

Testimony

by Jennifer Virga



I became a follower of Christ 8 years ago at age 22. I came out of Judaism. I attended the synagogue every Shabbat. I celebrated all the Jewish holidays Like Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. I attended a private high school in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, which is where I grew up. This part of the Bronx is predominately Jewish and wealthy. I had a privileged upbringing. I lacked nothing as far as materialism goes. I also had Christian friends at my high school and college who were witnessing to me all the time. I started to read the New Testament at age 20. I had to hide that. If my Rabbi or my Jewish friends found out, they would throw a fit. I gradually saw that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah who came to give salvation to the Jew first, and then the Gentile. (Romans 1:16) I also realized the New Testament was not a handbook on Anti-Semitism like some of my Jewish friends claimed.

After I got saved I had some very rough times with my family. My parents were on the fence with regard to my conversion. Other family members were not so indifferent. There was an uncle who I was very close with until I got saved. When he found out he spit in my face, and then slapped me so hard I fell on the floor. I was hurt more emotionally than physically. I had another family member who called told me I was a "good-for-nothing skank whore" for becoming a Christian. I had another family member call me a "scumbag traitor" for reading the New Testament. I was crushed and really, really hurt. I will not lie and say it did not bother me. But I found comfort in Matthew 10:34-35 says, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law". It comforted me because I knew that this was going to happen because of my new found faith in Yeshua. I also faced ostracism from some members of my synagogue and my friends as well.

There was someone on FaceBook who encouraged me attend a Hebrew Roots congregation in Queens, New York. They said it would help me maintain my Jewish culture and identity. I attended for a few weeks, but I felt something was missing. There was all this talk of the law. They even passed around the Torah scroll. I felt this was odd since just about all the people in this fellowship were Goyim, which struck me as strange. I was one of only a few people there with Jewish ethnicity. I knew from the teachings at my former synagogue that the Torah was given to Israel, not to the Gentile nations.

If a foreigner wanted to join Israel and celebrate Jewish holidays like Passover, they had to be circumcised and follow the Torah like the native Jews. If they wanted to become Jews, then they had to obey the same law as Jews. The key here is that IF they wanted to become Jews. Exodus 12 verifies this. So I knew that my rabbis were correct in this teaching. Real Jews never teach that the Goyim must follow the Torah, because its not in the bible. Its not found in the Old Testament, or the New Testament. I felt uncomfortable that all these Gentiles were so focused on something that was never theirs to begin with. There was little focus on God's Son and His wonderful saving grace. It was like a jackhammer that kept pounding on about the Torah.

I also studied what Galatians 3:28 says. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." I consulted many bible commentaries and teachers on what this means. Well, it means exactly what it says. I am no longer a Jew, spiritually speaking. This verse is not teaching that my bloodline changes. I am still an ethnic Jew. But my spiritual identification is in Christ. The same with a Gentile. They are still ethnically the same, whether Greek, Irish, Spanish, Russian, etc. It is their spiritual identity that changes. Both believing Jews and Gentiles have been grafted into the Vine. The vine is not Israel. The vine is not Judaism and Torah observance. The vine is Jesus Christ. "I am the vine, you are the

branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5). This verse proves that the vine is a living breathing person, not a religion or a nation.

I also started to see what Ephesians 2:14-15 really are saying. “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace” It is Christ who is our peace, not some law written on stone, which nobody can truly keep anyway. (Romans 3:23) From 2 groups of people (Jews and Gentiles) the one new man (the church) is created.

The Church is a living organism, nor an organization. It is believers who make up its body parts. The law of commandments that is abolished in Christ's flesh is the Torah. I also discovered what the role of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:18 “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” It is the role of the Spirit to convict us of sin. It is what enables us to produce fruit, Galatians 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” Do you really think external observance of the Torah produces these things?

The bottom line is most of the Hebrew Roots Movement are pretending to be something they are not. You don't become a Jew when you get saved. The bible is clear on this. Orthodox Rabbis who are schooled in the Torah and ancient Hebrew agree with this: The Torah was not given to the Gentiles. These are teachings from real Jews who know what they are talking about in this area. Why would someone insist on having something that was never theirs to begin with? Why would they want something that they are not capable of obeying (James 2:10)? Why would they want to cling to shadows instead of the Person who all the shadows of the Torah point too? Why would they insist on keeping a kosher diet and the Old Testament feast that you are not required to keep, and were never given to them to begin with? Colossians 2:16-17 “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” There is no reason to pretend to be something they are not.

What they are saying is actually a form of anti-Semitism. Do they realize that? They are saying the real Jews are the ones who in many cases call Jesus by a pseudo-Hebrew name and obey the Torah (or deceive themselves into thinking they are). This is pure nonsense. They are taking an identity that does not belong to them. Its ok if you are not Jewish, it really is. You'll be just fine. They should keep their focus on what Christ has done.

I now follow the commands of Christ and His pattern for the New Testament church. That means I fellowship on Sundays and break bread weekly (Acts 20:7). As a Jew, I have been granted a divorce from the Torah. This is how I can be married to Christ without committing spiritual adultery. Romans 7:4, “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”