

Ask The Rabbi – May 4, 2021

Question:

Can you explain the difference between Hebrew Roots and Messianic Judaism and Two House and us?

I had a conversation about the expression, "Hebrew roots", and you had explained some things to me. Could you please revisit this with me, and explain why you are not in favor of using this expression?

Response:

Over the course of the life of Kehilah Portland we have been confronted with the term Hebrew Roots. A term that appears to be so simple and yet offers varying degrees of understanding.

Messianic Judaism is viewed as a means for discovering / rediscovering the Hebrew Roots of the faith of Christianity. While true on the surface, it does not fully capture what Messianic Judaism truly is.

In addition to the idea of rediscovering the Hebrew Roots of Christianity, this term has become associated with a movement or should I say movements whereby they have incorporated the term Messianic as a means for identifying themselves.

When we first started the congregation, I was focused on the name of the congregation and how to identify it. Would we identify ourselves as:

- Kehilah Portland Synagogue
- Kehilah Portland Messianic Synagogue
- Kehilah Portland Messianic Jewish Synagogue

This deliberation would occur prior to us moving to Maine and thus we had little understanding regarding the dynamic of the Body of Messiah we would come to experience once we moved to South Portland.

On the surface one might see this as a non-issue. When in reality, after we had been here for two years, we had come to realize just how important the identity of the congregation would become. On one hand it caused a stir within the Jewish community in that anyone who has embraced Yeshua is no longer Jewish, thus our ability to interact with the Jewish community was challenged then and is still challenged today.

When we arrived in Maine back in 2010 and started the congregation officially in January 2011 we would get many calls from people inquiring about the congregation. We had come to find out that many were interested and attended identified themselves as being Messianic, yet the subtlety of the term was rather deceptive. It would be through further conversations that we came to understand an entirely other dynamic that existed.

Many times conversations would involve certain passages of Scripture such as Ezekiel 37:15 – 16:

[Eze 37:15](#) The word of Adonai came to me:

[Eze 37:16](#) "You, human being, take one stick and write on it, 'For Y'hudah and those joined with him [*among*] the people of Isra'el.' Next, take another stick and write on it, 'For Yosef, the stick of Efrayim, and all the house of Isra'el who are joined with him.'

A great deal of emphasis was placed on the two sticks coming together with one stick being Y'hudah, representing the Southern Kingdom and the other stick representing Efrayim the Northern Kingdom. All in

all, on the surface, both back then and to this day see these verses as a representation of the reunification of the Kingdom...

[Eze 37:22](#) I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Isra'el; and one king will be king for all of them. They will no longer be two nations, and they will never again be divided into two kingdoms.

Yet, this passage has taken on a life of its own with an infusion of understanding that is not supported by Scripture. Within the Hebrew Roots movement are those who identify as Efrayim. That is they identify as being from the lost tribes of Israel. The term used within the Hebrew Roots movement is known as “Two House” and thus refers to the two houses of Israel (Y'hudah and Efrayim).

The premise by which this ideology is conveyed is as follows:

- Messianic Jews, that is those who are born Jewish and come to accept Yeshua as Messiah are from the tribe of Y'hudah.
- Non-Jewish people who come to accept Yeshua and have embraced Torah are of the Northern Tribes.
- Those who have come to accept Jesus and have not embraced Torah (The Church) are not part of The Body of Messiah.

Thus we were introduced to the Hebrew Roots movement in general and the Two House / Efraymite movement specifically. The distinction we made in our name was only further fortified by our position as a congregation and our rejection of this theology. Not only had we garnered a reputation within the Jewish community for which we have not moved, we have also garnered a reputation within the Hebrew Roots community for which we have not moved.

The framework of this aspect of the Hebrew Roots movement is rather toxic. This is an observation I had made for an article I did not publish nor completed:

There is an emphasis within this movement towards truth, yet an antagonistic tone towards Jew's in general and Messianic Jews specifically. It all stems from an identity crisis on the part of these people, who so desperately want to be recognized as Israel, yet offer no formative proof to their claims of identity, other than a love for Torah.

No person outside of the Jewish community could have a passion for Torah?

Many of these people (not all) tend to be confrontational towards anyone who does not agree with this position. Furthermore, they tend to be overly legalistic, conveying an extremely literalistic interpretation of scripture. In essence they tend to take on the position of a “one law, one people” viewpoint.

Speaking from personal experience, I have witnessed first hand in our congregation some extremely passionate Two House supporters who caused an enormous amount of dissension, leading to confusion amongst other congregation members. As a result of their overly demonstrative and sometimes hostile actions, they were asked to leave the congregation. Our initial intent was to worship together in unity. That didn't happen because there was intentional action to promote an agenda, ignoring any regard for leadership or the vision of the congregation. It was more important to promote the agenda than to participate in the bigger picture.

Thus, under the umbrella of the term “Hebrew Roots” lies a movement that assumes an identity that can neither be validated, that is of being from the lost tribes, nor does it embody the fullness of Yeshua. By excluding the “nations” that is those outside of what they have identified as Y'hudah and Efrayim being the only two branches in the body of Messiah based on a passage of Scripture (Ezekiel 37:16) ignores the

dynamic of the Gospel.

Mat 28:19 Therefore, go and make people from all nations into talmidim, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the Ruach HaKodesh,

Mat 28:20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember! I will be with you always, yes, even until the end of the age."

And the message of the Prophets...

Isa 49:6 he has said, "It is not enough that you are merely my servant to raise up the tribes of Ya`akov and restore the offspring of Isra'el. I will also make you a light to the nations, so my salvation can spread to the ends of the earth."

Isa 49:7 Here is what Adonai, the Redeemer of Isra'el, his Holy One, says to the one despised, whom the nations detest, to the servant of tyrants: "When kings see you, they will stand up; princes too will prostrate themselves, because of Adonai, who is faithful, the Holy One of Isra'el, who has chosen you."

The Gospel message is intended to be conveyed to all the nations and thus people from outside the nation of Israel would be brought near to the Jewish Messiah.

Sha'ul conveyed this dynamic when writing to the Ephesians after conveying that Jew and Gentile will become one in Messiah did not mean that Gentiles would become Jewish, but that they were brought near to the Covenants by Messiah...

Eph 2:11 Therefore, remember your former state: you Gentiles by birth—called the Uncircumcised by those who, merely because of an operation on their flesh, are called the Circumcised—

Eph 2:12 at that time had no Messiah. You were estranged from the national life of Isra'el. You were foreigners to the covenants embodying God's promise. You were in this world without hope and without God.

Eph 2:13 But now, you who were once far off have been brought near through the shedding of the Messiah's blood.

Eph 2:14 For he himself is our shalom—he has made us both one and has broken down the m'chitzah which divided us

Eph 2:15 by destroying in his own body the enmity occasioned by the Torah, with its commands set forth in the form of ordinances. He did this in order to create in union with himself from the two groups a single new humanity and thus make shalom,

Eph 2:16 and in order to reconcile to God both in a single body by being executed on a stake as a criminal and thus in himself killing that enmity.

And thus continuing his teaching, Sha'ul conveys secret plan of Adonai accomplished through Yeshua:

Eph 3:1 It is a consequence of this that I, Sha'ul, am a prisoner of the Messiah Yeshua on behalf of you Gentiles.

Eph 3:2 I assume that you have heard of the work God in his grace has given me to do for your benefit,

Eph 3:3 and that it was by a revelation that this secret plan was made known to me. I have already written about it briefly,

Eph 3:4 and if you read what I have written, you will grasp how I understand this secret plan concerning the Messiah.

Eph 3:5 In past generations it was not made known to mankind, as the Spirit is now revealing it to his

emissaries and prophets,

Eph 3:6 that in union with the Messiah and through the Good News the Gentiles were to be joint heirs, a joint body and joint sharers with the Jews in what God has promised.

For which the premise conveyed by the Hebrew Roots movement as to the Northern tribes being “lost” and thus the revelation that they, through their love for Torah are in fact associated with the Northern Tribes is also not supported by Scripture.

We find first that the Northern Tribes were not lost when they were dispersed and consumed by the Assyrians at 722 BCE. For we read in 2 Chronicles what happened to some from the Northern Tribes.

2Ch 11:13 The cohanim and L'vi'im from wherever they lived throughout all Isra'el made themselves available to Rechav'am.

2Ch 11:14 The L'vi'im left their pasture lands and property and came to Y'hudah and Yerushalayim; since Yarov'am and his sons had thrown them out, not allowing them to function as cohanim for Adonai,

2Ch 11:15 and had appointed for himself cohanim for the high places and for the images of goat-demons and calves that he had made.

2Ch 11:16 Those from all the tribes of Isra'el who had set their hearts on seeking Adonai, the God of Isra'el, followed them to Yerushalayim to sacrifice to Adonai, the God of their fathers.

2Ch 11:17 For three years they strengthened the kingdom of Y'hudah and made Rechav'am the son of Shlomo strong, because for three years they followed the way of life of David and Shlomo.

Whereby anyone who wanted to go to Y'hudah seeking Adonai went. Thus Y'hudah retained the identity of all the tribes, therefore identity still remained. Consider Ya'akov's and Kefa's introductions in their letters:

1Pe 1:1 From: Kefa, an emissary of Yeshua the Messiah To: God's chosen people, living as aliens in the Diaspora—in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia, and Bythina—

Jas 1:1 From: Ya'akov, a slave of God and of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah To: The Twelve Tribes in the Diaspora: Shalom!

Thus the premise to day of the assumption of identity by people who profess love for Torah and are not Jewish, and thus can offer no further evidence as to their identity goes against the minimum requirement stipulated by Torah.

Deu 19:15 "One witness alone will not be sufficient to convict a person of any offense or sin of any kind; the matter will be established only if there are two or three witnesses testifying against him.

Just as replacement theology uses the premise to support their position of the church replacing Israel by falsely stating as fact in the New Covenant writings anywhere Israel is mentioned means the church. Likewise, the Two House supporters convey, wherever Israel is mentioned in the New Covenant writings, it is referring to the Lost Northern Tribes / Efrayim.

Proclaiming the Love of Torah as being foundational in establishing an identity that is unsubstantiated and unsupported is further diffused by Scripture when you consider the Northern Tribes unrepentant conduct towards Adonai:

2Ki 17:24 The king of Ashur brought people from Bavel, Kutah, `Ava, Hamat and S'farvayim and settled them in the cities of Shomron in place of the people of Isra'el; they took possession of Shomron and lived in its cities.

2Ki 17:25 When they first came to live there, they did not fear Adonai. Therefore Adonai sent lions among them, which killed some of them.

2Ki 17:26 So they said to the king of Ashur, "The nations you carried away and settled in the cities of Shomron are not familiar with the rules for worshipping the God of the land. Therefore he has sent lions among them; and they are there, killing them; because they're not familiar with the rules for worshipping the God of the land."

2Ki 17:27 In response, the king of Ashur gave this order: "Take back one of the cohanim you brought from there. Have him go and live there, and have him teach them the rules for worshipping the God of the land."

2Ki 17:28 So one of the cohanim they had carried away captive from Shomron came and lived in Beit-El, and he taught them how they should fear Adonai.

2Ki 17:29 Nevertheless, every nation made gods of their own and put them in the temples on the high places which the Shomronim had made, every nation in the cities where they lived.

2Ki 17:30 Thus the people from Bavel made Sukkot-B'not, those from Kutah made Nergal, those from Hamat made Ashima,

2Ki 17:31 the `Avim made Nivchaz and Tartak, and the S'farvim burned up their children in the fire as sacrifices to Adramelekh and `Anamelekh the gods of S'farvayim.

2Ki 17:32 So they feared Adonai, while at the same time they appointed for themselves priests from among themselves to preside at the high places, and they would sacrifice for them in the temples on the high places.

2Ki 17:33 They both feared Adonai and served their own gods in the manner customary among the nations from which they had been taken away.

2Ki 17:34 To this day they continue to follow their former [*pagan*] customs. They do not fear Adonai. They do not follow the regulations, rulings, Torah or mitzvah which Adonai ordered the descendants of Ya'akov, to whom he gave the name Isra'el,

2Ki 17:35 with whom Adonai had made a covenant and charged them, "Do not fear other gods or bow down to them, serve them or sacrifice to them.

2Ki 17:36 On the contrary, you are to fear Adonai, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm. Worship him, and sacrifice to him.

2Ki 17:37 You are to observe forever the laws, rulings, Torah and mitzvah which he wrote for you. You are not to fear other gods,

2Ki 17:38 and you are not to forget the covenant I made with you. No, you must not fear other gods

2Ki 17:39 but must fear Adonai your God; then he will rescue you from the power of all your enemies."

2Ki 17:40 However, they didn't listen, but followed their old [*pagan*] practices.

Thus, the term Hebrew Roots represents more than what these two simple words are intended to convey. There are other aspects within this movement who either identify as being Messianic are neither part of the Messianic Jewish Movement nor embrace this movement.

- The Sacred Name movement believe in reciting the Name of Adonai (YHVH) and believe that it is by this name people are saved. The premise continues – if you do not pronounce His name you are not saved.

The vast inconsistency that exists is that within this movement there is no consensus as to How the Name of Adonai is pronounced. In attempting to sanctify the Name of Adonai, they are defiling His Name through the manner by which they use His Name. I am reminded of these verses when this part of the Hebrew Roots Movement comes up in conversation:

Exo 20:7 א "You are not to use lightly the name of Adonai your God, because Adonai will not leave unpunished someone who uses his name lightly.

The word used here for lightly (vain in KJV) is “shav” and means falsely.

Then there is the Name we know...

Act 4:9 If we are being examined today about a good deed done for a disabled person, if you want to know how he was restored to health,

Act 4:10 then let it be known to you and to all the people of Isra'el that it is in the name of the Messiah, Yeshua from Natzeret, whom you had executed on a stake as a criminal but whom God has raised from the dead, that this man stands before you perfectly healed.

Act 4:11 "This Yeshua is the stone rejected by you builders which has become the cornerstone.

Act 4:12 There is salvation in no one else! For there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by whom we must be saved!"

- Seventh Day Adventist are not technically part of the Hebrew Roots Movement but have embraced as aspect of it known as Sabbitarians.

Sabbitarians have come to embrace Shabbat rather than the first day of the week. Yet under the surface of this aspect they have rejected many other aspects, such as the Moadim while at the same time conveying that they have replaced the Jewish people because they keep Shabbat “correctly”

So, what is missing?

Why should you embrace Messianic Judaism?

Unlike the Hebrew Roots movement, where the primary focus is on “rediscovering” the roots of the Christian faith and is in-cohesive in their message, Messianic Judaism is a prophetic movement.

The responsibility of the Jewish people is to usher the return of Yeshua. The talmidim of Yeshua offered the foundation of believers from all nations, a Jewish foundation. If you view what has transpired over the last two thousand years, as Jewish authority waned in the Body of Messiah and Gentile authority increased so to the many destructive practices that have become accepted practices within the Body of Messiah.

With the rise of the Messianic Jew as was seen in the first century of the common era, we are seeing a transformation occur. Adonai is opening eyes and reminding Gentile believers that it is Torah that is written on their hearts.

Eze 36:24 For I will take you from among the nations, gather you from all the countries, and return you to your own soil.

Eze 36:25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your uncleanness and from all your idols.

Eze 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit inside you; I will take the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Eze 36:27 I will put my Spirit inside you and cause you to live by my laws, respect my rulings and obey them.

This has all be initiated by Adonai through the Jewish people. Thus just as Yeshua lead 12 Jewish talmidim and then opened Sha'ul's eyes so to it will be the Messianic Jewish movement that will impact the world, leading to the return of Yeshua.

Zec 8:20 "Adonai-Tzva'ot says, 'In the future, peoples and inhabitants of many cities will come;

Zec 8:21 the inhabitants of one city will travel to another and say, "We must go to ask Adonai's favor and consult Adonai-Tzva'ot. I'll go too."

Zec 8:22 Yes, many peoples and powerful nations will come to consult Adonai-Tzva'ot in Yerushalayim and to ask Adonai's favor.'

Zec 8:23 Adonai-Tzva'ot says, 'When that time comes, ten men will take hold—speaking all the languages of the nations—will grab hold of the cloak of a Jew and say, "We want to go with you, because we have heard that God is with you." ' ' "

This is a prophetic movement with the purpose of evangelizing the Jewish people as to the truth and reality of Yeshua, yet offering light to the nations.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the Good News, since it is God's powerful means of bringing salvation to everyone who keeps on trusting, to the Jew especially, but equally to the Gentile.

Rom 1:17 For in it is revealed how God makes people righteous in his sight; and from beginning to end it is through trust—as the Tanakh puts it, "But the person who is righteous will live his life by trust."

And yet, there is no vision within the Hebrew Roots movement that is supported by Scripture as the Messianic Jewish Movement, for we have a purpose that will lead to the return of Yeshua.

Mat 23:37 "Yerushalayim! Yerushalayim! You kill the prophets! You stone those who are sent to you! How often I wanted to gather your children, just as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you refused!

Mat 23:38 Look! God is abandoning your house to you, leaving it desolate.

Mat 23:39 For I tell you, from now on, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of Adonai.' "

We will see Yeshua when the Jewish people say...

What number that is, only Adonai knows. Yet, we are here as a prophetic movement that is experiencing a revival of the Jewish people that has taken root in the 1880s with the first Aliyah to the land, leading to four additional Aliyot, leading to the reappearance of the Nation...

Isa 66:7 Before going into labor, she gave birth; before her pains came, she delivered a male child.

Isa 66:8 Who ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Is a country born in one day? Is a nation brought forth all at once? For as soon as Tziyon went into labor, she brought forth her children.

...and to an acceleration of the Revival of the Jewish people in the 1960s and 70s where the Jewish believer became even more pronounced, followed by the congregational element beginning to take shame in the 1980s.

To where we are today.

What about wanting to know about my Hebrew Roots?

If you are part of a Messianic Jewish Synagogue, you will learn about your Hebrew roots and so much more.

Thus roots is not a sufficient term that full expresses what we are and what you will experience.

You have been brought into the rich heritage that Adonai has established through the Jewish People.

Rom 9:1 I am speaking the truth—as one who belongs to the Messiah, I do not lie; and also bearing witness is my conscience, governed by the Ruach HaKodesh:

Rom 9:2 my grief is so great, the pain in my heart so constant,

Rom 9:3 that I could wish myself actually under God's curse and separated from the Messiah, if it would help my brothers, my own flesh and blood,

Rom 9:4 the people of Isra'el! They were made God's children, the Sh'khinah has been with them, the covenants are theirs, likewise the giving of the Torah, the Temple service and the promises;

Rom 9:5 the Patriarchs are theirs; and from them, as far as his physical descent is concerned, came the Messiah, who is over all. Praised be Adonai for ever! Amen.

This is what you will discover through the Messianic Jewish Movement.

A vision, a purpose and a calling.