

Can we celebrate Xmas?

And what about Jewish festivals?

Are we to celebrate them the Jewish way?

Early Christian practices

Many feel they can and just as many believing in Jesus feel it's the day of Mithras, the Persian god or saviour, or some even ascribing it to the Roman Caesars who of course thought they were the incarnation of the deity.

Now, did the early Christians celebrate Xmas? There is no evidence that they celebrated it, be it in September, October/November or 25 December - there were three spectacular or noteworthy celestial signs in the heavens (star constellations) and we know that God does manifest His glory this way and especially thinking now of the historical event such as the birth of His Son. Besides, the prophets of old were looking forward to His coming.

If we were honest we will admit that the knowledgeable Paul of Tarsus was dead against the celebrations of days, months and years, meaning of course any festival, be it Jewish or pagan. Should we rationalize this Pauline statement, we may just as well never voice our rejection of the Xmas celebration. Paul's gospel breathed with the New and Better Covenantal glory and those who then always are bent on proving his "Jewishness" when it comes to celebrations and especially of days, months and years, may as well reinvestigate not Paul's Jewishness because that is real, but his approach to all the Jewish issues after His encounter with the risen Jesus/Yeshua on Damascus Road.

Fact is many who are bent on retracing their Jewish roots, are so quick to condemn "Christian" celebrations, but they seem to forget that Paul's days, and months and years - referring now to festivals that were faithfully kept in ancient Israel - are also to be questioned, i.e. in light of New Covenantal (NT) developments.

For this reason I myself feel that I live in the freedom brought us by Jesus/Yeshua and I therefore celebrate no, yes zero! - Jewish festivals. However, when I am in Rome I will do as the Romans do and when I am in Jerusalem I will do likewise (Paul) but I will definitely not, like the Jewish theocracy of old, stick to days, months and years as if these are to be condoned, whereas other "pagan" festival days of the "Christians" must be rejected outright (See Paul's Letter to the Galatians).

I have made a study of the old Baalim worship, of Mithraism, of Gnosticism and I have read widely on pagan cults, so I know what I am talking about, and I know that paganism indeed made an impact on post-apostolic Christendom, but I am definitely not going to deny the one and not the other seeing that Jesus/Yeshua brought us freedom in HIM.

Now, without going at length into Jewish festival days - which I have respect for especially when moving among Jews who do not know Jesus Christ as Saviour and who are then still under the bondage of the Law, i.e. in Paul's viewpoint - I am not going to bring myself under bondage, claiming that this will work my Salvation.

However, and this I want to state clearly: Jesus/Yeshua was born and this is the crux! On His Name the heathen (the goyim) will hope (Matthew) and He is the Light of the nations. He is Israel's Saviour of old and therefore I will uplift His birth without feeling ashamed even on 25 December for He left His heavenly glory to dwell among us and to uplift us (Phil. 2)! I know it is not about a day but it is all about SALVATION IN AND THROUGH JESUS/YESHUA.

And the BIG question is: If we are never to celebrate Jesus/Yeshua's birth, when are we going to do so? Are the "day forsakers" going to announce a special celebration day for the birth of the Son of God? The most important date on the Christian (New Covenant) calendar! Or are we now going to keep forever quiet about Jesus/Yeshua's birth just because we are so strongly against the "paganised" 25 December?

I am most certainly not for paganism in any form but it is better to introduce Christ and faith in Him in stead of paganism! Don't get me wrong but it seems there is a fanatical spirit at work, as though everything Jewish is of God - meaning everything as long as it has an Old Testament connection. Now I am all for the Old Testament and for studying Hebrew - the original language - but then we must retain objectivity at all times, not so?

Let's therefore also research, e.g. the very important Hanukah festival for it is definitely smacking of Greek (Hellenist) influence. God gave one lamp and that is the seven-branched candlestick which was never to be removed from the Temple or the hearts of the people and which was always to be lit (the menorah).

It is, however, almost as if the Hanukah Lamp is brought so closely into homes that it is almost as if it is the most important symbol to the Jews, whereas the Menorah Lamp - reflecting the Light of Israel (= Israel's God and Messiah) - is subtly pushed into the background. (I can go further with miraculous Essene "oil miracles" but I will leave it here).

Considering the aforesaid, it is just as though the Hanukah lamp then all of a sudden has replaced the Menorah and even if only for eight days or so, then we may indeed ask ourselves: Was ancient Israel ever commanded to do so, i.e. by God? (The symbolic Zechariah lamp does not resemble the Hanukah Lamp).

And especially at this point in time where many believers in Messiah are urged by Jewish root-seekers to replace the Christian Xmas season for Hanukah, meaning of course replacing a celebration about Jesus/Yeshua for a Jewish historical festival, reminding, on the one hand, the Jews of the Greek onslaught against their temple and its most important altar ritual (the fire sacrifices) yet, on the other hand, robbing believers in Jesus of their faith in the coming of Jesus the Messiah (= the fulfilment of the Jewish prophets' announcements on the birth of Messiah?).

It is just as though Christians are compelled to uphold the one yet clean forgetting about the other very important date in the history of the world (!), therefore going much wider than Judaism only. So think about pagan influence going wider than just the paganized "Christians"!

Why also link the Law of Moses to Shavuot? (feast of the weeks or Pentecost). Was it not a post-70 A.D. influence - in other words wasn't it so declared and may be to sever ties with the Christian community and her teachings, and for whom Shavuot was VERY important? [Because of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Day, a historical date on the Christian calendar and pointing to the first fruits of the New and Better Covenant dipped in the sacrificial blood of the Son of God - "Christian" is derived from Christos (Greek), and who is then a believer in Messiah just as the Jewish (Hebrew) Maschiach followers are (=it is therefore meaning one and the same Messiah)]. Did not the God of Israel give all the divers kinds of languages at the Tower of Babel? And didn't Christ came for this very cause, namely to save both the Jews and the Gentiles (1 Tim. 1.15 - "sinners" meaning ALL who have fallen short and who were then in need of a Redeemer (Paul).

Let's therefore research the Hanukah issue objectively and before rejecting it outright, denying left, right and centre everything smacking in the least of "Christian" paganism.

And with these aforementioned statements in mind: I don't deny that God had indeed proven His mighty strength to the Jews in the days of Antiochus IV as I know that the God of Israel is Almighty, but considering the very important Hanukah Lamp and that it is often applied at random, we may perhaps ask ourselves : Did God intend replacing the menorah - even temporarily and especially where the Menorah has always stood for the sevenfold Spirit of God (Isa. 11) and especially having a bearing on Israel's mighty Deliverer - the Glory and Pride of Israel (Prince of Israel)?

Those Christians who are so quick to condemn "Christian paganism" may perhaps ask themselves : Which of the festivals were instituted by God and which of the festivals were not? Also why leave the Sabbath untouchable yet "replacing" the menorah, even temporarily, for an eight-branched-candlestick - yes, symbolising as it is said the miraculous eight day burning of the lamp in the temple, i.e. running then for eight

days on the last portion of sacred/consecrated oil - but would this historical event in Jewish history have necessitated a rival ritual like creating a new eight-branched candlestick? And if one should take note of what had happened to the High Priestly office in the days of the Maccabees, one can indeed ask the type of questions I am asking here. Isn't it the God of the menorah who has always worked victory for the Jewish people, also in the days of Antiochus IV?

Those interested can indeed research this issue, namely the Hanukah Lamp and its assumed Greek (Hellenist influence) and especially meaning here those Gentile Christians/believers in Messiah Jesus/Yeshua).

There was most certainly a day when Christ was born! And seeing that things have now gone this far, we may as well declare on this day in one accord: Yes, we don't know the exact date, but Jesus/Yeshua was indeed born! Therefore, let's rejoice in this thought!

Let's also thank God that He sent His one and only Son into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1.15)! And let us get washed in the blood of Jesus/Yeshua anew - the most important message for any believer in the Son of God made flesh, i.e. instead of bickering and contending about names, dates and important festival celebrations!

Jesus/Yeshua our peace, our rest!

"For unto us a child is born, and unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders and He shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9.6).

And we were called to spread this divine peace among all believers in Christ/Messiah!

Added 2014/12/27

May I add here: There are especially three Jewish festivals of importance and these are, (1) Pesach (2) Yom Kippur and (3) Shavuot or Pentecost, and (4) the Festival of the Tabernacles (booths) was also instituted by God in remembrance of the Israelites' release from Egypt and their days spent in the desert in make-shift houses or booths. All these festivals have indeed a deep spiritual meaning but Pesach was fulfilled by Yeshua/Jesus on Calvary and likewise does Yom Kippur point to Christ's crucifixion - Egypt symbolises our carnal spirit and our subjection to sin and iniquity; the Son of God came to break the bondage of slavery to sin and disobedience over us through His shed blood and for slightly more than 2000 years all who want to, can now come directly via the Cross to God the Father for since the crucifixion of Jesus/Yeshua the repentant of heart (the obedient) are walking in spiritual freedom (Isa 53; 1 Tim. 1.15). Pentecost came to full expression in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and therefore the water bath (=the baptism) in Maschiach's Name bringing forth the "first fruits" of the New and Better Covenant with Yeshua/Jesus as Lord and Messiah (Acts 2; Acts 4.12) - the Holy Spirit endowment empowered the bloodwashed to walk in spiritual victory. Although we can ascribe rich symbolism to (4) it mainly serves to remind the Jews of their God as shelter and sustenance to them in the wilderness - in other words acting then as their all-encompassing God which message does have a bearing on the New and Better Covenant, however, everything is now fulfilled in Jesus/Yeshua.

The early Christians celebrated the Jewish Pesach with Jesus on the Cross in mind and that would have meant for them redemption, confession of their sins, baptism in His Name (!), extending love to their fellows, in other words accepting Jesus/Yeshua as Saviour and Lord just as Peter brought the message on Pentecost Day - all the most important (divinely instituted Jewish festivals) culminating then in the Lamb of God and the risen Jesus.

Although we can and must take note of the Old Testament festivals, it is not necessary to revert to Old Testament meals on Pesach but we can rather, in true Christian tradition, use the Crucifixion date as a fast day and a day of confession of our sins whilst celebrating the holy communion Jesus Himself instituted and so that

we may have a share in his broken body on the Cross and when He "officially" took the office of High Priest upon Himself - fulfilling Yom Kippur simultaneously for us along with everything that had come along with this very important day on the Jewish calendar.

On Pentecost Day we can bring into remembrance the necessity of baptism with the Holy Spirit as Jesus/Yeshua's Gospel had to carry on from generation to generation (dor va dor), as well as baptism in the Name of the one and only Saviour of the world - Israel's Great Protector and Deliverer of old putting on flesh in the New Testament (=the New Covenantal order of God).

On Pentecost Day we must especially bring the necessity of confession of our sins (Acts 2) to mind for this entails the New Covenantal apostolic message. And confession, also restitution (making right with our neighbour) is indeed pointing to the fulfilment of the law (=to love thy neighbour as thyself is a commandment on which the whole Law hinges and which was 100% portrayed by Jesus/Yeshua on the Cross).

So if we want to celebrate days, let's celebrate the crucifixion and the resurrection properly often mentioning the birth of our Saviour and who was nailed fourfold to the Cross (his hands and feet were pierced) in order to fulfil the Law on our behalf! (=the tzitzit's symbolic meaning).

ADDED ON 2014/12/30

We know that Paul had a strong desire to visit Jerusalem (co-inciding with Pesach and then fifty days later Pentecost) and Paul would naturally have done so with especially the believers in Messiah in mind. There is no evidence that Paul partook of the Pesach temple ritual (the animal sacrifice very much in sway at the time) and I am also sure that Paul would have sided with the New Covenantal interpretation of Pesach even if the Jewish Pesach (the usual Pesach meal) was participated in by him (=in Christian Jewish homes). Did he pay the temple tax? It seems so as the temple tax (payment of the shekel for the upkeep of the temple and its rituals) was compulsory (Acts 21.26). It is clear that Paul's "observance" of the Law had a different ring to it after his Damascus experience, however, because he was so vehemently persecuted by the diaspora Jews - his life was in jeopardy - he had to follow James' advice closely in order to appease the Jews' wrath against Paul for "trespassing" the Law of Moses. But this whole issue needs to be discussed in depth (=Acts 21). Now, regardless all Paul's bold efforts to appease the Jews, his own people (the Jews) mobilized against him and he was arrested, also compelled, on a false accusation, to appeal to Caesar - he went as a captive to Rome where he appeared before Nero, pleading his innocence.

Jesus/Yeshua then surely came to fulfil the Law (Mat. 5.17). He did not nullify the Law, meaning He indeed conformed to the Law and all its prescriptions, however, in and through His crucifixion He fulfilled the Law having been nailed to the Cross fourfold and so that you and I, in and through His complete (perfect) work of Salvation on the Cross, could be freed from the power of sin (=trespassing the strict prescriptions of the Law and being found guilty all the time as the Law reminded us constantly of the bondage of sin (see Paul's Letter to the Galatians).

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