

The Hebraic Roots Movement

Peter Ditzel

Readers are increasingly asking me questions about a set of doctrines called Hebraic Roots. In recent years, Hebraic Roots teachings have invaded many churches and even some seminaries. There are even Hebraic Roots Bibles and a Hebraic Roots Network (<http://www.hebraicrootsnetwork.com/>). Because this trend appears to be growing in numbers and adherents, we should know something about it. It would be too much to explore all of the teachings of this movement in one article, and, to complicate matters, there are some variations in belief from one specific Hebraic Roots group to another. What I would like to do is briefly examine a few of the core beliefs of this movement and compare them to Scripture.

Brief History

It's hard to pinpoint the roots of Hebraic Roots (pun intended). But it certainly seems to have developed from the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong and his Worldwide Church of God (WCG), the Sacred Name Movement (SNM), and Messianic Judaism (MJ). One Hebraic Roots website specifically says, "Among all these groups it has been the WCG which has had the greatest impact in promulgating this teaching and the keeping of the Old Testament laws, nationally and internationally until about 1994-1995 when it abandoned its core belief structure" (http://www.ourfathersfestival.net/hebrew_roots_movement). Hebraic Roots certainly shares many doctrines with WCG, SNM, and MJ, and many teachers were to one extent or another exposed to and influenced by the doctrines of these earlier groups.

Someone who seems to have followers among both the devotees of Herbert Armstrong and Hebraic Roots enthusiasts is William F. Dankenbring. Billing his Triumph Prophetic Ministries as "an independent, Torah-observant, multiracial, Christian ministry preaching the Good News of the soon coming Kingdom of God!" (<http://triumphpro.info/category/from-the-pastor/>), Dankenbring was once a member of the WCG and a writer in its Personal Correspondence and Editorial Services departments.

One of the early teachers of Hebraic Roots with a clear connection to the WCG is Dean Wheelock. The owner of the trademark, Hebrew Roots®, is Susan Aleene Wheelock (see "HEBREW ROOTS"

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<http://www.trademarkia.com/hebrew-roots-78207418.html>). Susan is Dean's wife. They publish the magazine, *Hebrew Roots*®. Dean "became a Worldwide Church of God member in 1968, attended Ambassador College, and then attended the Church of God International from 1979-84 ("Summaries of Conference Sessions" <http://www.servantsnews.com/sn9712/s71219.htm>). According to the above source, "Wheelock believes we are in a marriage covenant with Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah). We need to think more in the frame of mind of the female direction to understand this. When a woman is betrothed to a man, wouldn't she want to learn more about him, his customs and his religion? Since the Father sent Jesus as a Jew, Wheelock concluded that we all need to learn more about being a Jew."

Do we? Has God called us to learn how to behave as Jews? Or are we "called to belong to Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:6), "called for freedom" (Galatians 5:13) and to "be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers, tenderhearted, courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:8-9)? Let's find out what these Hebraic Roots people have to say.

Teachings of the Hebraic Roots Movement and Biblical Responses

Superiority of the Old Testament: The Wikipedia article called "Hebrew Roots" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Roots) has aptly stated this core belief.

Both the Old and New Testaments are held as holy books, but the Old Testament takes precedent over the New. The Torah serves as the foundation to all subsequent understanding and interpretation of Scripture. A foundational distinction of the Hebrew Roots movement is the manner in which Scripture is translated and interpreted so that later testimony (particularly the New Testament, or "Brit Chadashah") does not conflict with Torah commandments.

Response: Even the Hebraic Roots website, Passion for Truth Ministries, states, "This [that Joshua was a type of the Messiah] is why Moses could not lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. Joshua had to be the one leading them because he was the prototype of the true 'Joshua' who would lead His people at the end of time into the true

Promised Land. It was a hint to the name of the coming Messiah" ("Beliefs" <http://www.passionfortruth.com/contentpages/18844/74faabba-f2c0-4fc4-b5b0-ebde217f8f8c/Beliefs.aspx>). This is correct. Moses, who personified the law, could only take the people so far. He died on the wrong side of the Jordan. Joshua then had to lead the people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

Why then, do Hebraic Roots advocates teach that we Christians, who are figuratively in the Promised Land, should go back over the Jordan to dead Moses for guidance? To do so is ridiculous. We are to be "looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:2). The Old Testament gives us types, shadows, examples, and prophecies that can only be properly perceived with New Testament eyes. I thoroughly address the point in my article, "The Superiority of Jesus Christ and His New Testament Revelation" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/ntsuperiorot.htm>). I also recommend reading "The Sermon on the Mount" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/sermononthemount.htm>) and "Dead to the Law" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/deadtothelaw.htm>).

Jesus did not end the law: The Wikipedia article referred to above also states this belief of the Hebraic Roots Movement: "It is believed by those in the Hebrew Roots movement that Yeshua the Messiah did not come to establish a new religion or to 'do away' with the law." And read this from Jim Staley's Passion for Truth website: "What God destroyed on the cross was the penalty that the Law of God demanded as payment for the breaking of it... The Law of God was never abolished.... And what was changed and 'done away with' was the priestly system of sacrifices.... We believe that believers today are to live their lives exactly the way the first century believers lived: They kept the Torah as best as they could through the Spirit of Yeshua Messiah" <http://www.passionfortruth.com/contentpages/18844/74faabba-f2c0-4fc4-b5b0-ebde217f8f8c/Beliefs.aspx>).

Response: Let me immediately address the last claim: that we are to keep the Torah (the law), and that first-century believers did so. Scholars commonly and wrongly assume that what they call The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 addressed circumcision only. But notice this from the letter composed after the meeting: "They wrote these things by their hand: 'The apostles, the elders, and the brothers, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: greetings. Because we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and *keep the law*," to whom we gave no

commandment" (verses 23-24, emphasis mine). In other words, this meeting, besides the question of circumcision, also settled that the Gentiles did not have to keep the law. Earlier in the meeting, speaking of this attempt to make the Gentiles keep the law, Peter said, "Now therefore why do you tempt God, that you should put a *yoke on the neck* of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we *were* able to bear?" (verse 10, emphasis mine). Peter called the law a yoke on the neck, and he spoke of even the Jews' keeping of it in the past tense.

But Peter was about to stumble. Writing of an event that took place after this meeting, Paul says,

But when Peter came to Antioch, I resisted him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before some people came from James, he ate with the Gentiles. But when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews joined him in his hypocrisy; so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they didn't walk uprightly according to the truth of the Good News, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, *live as the Gentiles do, and not as the Jews do*, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as the Jews do?

Galatians 2:11-14, emphasis mine

The *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* ends verse 14 this way: "why do you compel the nations to Judaize?" Peter had been living without the law, living as the Gentiles do. And, from what Paul says, it was obviously wrong for Peter to act in a way that put pressure on the Gentiles to live as the Jews. But what did we read above from the Hebraic Roots Movement? "The first century believers...kept the Torah as best as they could." Rubbish! This is an attempt to put a yoke on your neck that even the Jews were not able to bear. First-century Christians—at least those who were not Judaizers—knew that Christ fulfilled the law and that they were saved by grace alone.

To address the rest of the Hebraic Roots claim that Jesus did not end the law, I refer you to my article, "In what way did Jesus fulfill the law?" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/jesusfulfilllawqa1.htm>).

We are justified and saved by faith, and yet works are necessary for salvation: On his Statement of Beliefs page, William F. Dankenbring says,

Salvation is dependent on repentance from sin, accepting Yeshua (Jesus Christ) as Savior, and Baptism by immersion, and receiving the Holy Spirit, and then "enduring to the end," "overcoming," and keeping God's commandments—obedience. Peter wrote to those who sought to be saved, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). From that point, we must OBEY God and keep His commandments; through the power and help of the indwelling Holy Spirit, "which God has given to them that OBEY Him" (Acts 5:32). Of course, the Scriptures show that we are justified by faith, not by works; and we are saved by Faith, not by human effort, rituals, or works (Eph.2:8-9). Nevertheless, good deeds ARE necessary for salvation (verse 10); because God has ordained that we walk in them. If we don't, we disobey Him and break His commandments. Jesus said to enter life we must "keep the commandments" (Matt.19:17)

<http://triumphpro.info/category/statement-of-beliefs/>

Response: I hope you see that what Dankenbring is saying here is that, while he gives lip service to Jesus Christ as Savior, we are really saved by our obedience to the law. He is, in fact, parroting the aberrant teaching of Herbert W. Armstrong. Notice what Armstrong says here: "'Justified' does not refer to the future—it has to do only with your guilty past! This term 'justified' does not mean 'saved' as we shall now see. It does not mean the gift of life. It means the gift of acquittal of past guilt! It means the penalty of past sins has been paid in full, by Christ, for you!... We are justified only of sins that are past.... So, from here on, we must obey—unto righteousness!" (*What Do You Mean . . . Salvation?* <http://www.cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/HWA/k/1126/Salvation.htm>).

Dankenbring cites, but does not quote, Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast." Yet Dankenbring has the temerity to then say, "Nevertheless, good deeds ARE necessary for salvation" and then cite Ephesians 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them." But this says nothing of our good works having anything to do with salvation.

William Dankenbring tries to make Acts 5:32 say that we must keep the commandments to receive the Holy Spirit. But when we read it in context, we see that it says no such thing. If we go back to verse 15, we find that people were bringing the sick so that Peter might heal them. Verses 17-20 say that the high priest and the Sadducees were filled with jealousy and arrested the apostles, but an angel released them and gave them an order: "Go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." This they did, and when the Jewish leaders found out, they brought them before the council and questioned them, saying, "Didn't we strictly command you not to teach in this name? Behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood on us" (verses 21-28). Then we read in verse 29, "But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men.'" Obey what? The Ten Commandments? No. That is not in question here. The Jewish leaders didn't need to be told to keep the Ten Commandments. The context tells us that the angel of the Lord had just told the apostles to preach the Gospel. And so they did as they were told.

And they will now preach the Gospel even to the Jewish leaders. Peter and the apostles continued speaking: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you killed, hanging him on a tree. God exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. We are His witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him" (Verses 30-32). This was a brief statement of the Gospel, not the Ten Commandments. Peter was saying that God has given the Holy Spirit to those who obey the Gospel. He later speaks of obeying the Gospel in 1 Peter 4:17: "For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God. If it begins first with us, what will happen to those who don't obey the Good News of God?" (see also 2 Thessalonians 1:8). The Greek word for obey carries with it the idea of being persuaded. We obey the Gospel when we believe it.

Dankenbring also cites Matthew 19:17: "He said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but one, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.'" For a complete rebuttal of the notion that Jesus is here saying that we must keep the commandments to enter into life, see "Why did Jesus tell the rich, young ruler to keep the commandments to be saved?" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/richyoung rulerqa.htm>).

If we were saved by Jesus paying for our past sins and we then having to obey the law, our salvation would be a mixture of grace and works.

But remember that Ephesians 2:8-9 says that we are saved *by* grace *through* faith and *not* of works. And in Romans 11:6, Paul logically states, "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work." Paul is saying that grace and works are contradictory. Our salvation cannot be by both. We are saved by grace alone.

The seventh-day Sabbath and Old Testament feast days are kept: This is the seventh of the "7 Distinctive Core Differences" on ourfathersfestival.net: "The 7th Day Sabbath and the Creators [sic] (Torah) holy days which picture/foreshadow the 1st and 2nd comings of the Messiah and the Master Plan of Salvation for mankind are observed" (http://www.ourfathersfestival.net/hebrew_roots_movement).

Response: Why, if God intended the keeping of a Sabbath day or a holy day, does the New Testament contain not a single instruction, admonition, or chastisement concerning the keeping or breaking of one of these days? This is especially odd considering that Paul's letters are largely written to Gentiles, who would have had no knowledge of these days. And why does the letter to the Gentiles that we have already examined in Acts 15 not tell the Gentiles to keep these days? How can Paul say the following, in Romans 14:5-6, if keeping Sabbaths and holy days is important? "One man esteems one day as more important. Another esteems every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks. He who doesn't eat, to the Lord he doesn't eat, and gives God thanks." The Bible says that the Sabbaths were only shadows, but Jesus Christ is the body or substance (Colossians 2:16-17). He cast the shadows, but now that we have Him, the reality, we have no need to return to the shadows. We have our rest in Him. Jesus is God's rest that we enter by faith. I thoroughly explain all of this in "What Is the Christian Sabbath?" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/christiansabbath.html>) and "Questions from Seventh Day Keepers" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/7thdayanswers.html>).

I want to say one more thing concerning this subject. Homeschool magazines and Christian book catalogs and websites advertise several books that authors have designed to teach you and your family how to celebrate the Old Testament holy days and festivals. While, as Christians, we can look into the Old Testament to see the types and shadows contained in it, there is absolutely no reason for us to keep these defunct days, even merely as a homeschool unit study. We are

not to go back into those shadows. To do so is a dangerous practice. Shadows, by definition, are dark places but God has called us "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). We are not to return to the shadows. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "You observe days, months, seasons, and years. I am afraid for you, that I might have wasted my labor for you" (Galatians 4:10-11). Paul was genuinely concerned about people who return to day keeping, and so am I.

The Two-House Theory/Two-House Theology/Ephraimites: Hebraic Roots teachers differ over this theory, and some do not accept it at all. But basically, according to this theory, there is a distinction between Jews and Israelites. The Jews are descended from the house of Judah that consists of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin of the southern kingdom of Judah (notice, for example, 1 Kings 12:21). But Assyria captured the house of Israel, the people of the northern kingdom made up of the remaining ten tribes (2 Kings 17:3-6), and they never returned to their land. They became lost to history. They are the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." According to some advocates of this theory, these tribes wandered and spread the bloodline of Israel throughout the world. But most who teach this idea say that the ten tribes went to northern Europe (with particular emphasis on Britain). From Europe, the bloodline extended to America, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and other nations with large populations of northern Europeans.

Those who teach this idea say that God is today still dealing only with Israelites (the house of Judah and the house of Israel). If you are willing to submit to Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus Christ), then you are of the bloodline of Israel. Some teachers allow for believers who are obviously not of Israelite blood by putting them into the category of strangers who attach themselves to Israel (see Exodus 12:49). But, by and large, believers are Israelites. And, being Israelites, they are to obey all the law. If you have an hour and twenty minutes to waste, you can hear Jim Staley preach this nonsense here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTx5tjNQEvw>.

Response: Many of you will have recognized the Two-House Theory as a rehash of Anglo- or British-Israelism, a belief that Herbert Armstrong made very popular. In my article, "The United States and Britain in Fantasy" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/usbc.htm>), I knock this idea on the head by showing from the Bible that Jesus and His apostles considered the house of Israel and the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" to be the Jews that they spoke to in Palestine. The house of

Israel being "lost" refers to their spiritual condition, not to geographic disorientation. If you want the details, please read the article.

The promulgators of this bunkum seem not to realize how sharply they contradict Scripture: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:28-29). This passage is saying that Jews and Greeks are all one in Christ Jesus. Contrary to the Hebrew Roots teaching, there is no distinction. Once one is a Christian, being a physical Jew means nothing. And please notice that this verse does not say that if you are Abraham's seed, then you are Christ's. It says that if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, the spiritual descendents of Abraham by faith.

"Neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children. But, 'In Isaac will your seed be called.' That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as a seed" (Romans 9:7-8).

Colossians 3:10-11 tells us that we "have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his Creator, where there can't be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondservant, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:10-11). By saying that there is no line of distinction between Christians, this directly opposes the Two-House teaching that only Israelites can be Christians. To be an Israelite or to be a Gentile means nothing.

Dietary Restrictions: Craig D. Whatley, in his conclusion to his article, "How Important Is It To Obey God in What We Eat?" (<http://www.passionfortruth.com/articleEntry.aspx?parentnavigationid=18867&viewarticleGuid=e464b9dd-e5bb-45e8-b365-e4ddf992a606>), says, "God is serious about what we eat.... Therefore, since we love Him and understand that our body is the temple of God, then we should strive with daily diligence to keep our bodies undefiled. A big part of that is living by his dietary instructions given in Torah - i.e., not consuming unclean animals."

Response: In Mark 7:15, Jesus said, "There is nothing from outside of the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man." Paul wrote, "If you died with Christ from the elements of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to ordinances, 'Don't

handle, nor taste, nor touch' (all of which perish with use), according to the precepts and doctrines of men?" (Colossians 2:20-22). When we become Christians, such externals pass away. We are no more bound to the law than a woman is bound to her dead husband (Romans 7:1-4), and notice this from Romans 7:6: "But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held." This does not mean that the law is sin (verse 7), but it does mean that we are not under it. For more information about dietary restrictions, read "The Real Poison of Biblical Dietary Laws and Health Secrets" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/uncleanmeats.htm>).

Some of the other teachings and practices of Hebraic Roots are addressed in the Armstrongism section of this website (http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/wohg_009.htm).

The Hebraic Roots Hall of Shame

The following is a partial list of Hebraic Roots ministries and leaders. I list them so that you will beware of them.

Michael Bugg <http://hebrewroot.com/> (CAUTION: My antivirus program says this site is infected)
Eddie Chumney <http://www.hebroots.com/>
Bill Cloud <http://www.billcloud.com>
Rico Cortes <http://wisdomintorah.com/>
Sheila Crawford <http://www.shofarministries.net/index.html>
Baruch Ben Daniel <http://www.mashiyach.com/>
Hanok ben Isaak <http://jewsandjoes.com/>
Joe Good <http://hatikva.org/>
"John and Steve" <http://119ministries.com/>
"John and Steve" <http://hebrewrootscult.com/> (apparently intended to snag those searching "Hebrew roots cult")
Monte Judah <http://lionlamb.net/v3/>
Hebrew Nation Radio at <http://hebrewnationradio.com/>
Hebraic Roots Network <http://hebraicrootsnetwork.com/>
Tim Kelley <http://amiyisrael.org/>
Daniel Klutstein <http://www.tikvatyisrael.com/>
Lee Miller <http://houseofdauidfellowship.com>
Avi Ben Mordechai <http://www.m7000.com/>
Michael Rood. <http://aroodawakening.tv/>
Brad Scott <http://www.wildbranch.org/>
Season of Our Joy <http://season-of-our-joy.com/>
Jim Staley <http://www.passionfortruth.com/>
Jim Staley <http://abouthebrewroots.com/> (secondary site)

Dean & Susan Wheelock <http://www.hebrewroots.net/>
? <http://www.ourfathersfestival.net/home>
? <http://israelite.info/>

Conclusion

Hebraic Roots, by teaching that we begin with faith but must now obey the law, teaches exactly what Paul, in Galatians 3:3, warns against: "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now completed in the flesh?" One of the biggest problems the apostles had to deal with was Judaizing. The Judaizers were Jews who claimed to be Christians but who insisted that Christians must keep the law of Moses. And this is what the Hebraic Roots teachers are—modern Judaizers.

Paul said, "For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a law-breaker. For I, through the law, died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me. That life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me. I don't make void the grace of God. For if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing!" (Galatians 2:18-21). To say that we must keep Torah is to preach what the Judaizers who troubled the Galatians preached. It is another gospel:

I marvel that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different "good news"; and there isn't another "good news." Only there are some who trouble you, and want to pervert the Good News of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you any "good news" other than that which we preached to you, let him be cursed. As we have said before, so I now say again: if any man preaches to you any "good news" other than that which you received, let him be cursed.

Galatians 1:6-9

Anyone today who tries to follow the Old Covenant law is living in the shadows. Because he doesn't see what has been abolished, he has a veil over his face. Only when he turns from the law to Jesus Christ ALONE will that veil be removed.

For if that which passes away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory. Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech, and not as Moses, who put a veil on his face, that the children of Israel wouldn't look steadfastly on the end of that which was passing away. But their minds were hardened, for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains, because in Christ it passes away. But to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. But whenever one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:11-18

But shun foolish questionings, genealogies, strife, and disputes about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. Avoid a factious man after a first and second warning; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sins, being self-condemned.

Titus 3:9-11

For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse.

Galatians 3:10