

PARABLES

Bringing Hidden Things to Light



Psalms 78:2-4

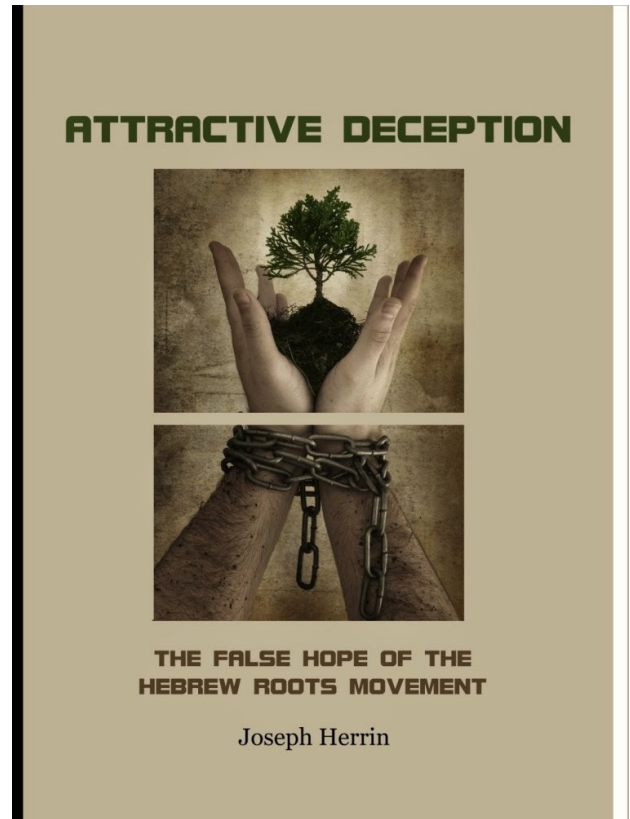
I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Parables Bookshelf - Series 1.20.2

This edition of the Parables Bookshelf Newsletter continues the book *Attractive Deception—The False Hope of the Hebrew Roots Movement*.

If Satan cannot get men and women to deny Christ, he can be almost as effective by bringing distortion and error into their understanding of Christ and His will for their lives. This is the tactic he has pursued with great effectiveness among those who have embraced the Hebrew Roots Movement, or various aspects of it.

We must be on guard at all times against the deception of the enemy of our souls.



Food for Thought

Unless believers appreciate their own weakness, that is, know how incompetent they are in themselves to encounter the supernatural, they shall be deceived...

The need today is for a company of overcoming saints who know how to wage war for the release of those under the enemy's deception.

Watchman Nee

Scripture Memory

II Corinthians 10:5

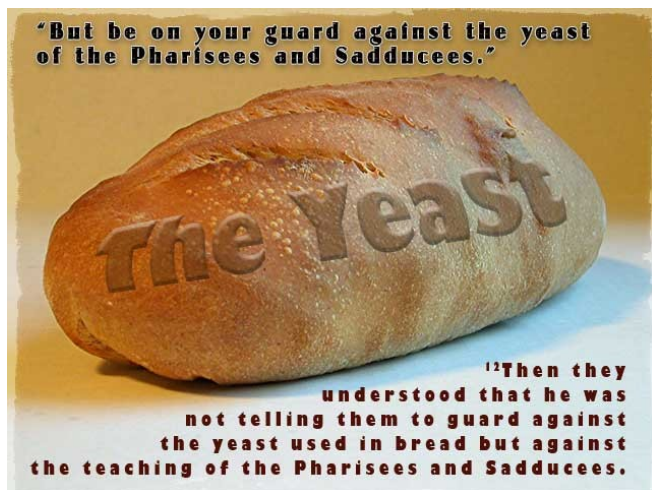
We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God...

Parables Newsletter

- Series 1.20.2
- *Attractive Deception*
- Chapters 2-3

Attractive Deception— The False Hope of the Hebrew Roots Movement

The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees



There is an interesting story in the Talmud (in the tractate Bava Mezia 59b) that illustrates the attitude of many Orthodox Jews toward the Scriptures. This popular story centers on a group of rabbis who are holding a halakhic debate as to whether an oven that has become religiously unclean can be made clean again. (Halakha refers to principles and rules for living which inform Jews about how they are to conduct their lives.) In this story found in the Talmud, the majority of the rabbis conclude that an unclean oven cannot be made clean again. A certain rabbi by the name of Eliezer disagrees, asserting that it can be made clean again. This led to the following exchange:

On that day, Rabbi Eliezer put forward all the arguments in the world, but the Sages did not accept them. Finally, he said to them, "If the halakha is according to me, let that carob-tree prove it." He pointed to a nearby carob-tree, which then moved from its place a hundred cubits, and some say, four hundred cubits. They said to him "One cannot bring a proof from the moving of a carob-tree."

Said Rabbi Eliezer, "If the halakha is according to me, may that stream of water prove it." The stream of water then turned and flowed in the opposite direction. They said to him, "One cannot bring a

proof from the behavior of a stream of water."

Said Rabbi Eliezer, "If the halakha is according to me, may the walls of the House of Study prove it." The walls of the House of Study began to bend inward. Rabbi Joshua then rose up and rebuked the walls of the House of Study, "If the students of the Wise argue with one another in halakha," he said, "what right have you to interfere?" In honor of Rabbi Joshua, the walls ceased to bend inward; but in honor of Rabbi Eliezer, they did not straighten up, and they remain bent to this day.

Then, said Rabbi Eliezer to the Sages, "If the halakha is according to me, may a proof come from Heaven." Then a heavenly voice went forth and said, "What have you to do with Rabbi Eliezer? The halakha is according to him in every place." Then Rabbi Joshua rose up on his feet, and said, "It is not in the heavens" (Deuteronomy 30:12).

What did he mean by quoting this? Said Rabbi Jeremiah, "He meant that since the Torah has been given already on Mount Sinai, we do not pay attention to a heavenly voice, for You have written in Your Torah, 'Decide according to the majority'" (Exodus 23:2).

Rabbi Nathan met the prophet Elijah. He asked him, "What was the Holy One, Blessed be He, doing in that hour?" Said Elijah, "He was laughing and saying, 'My children have defeated me, my children have defeated me.'"

[End Excerpt]

Hyam Maccoby, a British Jew who was both a scholar and author, shared the following comment on this passage from the Talmud. "This extraordinary story strikes the keynote of the Talmud. God is a good father who wants His children to grow up

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and achieve independence. He has given them His Torah, but now wants them to develop it...

Dear saint, do you perceive the serious error in what is revealed regarding the attitude of the Orthodox Jew toward God and His holy Scriptures? Does Yahweh truly desire for His people “to grow up and achieve independence”? Does Yahweh want His people to direct their own way and rely upon their own wisdom to such a degree that they do not even heed the voice of God speaking from the heavens? Did Yahweh actually instruct the Hebrew people at Mount Sinai to “Decide according to the majority”? The Scripture cited to support this dangerous view is the following:

Exodus 23:2

You shall not follow a multitude in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice...

The rabbis of Israel have twisted this verse to derive from it something Yahweh never intended. The divine intent of this commandment is that a man must stand for truth, righteousness, and integrity, even when the multitude around him is clamoring to do evil. The rabbis read into this commandment the principle that the majority opinion should rule, but only when the majority is not clamoring for that which is false, unrighteous, or evil. This rabbinic interpretation is an example of casuistry - the use of clever but unsound reasoning, especially in relation to moral questions.

This idea of God assigning to man the principle of majority rule is a gross distortion of the truth. Yahweh never gave any commandment that the Hebrew people should determine halakha, the laws of how life should be lived, through majority rule. A very great transition occurs when a person adopts this false view. No longer is God viewed as the judge

and determiner of truth, life, and justice. Man steps into God’s place, being the final arbiter of how the Scriptures are to be applied to daily life, while going far beyond the Scriptures to create a body of legislation and advice on subjects the Bible does not address.

At the heart of this fictitious tale found in the Talmud are the words ascribed to Rabbi Joshua, “*It is not in the heavens.*” To what does “*It*” refer? The answer is “Judgment,” “Rule,” “the establishing of halakha (Jewish Law).”

These things are not to be found in the heavens. The argument behind this claim is “*that since the Torah has been given already on Mount Sinai,*

we do not pay attention to a heavenly voice.” In other words, God has already given the Hebrew people His law. Now they are on their own to apply it and develop it into a full and mature body of legislation and counsel to inform the Jewish people in every aspect of how life should be lived.

With subtlety worthy of Satan himself, the Jewish “sages” followed in the footsteps of Lucifer when he aspired to make himself like God, to rule his own life, and to no longer be ruled by God.

Isaiah 14:13-14

But you said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”

Is it not “independence” that Lucifer was seeking? He did not want to be ruled by God. He wanted to

Does Yahweh truly desire for His people “to grow up and achieve independence”?

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be equal to God, choosing his own way, ruling his own life. This same attitude is being taught in this passage from the Talmud. Rabbi Joshua argues that the answer to questions on the Law cannot be found in heaven, they must be resolved by man. “*We don’t need to pay attention to a heavenly voice.*” We see a great contrast in the life of Christ. He was always beholding the Father. He only did what He saw His Father in heaven doing, and He only spoke the words His Father commanded Him to speak.

John 5:19

Yahshua therefore answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, *the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.*”

John 5:30

“*I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*”

John 8:28

Yahshua therefore said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and *I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.*”

John 8:42

Yahshua said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for *I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.*”

John 12:49

“For *I did not speak on My own initiative, but the*

Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak.”

John 14:10

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? *The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.*”

Though Yahshua was equal with God, He did not seek independence. He stated “*As I hear, I judge.*” What a great contrast this is to the teaching of the Talmud. The Talmud tells the Jewish people to ignore the heavenly voice. It instructs them that they are on their own. They are to “grow up” by no longer looking to God to inform them about sin, and righteousness, and judgment. This is the cunning of Satan. This is the spirit of antichrist. The Son of God did not come to lead men to independence from His Father. He came to draw men unto Him. Yahshua consistently declared the need of God’s people to be dependent upon, and in communion with, God through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7-13

“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth.”

The Talmud teaches that men can determine their

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own truth. It is filled with the thoughts and opinions of the rabbis as they applied their carnal minds to the interpretation of God's word. Christ has testified that we need the Spirit of God to know truth. His apostles declared the vital role of the Holy Spirit in ascertaining the thoughts of God, and the utter inability of the carnal mind to apprehend spiritual truth.

Romans 8:14

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

I Corinthians 2:11-14

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

As disciples of Christ we are to bear much fruit for the glory of God. We are informed that we can ONLY bear fruit if we ABIDE in Christ. We do NOT want to be independent. The branch that is independent from the vine withers away. It will be gathered up and cast into the fire.

John 15:4-8

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me,

and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”

Talmudic Judaism is apostate because it has separated itself from God. The Son of God declared this to be true. He warned His disciples of the persecution they would suffer at the hands of those who claimed to be doing service to God. Christ's disciples would suffer because their persecutors, the Orthodox Jews, do not know Yahweh or His Son.

John 16:2-3

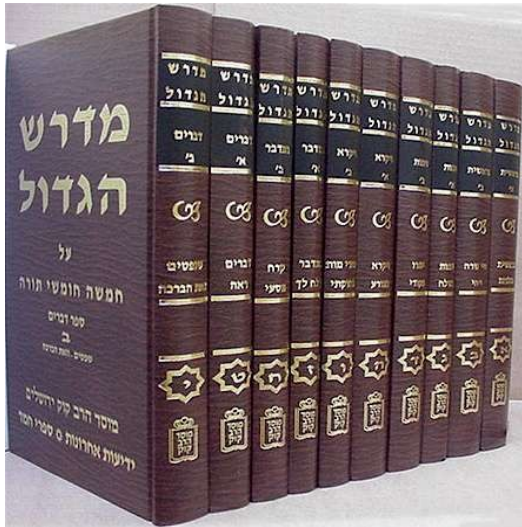
“They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. And these things they will do, because they have not known the Father, or Me.”

Having pursued a course of “independence” from God, the Jews consider themselves to be emancipated. They do not acknowledge the need to wait upon Yahweh to know His mind and thoughts. The independent action of the Hebrew people included developing their own law (Torah). This is what Hyam Maccoby admitted when he summed up the message contained in this Talmudic story. *“This extraordinary story strikes the keynote of the Talmud. God is a good father who wants His children to grow up and achieve independence. He has given them His Torah, but now wants them to develop it...”*

This is precisely what the Jews did. They

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“developed” their own Torah. Their Torah is the Oral Torah, now referred to as the Talmud. Along with the Talmud, the Jews venerate the Midrash.



Midrash Set

The Midrash is a second body of writings that is closely associated with the Talmud. Its contents were written by many of the same men who contributed to the Talmud. The Midrash is organized differently than the Talmud. The Talmud is arranged topically, for the many opinions of the rabbis did not fit well with a Scriptural layout. The Midrash, by contrast, follows the layout of the Bible. It is similar to a running commentary on various books of the Bible. The Scriptures are cited, alongside of which are copious comments by the rabbis. It is not unusual to find a fragment of a single verse attended by pages of rabbinical commentary. The rabbis also presume to fill in “gaps” in the Bible narrative as they supply information that is absent from the divinely inspired words of Scripture.

There is much pride revealed by those who would add to the word of God. An absence of holy fear towards the Creator is manifested when men begin to tinker with the message Yahweh delivered to mankind. Far from being the reflections of wise

men who had a deep reverence for the holy words of Yahweh, the Midrash is filled with idle speculations and vain babbling of the most base and ignoble kind. To illustrate, I have chosen certain portions from the Midrash of Genesis (Bereshith). I will begin with the rabbis’ comments on Adam’s creation. (Note, the abbreviation “R.” stands for “Rabbi,” while “b.” signifies “ben” meaning “son of.”)

R. Jeremiah and R. Leazar said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, He created him a hermaphrodite [bi-sexual], for it is said, “male and female created He them and called their name Adam” (Genesis 5:2).

R. Samuel b. Nahman said: When the Lord created Adam, He created him double-faced, then He split him and made him of two backs, one back on this side and one back on the other side. To this it is objected: But it is written, “And He took one of his ribs, etc.” (Genesis 2:21). [Mi-zalothaw means] one of his “sides,” replied he, as you read, “And for the second side (zela) of the tabernacle, etc.” (Exodus 26:20).

R. Tanhuma, in the name of R. Banayah, and R. Berekiah in the name of R. Leazar said: He created him a lifeless mass extending from one end of the world to the other... How do we know [that he stretched] from east to west? Because it is said, “Thou hast formed me behind (ahor) and before (kedem).” From north to south? Because it says, “Since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from one end of heaven unto the other” (Deuteronomy 4:32).

The Midrash is filled with this type of nonsense. It seems no better than the idle banter of profane men. In the same Midrash on Genesis there is a story inserted regarding Titus, the Roman General who de-

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stroyed Jerusalem and the Temple of the Jews.

When the wicked Titus entered the Holy of Holies, he dragged down the veil, blasphemed and reviled God. On his return a mosquito entered his nose and began piercing his skull. And when he died they split open his brain and found that it (the mosquito) was like a bird weighing two pounds.

In the commentary from Genesis chapter 2 where the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden is mentioned, and the prohibition from eating from it, the rabbis enter into speculation regarding what type of tree it must have been.

R. Meier said, It was wheat, for when a person lacks knowledge people say, 'That man has never eaten bread of wheat.' R. Samuel b. Isaac asked R. Ze'ira: 'Is it possible that it was wheat?' 'Yes,' replied he. 'But surely TREE is written?' he argued. 'It grew lofty like the cedars of the Lebanon,' replied he.

Reflecting on the creation of woman in Genesis chapter 2, the rabbis share these bits of rare insight.

R. Joshua was asked, 'Why does a man come forth [at birth] with his face downward, while a woman comes forth with her face upwards?' 'The man looks towards the place of his creation [the earth], while the woman looks towards the place of her creation [the rib],' he replied. 'And why must a woman use perfume while a man does not need perfume?' 'Man was created from earth,' he answered, 'and the earth never putrefies, but Eve was created from a bone. For example, if you leave meat three days unsalted it immediately goes putrid...' 'And why is a man easily appeased, but not a woman?' 'Man was created from the earth,' he answered, 'and when you pour a drop of water on it immediately absorbs it; but Eve was created from

a bone, which even if you soak many days in water does not become saturated...' 'Why do they [the women] walk in front of the corpse [at the funeral]?' 'Because they brought death into the world, therefore they walk in front of the corpse.'

Aside from the myriad opinions the rabbis give on the various passages of Scripture, they introduce much spurious historical information. If a narrative in the Bible leaves out information, the rabbis are not shy about filling in the gaps. Thus, in the Midrash you may find the name of Noah's wife [Naamah]. You may find the reason given that Noah waited 500 years before he began to have sons when other men were recorded as having sons at a much younger age. The Midrash further asserts that Noah, whose name means "rest," only received his name after inventing implements for tilling, cultivation, and harvest of the fruit of the ground. It is suggested in the Midrash that prior to this time the labor of man was an excessive burden, for the ground produced only thorns and thistles. Thus, by inventing these implements of farming, Noah brought rest to mankind.

What is the result of all this speculation and historical inventiveness? The Scriptures are treated shamefully. The divine words of God are altered, amended, and added to, demonstrating a lack of regard for preserving and honoring the wisdom and revelation of Yahweh. It is little wonder that apostate Judaism is so marked by the pride of man, for its central documents are born out of presumption and a spirit of usurpation. Man, considering himself to be the equal of God, has set about to alter the divine communication at will.

The Scriptures are treated shamefully.

When Yahshua walked this earth, He warned His

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disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Matthew 16:5-12

And the disciples came to the other side and had forgotten to take bread. And Yahshua said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” And they began to discuss among themselves, saying, “It is because we took no bread.” But Yahshua, aware of this, said, “You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? “Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up? Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets you took up? How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Leaven is something that is added to ground grain (flour or meal) in order to cause a reaction. The leaven initiates the process of fermentation, producing gas bubbles in the dough, resulting in it rising. The Son of God used leaven repeatedly to illustrate the work of Satan and of evil men. This symbolism is most appropriate when one speaks of Talmudic (Rabbinic) Judaism, for the Jewish teachers have introduced a foreign agent into the pure word of God which ultimately transforms the character and meaning of God’s word. In ensuing chapters we will see how this tendency of man to add to and alter divine truth has manifested itself throughout Orthodox Judaism and has been adopted by adherents of the Hebrew Roots Movement.

Hanukkah - An Historic Deception



Whenever I encounter individuals who have embraced the Hebrew Roots Movement, Christmas and Easter are often mentioned. A desire to separate oneself from profane spiritual practices and to return to authentic Bible-based observances (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles), is often cited as one of the reasons people are abandoning mainstream denominational Christianity and adopting a more Hebraic approach to the faith of Christ.

Having for many years been aware of the corruptions that have entered into Christianity, and having searched out this matter at significant length, I can sympathize with believers who wish to separate themselves from practices that have idolatrous origins. I will not repeat what I have written in many other places regarding the unclean spiritual origins of Christmas and Easter.

I share the conviction held by many of those in the Hebrew Roots Movement that Christians should not observe holidays that are historically demonstrated to have arisen from the worship of false deities. I believe Christians should make an effort to separate between the holy and the profane. I believe they should heed the divine admonition to not learn the ways of the heathens (Deuteronomy 18:9). Yahshua said that men should worship God “in

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spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). We fail on both counts when we adopt festivals and holy days that were dedicated to false deities (their dates, names, symbols, and rites), and then spread a thin varnish of Christianity over them as if the act of doing so sanctifies these celebrations and makes them acceptable to Yahweh and His Son.

Some Hebrew Roots websites devote space to exposing the pagan and idolatrous origins of “Christian” holidays. Videos can be found online where Hebrew Roots teachers expose the unclean spiritual roots of Christmas and Easter, while urging Christians to have nothing to do with the unfruitful works of darkness. A significant amount of research, fact-checking, and consideration has gone into many of these teachings. Yet, I have noticed an absence of the same level of diligence in examining the origins of the Jewish holiday known as Hanukkah. It should raise some eyebrows, leading to significant scrutiny, when it is often remarked that Hanukkah is “the Jewish Christmas.”



I can hear the protests now. “No! Hanukkah is a legitimate Jewish holiday. Its origins are traceable back to the Maccabean revolt and the miracle of oil at the re-dedication of the Second Temple after the Greeks had defiled it.” Yes, and adherents of Christmas declare that it is traceable back to the birth of Christ; its rites and symbols are derived from the Star of Bethlehem, the presentation of

gifts by the Magi, and angels announcing to shepherds in the field that the King of the Jews had been born! Brothers and sisters, it can be demonstrably proven that Hanukkah is as much derived from the Roman Saturnalia as is Christmas. Like Christmas to the Christians, Hanukkah is Saturn/Satan worship covered over with a whitewash of “Jewishness.” I do not ask you to accept this conclusion based upon my word. I will present the evidence before you and invite you to judge.



On the surface, both Christmas and Hanukkah share numerous similarities. They occur close together on the calendar. They both are observed over multiple days. Gift giving is equally associated with them. Lights/candles are integral parts of both observances. There is also an increasing crossover of traditions from Christmas to Hanukkah with many people beginning to incorporate a Hanukkah Bush in their celebration, topped with a star in imitation of the Christmas Tree.

There are some who errantly style themselves as “purists” who resist the intrusion of Christmas observances into Hanukkah. In order to keep Hanukkah “undefiled” they hold to the traditions of the rabbis set forth in the Talmud. They attempt to observe Hanukkah as they imagine it to have been observed by the Jews who lived in the day of Christ. The central focus of this Hebrew festival becomes the nine candle menorah, also called the

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Hanukiah. I have yet to find any Hebrew Roots adherents who observe Hanukkah who do not adopt the Hanukiah as a central part of their ritual.



Hanukiah

After posting the previous chapters that spoke of the Talmud and Midrash, some readers wrote to defend the Hebrew Roots Movement. They stated that their Hebrew Roots church or group only embrace the written Torah. They reject the Oral Torah and its succedents, the Midrash and Talmud. I do not doubt the sincerity of these objections. Many people simply do not realize the source from which many Jewish practices arise. They are following the Talmud unknowingly. It is in the Talmud that the Hanukiah is established as a Jewish tradition, and rules are set forth for its employment.

On Lighting The Chanukiah:

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat, page 21b
What is 'Hanukkah? The rabbis taught: "On the twenty-fifth day of Kislev 'Hanukkah commences and lasts eight days, on which lamenting (in commemoration of the dead) and fasting are prohibited. When the Greeks entered the sanctuary, they defiled all the oil that was found there. When the government of the House of Asmoneans (Hasmoneans) prevailed and conquered them, oil

was sought (to feed the holy lamp in the sanctuary) and only one vial was found with the seal of the high priest intact. The vial contained sufficient oil for one day only, but a miracle occurred, and it fed the holy lamp eight days in succession. These eight days were the following year established as days of good cheer, on which psalms of praise and acknowledgment (of God's wonders) were to be recited...

The rabbis taught: The law of 'Hanukkah demands that every man should light one lamp for himself and his household. Those who seek to fulfil it well have a lamp lit for every member of the household. Those who seek to fulfil the law in the best possible manner should light according to Beth Shamai the first night eight flames, and every following night one flame less. And according to Beth Hillel the reverse - the first night one lamp, and be increased by one on each succeeding night.

Note the reasons given for placing the Hanukiah in the home and lighting the candles. The reason is "The rabbis taught..." There is nothing beyond this. There is no admonition in the Bible to observe Hanukkah. The Bible contains no mention of the Hanukkah menorah. The Scriptures say nothing of lighting candles to observe any festival. The Talmud gives the Jews nothing more than a tradition of men. Since it did not derive from the holy Scriptures. From where did it come?

Before you answer that it came from the miracle of the oil that is described in this section of the Babylonian Talmud, remember what has been observed previously. The Jewish rabbis have no scruples when it comes to altering the Scriptures, re-writing the history of the Bible. They have proven themselves to be great embellishers of the Biblical narrative, adding to it many spurious facts and deceitful inventions of man. Is it inconceivable that these same rabbis tinkered with the historical accounts

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outside of the Scriptures in the same way they that they “filled in gaps” in the Bible’s historical narrative? An examination of the evidence leads to the conclusion that the rabbis did in fact create a fictional history of the Maccabean revolt and of the subsequent rededication of the Temple.

It should surprise no one, but will undoubtedly trouble a great many, to learn that the Jewish religious leaders practiced syncretism long before the Christian era began. Syncretism is defined in the following manner.

Syncretism: *the attempt to reconcile disparate or contrary beliefs, often while melding practices of various schools of thought. This may involve attempts to merge... several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, and thus assert an underlying unity allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths.*

[Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism>]

If that definition seems a bit difficult to wrap one’s mind around, I present for the reader a simpler definition. *Syncretism is the introduction of beliefs and practices from one religion into that of another religion.* An example of this is observed in the introduction of monasteries and monks into the Roman Catholic Church which describes itself as “Christian.” There is nothing in the Old Testament practice of Judaism, or the New Testament practice of Christianity, that corresponds to monastic practice. There is, however, a long history of monastic practice in other ancient religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism.



Buddhist Monks



Buddhist Monks Lighting Candles



Buddhist Monk with Prayer Beads

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The Roman Catholic Church has monks. It practices candle lighting. It incorporates prayer beads in the praying of the rosary. Seeing that none of these practices come from the Bible, and recognizing their presence in other religions extant at the time that Rome began these practices, we observe that it was through the practice of syncretism that these things were brought into that which calls itself “Christianity.”

Satan has long been about the practice of introducing the profane into the holy. Before the advent of Christianity, Satan had great success in enticing the Hebrew people to adopt many idolatrous practices from the nations around them. The Old Testament contains a myriad of accounts of the Israelites going after the gods of other nations. Embracing practices from other religions was such a temptation that Yahweh forbid the Israelites to marry people from the nations around them lest they be drawn away to worship their gods. Nevertheless, the people of Israel transgressed repeatedly, and profoundly. They adopted rites, symbols, and even the outright worship of other deities. As punishment, Yahweh sent plagues, drought, pestilence, and warring nations against them. When they did not repent of their idolatrous practices, He sold them into slavery to the very nations whose gods they were worshipping. The northern ten tribes of Israel were led captive into Assyria, and the Southern tribes were taken into bondage in Babylon.

Any sincere Christian who walks according to the leading of the Spirit of Christ, eschewing error and loving truth, should be appalled as they observe the great harlot of Rome. This entity that boasts of being the largest religion in the world, declaring itself to be the one true and universal church of Jesus Christ, has prostituted herself as she has embraced other gods along with their rites, symbols, and doctrines. There is far more evidence of Sun worship among the Roman Catholic Church than there is worship of the Son of God. It is a gross admixture

of the holy and the profane.

Many non-Catholic Christians recognize that the abominations of Rome have bled over into Protestant Christianity. The clergy/laity system is anti-Christian, for the apostles taught that the entire body of Christ was called to be a kingdom of priests. The Protestant church has embraced Christmas and Easter, Sunday worship, a fixation on buildings with steeples/obelisks, and the list goes on and on. A growing number of believers want to heed the command of Revelation 18:4 to “Come out of [Babylon/the Great Harlot] My people, lest you participate in her sins and partake of her plagues.”

Partially due to a failure to recognize the apostate nature of Judaism, an apostasy that began long before the birth of Christ, and partially due to the ongoing deception of Satan, Christians are turning away from the harlotries of Rome and toward an even older idolatry, one that was birthed in Babylon. This is the state of Judaism today. It is as saturated with the religious confusion of Babylon as is the Roman Catholic Church. I believe it is more convincing to show people this truth, than to tell them it is so.



Macedonian Hanukiah

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Many Jews and Christians who observe Hanukkah relate the story of the miracle of the oil to their children. Hanukkah is being embraced as an alternative to Christmas.

It is difficult to arrive at the true origins of the Hanukkah celebration without providing some historical background. In 332 B.C. Palestine was conquered by Alexander the Great. This began a period of Greek rule and influence over the Jewish people. Alexander died at the age of 33 in the year 323 B.C.. He had conquered a massive area in the brief period of his conquests. Upon his death, the territory over which he had established rule was split up under four of his generals. One of these generals (Ptolemy) established rule over Egypt and adjacent lands. This became known as the Ptolemaic Empire. Another general established rule over the land of Syria. This became known as the Seleucid Empire.

Israel/Palestine was caught between these two Greek empires and control over the Jews changed hands numerous times. For a period of time the Ptolemaic Empire of Egypt ruled over Palestine. This rule was finally put to an end when the Seleucid King Antiochus III invaded Palestine in 201 B.C.. Palestine remained firmly under Seleucid control until the Maccabean Revolt that lasted from about 168-164 B.C.. By the time of the Maccabean Revolt, the Jews had been under Greek influence for more than one and a half centuries. Numerous Greek cities had been built in the land of Palestine, and a significant number of Jews had become Hellenized, having adopted Greek culture and in many cases their religion as well. This led to a struggle between Orthodox Jews and Hellenized Jews, with a state of civil war erupting between them at times.

Although the Talmud, the books of *I and II Maccabees*, and other Jewish sources describe the Maccabean revolt against the Greek Seleucid rulers of

Palestine as a righteous revolution precipitated by Greek oppression, religious persecution, and the defiling of the second Temple in Jerusalem, there is solid reason to believe this is a biased view. It was the policy of the Greeks to allow conquered peoples to retain a significant amount of autonomy, as long as they paid taxes and remained loyal to the Greek rulers. This was the condition of the Jewish people from the beginning of Greek rule. Following is a letter recorded by the Jewish historian Titus Flavius Josephus that is found in his writing *Antiquities of the Jews*. This letter was written by the Greek King of the Seleucid Empire to the Greek ruler of the Ptolemaic Empire.

KING ANTIOCHUS TO PTOLEMY, SENDETH GREETING.

"Since the Jews, upon our first entrance on their country, demonstrated their friendship towards us, and when we came to their city [Jerusalem], received us in a splendid manner, and came to meet us with their senate, and gave abundance of provisions to our soldiers, and to the elephants, and joined with us in ejecting the garrison of the Egyptians that were in the citadel, we have thought fit to reward them, and to retrieve the condition of their city, which hath been greatly depopulated by such accidents as have befallen its inhabitants, and to bring those that have been scattered abroad back to the city. And, in the first place, we have determined, on account of their piety towards God, to bestow on them, as a pension, for their sacrifices of animals that are fit for sacrifice, for wine, and oil, and frankincense, the value of twenty thousand pieces of silver, and [six] sacred artabrae of fine flour, with one thousand four hundred and sixty medimni of wheat, and three hundred and seventy-five medimni of salt. And these payments I would have fully paid them, as I have sent orders to you. I would also have the work about the temple finished, and the cloisters, and if there be any thing else that ought to be rebuilt. And for the materials of wood, let it be brought them out of Judea itself and out of

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the other countries, and out of Libanus tax free; and the same I would have observed as to those other materials which will be necessary, in order to render the temple more glorious; and let all of that nation live according to the laws of their own country; and let the senate, and the priests, and the scribes of the temple, and the sacred singers, be discharged from poll-money and the crown tax and other taxes also. And that the city may the sooner recover its inhabitants, I grant a discharge from taxes for three years to its present inhabitants, and to such as shall come to it, until the month Hyperheretus. We also discharge them for the future from a third part of their taxes, that the losses they have sustained may be repaired. And all those citizens that have been carried away, and are become slaves, we grant them and their children their freedom, and give order that their substance be restored to them."

This letter, written by the Seleucid ruler, an ancestor of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, demonstrates that the Greeks were not only content to allow the Jews to continue their own form of worship, but were taking steps to help them restore the Temple and to bring back the scattered Jews to the land of Palestine. Although there was undoubtedly a growing religious conflict between the Orthodox Jews and the growing number of Hellenized Jews, a conflict in some ways mirrored in Israel today between the Orthodox and secular Jews, a great deal of the conflict with the Greek rulers was political.

Historical records reveal that a quarrel about taxation arose during the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 B.C.) and the Jewish High Priest Onias. The quarrel resulted in the appointment in 242 B.C. of Joseph, son of Tobiah, a nephew of the High Priest, to the office of tax collector. This led to a rivalry between the Jewish Tobiad family and the Oniad High Priests. Similar disputes continued after the Seleucids gained control of Palestine. Those Jews that were content with Greek rule and culture

were viewed as traitors by the Orthodox Jews.

Sometime prior to 168 B.C. an influential segment of the Jews revolted against the Greeks. This resulted in the Seleucid King taking away from the Jews their autonomy and forbidding them access to the Temple. This latter step points to the Jewish religious leaders being the source of the revolt. These acts by the Greeks were taken only when a conquered people proved to be rebellious. Most Jewish and Christian information about the Maccabean Revolt comes from the books of *I and II Maccabees*. These are books written by Jews, and as such they can be expected to paint a historic picture that is slanted in favor of the Jews, and particularly of the Maccabees who became leaders of the Hasmonean Dynasty.

Recommended Reading

<http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/re-examining-hanukkah/3/>

<http://www.orinst.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/Documents-Maccabees.pdf>

I and II Maccabees, although included in the Apocrypha to the Bible, are not considered part of the canon of Scripture. They should not be deemed to be "Spirit breathed," and their historical narrative should be examined for evidence of historic revisionism. The recording of Jewish history is no different than that of any other people in that it has included a great many deceivers and unfaithful witnesses.

I do not doubt that after some act of rebellion by the Jews, the Greeks did suppress the free exercise of the Jewish faith. Nor do I doubt that they defiled the Temple in Jerusalem. It would have been in keeping with the practice of the Greeks to convert the use of a rebellious people's holy places to the worship of Zeus or other Greek deities, and it is

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recorded by numerous sources that this is in fact what occurred in Jerusalem.

From 168-164 B.C., Judas Maccabeus (Maccabeus meaning “hammer”) led a revolt against the Greeks and against the Hellenized Jews in Palestine. The books of *I and II Maccabees* attribute to him a series of successive victories over the Greek forces resulting in the liberation of the Temple and the restoration of Jewish Temple worship. This account of Judas Maccabeus appears slanted to bolster the heroic image of the Maccabees and their ensuing Hasmonean dynasty which maintained religious and political rule over Palestine from 140 B.C. until the beginning of the Herodian Dynasty in 37 B.C.. (Herod the Great married a Hasmonean princess to bolster the legitimacy of his reign).

One piece of evidence that would bring into doubt the depiction of Judas Maccabeus as the conqueror of the Greeks and the liberator of the Temple, is derived from the book of *II Maccabees*. In a passage found there, mention is made of some letters between the Greeks and Jews that would support the view that it was the High Priest Menelaus who brokered a deal with Antiochus V (who succeeded to the throne upon the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes) and Lysias (a Greek commander), restoring to the Jewish people their own religion and access to the Temple.

Some may think it strange that facts in *II Maccabees* would contradict the account of *I Maccabees*, but this is explained by the two books having different authors with very different perspectives. It is suggested by some scholars that *I Maccabees* was written by a Sadducee who was a sympathizer with the Hasmoneans, some going so far to describe *I Maccabees* as a partisan document. In contrast, *II Maccabees* is believed to have been written by a Pharisee. This latter book was written in Greek, while it is asserted that *I Maccabees* was written

originally in Hebrew or Aramaic, though only Greek copies are extant at this date.

II Maccabees 11:29-32

Menelaus declared unto us, that your desire was to return home, and to follow your own business: Wherefore they that will depart shall have safe conduct till the thirtieth day of Xanthicus with security. And the Jews shall use their own kind of meats and laws, as before; and none of them any manner of ways shall be molested for things ignorantly done. I have sent also Menelaus, that he may comfort you.

This account supports the historical view that the Seleucids retained control over Palestine after the Maccabean revolt, though their power was in decline as the power of Rome was increasing. The Jewish observance of Hannukkah, is based upon the account of history that presents Judas Maccabeus as the hero of the conflict against the Greeks. The celebration of Hanukkah is derived from the following passage in the book of *I Maccabees*.

II Maccabees is believed to have been written by a Pharisee.

I Maccabees 4:36-59

Then said Judas and his brethren, Behold, our enemies are discomfited: let us go up to cleanse and dedicate the sanctuary. Upon this all the host assembled themselves together, and went up into mount Sion. And when they saw the sanctuary desolate, and the altar profaned, and the gates burned up, and shrubs growing in the courts as in a forest, or in one of the mountains, yea, and the priests' chambers pulled down; They rent their clothes, and made great lamentation, and cast ashes upon their heads, and fell down flat to the ground upon their faces, and blew an alarm with the trumpets, and cried toward heaven. Then Judas ap-

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pointed certain men to fight against those that were in the fortress, until he had cleansed the sanctuary. So he chose priests of blameless conversation, such as had pleasure in the law: Who cleansed the sanctuary, and bare out the defiled stones into an unclean place. And when as they consulted what to do with the altar of burnt offerings, which was profaned; They thought it best to pull it down, lest it should be a reproach to them, because the heathen had defiled it: wherefore they pulled it down, and laid up the stones in the mountain of the temple in a convenient place, until there should come a prophet to shew what should be done with them. Then they took whole stones according to the law, and built a new altar according to the former; And made up the sanctuary, and the things that were within the temple, and hallowed the courts. They made also new holy vessels, and into the temple they brought the candlestick, and the altar of burnt offerings, and of incense, and the table. And upon the altar they burned incense, and the lamps that were upon the candlestick they lighted, that they might give light in the temple. Furthermore they set the loaves upon the table, and spread out the veils, and finished all the works which they had begun to make. Now on the five and twentieth day of the ninth month, which is called the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and eighth year, they rose up betimes in the morning, and offered sacrifice according to the law upon the new altar of burnt offerings, which they had made. Look, at what time and what day the heathen had profaned it, even in that was it dedicated with songs, and citherns, and harps, and cymbals. Then all the people fell upon their faces, worshipping and praising the God of heaven, who had given them good success. And so they kept the dedication of the altar eight days and offered burnt offerings with gladness, and sacrificed the sacrifice of deliverance and praise. They decked also the forefront of the temple with crowns of gold, and with shields; and the gates and the chambers they renewed, and hanged doors upon them. Thus was there very great gladness among the people, for that the reproach of the heathen was put away. Moreover Judas and his brethren with the whole con-

gregation of Israel ordained, that the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept in their season from year to year by the space of eight days, from the five and twentieth day of the month Casleu, with mirth and gladness.

To this day, the Feast of Dedication is observed beginning on the 25th day of the month Kislev, running for eight days. It must be noted that in the account above, there is no mention of the miracle of the oil which is reported in the Talmud. This is a glaring omission if the story were true. The book of *I Maccabees* is estimated to have been written about 100 B.C.. This places its authorship almost five centuries closer to the actual events being described than the Talmudic account. How do we account for this omission? A reasonable explanation is that the rabbinical account of the miracle of the oil was, like so many of their additions to the Biblical account, a fabrication. This conclusion is bolstered by the writings of Josephus.

Now Judas [Maccabeus] celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the Temple for eight days; and omitted no sort of pleasures thereon; but he feasted them upon very rich and splendid sacrifices; and he honored God and delighted them by hymns and psalms. Nay, they were so very glad at the revival of their customs when after a long time of intermission they unexpectedly had regained the freedom of their worship, that they made it a law for their posterity, that they should keep a festival on account of the restoration of their Temple worship for eight days. And from that time to this we celebrate this festival, and call it Lights. I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to that festival.

[Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 12, Chapter 7, Part 7]

Josephus wrote this account of Hanukkah around

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100 A.D., nearly three centuries earlier than the Talmudic account. Again, we find no mention of the miracle of the oil. Even more puzzling, if the story of the oil were true, is that Josephus confesses ignorance regarding why this Jewish festival is referred to as “Lights.” Had the story of the miracle of the candlestick burning for eight days on a single day’s supply of oil been known, he surely would have suggested it as a possible explanation for the name of the festival.

There is, however, an explanation for Hanukkah being referred to as “the Festival of Lights,” that Josephus, a Jew whose father was of priestly descent, would have been reluctant to disclose. It is that this “Hebrew” festival was actually a Jewish adaptation of the much older Babylonian celebration of Saturn. The Saturnalia, as the Romans called it, was from ancient times also called “The Festival of Lights” and “The Feast of Dedication,” as the Romans traced it back to the dedication of the Temple of Saturn in 497 B.C., on the precise date which the Roman Festival of Lights begins. This, and other evidence of Hanukkah’s true origins will be set forth in the following chapter.

*this “Hebrew” festival
was actually a Jewish
adaptation of the much
older Babylonian
celebration of Saturn.*

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Written by Joseph M. Scriven,
1855