

# The Original Faith

**By Norman B. Willis**

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Adapted from the Nazarene Israel study.

Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are adapted from the New King James Version with the original Hebrew names restored.

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## Author's Notes:

Some want to know what English version I use. I typically begin with the New King James Version, and correct the names to the Hebraic forms. Whenever there is a question, I try to display the source texts alongside the English, so you can check things out for yourself. The Hebrew is from the Hebrew Masoretic Text. For the Aramaic I have copied the Peshitta Aramaic in BibleWorks 8, using a Hebrew block letter font, noting also the English translation used.

Some want to know why I reference Greek texts when I believe in a Semitic inspiration. Simply, while I believe the Renewed Covenant was inspired either in Hebrew or Aramaic, the two extant Aramaic texts (Peshitto and Peshitta) cannot be the originals, as there are just too many corruptions. I may yet use them in future works, but since the Greek texts are older, they are generally more valuable for textual analysis.

I believe that Scripture is the highest and best authority on all matters of doctrine. I have tried simply to show what YHWH's Word states, and then provide only enough commentary to show how the verses relate to each other. My hope is that you will focus on Yahweh's words, rather than my own.

If you have suggestions for making this study better, please email me at [servants@nazareneisrael.org](mailto:servants@nazareneisrael.org).

May Yahweh lead us all into His perfect truth.

Norman Willis

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***Yehudah (Jude) 3***

***3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.***

## What Was the Original Faith?

Do you want to keep the faith the Messiah taught His apostles to keep? Some people are quick to claim that the Messiah's disciples were all "Christians," but is this really what the Biblical record shows?

What if the Bible showed that the Messiah and His disciples thought of themselves as Nazarene Israelites, and the "Christians" were a different group entirely? What would it mean?

One of the most influential Church Fathers of all time was Epiphanius of Salamis. He lived from 310 to 403 CE. He said that the Nazarenes and the Christians were two separate (but related) groups who kept two related (but different) faiths in the fourth century CE—and that is how it still is today.

***"The Nazarenes do not differ in any essential thing from them (meaning the Orthodox Jews), since they practice the customs and doctrines prescribed by Jewish Law; except that they believe in Christ. They believe in the resurrection of the dead, and that the universe was created by God. They preach that God is One, and that Jesus Christ is His Son. They are very learned in the Hebrew language. They read the Law (meaning the Law of Moses).... Therefore they differ...from the true Christians because they fulfill until now [such] Jewish rites as the circumcision, Sabbath and others." [Epiphanius, "Against Heresies," Panarion 29, 7, pp. 41, 402]***

In *Panarion (Against Heresies)*, Epiphanius attempts to prove that the Catholics were the true descendants of the first century apostles (James, John, Peter, Paul, et al). Although Epiphanius' claim was widely accepted in his day, many other Catholic scholars have disagreed with him since.

Among those who disagreed with Epiphanius was Marcel Simon, a devout Catholic expert on the first century assembly. Marcel Simon said Epiphanius knew that it was not the Catholics, but the Nazarenes, who were the real descendants of the first century assembly—yet Marcel Simon still called the Nazarenes "heretics" because he said the Catholic Church did not like their doctrines.

***They (Nazarenes) are characterized essentially by their tenacious attachment to Jewish observances. If they became heretics in the eyes of the (Catholic) Mother Church, it is simply because they remained fixed on outmoded positions. They well represent, (even) though Epiphanius is energetically refusing to admit it, the very direct descendants of that primitive community, of which our author (Epiphanius) knows that it was designated by the Jews, by the same name, of 'Nazarenes'." [First Century expert Marcel Simon, Judéo-christianisme, pp 47-48.]***

Notice how Marcel Simon acknowledged that the Nazarenes were the direct spiritual descendants of the first century apostles (James, John, Peter, et al); yet still he called the Nazarenes "heretics" because they earnestly contended for the faith once delivered to the saints, just as Jude 3 commands.

**Yehudah (Jude) 3**

**3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.**

But how can Marcel Simon call the Nazarenes “heretics” for obeying Jude 3? Are we “heretics” if we do what Scripture says? Are not the real heretics those who teach against what Scripture says?

If the Nazarenes were the direct spiritual descendants of the Jewish apostles, it makes sense that they kept “such Jewish rites as the Sabbath, circumcision, and others,” because in His very first sermon the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) told us not to think that He had come to do away with the Laws of Moses, or the Prophets.

**Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:17-19**

**17 “Think not that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but (only) to fulfill.**

**18 For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, nothing at all shall pass from the Law, till all is fulfilled.**

**19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

**But whoever does and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”**

It is important that Yeshua said not to think that He had come to do away with the law. Being a good Son,

Yeshua would not have disobeyed His Father Yahweh (Jehovah), Who had said to be careful not to add or subtract anything from the Laws of Moses.

**Devarim (Deuteronomy) 12:32**

**32 “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”**

Sometimes people think that the Laws of Moses were done away with, because some passages in the Renewed Covenant (New Testament) are easily misunderstood. Many of these easily misunderstood passages are found in the Apostle Paul’s (Shaul’s) writings. However, the Apostle Peter (Kepha) forewarns us, so we will not misinterpret them.

**Kepha Bet (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter) 3:15-17**

**15 And think of the long-suffering of our Master as Salvation (literally: Yeshua), as also our beloved brother Shaul (Paul) wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him;**

**16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable twist, to their destruction, as also the rest of the Scriptures.**

**17 Then beloved, you being forewarned, watch; lest being led by the error of Lawlessness (KJV: error of the wicked) you should fall from your own steadfastness.**

Notice that in verse 16, Kepha tells us that there was a group of believers in his day who were “untaught and unstable,” in that they twisted Shaul’s writings to make it seem as if they say something they do not.

In verse 17 Kepha warns us not to be led by the “error of lawlessness.” The King James Version renders this as the “error of the wicked,” but Strong’s Concordance tells us that this word has to do with enacting or instituting something (like a substitute religion) which is contrary to the Law(s of Moses).

***NT:113 atesmos (ath'-es-mos); from NT:1 (as a negative particle) and a derivative of NT:5087 (in the sense of enacting); lawless, i.e. (by implication) criminal:***

The Aramaic Peshitta (NT) also agrees that we are to guard ourselves from going after the error of those who are without the Laws of Moses (Aramaic: דדלא נמוס).

***Kepha Bet (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter) 3:17, Murdock Peshitta  
17 Ye therefore, my beloved, as ye know [these things] beforehand, guard yourselves, lest, by going after the error of the lawless, ye fall from your steadfastness.***

In context, Kepha tells us there was a false faith in his day which misinterpreted Shaul and preached against the Laws of Moses. Isn’t that what Christians do?

Catholic Archbishop James Cardinal Gibbons tells us that Scripture “enforces the religious observance of Saturday,” but then proudly boasts that the church nonetheless proclaimed Sunday as the day of worship.

***'But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we (the Catholic Church) never sanctify.'***

***[Archbishop James Cardinal Gibbons, The Faith of our Fathers, 88th ed., pp. 89.]***

Reverend Stephen Keenan tells us that the Catholic Church had the power to change the days of worship on her own, even though Scripture does not give her this authority.

***"Question: Have you any other way of proving that the Church has power to institute festivals of precept?***

***"Answer: Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her—she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority."***

***[Reverend Stephen Keenan, A Doctrinal Catechism, 3rd ed., p. 174.]***

Isn’t Stephan Keenan’s argument circular reasoning? He argues that the church must have had the power to change the days of worship just because it did so.

The Prophet Daniel warns us about a Little Horn who would attempt to change the appointed times of worship (from Sabbath to Sunday), and who would also attempt to change the Laws of Moses (which regulate the rest of the Body’s conduct).

***Daniel 7:25  
25 He shall speak pompous words against the Most High,  
Shall persecute the saints of the Most High,  
And shall intend to change (the festival) times and (the) Law.***

***And the saints shall be given into his hand  
For a time and times and half a time.***

As we will see later in this study, this is precisely what the Catholic Church did. It changed the appointed times of worship and also persecuted the saints of the Most High (i.e., the Nazarenes) who kept the original festival times and the Law. But isn't it a sin to change Scripture like that?

## **Why the Same Days of Worship?**

The Roman 'Christian' calendar tells us that the day begins at midnight (i.e., the 'witching hour'). Scripture, however, tells us that the day begins at evening.

***B'reisheet (Genesis) 1:31b***

***31b So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.***

Leviticus 23:32 confirms that Yahweh defines a day as lasting from evening to evening (i.e., from sunset to sunset), rather than from midnight to midnight.

***Vayiqra (Leviticus) 23:32b***

***32b "On the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall celebrate your Sabbath (i.e., rest day)."***

The 'Sabbath' discussed in Leviticus 23:32 (above) is the Day of Atonement, but the weekly Sabbath also lasts from evening to evening. Luke 4:16 tells us that Yeshua (Jesus) also kept this Sabbath, which lasts from sunset to sunset.

***Luqa (Luke) 4:16***

***16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.***

The Apostle Shaul (Paul) also continued to go into the synagogues on the Sabbath day even many years after Yeshua's resurrection.

***Ma'asei (Acts) 13:14***

***14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.***

In the last chapter we saw how Yeshua told us not to think that the Law or the Prophets had been done away with. There is nothing vague about this.

***Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:17-19***

***17 "Think not that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but (only) to fulfill.***

***18 For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, nothing at all shall pass from the Law, till all is fulfilled.***

Nevertheless, the Christian Church tells us that since Yeshua fulfilled the Law, we should no longer keep the Sabbath and Yahweh's festivals, but that we should keep Sunday, Christmas, and Easter instead. This is very curious considering that Sunday, Christmas, and Easter are never commanded anywhere in Scripture.

When was the switch from the evening to evening Hebrew calendar to the midnight to midnight Roman one? Christian scholars often use Acts 20:7-11 as an alleged 'proof text' that the disciples met on the Roman (midnight to midnight) Sunday. This might at first seem to make sense, but in the end it does not add up.

***Ma'asei (Acts) 20:7-11***

***7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Shaul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.***

***8 There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together.***

***9 And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Shaul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.***

***10 But Shaul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him."***

***11 Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.***

Since first century Judea was under Roman control, it might seem to make sense that the disciples gathered on Sunday morning and listened to Shaul for almost twenty-four hours. However, some things do not make much sense. Why would there be so many lamps in the upper room if the disciples met on a Sunday morning? And why would they only eat one meal in a twenty-four hour period? Considering that Shaul was teaching in a Jewish synagogue, these things do not make a whole lot of sense.

Religious Jews are a very tradition oriented people. They usually worship at their synagogue (or at the temple) on Sabbath; after Sabbath is over they often get together at a friend or a relative's house to break bread and fellowship, so as to extend the day of worship and rest as long as possible. However, this is not a new day of worship: it is simply a normal extension of the Sabbath. If we read Acts chapter 20 in this light, we can see that the reason there were so many lamps in the upper room is that they initially met after sundown 'Saturday night' (and then talked until the break of day 'Sunday morning').

So if Sunday worship does not come from Scripture, then it comes from men. History tells us that one of the earliest references to “Sunday” worship comes from the Christian apologist Justin Martyr (circa 150 CE). For example, we are told that all of the people gathered together to worship on “the day called Sunday” (which is named the ‘sun’ day in honor of the sun).

***And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place....***

***[Justin Martyr, First Apology, Chapter 67 - Weekly Worship of the Christians, circa 150 CE, Biblesoft]***

Justin Martyr is using a different practice than is found in Scripture, because Scripture does not call the days of the week by a name. Rather, Scripture numbers the days of the week (first day, second day, third day, and so forth); only the Sabbath has a name (Shabbat). The term ‘Shabbat’ means “the rest” or “the abstention” (from doing our own will).

In contrast to this, Justin Martyr tells us that the reason his assembly worshipped on Sunday (on the Roman Calendar) was that it was the day Elohim (G-d) made the world, and that it was the day Yeshua first appeared to His disciples.

***But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and***

***on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.***

***[Justin Martyr, First Apology, Chapter 67 - Weekly Worship of the Christians, circa 150 CE, Biblesoft]***

Justin Martyr’s reasons for worshipping on Sunday might sound good, except that neither the Messiah nor His apostles met on Sunday. Also, it is not what the Creator tells us to do, so to change the day of meeting is to change the appointed festival times and the law). Nonetheless, Sunday worship slowly began to spread.

Following the same pattern, the Passover began to give way year by year to the pagan festival of Easter (Ishtar). First the date was changed, from the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (or Aviv) on the Hebrew calendar, to the first Sunday after the Vernal Equinox (which is an important day in pagan sun worship calendars). Finally, the name of the festival was changed from Passover to Easter, in honor of the Babylonian mother-goddess Ishtar (Easter or Ashtoreth). Eventually pagan fertility rites (such as dying eggs in blood) and other sun worship traditions (such as praying to the sun at sunrise) were brought into the worship on those days.

The Church Father Eusebius records that a great crisis called the ‘Quartodeciman Controversy’ erupted when Bishop Victor of Rome began to demand that all of the assemblies keep the Passover on Sunday rather than on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (Aviv). The bishops of Asia insisted on keeping Passover on the Hebrew calendar, as the Apostles Phillip and John had taught them.

***A question of no small importance arose at that time. For the parishes of all Asia, as from an older tradition, held that the fourteenth day of the moon, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should be observed as the feast of the Saviour's passover...But it was not the custom of the churches in the rest of the world...But the bishops of Asia, led by Polycrates, decided to hold to the old custom handed down to them. He himself, in a letter which he addressed to Victor and the Church of Rome, set forth in the following words the tradition which had come down to him. [Eusebius, Church History, Book V, Chapters 23, 25, circa 190-195 CE]***

Eusebius also records a letter that Polycrates, a major figure in Asia, personally wrote to Bishop Victor of Rome, protesting his decision to change the date of the Passover from the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (Aviv) to a Sunday. Polycrates points out that the tradition of keeping the Passover on the Hebrew calendar was passed down by the apostles Philip and John themselves, and that the tradition had been kept over generations by a number of distinguished and devout families. He insists that all believers should do as the Scriptures tell us, rather than accepting man-made traditions instead.

***We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints. Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who fell asleep in Hierapolis; and his two aged virgin daughters, and another daughter, who lived in the Holy Spirit***

***and now rests at Ephesus; and, moreover, John, who was both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord, and, being a priest, wore the sacerdotal plate. He fell asleep at Ephesus. And Polycarp in Smyrna, who was a bishop and martyr; and Thraseas, bishop and martyr from Eumenia, who fell asleep in Smyrna. Why need I mention the bishop and martyr Sagaris who fell asleep in Laodicea, or the blessed Papius, or Melito, the Eunuch who lived altogether in the Holy Spirit, and who lies in Sardis, awaiting the episcopate from heaven, when he shall rise from the dead? All these observed the fourteenth day of the Passover according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops; and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven. I, therefore, brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, and have met with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, am not affrighted by terrifying words. For those greater than I have said 'We ought to obey God rather than man'.***

***[Eusebius, Church History, Book V, Chapter 24. Translated by Arthur Cushman McGiffert. Excerpted from Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series Two, Volume 1.]***

Although the apostles Philip and John had personally taught those in Asia to keep Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> of

Nisan (on the Hebrew calendar), the Roman Bishop Victor excommunicated any assembly which did not keep Passover on a Sunday (on the Roman calendar). While this greatly displeased many of the other bishops (who knew what Polycrates had said to be true), the Roman bishopric won the argument. Although unity was preserved in the church, it was not preserved on loyalty to Scripture, but to the Roman bishopric. Those who kept Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (on the Hebrew calendar) were ultimately driven underground. The Quartodeciman Controversy shows us how the Roman Church attempted to change the appointed festival times and the Laws of Moses (just as prophesied over the 'Little Horn' in Daniel 9:25).

As we explain in *Nazarene Israel*, power began to be centralized in the bishopric of Rome immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem and the apostles' deaths. The Roman Bishop began to decree that pagan symbols and pagan festival days were legitimate, even though this was a direct violation of the Laws of Moses (which tell us to avoid all non-commanded imagery, and all non-commanded festival days).

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:19***

***19 "And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which Yahweh your Elohim has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage."***

Despite Yahweh's warning, the Roman Christian feast calendar continued to adopt days based on the motion of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Although the exact wording is not preserved, during the Council of Nicea

(circa 325/326 CE) the Roman Church decided that Easter was to be celebrated throughout the world on the Sunday that followed the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 'paschal moon.' However, the moon was considered 'paschal' only if the 14<sup>th</sup> day fell after the spring equinox. Since the equinox is never mentioned in Scripture, this was just another example of how the Christians turned their back on Yahweh's commandments, deciding instead to implement their own days of worship based on the movements of the sun, the moon, and the stars. This is strictly forbidden.

Some Christians wonder what is wrong with making up our own days to honor Yahweh. To answer this, let us look at the sin of the golden calf.

***Shemote (Exodus) 32:4-5***

***4 And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"***

***5 So when Aharon saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aharon made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to Yahweh."***

Even though Aharon declared that the festival was in honor of Yahweh, Yahweh did not feel honored. Instead, He became enraged that His people would keep festival days that He did not command.

The only reason the word "Easter" appears in the King James Version is that it was a mistranslation of the Greek word *Pascha* (πάσχα), meaning Passover. This error has been corrected in almost every other major translation since the King James Version, yet, ironically, people still keep Easter. Why do they do

this? The apostles did not reference Easter, but the Passover.

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| Acts 12:4<br>4 So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover. | BGT Acts 12:4 ὃν καὶ πιάσας ἔθετο εἰς φυλακὴν παραδοὺς τέσσαρσιν τετραδίοις στρατιωτῶν φυλάσσειν αὐτόν, βουλόμενος μετὰ τὸ <u>πάσχα</u> ἀναγαγεῖν αὐτὸν τῷ λαῷ |
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Further, Shaul does not tell us to keep Easter, but rather to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread (which is a continuation of the Passover).

**Qorintim Aleph (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians) 5:8**  
**8 Therefore let us keep the feast (of unleavened bread) not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**

Acts 20:6 shows us that the disciples were still keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread (and not Easter) many years after Yeshua's resurrection.

**Ma'asei (Acts) 20:6**  
**6 But we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread....**

In Acts 27:9 the disciples kept the Day of Atonement, here called 'the Fast' because it is often observed by fasting. (The reason the voyage was "now dangerous"

was that the Day of Atonement takes place in the fall. Boat travel on the Mediterranean can be stormy after that time.)

**Ma'asei (Acts) 27:9-10**  
**9 Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Shaul advised them, 10 saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."**

The Apostle Shaul continued to observe the Pentecost on Yahweh's original calendar.

**Qorintim Aleph (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians) 16:8**  
**8 But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost....**

We know Shaul kept the Pentecost on the Hebrew Calendar (and not the Roman Christian one) because he went up to Jerusalem (rather than Rome).

**Ma'asei (Acts) 20:16**  
**16 For Shaul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.**

If the apostles continued to keep the original festivals, then why would we want to keep any other days of worship? Let us remember that the apostles received the gift of the Spirit when they were keeping Yahweh's original festival days. This shows that even after Yeshua's resurrection, keeping Yahweh's festivals is still important.

**Ma'asei (Acts) 2:1-2**

**1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.**

**2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.**

In Colossians 2:16-17, the Apostle Shaul tells us that the Sabbath, festivals, and New Moon Days are all prophetic shadow pictures of things “still to come.” This means just as Yahweh poured out blessings on those who kept His festivals in the past, He will again pour out blessings on those who keep His festival days in the future. However, Scripture’s true meaning is lost in most major versions, including the King James Version which inverts the meaning of the passage by two supplied words– “days” and “is.”

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| <p>Colossians 2:16-17, KJV<br/> 16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moons, or of the sabbath <u>days</u>:<br/> 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body <u>is</u> of Christ.</p> | <p><sup>BGT</sup> Colossians 2:16 ¶ Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων.<br/> <sup>BGT</sup> Colossians 2:17 ἅ ἐστιν σκιά τῶν μελλόντων, τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ.</p> |
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Because of its two supplied words (“days” and “is”) the KJV leads the reader to conclude that we should not let anyone tell us what to eat, what to drink, or what days of worship to keep. If we accept these added words at their face value we can easily conclude that it makes no difference whether we keep the Sabbath and the

festival days, or whether we worship on Sunday, Christmas, Easter, the Chinese New Year, Ramadan, or even no festival days at all. Other translations make similar alterations to the text, and these alterations generally help promote the idea that Yeshua really did come to abolish the law and the prophets, even though it flies in the face of His own words at Matthew 5:17-19.

Scripture is very clear that we are not to add anything to Scripture, or take anything away (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:6, etcetera). Therefore, once we realize that the supplied words “days” and “is” do not appear in the source texts, we should take them back out of the English translations. Here is the exact same passage from the King James, but with the supplied words “days” and “is” removed:

***Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moons, or of the Sabbath; which are a shadow of things to come; but the Body of Christ.***

There are three main ideas here (1-2-3):

- 1. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moons, or of the Sabbath;***
- 2. which are a (prophetic) shadow of things (still) to come;***
- 3. but the Body of [Messiah].***

To paraphrase, the Apostle Shaul is telling us (1-2-3):

- 1. Let no man judge you with regards to the meat you eat, what you drink, or what religious festival days you keep;***

**2. Because these foods, liquids and festival days are all prophetic shadows of things still to come;**

**3. Therefore, let only the Body of Messiah tell you what to eat, what to drink, and what festival days to keep!**

Those who were not keeping the Laws of Moses were judging the Nazarenes, and Shaul said not to listen to them (for they were not really of the Body of Messiah). This becomes apparent if we rearrange the clauses to make the English read better (3-1-2). Shaul says we should not let anyone but the Body of Messiah judge us in what we eat, what we drink, and/or what festival days we keep, because these are all prophetic shadow pictures of blessings still to come.

**[Colossians 2:16-17, reordered 3-1-2]**

**Let no man (but the Body of Messiah) judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moons, or of the Sabbath; for the festivals are shadows of things (still) to come.**

Shaul's true meaning is not reflected in the NIV at all. Rather, the NIV makes it seem like we can do whatever we want (since the Messiah allegedly came to do away with the law and the prophets).

**[Colossians 2:16-17, NIV]**

**16 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.**

**17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.**

The King James, the NIV, and most of the mainstream Christian versions suggest that so long as you know that Yeshua is the Messiah it makes no difference what days of worship you keep, because the festivals are merely shadows of the things that "were" to come. However, this is the opposite of what Shaul said.

The Laws of Moses are called the *Torah* in Hebrew. As we explain in the Nazarene Israel study, the Torah is a set of instructions that Yeshua's Bride is supposed to follow in order to purify herself; and it also serves as Israel's bridal covenant. According to Jewish tradition, the Torah was first given to Israel at Mount Sinai at Pentecost. Thousands of years later the Spirit itself was poured out on those who were in the right place at the appointed time. Thus there have already been at least two fulfillments of the Feast of Pentecost (and Colossians 2:16-17 tells us that there are more on the way).

Western Greco-Roman thought is fairly linear, and it can be "checklist oriented." Western minds often consider that the prophecies are fulfilled only one time. However, Hebraic thought is sometimes described as being "cyclical," and in Hebraic thought the prophecies can have more than one fulfillment. A good example of this is how Scripture shows us that there will be many fulfillments of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Church has long taught that the Messiah was born on December 25. However, if we think about it, Yeshua could not have been born in December, because Luke 2:8 shows us that there were shepherds keeping watch over their flocks, but in Israel flocks are not let out to graze in winter, because there is nothing for them to eat.

***Luqa (Luke) 2:8***

***7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.***

***8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.***

From a prophetic standpoint it makes more sense that Yeshua would be born on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, because that would fulfill the first day of the festival. This is likely why Yochanan (John) tells us that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

***Yochanan (John) 1:14***

***14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us....***

The word "dwelt" is the Greek word *skenoo*, Strong's NT4637, meaning "to tabernacle."

***NT:4637 skenoo (skay-no'-o); from NT:4636; to tent or encamp, i.e. (figuratively) to occupy (as a mansion) or (specifically) to reside (as God did in the Tabernacle of old, a symbol of protection and communion):***

What Yochanan (John) really said, then, was that Yeshua became flesh and tabernacled among us.

***Yochanan (John) 1:14 [interpreted]***

***14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us....***

This makes sense, in that Leviticus 23 tells all native born Israelites who live in the land of Israel to go up to Jerusalem three times a year. One of these three annual pilgrimages is the Feast of Tabernacles. During this festival all Israel must dwell in tabernacles (temporary dwellings) for seven days. In Hebrew these temporary dwellings are called *sukkot*. In English they are often called booths.

***Vayiqra (Leviticus) 23:42***

***42 You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths (tabernacles)....***

Because Jews are such traditional people, the ruling of the rabbis in the first century was probably the same as the rabbinical ruling of today: for health and safety reasons, anyone who is either sick, old, or pregnant does not actually have to live in a tabernacle, but may rent a room in an inn. However, even though Miriam (Mary) was pregnant, there was no room at the inn, and therefore Joseph and Miriam had to stay in a temporary dwelling (in this case a booth or a manger), fulfilling Leviticus 23.

It might have seemed like a trial to have Miriam stay in a temporary dwelling when she was ready to give birth, yet it came to pass so that Yeshua might be born in a temporary dwelling, in fulfillment of the feast. Yet even though Yeshua already fulfilled the prophetic aspects of the Feast of Tabernacles, Zechariah 14 tells us that there will be another fulfillment.

***Zechariah 14:16-17***

***16 And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to***

**year to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.**

**17 And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts, on them there will be no rain.**

And if that was not enough proof that the festivals are prophetic shadow pictures of things still to come, there is still another prophesied fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles in the book of The Revelation.

**Hitgalut (Revelation) 21:3**

**3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of Elohim is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and Elohim Himself will be among them,**

**4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."**

Shaul told us not to let anyone but the Body of Messiah tell us what days of worship to keep because he wanted us to be able to receive our blessings for keeping the days Yahweh commanded.

Despite all this, circa 311 CE a Roman general named Constantine allegedly became saved, went on to fight many civil wars, and eventually became the Emperor of Rome. He then issued his famous Edict of Milan, which officially proclaimed a degree of religious tolerance within the Roman Empire. However, this religious tolerance was extended mostly to Torahless (lawless) Christians like himself, while it was denied to

those of the original Nazarene Israelite faith. By 336 CE Emperor Constantine issued an edict stating that Christians must not "Judaize" by resting on the Sabbath, but that they must rest on "the Lord's Day" (i.e., Sunday) instead.

**"Christians must not 'Judaize' by resting on the Sabbath; but must work on that day, honoring rather the Lord's Day ('Sun' day) by resting, if possible, as Christians.**

**However, if any (Nazarene) be found 'Judaizing', let them be shut out from Christ."** (Other translations read, "Let them be anathema to Christ.")

**[Council of Laodicea under the Emperor Constantine; Canon 29, circa 336 CE]**

Three hundred years after Yeshua, the Church of Rome officially banned the faith once delivered to the saints.

But why was Emperor Constantine allowed to suppress the original faith (and change the calendar)? Scripture does not say, but it may be that Yahweh knew that the lawless Christian variation of the faith would spread throughout the world much more rapidly than the Torah-keeping variation would—and therefore while it was not as true and correct as the original Nazarene Israelite faith, it did help to foster and spread belief in salvation through a Messiah of Israel.

Now we reach the turning point. While the Father winks at times of past ignorance, now He wants all men everywhere to repent and begin living up to the instructions given through Moses, which we are told were given to us for our own good.

**Devarim (Deuteronomy) 10:12-13**

**12 "And now, Israel, what does Yahweh your Elohim (G-d) require of you, but to fear the Lord your Elohim, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul,  
13 and to keep the commandments of Yahweh and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"**

If YHWH gave us these instructions for our own good, then why would we not happily and eagerly embrace them as the divine blessing that they are?

## Reclaiming Your Israelite Heritage

After the reigns of Kings David and Solomon, a tragic split took place within the nation of Israel which led to the formation of two separate kingdoms. The nation of Israel has been divided ever since that time, and unless we realize the split that took place we cannot understand the Messiah's mission to bring all of Israel's people back together as one in Him.

After the nation split, the two tribes left in the south were called the southern kingdom of Judah (or the House of Judah); and they are the spiritual (if not also the literal) ancestors of the Jews as we know them today. Additionally, the ten tribes in the north were called the House of Israel (or the House of Ephraim), who later became known as the "lost ten tribes."

Israel's history is long and complex, but the split took place at least in part because King David's grandson Rehoboam was a cruel tyrant. When the ten northern tribes saw that he did not love them (and was planning to treat them cruelly), they decided that it would be better for them to break away from David's grandson and establish their own kingdom in the north.

**Melachim Aleph (1<sup>st</sup> Kings) 12:16**

**16 Now when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, "What share have we in David?? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse!! (Therefore go) To your tents, O Israel! (And) Now, see to your own house, O David!" So (the House of) Israel departed to their tents.**

As we explain in the Nazarene Israel study, America descends spiritually (if not also literally) from this exact same House of Israel (Ephraim). It should therefore not be surprising that, following the same pattern, the American colonies rebelled against King George of England for the same reasons the House of Israel rebelled against the House of David: they were being taxed, but they were not loved.

Like the American colonies would later establish a new government, the ten northern tribes of Israel (Ephraim) established a new government under a man named Jeroboam. However, Jeroboam knew that if the people continued to go up to Jerusalem three times a year (as the Torah says), their loyalty would eventually return to their old king, Rehoboam (in the south), which would eventually lead to Jeroboam's downfall and death.

***Melachim Aleph (1<sup>st</sup> Kings) 12:26-27***

***26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David:***

***27 If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Yahweh at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their master, Rehoboam king of Judah...and they will kill me...and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah."***

Rather than see his people return to King Rehoboam, Jeroboam took counsel and decided to create a new faith. This new Samaritan faith would still focus on Yahweh, but it would differ in several essential details. To please men's visual orientation he set up idols (i.e., visible objects of worship and religious icons) in Dan and Beth El, thus changing the location of the worship away from Jerusalem. This was a grievous sin.

***Melachim Aleph (1<sup>st</sup> Kings) 12:28-31***

***28 Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!"***

***29 And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.***

***30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.***

***31 He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.***

Jeroboam also made priests out of those who were not Levites. Not surprisingly, this is also what the church would do many hundreds of years later: they would create a new faith based on the old one (just changing the details). Rather than focus on an invisible Creator, they would give adoration to visible symbols (such as crosses, figurines, and other icons). They also moved the center of the faith from Jerusalem to Rome.

Jeroboam also changed the times of the festivals. He pushed the Feast of Tabernacles back from the seventh Hebrew month to the eighth. This is a picture of what the church would later do in pushing Sabbath back a day (to the Sun-day), pushing Passover back to Easter Sun-day, and pushing the Feast of Tabernacles back to Christmas (near the winter solstice). The church has lovely sounding reasons for having done these things, but just as it was in the Garden of Eden, the decisions that were made run contrary to Scripture. Whether the church is aware of what they were doing or not, by failing to obey Yahweh they end up honoring the sun (aka Lucifer, the Light Bringer, i.e., Satan).

Yahweh sent prophets like Hosea and Elijah (Eliyahu) to turn the northern kingdom back to Him, but it was to no avail. After roughly a hundred and fifty years, He finally allowed the king of Assyria to come and take the northern tribes away into captivity where they became mixed with the gentiles. Over time their Israelite heritage became lost.

***Melachim Bet (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings) 18:11-12***

***11 Then the king of Assyria carried Israel away captive to Assyria, and put them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes,  
12 because they did not obey the voice of Yahweh their Elohim (G-d), but transgressed His covenant and all that Moses the servant of Yahweh had commanded; and they would neither hear nor do them.***

These were the captives Yeshua came to set free.

***Luqa (Luke) 4:18-19***

***18 "The Spirit of Yahweh is upon Me,  
Because He has anointed Me  
To preach the gospel to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;  
19 To proclaim the acceptable year of  
Yahweh...."***

While the Jews expected the Messiah to throw off their Roman oppressors militarily, Yeshua said that He was not sent on His first trip, except to begin regathering the lost sheep of the northern House of Israel.

***Mattityahu (Matthew) 15:24***

***24 But He answered and said, "I was not sent (on this first trip) except to the lost sheep of the House of Israel."***

When the Assyrians had come to take the northern ten tribes into captivity, they did not stop at the border. Rather, they invaded the southern kingdom of Judah as well, and members of all twelve tribes went into captivity. This is why the apostles write their epistles to the lost and scattered of the twelve tribes of Israel.

***Ya'akov (James) 1:1***

***1 Ya'akov, a bondservant of Elohim and of the Master Yeshua Messiah, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.***

Most Christians know that the Good News was to be preached to the Jew first, and also to the gentiles; but they do not always realize that in Hebraic thought there are two kinds of gentiles. A goy is someone who has never been part of the nation of Israel, while a ger is someone who used to belong to the nation of Israel, but who has become estranged from the nation (and is now a stranger). It was these strangers of the lost ten tribes (who used to belong to the nation of Israel) to which Kepha (Peter) wrote his epistles.

***Kepha Aleph (1<sup>st</sup> Peter) 1:1***

***1 Kepha, an apostle of Yeshua Messiah, to the strangers of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia....***

Yeshua alludes to the lost ten tribes in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Try reading it with the understanding that the House of Judah is the older brother.

**Luqa (Luke) 15:11-32**

**11 Then He said: "A certain man (Yahweh) had two sons (Judah and Ephraim/Israel).**

**12 And the younger of them (Ephraim) said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood (the kingdom).**

**13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living (in the Dispersion).**

**14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine (of spiritual food) in that land, and he began to be in want.**

**15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country (the Church), and he sent him into his fields to feed swine (idols).**

**16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.**

**17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have (spiritual) bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!**

**18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.""**

**20 "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.**

**21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'**

**22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.**

**23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry;**

**24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.**

**25 "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.**

**26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.**

**27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'**

**28 "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.**

**29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.**

**30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'**

**31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have (Torah) is yours.**

**32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"**

The name Ephraim means "doubly fruitful," but it also has a secondary meaning of "prodigal." Therefore, Yeshua's parable is about the lost ten tribes.

In Nazarene Israel we give many more details about how Scripture tells us that we are the lost ten tribes of Israel (Ephraim) and how we are being called back to our inheritance by Yeshua's sacrifice.

One day soon our Jewish brothers and sisters will also look upon Him whom they have pierced, and they will grieve for Him as one mourns the loss of a firstborn.

***Zechariah 12:10-11***

***10 "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."***

We can already see telltale signs that Yahweh is getting ready to bring this about; but until it does, Yeshua tells us in His parable (above) that our Jewish brothers and sisters will not be happy at the thought of us coming home. They feel we are not worthy. Judah has kept Yahweh's Torah for thousands of years, through Christian persecution, multiple invasions, the Holocaust, and more. They have suffered and died at Christian hands for the privilege of keeping the Torah. They fear the Nazarene Israel movement is a Christian trick of some kind, and they currently reject us.

Until Yahweh opens Brother Judah's eyes, one of the best things we can do is to join with others in our area for fellowship. Fellowship has many benefits which are not readily apparent. We can learn the Torah, and learn Hebrew, and begin to get ready for the day when Yahweh calls us home. It is fun, and also a rich growth experience.

However, in Acts 15:19-21 the apostles tell us that before we can enter into fellowship we must first agree to abstain from four spiritual abominations:

1. Idolatry (which is spiritual adultery)
2. Sexual immorality (reference Leviticus 18 and 20)
3. Strangled meats (reference Leviticus 11)
4. Blood

***Ma'asei (Acts) 15:19-21***

***19 Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are (re)turning to Elohim,  
20 but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.***

***21 For throughout many generations, Moses has had those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."***

Once we abstain from these four abominations, we can enter into the assemblies and learn more. However, our goal is not just to learn about the Torah, but also to put what we learn into practice. The goal is not just to become students of the Word, but to become disciples (as the Great Commission also says).

***Mattityahu (Matthew) 28:18-20***

***18 And Yeshua came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.***

***19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Set apart (Holy) Spirit,***

**20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amein.**

As we explain in Nazarene Israel, it is not possible to keep the whole Torah while we live in the dispersion. However, Yahweh wants us to keep as much of the Torah as we reasonably can...and with joy.

We have spoken a lot about keeping the Torah. Just to be clear, the faith is still a spiritual walk, and love is still the heart of the Torah. The only difference is that it is not "anything goes." Scripture prohibits us from having fellowship with idolaters or those who do sexually immoral things. For example, we are not permitted to fellowship with those who divorce their spouses when their spouses have not committed sexual immorality (reference Acts 15:19-21 and Matthew 19:9). Scripture does not permit us to fellowship with those who eat blood (such as German Bloodwurst) or Levitically unclean meats (such as pork and shellfish, reference Leviticus 11). Yet because our faith is a spiritual walk, we are to explain these requirements in love.

There is no way to anticipate or answer every question you may have in a short introductory work of this type. If you have questions, please visit the Nazarene Israel website, [www.nazareneisrael.org](http://www.nazareneisrael.org), where you will find many more studies and learning materials, as well as an online Fellowship Finder.

People are people, and due to the grassroots nature of the Nazarene Israel movement, we cannot at this time take responsibility for others you may meet in fellowship. You will have to pray, listen carefully for the sound of His voice, and do as He leads you.

**Yochanan (John) 15:4-8**

**4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.**

**5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**

**6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.**

**7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.**

**8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.**

Email me if you need help, but above all remember to listen for His voice, and abide in Him. It is only when we abide in Him, and obey His voice that we can serve Him.

Welcome to Nazarene Israel, the faith once delivered to the saints. May YHWH bless you and your family, and establish you in all of His pathways.

May He turn our hearts back to Him, and restore us to the Land of our forefathers, soon and in our day.

In Yeshua's name,

Amein.