribed rituals for actions and speech.

Formularies.

Prescribed songs.

Liturgy.

Emphasis on rule & correctness.

Relationship with books, rather than a Person.

I think you get the idea.

Even amongst regular Christians I know quite a few who have an excellent relationship with their **Bibles**, but almost no relationship with **Jesus**. Amongst many Torah followers this phenomenon is just magnified many times.

Above, I attempt to demonstrate to you the context of the **distinctive features** of Messianism, Torah groups and Hebrew Roots in our time.

The context is **religiosity** – absolutely no different than the religiosity of almost every heathen religion on the face of this planet.

It was like that under the "Old" Covenant, and is the same under the "New" Covenant.

But, under the "Old" Covenant, though religious, it was valid, since much of what is mentioned above was sanctioned by Moses – who received it from the Father personally.

And this is exactly why, in retrospect, the apostle Paul calls these things "*the elements of the world*" (Gal. 4:3) and "*weak and beggarly elements*" (Gal. 4:9). Although these weak and beggarly elements of the world were ordained by the Father, and came in glory (remember Moses' face?), they still represented LETTER.

Paul was a minister of a much BETTER covenant – a covenant of the SPIRIT which by far surpasses the glory of the covenant of LETTER.

*... He is the mediator of a **better covenant**, which was established upon better promises.* – Heb. 8:6.

*... our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant-- not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, **came with glory**, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be **even more glorious**? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! **For what was glorious has no glory now** in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, **how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!** – 2 Cor. 3:5 – 11.*

*Now that [covenant] which decayeth and waxeth old **is ready to vanish away.*** – Heb. 8:13.

Personal Experiences

I never cease to be amazed at **the amount of gloryless religiosity present amongst most Torah and Hebrew Roots groups.**

Wherever I travel across our beautiful country, I usually find more than 50% of the above symptoms amongst most groups.

Whenever members would speak to me, their faith language would be a **concoction of Afrikaans and Hebrew, or English and Hebrew**, with a **strong shot of sacred names in between**. When asked why they mix their language thus, the response is usually that the Hebrew terms are **more correct**, or that they **so love these words** – seemingly because they are so "original". It never seems to occur to them that **nobody** besides their own insular group **understands their Hebrew jargon** – however correct it might be.

*"If a leader can't get a message across clearly
and motivate others to act on it,
then having a message doesn't even matter."
– Gilbert Amelio*

Why call Biblical Mortals by their Hebrew Names?

These members even call **mere mortals** in the Bible by their (sacred?) **Hebrew names**, like Jacob (Jakov), Moses (Moshe) or Paul (Shaul), etc.

The use of sacred names of the Godhead at least have Biblical merit, but why call Biblical characters by their Hebrew names? Once I know that "Peter" means "rock" in the original, can anybody please explain to me why I should call him by his Hebrew name?

If these believers were to be **honest** and **consistent** in this, then they need to call South Africans with the surname Roux by their original French surname, i.e.

Rouge (meaning "red"). Also, Viljoen should be "Villion", Terblanche should be Terra Blanche, Fourie should be Faure, etc. But these Torah people don't call South Africans such. Why then do the "original" Hebrew thing with Biblical characters?

Why pray with Talits (prayer shawls)?

Torah people often pray with Jewish prayer shawls (*talits*) over their heads. Personally, I still don't understand why.

The **talit** was supposed to **foreshadow the tabernacle** (of David).

The tabernacle, in turn, was supposed to **foreshadow the temple** (of Solomon).

The temple (of Solomon), in turn, was supposed to **foreshadow the bodies of believers** (as a temple of the Ruach) – with rent veil and bold access to the throne room.

Why on earth would one desire to **force the fulfillment** (our bodies) **under the shadow** (*talit*) all over again?

That's not forward progression – it's backward regression!

The Star of David/Remphan?

To add insult to injury – most of these *talits* (straight from Jerusalem!) sport the **deeply occult "Star of David"** – often even **ritually kissed** by devotees. **This symbol can be found in virtually every branch of the occult.** If you don't believe me, go and have a look yourself! No other symbol in the world so permeates the occult world than the "Star of David".

In the past, I've heard laborious Hebrew Roots teachings on how this symbol stems from the rose of Sharon – which teaching is firstly extra-biblical, and secondly utter nonsense. Not even this forced teaching explains the inner lines of this symbol. Actually, the inner lines defy this dubious teaching!

The odds lean heavily towards the fact that this symbol rather hails from the Biblical **"star of Remphan"** – on which topic the Bible is not too positive.

Do you really desire to put yourself physically under the authority of the star of Remphan?

Even more so:

Why do we see such an utter obsession with this star amongst Torah people? Where do they get it from?

Or is this just another manifestation of the worship and esteem of everything Jewish or Judaic? Just another form of **idolatry**?

Absence of true Godliness.

Perhaps the most evident symptom of a residing religious spirit is the **abundance of activity, study and ritual** amongst many Torah folks, but **frequent absence of godliness**:

Evangelism:

What good is it if one can **recite prayers and passages in Hebrew**, but have no idea (and could honestly care less about) **how to bring the gospel to your Xhosa or Zulu housekeeper** in her native tongue?

What good is it if one **knows the Hebrew names of the Godhead and Biblical characters**, but has no idea (and could honestly care less) **what the names of the unbelievers at one's workplace are**?

What good is it if one can conduct lengthy arguments from Scripture why the apostle Paul (sorry, Shaul) seemed to **keep the Biblical feasts**, but have **never brought the gospel to** (and could honestly care less about) **any other soul** like Shaul did?

What good is it if one **knows exactly how to count days to celebrate Biblical feasts**, but has never counted (and could honestly care less about) **how many unreached countries there are in the world**?

What good is it if one has **been to Israel several times** but could care less about the **unsaved in Timbuktu**?

What good is it if one can **explain the symbolism of the Tabernacle**, but has no idea **how to explain the gospel to an unbeliever**?

Compassion:

What good is it if one knows exactly when, how and for how long to **fast**, but one has **never fed one hungry person**?

What good is it to have one's regular **Shabbat meal**, but one could **care less about those with no meal**?

What good is it if one prides oneself in being **the priest of one's home**, but **could care less about fathers who don't have homes to raise their families in**?

What good is it if one knows the Torah by heart from **many readings**, but **cares less about those who cannot read**?

Prophecy:

What good is it if one can **follow intricate prophetic lines** throughout the Bible, but have no idea what the **rhema voice of the Ruach** sounds like?

What good is it if I can **recite prophetic passages in Hebrew**, but have no idea how to teach new believers **how to hear the voice of the Ruach**?

What good is it if I can **see Jesus in every Torah verse or symbol**, but I **reject the flesh covenant** of Jesus?

I could go on and on and on along this line.

No one Christian can do EVERYTHING I suggest above. But you should be into at least SOME of them!

Are you? Or are you only into Torah?

Not surpassing the Righteousness of the Pharisees.

The point of the matter is this:

Jesus came to earth as a man to teach, suffer and die to save mankind. **He fed the hungry, healed the sick, comforted the broken-hearted and wept for his friends. He did nothing that He did not see his Father doing.**

If your study of the Torah does not press you to do likewise – then you have simply lost contact with the reality of the Spirit of Jesus. The Ruach is not behind what you are doing. Then you are simply hamster-milling the Torah. *Parshah* after *parshah*. Week after week. Month after month. Year after year.

Disappearing behind the "Torah veil".

Sadly, over many years, **I've seen several dear friends entering, and disappearing behind a proverbial "veil" labeled "Torah"**. Once inside, they are somehow kept rather busy, since one sees very few re-appearing.

Having once been devoted, passionate folks with a good measure of godliness, they become entangled in a web of Torah must-do's and programs.

Gone are their prayers and intercession (they now pray in Hebrew and primarily for Israel, and not any more for the lost), their **compassion** (they now travel to Israel in stead of running soup kitchens), their **zeal for the lost** (they now rally believing folks together to study Torah, rather than rallying people for prayer and intercession).

They are **seldom available** for simple friendship, because they are forever attending Torah or Hebrew classes, away on tour through Israel, resting on Shabbat,

planning a feast or manufacturing menorahs.

The steady, unbridled Perversion

And in order to keep people motivated, the **level of "revelation"** of these groups has to **deepen** every year.

So, somewhere along the line, **the Talmud slips in** unobtrusively.

A while later **Judaism** becomes progressively sensible and attractive.

Meanwhile, slowly and unnoticed, progression is made through the Scriptural **interpretation levels** of *p'shat*, *drash* and *remez*.

When *sod* level arrives, **Cabbala** suddenly seems acceptable, logical, clever and appealing ...

Never in any Torah group or Hebrew Roots study have I ever encountered any **warnings** against these, seen any **parameters** laid down or noticed **boundaries** drawn.

The ever-changing Flavour

And, as in the institutional church, **the flavour changes every year:**

Every year the **State of Israel** is in a new **crisis** to rally Torah people behind.

Every year new **archeological discoveries** are made.

Every year American Torah and Hebrew teachers produce new **books, DVDs and teachings.**

Every year new **pictogrammic interpretations** for Hebrew words become available.

Every year a new **eschatological "event"** happens in Jerusalem.

Every year a new **international teacher** visits South Africa.

Every year a new **pattern is discovered** in the Torah, yielding instant fame and prophetic status to its discoverer.

Every year new **tours to the Holy Land** get organized.

Or whatever.

There's enough "stuff" there to keep one busy for three or four lifetimes. Keeping one occupied and away from everything that was important to Jesus.

Very few ever re-appear from behind that "Torah-veil". The few who do, are usually somewhat bewildered for quite a period, struggling to fill the "busy" gaps with sensible Christianity. Others eventually become rather strange and estranged people. Eventually, most of them gradually fade or completely disappear from the Kingdom radar screen.

Why would anybody opt to live this kind of life?

Simply because it is much easier to **follow a set of rules** than to **search out the Father's heart** by his Spirit.

In the former, I'm in control. In the latter, He's in control.

The former requires no faith. The latter runs on faith!

Hamster-milling the Torah is dead religion. Lifeless works. Lethal letter. Puffing-up knowledge. Not surpassing the righteousness of the Pharisees and Sadducees. No life-giving Spirit.

*In a thousand pounds of **law**, there's not an ounce of **love**.*
- Proverb

*At first glance **legalism** seems hard,
but actually **freedom in Christ** is the harder way.
It is relatively easy not to murder, but hard to reach out in love;
easy to avoid a neighbour's bed, hard to keep a marriage alive;
easy to pay taxes, hard to serve the poor.*
- Philip Yancey in *What's so amazing about Grace?*

The Torah does not satisfy

On a recent ministry trip I met up with a kind, devoted lady who was really excited about what she was learning in her Torah group. She'd been a member for a number of years. She was learning so much, she said, that **her learning makes her ever hungrier for more.**

She excitedly told me that she had even asked her group "**When is this hunger going to stop?** I just forever crave for more and more ...!"

I had to restrain myself not to reply with the following two verses:

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." - John 6:35

... whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. - John 4:14

Have you ever contemplated this:

Those whom Jesus addressed above, already had access to the Torah for more than a thousand years. **But the Torah could never satisfy.**

Only when Jesus arrived in their midst, true satisfaction was possible.

And today, if your Torah studies cause you to forever hunger and thirst, you need to know **that Jesus is not in it.** If you were into the Bread of Life or Living Water, you wouldn't hunger or thirst any more. If you grow ever hungrier, it is indicative that you're into something else than Jesus.

Remaining forever hungry is actually what happens to an inmate in a prison. You are hamster-milling the Torah, and simply enjoying the exercise.

Which Items were on Jesus' Priority List?

Despite being a rabbi Himself, of the **four times** that Jesus sent out His disciples to do practical training, **He never sent them to teach people to observe the Torah.** What was His practical Training Curriculum about?

1. Preaching this message: **The Kingdom of Heaven is near** - Mat. 10:7
2. **Healing** the sick - Mat. 10:8
3. Raising the **dead** - Mat. 10:8
4. Cleansing **those who have leprosy** - Mat. 10:8

5. Driving out **demons** - Mat. 10:8
6. Ministering without **money** - Mat. 10:9
7. Ministering from a position of **little convenience** - Mat. 10:10
8. Blessing **homes that receive you** - Mat. 10:12
9. Acting prophetically against **towns who don't** - Mat. 10:14
10. Being **shrewd** and **innocent** - Mat. 10:16
11. Being **flogged in synagogues** - Mat. 10:17
12. Witnessing before rulers **about Jesus** - Mat. 10:18
13. Being hated because of **Jesus** - Mat. 10:22
14. Persecution because of **Jesus** - Mat. 10:22
15. Being called worse than demonic names because of **Jesus** - Mat. 10:25

Torah groups and Hebrew Rooters have little interest in Jesus' curriculum.
Here's what usually happens:

1. Preaching this message: **Heed the Torah**. - Ex. 19:5 - 6.
2. **Talking about kosher** to stay healthy.
3. Raising the **stone tablets**.
4. Cleansing **by the Torah**.
5. Driving out **all pagan names, languages and feasts**.
6. Ministering without **the New Covenant**.
7. Ministering from a position of **superior knowledge**.
8. Blessing **wife and kids on Sabbath**.
9. Acting prophetically against **those who don't receive the Stone Torah**.
10. Being **clever** and **learned**.
11. Suffering **because we're different from the rest of the Body**.
12. Witnessing **about the Torah and the Feasts**.
13. Being hated because of **Moses**.
14. Persecution because of **Moses**.
15. Being called bad names because of **Moses**.

Whether these last 15 items be good or bad is debatable - I have exaggerated them on purpose.

But they serve as a reality check: If you never get into the first 15, **you have simply lost contact with the reality of Jesus**.

If you have despised your Christian birthright **to be a co-worker with Jesus in the Kingdom of Heaven** and **sold it for a slab of stone**, you might later find that, like Esau, even your tears before the Father won't bring it back.

The first 15 priorities are on His heart for us - and we need to align our hearts with His.

To be continued ...