An Examination of the unorthodox beliefs of the First Fruits of Zion, their Torah Clubs, and the Hebrew Roots Movement in general

** Direct quotations are in *italics*, explanatory notes and orthodox response is within {brackets} **

1. A non-Trinitarian view of God in the forms of both Modalism and Subordinationism.

Examples:

> *Every day, millions of Christians pray to the God of Israel through their mediator, the King and Messiah of the Jews.* (6) {Boaz speaks of prayer <u>through</u> Jesus, not <u>to</u> Jesus, but as the Nicene Creed declares, Jesus is "God of God, Light of Light, True God of True God, One in Being with the Father, what then is the point of this distinction if not a form of Subordinationism hinting that only the Father is YHVH?}
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> *Pg. 128 Bradford makes a point that the Bible does not refer to Yeshua by the Father's personal name, Yehoveh* – (4, #6) {Why emphasize this if not to subordinate the Son?}
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> *The Doctrine of the Trinity is a tough issue for the Church and the Jews*. – (4, #6) {The mystery of the Trinity is beyond our understanding. The doctrine of it? Affirmed repeatedly by every orthodox branch of Christianity, it is not a tough issue.}
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> *Early Church and the Shema: Did not think of God being a conglomerate of "3 persons"…NAS Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!"…NAS Mark 12:29 Jesus Answered, "the foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord;* - (4, #6) {The Early Church, and each N.T. author, most certainly did view God as existing in three persons. Why is "3 persons" in quotation marks? Also, "conglomerate" is a Straw Man, this is not nor ever was the Church's view of the Trinity.}
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> *The Names of God…WE MUST RESTORE THE NAMES OF GOD!...When Lord and God are used, how can we tell if it is "God" or "Jesus" being referred to?...Y'shua, Who do you say he is?* – (4, #6) {Again, why the quotation marks? Is not Jesus of the same being as YHVH, why the need to distinguish? Who does orthodox Christianity say that Jesus is? God.}
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> *Reinserting God's name (YHWH) creates doctrine problems…NAS Acts 1:11 and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you watched Him go into heaven." The manner he went includes: (1) The FORM God/Man Jesus (2) the PLACE Mt. of Olives (3) The WAY into the sky, clouds…Zechariah 14 says it is Y-H-W-H (Yahweh) who lands on the Mt. of Olives!! We have always just 'plugged in' JESUS. Hebrew says YHWH. Vs.9 says 'He is ECHAD' ONE. This description is always reserved for the totality of the Godhead. The one we call "God"* – (4, #7) {So, when the Prophet Zechariah writes YHVH, he cannot be refering to Jesus?? Why?}
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> *"3 Persons" Doctrine…We must re-examine this un-Scriptural construct…"Left Behind" is a story! NOT A CHALLENGE to the nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Separates the Persons. Separates the Functions. Logical conclusion of 3 Persons doctrine: when Christ was on earth, God in Heaven was only 2/3rds complete!* – (4, #7) {This is NOT an accurate description of the doctrine of the Trinity, a bizarre Straw Man to attack. Once again we see "3 Persons" in quotation marks.}

Theory of the 'Trinity'…Tom Bradford (p. 127 also 132-139) "…I think we do a great disservice to ourselves when we attempt to artificially limit the possible manifestations of G-d to three, so that it makes a nice and tidy Roman Catholic doctrine." – (4, #8) {The Trinity is not a theory, it is a core belief of the Church, affirmed by multiple ecumenical councils of the Early Church, beginning with Nicaea. God defines his being to us: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, this definition is NOT artificial, it is scriptural. The Trinity is NOT a Roman Catholic doctrine (an attempt to smear this doctrine in the minds of would-be converts to the Hebrew Roots Movement), it was universally adopted as the orthodox explanation of the mystery of God's nature by the whole of the Early Church, accepted by Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholics churches alike for the past two thousand years, and denied primarily in our world today by heretical groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons.}

Bradford likens the Trinity to one Person with three different ATTRIBUTES/ROLES rather than three separates pieces that we label as persons.

> *Father – grand author of the divine plan*
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> *Holy Spirit – container and messenger of the divine plan*
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> *Son – the grand executor of the divine plan*

Found a Teaching at www.ariel.org that is one of the best Messianic teachings I have ever heard on the subject! I highly highly recommend it. He lays out in Church History the (6) major views concerning the doctrine of the Trinity as he sees it. – (4, #8) {Bradford is teaching Modalism, rejected at the Council of Nicaea, 325 AD. There is only one "major view" of the Trinity in Church History, all others represent minorities that were firmly rejected by the Church.}

Throughout the history of the Church there has been tremendous opposition and conflict to the connect of the Trinity of God – Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum - (4, #8) {The Council of Nicaea affirmed its decision 318-2, the opposition to the Trinitarian understanding of God has been a tiny minority throughout Church History, as a whole. Arianism did indeed have a moment of popularity in some geographic areas of the Early Church, but was soon relegated to the margins, this view seeks to legitimize the denial of the Trinity as having a voice "throughout" Church History, this is false.}

Where I Fall on this Issue…

> *Scripture does not ask us to believe in a contradiction. A contradiction would be…"There is one G-d and there is not one G-d" "God is shown/revealed in three roles/attributes/persons and G-d is one role/attribute/person"*
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> *To say "G-d is revealed often in three roles/attributes/persons and there is one G-d" is not a contradiction. It is something we do not understand, and it is therefore a mystery or paradox, but that should not trouble us as long as the different aspects of the mystery are clearly taught by Scripture, for as long as are finite creatures and not omniscient deity, there will always (for all eternity) be things that we do not fully understand.*
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> *From: www.messianicapologetics.net*
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> *Our attention needs to be placed squarely upon the Biblical text, to see if the concept of G-d composed of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is something that can be legitimately derived from Scriptures.* – (4, #8) {To refer to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a

role/attribute/person is NOT an orthodox statement, person is not equivalent to role or attribute, both are heretical lesser views. That scripture teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, without needing to use the word, has been accepted by orthodox Christians for two thousand years.}

Relationship between Yeshua and Yehovah

I also wanted to acknowledge Tom Bradford's teaching on pg. 273 and 274 of our student manuals.

Oneness, Unity, ECHAD yet…

Subservience of the Son to the Father…just as Joseph wielded the full power and authority of Pharaoh, but was not Pharaoh.

Bradford reminds us of how Yeshua taught his disciples to pray…not to Jesus; rather we pray to the Father in the name of Jesus. – (4, #11) {Joseph's authority on behalf of Pharaoh is not a legitimate comparison to that between the Father and Son. Jesus did indeed have the Father's full authority, AND he is also God. Prayer to the Son if entirely legitimate, to limit Jesus to the role of intermediary is unorthodox.}

2. A lesser view of all portions of scripture that are not Torah. Torah is the lens through which all scripture must be viewed, including the words of Jesus, and only Torah is fully inspired.

Examples:

The Torah is God's initial revelation of Himself to mankind, and as such it is the basis upon which all further revelation of God is tested, and the foundation upon which all else is built. – (1, p. 2) {If Torah was being used of God's Word as a whole, there would be no problem here, but FFOZ has made it clear (*"For the purposes of this book, when I speak of the Torah, I am speaking of the formal Torah in its narrowest sense- the five books of Moses"* (8, 1.23) that when they use Torah they primarily mean only the books of Moses.}

In the Messianic Era, the revelation of God will surpass even what He revealed to Moses. Yeshua is the prophet like Moses. Moses heard the voice of God speaking clearly, not in riddles, dreams, visions, or dark oracles. All the other prophets heard only an obscure echo. Moses heard the voice of God directly; consequently, Moses' words were not his own. In the same way, the Master tells the disciples, "The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative" (John 14:10). He spoke only what He heard from the Father – (5, p. 6) {The rest of scripture apart from Torah is not an "obscure echo", God-breathed is far more than that. Each author of scripture heard the voice of God, to relegate any portion of God-inspired scripture to secondary status is dangerous and contrary to 2 Timothy 3:16 as well as numerous councils and creeds of the Church.}

The commands of the Master cannot be different from the commands of the Torah any more than the Word of the Master is different from the Word of the Father. – (5, p. 11) {Jesus has no authority to declare Torah fulfilled, to give a 'new commandment'? The Word existed before Torah, the Word's authority is above Torah, and the Word has every right to speak with the full authority of God beyond Torah.}

3. **The belief that Jesus did not fulfill the Mosaic Law**.

Examples:

> *If Jesus was (and is) Jewish, his teaching must be located on the map of greater Judaism. His prophetic rebuke to his generation should be seen in continuity with that of the earlier prophets. His core message, his "gospel," should not be seen as a call for Jews to abandon Judaism, but rather, it must be recognized as a call to covenant fidelity, a rallying cry to the Torah and its teachings.* (6) {Jesus' Gospel is in quotations, has he not a new message to offer? They are using the Torah as the limits of God's grace, not even Jesus can offer anything new, his Good News must work within Judaism, it cannot be allowed, in their view, to exceed it.}
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> *Jesus' Last Supper took place at Passover. The ceremony known today as communion (or the Eucharist) was originally part of a Passover Seder… Jesus took the unleavened bread and cup of wine and gave them new meaning, and commanded us to partake of them in remembrance of him. For this reason, we take the bread and the cup annually in the context of our Passover meals.* (1, p. 3) {At Beth Immanuel, the synagogue under the leadership of the writer of the Torah Club materials, Communion is ONLY celebrated as part of the Passover Seder, a practice not in keeping with that of the Early Church. While the connection between Passover and Communion is key, once again the New Covenant exceeds the Old, communion's meaning and purpose extends beyond Passover.}
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> *The Master told His disciples, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." A few verses further on in the text, He reiterated the sentiment: "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me" (John 14:21). Some teachers limit the scope of this statement by appealing to Yeshua's "new commandment" of love for one another or His summary of the Torah's greatest commandments: love God; love neighbor. That might make sense if Yeshua intended to replace the Torah as replacement theology assumes. But He did not intend to replace the Torah. Instead, His commandments should be understood to include the broad range of His teaching about the kingdom, including His words about the Torah.* – (5, p. 10-11) {The emphasis by FFOZ upon 'replacement', as if that is the only other option alongside complete continuation of the Mosaic Law, ignores the truth that Jesus fulfilled the Law, bringing its era in God's redemptive plan to a close. In fact, his new commandment exceeds what is required by the Mosaic Law by requiring pure thoughts and attitudes in addition to obedience itself, a key element of Jesus' "you have heard it said, but I say to you" statements, yet his yoke is lite even with a higher standard than that of Moses because his followers live by the Spirit not the written code.}
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> *Each newer covenant was NOT a replacement of an older one…The Mosaic covenant (agreement to keep the law) and the Law itself was NOT declared null and void because of the covenant with Yeshua for the New Covenant.* – (4, #5) {This is a central claim of the FFOZ and Hebrew Roots Movement in general, but it fails to align with both the NT and Church History. Again, a more accurate term is supersede or succeed, not replace. Terminology aside, we don't define God's covenants, he does.}
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> *Odd isn't it? That one would be temporary and the rest permanent, and considering the wording throughout about 'perpetual', 'obedience, and 'forever' and knowing there will be a return to it in the Millennial Kingdom* – (4, #13) {See point #4 below, the perpetual nature of the Mosaic Covenant is a core belief with FFOZ, but not a biblical one, and certainly not one of the Church.}

4. An eschatology that awaits the rebuilding of the Temple complete with a Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system where the whole world will obey Torah in the millennial kingdom.

Examples:

> *We believe that there is a Jewish man who has taken up residence within each and every believer. The more one gets in touch with this inner Jew (i.e. Yeshua), the more one will feel compelled to turn to the ways of Torah and identify with the people of Israel. The non-Jewish call to Torah is part of biblical prophecy too. In the Messianic era, all nations will be keeping the Torah.* – (3, p. 14) {For those claiming FFOZ isn't requiring gentiles to obey Torah, the organization's founder is here claiming that Jesus living within us is compelling us to do just that. Also, FFOZ sees themselves as being a part of a movement to turn the entire Church to Torah observance, in order to bring about the End Times.}
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> *In the Messianic Era, Israel will walk in covenant fidelity, observing God's commandments and statutes. The whole world will live according to the Torah,* - (5, p. 10) {Where is the place for the New Covenant in this return to theocratic Israel writ-large?}
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> *Why does keeping God's commandments bring us into the Messianic Era in advance of its actual coming?* – (5, p. 12) {Group discussion question, the assumption being that Torah observance by gentile Christians is a fulfillment of prophecy; again, an example of why 'we don't require it' doesn't hold water, FFOZ claims those who do not choose the yoke of the Mosaic Law are living against God's plan for the Messianic Era. Once you define something as "God's will", freedom of conscience is moot.}
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> *Gentile Christianity mistook the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jewish people as indications that the church had replaced Israel…To the Gentile Christians, the Temple symbolized the Old Covenant and Judaism. Its destruction symbolized the end of the ceremonial religion of the Jews and the beginning of a spiritual religion in which the church became the new spiritual temple…While the New Testament does speak of the believers as the temple of the Holy Spirit and while we understand Christ is our high priest and ultimate sacrifice for sin: the New Testament writers NEVER intended to imply the cancellations of the literal Temple or the Levitical priesthood. (1. Sacrifices continued in the Temple after the ascension of Christ and we see the rebuilding of the Temple and the coming of Messiah with the sacrifices reinstituted. We need to work thru this information and make sure our theology meshes with what the Scripture has to say.) – Ideas taken from: Shadows of the Message – parsha Terumah* – (4, #1) {The claim that no NT author envisioned an end to the Temple and Levitical priesthood is flatly contradicted by the entire premise of *Hebrews*. To claim that the Apostle Paul envisioned a permanent Temple and Levitical priesthood, as a part of Christianity, fits not at all with Paul's writings or how he organized churches.}
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> *What are your thoughts on righteous people/animals/objects atoning for mankind? These things indicate (when studied) why the millennial sacrifices will return under the rule and reign of Messiah. (Another subject for another day.)* (4, #9) {This is not open for debate: Hebrews 10:4 (NIV) It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.}
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> *The work of preparing for the Final Redemption requires the restoration of a Jewish Messiah, a Jewish gospel, a Jewish concept of discipleship, and Jewish understanding of Torah.* (8, 10.2) {Two false assumptions here: #1, that the Church or anyone else is responsible for bringing about the 2nd Coming of Christ, #2 that it would be a restoration of the Gospel and Christian discipleship to what it

originally was if it was made "Jewish", a term defined in the practice of FFOZ by modern Judaism, NOT its first-century ancestor.}

5. That there has never been a Covenant with the Gentiles, thus it is only through 'becoming a Jew' in spirit, and in practice, that one can be a full/true follower of Jesus Christ.

Examples:

we believe that a non-Jew's position in Israel and participation in Torah are the natural results of his identity in Messiah. As believers in Messiah, non-Jews have a right and responsibility to take hold of the commandments of God. – (3, p. 4) {FFOZ identifies Jeremiah 31 as the foundation of the New Covenant, claiming Jesus' New Covenant in the Gospels is built upon these promises to Israel.}

"The point is not whether or not you are Jewish or Israelite. The point is that there is a Jewish Israelite living within you." – (3, p. 4) {Actually, it is the Holy Spirit that indwells believers, not Jesus, they may only be speaking metaphorically, but they're doing so to make an non-orthodox claim that Christians must live as Jews, which makes such a statement dangerous.}

In this teaching we present that the New Covenant is made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, resulting in the restoration of Israel. It is a common teaching of FFOZ that there is no covenant made with the people of the nations—Gentiles. Our position is that the ger was always considered to be equal participants in Israel based on their faith and faithfulness to the covenants. This is not a replacement theology—this is a theology of inclusion. – (3, p. 7) {It is hard to accept that gentiles converts were ever "equal participants" given the literal dividing wall in the Temple to keep them out. The New Covenant will include the restoration of Israel, but each and every person redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb is saved by, in, and through Jesus Christ, and him alone, NOT by belonging in any way to Israel.}

the core teaching at FFOZ has always been one of full non-Jewish participation in the things of Torah and the people of Israel. We have predicated this participation upon the individual's identity in Messiah alone. We believe that, as disciples of the Torah-observant Messiah, we are beholden to imitate His life and conform to His teaching. We believe in Torah observance on the basis of our identity in Yeshua. We believe that we have a position in Israel on the basis of the Messiah of Israel's position within each one of us. – (3, p. 12) {The Jewish heritage of Jesus necessitated Torah observance as he perfectly fulfilled the Law, it does not follow, that every disciple must be Torah observant in order to imitate him, Jesus never said so, nor does any NT text proclaim this.}

What is not debatable is that all believers already have citizenship in Israel through faith in Messiah. Non-Jews are grafted into Israel. Non-Jews are made part of the commonwealth of Israel. Non-Jews are given the covenants of promise. All of this is accomplished only through faith in Messiah. – (3, p. 15) {FFOZ views Paul grating analogy in Romans 11 incorrectly. Israel was a branch that is broken off because of unbelief, the root onto which gentile followers of Jesus are grafted is not Israel or the Mosaic Law, but Jesus Christ himself, the only root and foundation for all who believe. Israel was never the root, only a branch, the root was always God.}

Most people who attend Beth Immanuel are not Jewish, but we all practice Messianic Judaism together. – (1, p. 1) {The question of the relationship between a Jewish Christian and the Law of Moses is not the focus of FFOZ, their target has always been gentiles.}

Most people who attend Beth Immanuel are not Jewish, but they practice Messianic Judaism in imitation of Jesus. – (1, p. 2) {FFOZ is not a movement of Messianic Jews, rather one of gentiles seeking to follow Jesus by adopting the practices of modern Judaism.}

Q – If the Jews are still G-d's chosen people, what about believing Gentiles? How can Gentiles benefit from the covenants G-d made with the Jewish people without becoming Jewish? More practically, how can Gentiles who are drawn to the Torah and the Jewish people become involved with Messianic Judaism? Essentially, if Israel is limited to the Jewish people, and Israel is the people of G-d, where do believing Gentiles find their identity? – (4, #10) {Why are gentiles trying to benefit from God's covenant with Israel? That covenant is with them, by God's sovereign choice, not you. Our identity? Is in Jesus Christ, period, nothing else is needed or warranted.}

Let's consider that the church has taught a theology of replacement and substitution by which we believe the church has replaced and even superseded Israel. We have taught the church is the New Israel. We have taught that if a Jewish person wants salvation or any inheritance in the covenants of promise, he or she must forsake Judaism and convert to Christianity. This story contradicts replacement theology. The sons of Jacob were not adopted into the family of Ephraim and Manasseh, rather Ephraim and Manasseh were adopted into the family of Jacob to become sons of Israel. Israel does not join the Gentile church; the Gentile church has been spiritually united with Israel (Romans 9:4-5) Depth of the Torah p. 425-426 – (4, #12) {Not at all, believers in Jesus, both Jew and Gentile, are united together in him. One Lord, one faith, one birth.}

Because there is no mention of the New Covenant being a "universal covenant" made between G-d and the Gentiles, Gentiles have no part of this new Covenant unless they are somehow declared by YHVH to be part of either the house of Israel or the House of Judah. (p. 287) Romans 11 explains how this works. – (4, #14) {That's not at all what Romans 11 explains, one need only look at Romans 10:9-13 to find a covenant offered by God to anyone who believes in Jesus. In fact, the opposite of this claim is true: the Mosaic Covenant was limited to one people, the New has been given by Jesus to the whole world.}

Believers have been brought into a new family: the family of Israel. (8, 2.17) {1 Peter 2:9-10 proclaims that God has made a new people united in Christ, not expanded Israel.}

New Testament is not the New Covenant: The New Testament is a collection of scriptures that tell about how the gospel brought about the New Covenant, but it is not actually the New Covenant itself. (8, 3.17) {Followed by the use of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:24-28, FFOZ identifies this as the New Covenant, a covenant with Israel, not gentiles, and therefore in their mind, limited to by the parameters of the Mosaic.}

The New Covenant is a covenant only with the: people of Israel (8, 3.21) {That's not what John 3:16 says. That's not what any orthodox theologian in the Church's 2,000 year history has taught.}

We learned that the "New Covenant" is not the "New Testament," and it does not replace Torah. The Torah is actually a part of the New Covenant; that is why the New Covenant could be called

the "Renewed Covenant." (8, 3.23) {The entirety of the book of *Hebrews* refutes the notion that Torah is the basis of the New Covenant.}

We learned that the New Covenant was made only with God's chosen people Israel. Gentiles who want to have a share in the New Covenant must do so by participation in Israel through the Messiah of Israel. (8, 3.23) {Where is there a single statement in scripture asserting that "participation in Israel" is essential to belief in Jesus? Israel is the gatekeeper to Jesus? How? Why? This is NOT within the scope of the orthodox, catholic, and apostolic Church.}

The Old Covenant is part of this present world. The New Covenant is the covenant of the restored world of the Messianic Age. The Torah is the same in both covenants, but our relationship to it changes. In the Old, it was a matter of "if you obey me" and in the New it is a matter of "this Torah will be written on you heart." Thus the New Covenant is not an abrogation of the Torah but rather a new agreement changing our relationship to the Torah. (8, 3.30) {The New Covenant doesn't start until the End Times? The Church is under the Old Covenant? Again, this is not at all what the Early Church Fathers inherited from the Apostles.}

From Paul's perspective in Galatians, the offense of the cross is Gentile inclusion in Israel. (8, 6.24) {The offense of the Cross is the Messiah crucified instead of reigning from David's throne, foolishness to all who do not understand the power of God. FFOZ's viewpoint depends upon *Galatians* being almost completely misunderstood throughout the Church History, an error they alone can see.}

6. That faithful discipleship of Jesus Christ requires keeping the Mosaic Law, including the dietary (kosher), Sabbath, and festival provisions.

Examples:

We have risen to defend the unchanging authority of the Torah from those who claim it has been abolished. We have done the hard work of figuring the Torah back into the equation of discipleship as it applies to Jewish and Gentile disciples, respectively. (7) {According to FFOZ, Torah observance = discipleship. It was "hard work" to put it back because this effort goes against the entirety of Church History.}

We share a desire to walk after the commandments and to live our lives in faithful obedience to God's Torah. We share a sense of belonging in the greater body of Israel. – (3, p. 4) {You can "feel" like you belong to Israel, but you don't. Either you belong to Jesus, wholly and fully, or to the world.}

a large number of non-Jewish believers who are seeking out their biblical roots in an attempt to return to a purer form of our faith. – (3, p. 6) {To obey Torah as a gentile follower of Jesus, according to FFOZ, is "purer"; this is not being presented as optional.}

Lest there be any doubt about where First Fruits of Zion stands on this issue, allow me to remind everyone that First Fruits of Zion officially separated from the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) in May of 2000 over the issue of Gentile inclusion. – (3, p. 9) {FFOZ rejects Messianic Judaism because that movement does not push to include gentiles in the practice of Judaism.}

He clearly states that the Messianic Jewish Movement was never intended to be a place in which Gentiles would begin to embrace the Torah or feel compelled to keep the Torah. – (3, p. 10) {Which is why FFOZ broke with Messianic Judaism, they wanted that compulsion.}

We both espouse full non-Jewish participation in Israel. We both believe the Sabbath, the Festivals, the dietary laws and the whole of Torah applies equally to all God's people, Jew and non-Jew. – (3, p. 16) {Full Torah observance is the raison d'etre of FFOZ and much of the Hebrew Roots Movement, anything less to them is a violation of the will of God.}

The restoration of Early Messianic Judaism has implications for everything we do at Beth Immanuel. We keep the Sabbath and biblical festivals such as Rosh Hashanah and Passover according to God's prescription in Leviticus 23. We keep the Bible's dietary laws in keeping with the instructions in Leviticus 11. More than that, we endeavor to preserve a basic form of Jewish practice and tradition within our community. At the same time, we clearly distinguish between Jewish identity and Gentile identity within our community, making it clear that Gentile disciples are not required to observe the Torah as Jews or to abandon their Gentile identity. – (2, p. 2) {"Not required" statements ring especially hollow alongside those proclaiming that true disciples, if they really love Jesus, will want the yoke of Torah upon them.}

As sons of Abraham by faith in Messiah, we all have access to Yeshua's Jewish heritage. This does not mean that Gentile believers become Jews, but they should not be discouraged from practicing Messianic Judaism: the Jewish roots of their faith. – (1, p. 1) {Abraham, to whom we have a spiritual kinship in Christ, preceded the Law of Moses, not even being circumcised until AFTER receiving the promises of God by faith.}

we strive to be like Jesus in everything we do, which includes observing Jewish tradition. – (1, p. 3) {The true challenge of being like Jesus is far deeper, and far harder, than observing Jewish traditions.}

if they truly love Him, they must keep His commandments, including what He said about the unchanging Torah. – (5, p. 3) {This insistence upon an 'unchanging' Torah is reminiscent of how Muslims view the Quran, as greater than Muhammed and eternal, but Jesus is the Word of God, he IS greater than Torah, and his Word does supersede it.}

The Master binds the commandments, judgments, ordinances, and statutes of the Torah upon His disciples with the cords of love. He taught them to observe even the least of the Torah's commandments. All of Yeshua's teachings were explanations and interpretations of His Father's commandments. The Apostle John understood the equation, and he explained that every disciple of Yeshua is obligated by love for God to walk in obedience to Torah: For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. (1 John 5:3) – (5, p. 11) {"Obligated", again, FFOZ is declaring observance of the Mosaic Law to be a test of faith, without it they proclaim one cannot show love of God, and is therefore no true follower of Jesus at all.}

Only those who subject themselves to the authority of the Master's teaching and His Torah enter into the union of His love and the love of God: - (5, p. 14) {Thus, according to FFOZ, 99.9% of all those who have claimed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, historically and in our world today, are lost, for they have kept not the Mosaic Law. This is a far cry from: solus Christus, sola fide, and sola gratia.}

We are primarily interested in those passages which Christianity has traditionally used to teach that Jesus was against Judaism and the observance of the Torah. On closer examination, each of these passages proves just the opposite. Instead, we learn that in order to be "sinless," Jesus had to be Torah observant. (8, 4.2) {The Hebrew Roots Movement, FFOZ in particular, depend upon overturning the traditional understanding of every passage that pertains to the New Covenant, Law of Moses, and Early Church practices in the NT. They are right they say, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Augustine,

Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon, and the rest were all wrong…Of course Jesus followed the Law of Moses, the question that matters is: What does he expect of his disciples?}

Yeshua came to properly interpret the Torah – not to cancel it or replace it.

Yeshua is the Living Torah.

Yeshua did not teach against Torah, Sabbath, or kosher laws.

Yeshua's law of loves does not replace the Torah. (8, 4.2)

{The Straw Man of "against" and "replace" is not what the Church teaches, in reality the orthodox view is that Jesus fulfilled the Law, and that his teachings and New Covenant supersede it.}

We learned about Yeshua's yoke of discipleship and that "yoke" was a rabbinic metaphor for "Torah." (8, 5.21) {That the rabbis used "yoke of the Law" as a metaphor may be precisely why Jesus chose to speak of his own yoke, it was a to point out the contrast, his yoke vs. that of the Law. What does not follow, therefore, is the FFOZ assertion that this proves that in Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus is calling upon future gentile disciples to live as Jews under the Law of Moses (that being the exact same yoke as that of the Pharisees); once more their interpretation is the opposite of proper exegesis of the text.}

The biblical Sabbath and holidays have not been abolished or replaced.

The biblical Sabbath and holidays are relevant to believers today. (8, 8.2)

{The adjective biblical is meant to lend authority to retaining the Jewish calendar for Christians, but the Church based its adoption of Sunday as the Lord's Day and the celebration of, primarily, Christmas and Easter, on the same bible, the one that told them they came to God through Jesus Christ, not Israel.}

To say that Gentile believers are not expected to keep God's appointed times is the same as saying that Gentile believers are not supposed to have any holy days or days of worship. (8, 8.5) {Evidently, the Lord's Day, Christmas, and Easter don't count as holy days or days of worship unless we faithfully keep the Jewish calendar too.}

Not every commandment is applicable in our current situation. "For there are many commandments that are in force in the Land of Israel but not in countries outside the Land; and there are commandments in force only at the time the Sanctuary exists. There are those which are related to ritual holiness and purity; there are those in force only at beth din (court of law) of ordained and authorized judges [i.e. the Sanhedrin]. – Chofetz Chaim, The Concise Book of Mitzvoth

77 Applicable Positive Commandments

194 Applicable Negative Commandments

26 Commandments Applicable only in the Land of Israel (8, 9.5)

{Here's the rub, FFOZ claims that Jesus can't offer a new commandment by his authority nor modify the Law of Moses, but because there is not Temple or priesthood, hundreds of commandments are set aside

while still being faithful to Torah. Circumstances can change the Law, in their view it seems, but the Son of God cannot.}

If Gentile believers see the importance of keeping a biblical diet in order to maintain their identity as a participant in the holy nation, why should they be discouraged? After all, Yeshua kept kosher. (8, 9.14) {Notice the rationale: "in order to maintain", they may state over and over that salvation is by faith through grace alone, but "maintaining" that status requires Torah observance.}

The Torah gives us 613 opportunities to show our love for our Father in heaven, and our love for our fellow man. (8, 9.21) {See above, several hundred are defunct. Aside from that, being a gentile follower of Jesus Christ who lives like a Jew is how FFOZ defines love for God.}

It is not useful to try to impose higher standards on the Gentile believers than the apostles themselves imposed. However, the apostles offered those standards as a minimum threshold of dietary law, not a maximum. They pointed the Gentiles in the direction of the Torah's higher standards by encouraging them to remain in the synagogues and learn Torah from the weekly readings {Acts 15:21 is quoted} *With these words, the apostles invited the Gentile believers to take hold of their spiritual heritage by learning more of the ways of Torah…If someone who is not Jewish wants to eat a biblically kosher diet, how can anyone object? How could it possibly hurt to do so? How could it be wrong to obey the Bible.* (8, 9.28) {The first sentence, a biblical sentiment, is entirely negated by the second one. This movement views the Jerusalem Council, Acts 15, as affirming gentile obedience to the Mosaic Law, once more, an interpretation that is the opposite of two thousand years of Church understanding. It is absolutely correct to obey the Bible, but one must have an interpretation of it that does not twists its truths into pretzels if one is to use scripture to justify one's positions.}

The person who decides to keep kosher needs to vigilantly guard his heart from looking down on other believers who do not share his conviction…Nevertheless, we certainly can argue against the idea that keeping the biblical dietary laws places us under legalistic bondage…I would argue that keeping the dietary laws and other ceremonial laws of Torah is completely natural for believers. After all, if we are under the new covenant, God has written His Torah on our hearts (8, 9.29) {Jeremiah 31:33 is quoted, once more misidentified as the origin and sole definition of the New Covenant, and also misappropriating Jeremiah's promises to the Israelite people for themselves. While the first sentiment's seems noble, there can hardly be "other believers" who don't obey the Law of Moses given that FFOZ (and the Hebrew Roots Movement in general) defines that obedience as a necessary proof that a person loves God.}

Keeping the dietary laws is a natural expression of who we are in Messiah. It is part of our identity in the new covenant. If believers see the importance of keeping a biblical diet in order to maintain their identity as a participant in the holy nation, why should they be discouraged? After all, Yeshua kept kosher. (8, 9.29) {Again, the commonality with Islamic thought here: Islam views 7th century Arab cultural expressions as the only valid example. Here too, the form of how Jesus lived is lifted up for emulation, rather it is the heart of Jesus that calls us to do likewise, not its specific expressions in 1st century Judaism. Also, "in order to maintain", another example of the FFOZ belief that keeping the Law of Moses is required to show one is saved.}

The Gentile believer's relationship to Israel and the Torah comes through the Messiah. He is not required to keep the specific signs of Torah that were given to Israel {Colossians 2:16 is quoted, but then Ruth 1:16-17 is quoted to imply strongly that truly dedicated Christians will volunteer to keep Torah.

Those claiming FFOZ is just offering bible studies and is not a movement against the Church can point to "He is not required" statements, there are plenty, but they are repeatedly eviscerated by contradictory statements about what it really means to love God (i.e. follow Torah), as well as the inescapable implications of a theology that proclaims that only through Israel can believers in Jesus come to God.}

Gentile believers have a biblical invitation to participate along with Israel in keeping the Torah. (8, 10.18) {Except they don't, unless you flip passage after passage of scripture around to mean the opposite from its orthodox, catholic, and apostolic understanding; in other words, from what the Church as a whole has always believed them to be saying.}

7. The New Covenant is an extension of the Mosaic, which is still operative and normative for everyone.

Examples:

it seemed to harmonize with the work that the Spirit of God was doing within them, turning their hearts toward the Torah of God—the work of the New Covenant. – (3, p. 7) {The purpose of the New Covenant is to turn gentiles to Torah observance? That would be something we'd expect at least one NT author to affirm, wouldn't we?}

By espousing these premises, Messianic Judaism has maintained a convenient niche right next to the evangelical Christian church. Since they are not teaching that the Torah is the biblically prescribed way of life for all peoples and nations who call upon the name of the God of Israel, they can conveniently co-exist in cooperation with the Church's anti-Torah theological assumptions. – (3, p. 8) {Here FFOZ differentiates itself from Messianic Judaism which does not, like FFOZ, teach that Torah is for Gentiles, while taking a shot at Jewish Christians. How much clearer than "Torah is the biblically prescribed way of life for all peoples and nations" does it need to be to prove that FFOZ is a threat to the Church?}

From the outset of our ministry, FFOZ has maintained equal covenant participation for Jews and non-Jews. That is to say, we believe that the Torah is for everybody who follows the Jewish Messiah. However, that message has not always been crystal clear in our magazine publications and personal communications – (3, p. 12) {This is FFOZ lamenting that it wasn't always clear that gentile Torah keeping was their central purpose and primary goal; it is, point taken.}

Parts That Don't Apply Today

> *The Torah is not done away with or cancelled, but some parts of it do not apply to us today. (A) Death Penalty and Court-Imposed Punishments – Death penalty does not apply outside land or without Sanhedrin (B) Animal Sacrifices and Levitical Laws – Alter sacrifices and Levitical laws do not apply outside of temple in Jerusalem* (8, 1.14-1.15)
>
> {The Civil Law and Sacrificial Law are not functioning, but the Ceremonial Law is still binding because Torah is for everyone everywhere always? There's a flaw in this logic.}

Is Messiah to be understood as the ending of the Torah then? No. He is the end, but not the ending. He is the goal of the Torah, but not the termination of it. In fact, He Himself said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the law [Torah]" (Matthew 5:17) (8, 1.22) {Context matters, Jesus is

speaking to a Jewish audience before he instituted the New Covenant. It does not follow that his words here are proof that he was planning to extend the Mosaic Covenant to the Gentiles as the basis of the New Covenant.}

James calls the Torah the "perfect Torah," and the "Torah of liberty." (8, 2.20) {Followed by a quotation of James 1:22-25 where law (Gk. Nomon) is replaced in the text by Torah each time, this is a common tactic in the Hebrew Roots Movement, substituting Torah for Law in the NT whenever it helps make their point. Offered for context: James 1:25 English Standard Version But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.}

Messiah did not abolish the Torah; He abolished the enmity between Jew and Gentile engendered by Torah. Because of the inclusion of Gentile believers into the greater people of Israel, the Torah is no longer a wall of separation. In Messiah, Gentile believers have the prerogative to take hold of the covenant and take on the commandments. The enmity that kept Jews and Gentiles on opposite sides of the Torah wall has been removed. (8, 7.14) {In explanation of Ephesians 2:14-16, which in fact teaches that both Jew and Gentile alike can approach God through Jesus, not that both may now embrace Torah together. In addition, FFOZ maintains that Gentiles were always welcome in the Mosaic Covenant, that nothing has changed; so why was there a dividing wall in the first place, why did that Covenant treat non-Jews differently, limiting their participation?}

We believe that the Torah is a revelation of the righteousness of God and a description (along with the rest of Scripture) of the lifestyle of the redeemed community. (8, C.1) {What God gave to Israel, a theocratic kingdom of the Ancient Near East, in part to differentiate them from their immoral neighbors, they proclaim to be normative for every redeemed community for all time.}

8. The 'good works' of the New Covenant, and the purpose of the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost, is to enable Jesus' followers to more fully keep the Mosaic Law.

Examples:

First Fruits of Zion teaches a different message, but many of the results are the same. We teach that the believer's identity in Messiah gives him the right and responsibility to "take hold" of the commandments of God. The observance of the Sabbath, the biblical Festivals, the biblical dietary laws and the lifestyle of Torah becomes incumbent upon us because we have been "created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10) – (3, p. 6) {The 'good works' of Ephesians 2:10 are the Fruit of the Spirit, this is a greater obligation than Torah observance. We are called to more as followers of Jesus, this view is a step backward toward lesser responsibility.}

*SIDENOTE*** Interestingly, the New Covenant and the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost is to help us keep the Torah*. – (4, #4) {Nowhere is this stated in the New Testament, if this was God's primary purpose for sending the Spirit, wouldn't it be mentioned somewhere in scripture?}

When we keep the Torah, we allow Messiah to live through us. He is righteousness, and Torah is the standard of righteousness. He is the law fulfilled, and He desires to fulfill it through us. (8, 2.25) {The standard of righteousness as a follower of Jesus exceeds that placed upon Israel in the Mosaic

Covenant, to love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you is a higher calling than to keep kosher; we cannot exchange the greater for the lesser.}

9. That the practice of the Early Church, through the entirety of the apostolic generation, was a form of Judaism, complete with observance of the Mosaic Law by gentiles, and that this was in keeping with the desire of the Apostles and the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

Examples:

The majority of people in attendance at Beth Immanuel are not Jewish; most of us are Gentile Christians who have found spiritual significance in a traditional Jewish expression of our faith as we emulate the earliest form of Christianity. We feel called to follow the Jewish calendar, celebrate the weekly Sabbath, enjoy the Jewish holidays, and participate in the synagogue liturgical tradition – (2, p. 1) {The "earliest form" is a bold assertion with scant evidence, there is no evidence that gentile Christians were ever compelled by the Apostles to observe the Mosaic Law, or that this was anywhere the practice of the Early Church.}

The earliest form of Christianity—the Christianity of the apostolic era—was a messianic sectarian movement within greater, first-century Judaism. More than one hundred years after the life of Yeshua of Nazareth, the explosive growth of Gentile Christianity eclipsed the early, messianic, sect of Judaism he had founded. Many Jewish and Gentile Christians discarded the distinctively Jewish practices of the Torah (Law) as they assimilated into the evolving Gentile religious environment. The original, biblical faith and practice of Yeshua and his first disciples faded into obscurity. – (2, p. 1) {This isn't Church History as recorded in *Acts* or the available historical evidence. While the Apostles were still living the gentile Church's numbers exploded (See Acts 15, this was happening during their lives, not after). Had the Apostles desired to create a faith that was only a reform movement within Judaism, adhering to its every practice, they could have done so, but did not, because they had no such aim.}

In the days of the New Testament, Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus worshipped together as co-religionists, participating together in the prayers, rituals, expressions, and customs of daily Jewish life. They understood the person and teaching of Yeshua from within the context of Judaism and the Torah world-view. – (2, p. 1) {A bold assertion, not in keeping with *Acts* or Paul's letters, which instead give evidence of a new form of worship and fellowship, inspired by Judaism and the Hebrew scriptures, no doubt, but not limited by them, and not imitating them. Jesus was the inspiration of their worldview, his teaching was front and center, the Hebrew scriptures gave it necessary context, but were not the limits of it.}

Beth Immanuel exists to reconstruct and propagate that simple form of faith. (2, p. 1) {A reconstruction based upon a historical fantasy, and one making an emotional appeal to "simple faith" in order to convince Christians to abandon the faith and practice of the Church.}

According to the Apostles, Gentile believers are not required to keep the distinctive commandments of Jewish identity such as circumcision, Sabbath, the dietary laws, etc. Nevertheless, God-fearing Gentile disciples in fellowship with those early Jewish believers naturally participated in the Sabbath, synagogue, and Jewish-life along with the Jewish community of faith (Acts 15:19-21). – (2, p. 2) {Once again, "nevertheless", contradicts the previous

statement, rendering it moot and imposing Mosaic Law upon would-be Christ followers. All built upon the unproven assertion that this was what the Early Church did, which is a factual error (lie).}

The traditional synagogue liturgy is an essential part of Messianic Jewish expression and continuity with the rest of the Jewish world. Liturgy has been used in the Temple and in synagogues for thousands of years. The prayers are based heavily on Scripture and most them were in use in the Temple and synagogues of Yeshua's time. The early apostolic community used liturgy extensively, and it is a hallmark of authentic Messianic Judaism. – (1, p. 3) {The Early Church did indeed develop a liturgy, but it was not a copy of that taking place in the synagogues.}

ALSO in the langue of Torah, certain laws apply to both the Jew and the stranger ***who sojourns in the midst of the people of Israel*** *(not all Gentiles…but those in the midst of the Hebrews). All four of the apostolic decrees belong to that category of laws. (Read Leviticus 17-18)* – (4, #2) {Part of the rationale for the FFOZ view that Acts 15 is about imposing gentile Torah observance, rather than the actual contextual interpretation of freeing the new gentile converts from Law that the people of Israel had themselves failed to keep.}

Many Christians have difficulty accepting the idea of the ongoing roles of Torah and Israel because of the writings of the Apostle Paul…Therefore, it is important for us to examine Paul – the man and his message – in order to see if, in fact, his teaching are actually incompatible with the Land, the People, and the Scriptures of Israel. (8. 6.2) {The writings of Paul are not the sole reason, every NT author speaks with one voice about the New Covenant, but FFOZ does indeed reimagine Paul on a fundamental level, the results being a man and a theology unrecognizable to Augustine (for example).}

Paul has thus, wrongly, I believe, been seen as disregarding the Law and customs of his Jewish past as he developed entirely new, Christian solutions. He has, mistakenly, been made the creator of a Gentile Christianity that rejected Judaism and the Law as operative, rather than the champion of the restoration of Israel who fought for the inclusion of "righteous gentiles" in this new community as equals…as understood by James and the Council – Mark Nanos, The Mystery of Romans (8, 6.15) {The Straw Man of a Paul completely disconnected from his heritage, few Christian theologians would think of Paul in this way, is refuted in order to posit instead a fanciful Paul for whom the risen Savior changed very little in how he lived his life, except a new desire to include gentiles in Torah observance. One will read Paul's letters in vain without finding this version of Paul.}

There is really no way around Acts 21. Paul meant to pay for the Nazirites to demonstrate that he lived in obedience to Torah and never taught contrary to Torah observance. Any seemingly contrary statements from his epistles must be weighted against Acts 21. (8, 6.29) {Thus FFOZ jettisons Paul's words to gentile Christians, allowing his actions among his own people, during a charged and soon-to-be violent climate, and a particularly strident interpretation of Acts 21, to outweigh everything else he wrote.}

Many believers today might consider living in obedience to God's commandments if not for the writings of Paul. It is widely believed that Paul discouraged believers from practicing Torah and that he warned us from "going under the Law" and "falling from grace." But if that is really true, then Paul's writings hopelessly contradict what we know about Paul himself. This week we will examine a sampling of Pauline passages that have traditionally been interpreted as anti-Torah and anti-Jewish. We hope that we will be able to unravel these misunderstood passages to

discover the true message of the Apostle Paul. (8, 7.2) {It is not a contradiction at all for Paul, a Jew, to honor his heritage (to what extent is a matter open to debate), and at the same time, to not wish to impose that yoke of Mosaic Law upon new gentile Christians, and to have profound and foundational theological reasons for doing so. Paul's words matter, they can't be wiped away by imagining a Paul who didn't really mean what he wrote.}

Just like the apostolic decision in Acts 15, the Didache does not bind Gentile believer to the Torah. Instead, it encourages them to take on as much as they are able.

> *For if you are able to bear all the yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect;* but if you are not able, do what you are able to do – Didache 6:2
>
> *Yoke of the Lord = The Torah* (8, 10.19)
>
> {This view of the Didache only works if you accept the premise that yoke = Torah, it is an eisegetical interpretation in Matthew 11, just as it is here. FFOZ wants to believe there is support for a gentile Torah observant community in Early Church history, so this becomes the "proof".}

10. That Sabbath worship was the practice of the Early Church, something not 'changed' until Constantine.

Examples:

Constantine and the Catholic Church in the 4th century attempted to change the keeping of the 7th day…Though Christ's resurrection day, the 1st day of the week, is not ordained in the Holy Scriptures as a weekly day of meeting, there is certainly no prohibition against the church meeting on the 1st day but the L-rd's Day is not the Sabbath as defined by G-d Himself in the Holy Scriptures…Justification to change the Sabbath can sometimes be misunderstood by reading Paul's writings out of context. (Colossians 2:16-23) – (4, #3) {This is Dan Brown level conspiracy thinking. The Early Church met to fellowship and worship on Sunday, the Lord's Day, from the very first generation, a practice attested to in the NT, and long established centuries before Constantine. Notice also the appeal to anti-Catholic sentiment. There was not "Catholic Church" in the 4th century, at that point the Church was united and the bishop of Rome no more influential than the Patriarch of Alexandria (for example). The Hebrew Roots Movement depends greatly upon the ignorance of the people of the Church to the history of their faith.}

The New Testament contains no specific commandments concerning the nature, place, or time that God desires for corporate worship. There is no commandment to assemble on Sunday morning or any other day of the week. The Torah, on the other hand, contains ample instruction about God's appointed times of worship. In the faith and practice of the apostolic community, believers followed the biblical calendar, kept the seventh-day Sabbath, and worshipped God at His appointed times. (8, 8.2) {Another bold assertion about Early Church practice, not backed up by the available evidence, where in the NT do we see a Church following the Jewish calendar, fully and only?}

11. A hostility toward the history of the Church, predicated on the notion that the Church has always been corrupted and in error (and/or lying to you), and only this movement has God's truth.

Examples:

So, we aren't fighting the church, and we aren't fighting against Christians or Christian practice. However, we are challenging the underlying system of replacement theology and supersessionism. That's the root issue. Rooting it out is going to be a battle. I'm afraid it's going to be an ugly fight. While we can organizationally separate the goodness and productivity of the institutional church and sincere spirituality and devotion of the individual Christians—both the church and most Christians will feel assaulted, offended, and targeted. (7) {As numerous examples above have demonstrated, the Hebrew Roots Movement (FFOZ in particular) is indeed setting itself up against the entirety of the Church and its history. That Christians will rightly see the huge implications of this theology is to be expected, they feel targeted because they are; they are the mission field, their institutions must die if this is to take their place.}

Separating the institution from the theology that supports it is difficult, but that is what we need to do to progress. Again, the church is not the enemy—but we are challenging the theology the institution represents and propagates. (7) {They may say the Church is not the enemy, but to succeed, the Hebrew Roots Movement would need to overthrow the orthodoxy of Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians alike, not to mention the decisions of multiple Ecumenical Councils that predate the Schism. While I appreciate the willingness to say, "You're not the enemy", it doesn't match with the oft repeated assertions akin to, "You're lying to everyone and leading them astray".}

Most churchgoers still have no idea that they are called to be disciples of a Jewish rabbi. The potential to come alongside these brothers and sisters and seriously reorient their understanding of Jesus' life and teachings is nearly limitless. "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Matthew 9:37). (6) {FFOZ founder, Boaz, defines the Church as the mission field, this is not evangelism of the Lost, but conversion of the redeemed to their cause, especially those disaffected with their own church and vulnerable to being told that it is corrupted. The Church is the intended target.}

Messianic Judaism rediscovered an authenticity deeper and older than any form or structure existing within the mainstream Church: Torah. Suddenly, it wasn't primarily Jews coming into the movement. Rather, it was Christians, Gentile Christians who have been starved for authenticity for centuries. Gentile Christians hungry and zealous for Torah. – (3, p. 9) {The Church's faith and practice are described by the founder of FFOZ as "starved for authenticity." Given that the Mosaic Law predates the New Covenant by 1,500 years, it will always be older, that neither makes it deeper, nor justifies its continuation.}

Suddenly Gentile Christians everywhere are responding, "Yes! This is what my faith has been missing. This is what I have always been looking for." – (3, p. 9) {Your relationship with Jesus and development of the Fruit of the Spirit was lacking, and only feels fulfilled by embracing the practices of modern Judaism?? This doesn't raise a red flag?}

The matrix of the Messianic Jewish Movement simply is not big enough for the restoration that God is doing in the Body of Messiah. The Hebrew Roots movement has outgrown Messianic Judaism. – (3, p. 11) {The Hebrew Roots Movement has a savior complex, the arrogance here is stunning.}

Rest assured we are working on this issue in our study…little by little…chipping away doctrines of men and replacing it with the Scriptures themselves. Please be patient!!! – (4, #10) {This is not simply a Bible study, the goals of FFOZ (and Torah Clubs) is to set aside the Church as it has been known from the beginning.}

We are on a mission to restore the original faith and practice of the apostles and first followers of Jesus of Nazareth. We rejoice in our rootedness in Judaism as well as our relationship with Christianity. (8, Intro XV) {This feels like a slip of the tongue, yet this book has been through many editions, why would genuine followers of Jesus Christ need to have a 'relationship with' Christianity? Again, the first followers were Jews living under the Mosaic Law in a generation that grew up before the New Covenant was established, FFOZ sees no distinction between them and the gentile converts to Christ who rejoiced at Paul's message of salvation by grace through faith. To FFOZ, all disciples of Jesus must live like the 12 before the Resurrection, this is neither historically accurate, nor theologically necessary.}

Galatians 3:23-24 retranslated: "But before faith came, we were kept protected under the Torah, being kept inside for the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Torah has become our caretaker to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith." (8, p. 1.12) {Provided for comparison, this 'retranslation' changes Paul's meaning and purpose: Galatians 3:23-24 (ESV) Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.}

For the unbeliever is bound by Torah to sin and punishment while sin is living; but if sin and punishment dies, the unbeliever is released from the Torah's condemnation of sin. So then, if while sin and punishment is alive the unbeliever is declared righteous and justified, the unbeliever shall be called a lawbreaker; but if sin and punishment dies, the believer is free from the condemnation of the law, so that the believer is not a lawbreaker though she is joined to righteousness and justification. Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the condemnation of the Law through the body of Messiah, so that you might be joined to righteousness and justification, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. (paraphrase of Romans 7:2-4) (8, 7.8) {Part of a pattern of using paraphrases of key passages to 'demonstrate' that they mean the opposite of the Church's traditional interpretation. For Comparison: Romans 7:2-4 New International Version 2 For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. 3 So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man. 4 So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.}

Later readers of the epistle who were not aware of the contextual situation interpreted Galatians as an anti-Torah and anti-Jewish work. Based largely upon this misreading of Galatians, early Christianity jettisoned Torah and our connections to Judaism. We began to believe that anyone who attempted to keep a commandment of Torah was under the curse of the Torah. In retrospect, it was an absurd position…Paul was not preaching against Gentiles keeping the Torah. Technically, he was not even preaching against Gentiles becoming circumcised. He was preaching against Gentiles undergoing the conventional conversion into Judaism in order to achieve salvation and status in the Jewish community…Ironically, the epistle to the Galatians is the very scripture that Christian most often use to refute Gentile believers who are beginning to return to their Jewish roots and practice aspects of Messianic Judaism. As Christians begin to involve themselves in the various aspects of their heritage (such as Sabbath observance, kosher laws, daily prayer, etc.), they are often rebuked by other believers quoting from Galatians. That is turning it exactly backwards. Galatians was written to argue for Gentile inclusion in Israel, not Gentile exclusion from Israel. (8, 7.24-25) {"Later readers" is a false narrative. The earliest sources of

commentary on Galatians, Christians living within a century of Paul, understood *Galatians* in much the same way as the Church does today; at that time, they had no observances of Judaism to jettison, because such things were never part of the practice of the Church. FFOZ is once again writing off an entire portion of Scripture as having been falsely interpreted for the entirety of Church History, they alone can see what must be done to 'restore" the Church.}

We live in a prophetic time of restoration, and we are committed to seeing the whole body of Messiah, Jews and Gentiles, restoring four essential elements of apostolic faith

> {The 4th standard in the list:} *Torah – The Torah is God's eternal standard of righteousness and must return to its place of prominence and authority in the community of faith.* (8, 10.19-20) {This movement believes they are fulfilling prophecy, that their opposition to the holy, catholic, and apostolic Church is God's will.}

We considered four things that we need restored to our faith:

> *The Jewishness of Messiah*
>
> *The Torah context of the gospel*
>
> *The Jewish tradition of discipleship*
>
> *The prominence of Torah in the body of the Messiah* (8, 10.21)

Today's Bible students are seeking more! More than just creeds and dogma, today's Christian wants to apply the Bible to life by studying to learn, practice, and teach. Believers want to explore outside of traditional, denominational interpretations by examining the Bible as it was understood by the Jewish writers of the New Testament. (8, D.1) {A sound exegetical principle, except FFOZ defines traditional orthodoxy as a dead-end in this pursuit and posits an understanding on the part of the NT authors at variance with our earliest evidence regarding how the NT text was received and implemented in the Early Church.}

12. That Hebrew is a 'holy tongue', a more fitting language for worship than any other.

Examples

> *Why do you pray in Hebrew?*
>
> *Hebrew connects us with the wider Jewish people and other synagogues throughout the world. It creates continuity that stretches back to the Temple in the days of the apostles. In the Messianic Era, the whole world will speak Hebrew (Zephaniah 3:9). Hebrew is considered to be the Holy Tongue, since it is the language that God used to speak the world into existence, and to speak the words of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai. However, the majority of people attending Beth Immanuel don't know Hebrew. For this reason the cantor leads in both Hebrew and English, and all Hebrew has an English translation. We encourage people to learn Hebrew to increase their understanding of the Scriptures, and to pass this understanding along to the next generation. –* (1, p. 4) {This is simply evidence of an unbalanced worldview. Why would God have spoken in a human language to create the universe? Hebrew is not any more appropriate for prayer and worship than Latin, English, or Chinese.}

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8. Michael, Boaz, Hayesod: The Foundation, 2010.