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Who Were the Judaizers

Millennia before **Yeshua Messiah** came into the world and died for our sin, **ADONAI** foreshadowed **His** perfect sacrifice through the offering of slain animals. **He** apparently began by instructing Adam to offer blood sacrifices as symbols pointing the true and effective shedding of **the Lamb of God's** perfect blood on the cross. The sacrifice of a goat, lamb, ram, or other animal never had the power to forgive and cleanse sin - nor was it ever meant to. Such sacrifices were only outward, symbolic acts of obedience that, unless accompanied by a humble and contrite heart, were not acceptable to **Ha'Shem**. Without **belief, trust** and **faith** in the **God** to whom the sacrifice was offered, the whole exercise was merely a meaningless ritual. **These people come near Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me (Isaiah 29:13).**

When **Cain** offered **his** sacrifice of grain to **the LORD**, **he** sinned both by disobediendly bringing the wrong kind of offering and by offering it in the wrong spirit. Rather than bringing an animal sacrifice as **YHVH** had obviously commanded, **he** brought the fruit of **his** own labor, proudly supposing that **his** act of disobedience was just as acceptable to **God** as the one **He** had demanded. **His** was the first act of works righteousness, the forerunner of every such act since **his** time. Every person of every era who has tried to come to **ADONAI** on the basis of their own merits and works, or by some humanly designed religious ceremony, has followed in the unbelieving, grace-rejecting steps of **Cain**. By rejecting **Ha'Shem's** required animal sacrifice, **Cain** rejected **God's** provision for substitutionary salvation in **His Son** toward which that blood offering pointed.

Abel, on the other hand, had obediently offering the blood sacrifice that **God** required, and in **faith**, it leaped across centuries and touched the cross (see the commentary on **Genesis, to see link click [Bi - Cain and Abel](#)**). **ADONAI** accepted **his** offering, not because it had any spiritual benefit in itself, but because it was presented in **trust** and obedience.

Since the time of **Cain** and **Abel**, two divergent lines of works and **faith** had characterized religious life in all of humanity. Whoever follows the way of **Cain**, follows **the Adversary's** lie; and whoever follows the way of **Abel**, follows **God's** way of grace and forgiveness.

These two ways of approaching **YHVH** can be traced throughout the TaNaKh. The builders

of the tower of Babel (see the commentary on [Genesis Dm - Let Us Build a City and Make a Name For Ourselves](#)), followed the unbelieving and rebellious way of Cain, whereas Noah and his family followed the believing and obedient way of Abel (see the commentary on [Genesis Ce - The Ark is a Type of Christ](#)). The vast majority of the ancient world followed the ungodly way of Cain (see the commentary on [Jude Aq - They Have Taken the Way of Cain, Rushed into Balaam's Error](#)), whereas Abraham and his household followed the godly way of Abel (see the commentary on [Genesis Ef - Abram Believed the LORD and He Credited It to Him as Righteousness](#)). Within the nation of Isra'el there were always the same two lines of human achievement and divine accomplishment, of **trusting** in what mankind can do for God, or of **trusting** in what God has done for mankind. Those who follow the narrow gate of **faith** are always a minority (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Dw - The Narrow and Wide Gates](#)), but for the **faithful** remnant, the blessings of ADONAI never cease and His promises never fail.

At the time Yeshua was born the righteous of the TaNaKh included Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Anna, Simeon, and many others whose names are unknown to us. They placed their **trust** in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for their salvation and unconditionally believed in the Torah as His divinely-revealed Word. They **faithfully** and willingly conformed their behavior to God's prescribed ceremonies and standards, all the while demonstrating that their **faith** was in ADONAI Himself, not in the keeping of those ceremonies and standards, as important as they were in the Dispensation of Torah.

But by the time Yeshua was born the vast majority of Israelites had perverted the Torah and to put their **trust** and **faith** in themselves, looking to their own goodness and accomplishments to make themselves acceptable to Ha'Shem. The Oral Law was grounded in works righteousness (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Ei - The Oral Law](#)). They believed in the idea of attaining merit before God through the strict observance of an almost endless list of man-made regulations and ceremonies. Most Jewish leaders, epitomized by the self-righteous Pharisees and Sadducees, proudly believed their religious works placed them in YHVH's special favor and gained them forgiveness for their sins.

It was from this vast group of legalistic Jews that the Judaizers arose, claiming to follow Messiah, but teaching that a Gentile had to be circumcised and follow the 613 commandments of the Torah in order to be saved; and that all believers, Jew and Gentile alike, had to continue to follow those 613 commandments in order to maintain their relationship with ADONAI. Their teaching not only corrupted the gospel, but also the teaching of the Torah, in which a right standing before ADONAI had always

been only by obedient **faith**. At no time in history as anyone been saved by their own merit. Both before and during the Dispensation of Torah, people were saved by **faith** alone. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, the godly judges, kings, prophets, and all the righteous of the TaNaKh were saved only on the basis of **faith**. All of these people, whether man or woman, Jew or Gentile, **pleased God because of their faith** (see the commentary on [Hebrews Cl](#) - **The Hall of Faith**).

The Galatian opponents of Paul were Judaizers who made proselyte circumcision and Torah observance required for a right standing before God. They perverted the simplicity of the gospel by adding requirements to it (Revelation 22:18). Judaizers were therefore not teaching godly doctrine, but the lie of from the pit of sh'ol, that a people, by their own goodness and works, can gain favor with **YHVH**. This is why Paul referred to **the Judaizers as dogs . . . evil workers . . . the false circumcision (Philippians 3:2 NASB). False circumcision** translates the Greek word *katatome*, which is used there in the B'rit Chadashah and refers to pagan sexual mutilation.

The Judaizers recognized **Yeshua** as **the Messiah** intellectually. But **they** had not crossed over the line from knowledge to **faith** (see the commentary on [Hebrews Al](#) - **How Shall We Escape If We Ignore So Great a Salvation**). Therefore, because **their** view of **the Messiah** was corrupt, so was **their** view of **Yeshua**. **They** did not look at **Christ** as **the Lamb of God** who would **take away their sin**, because **they** didn't believe **they** had **sin** that demanded such a sacrifice in order to be forgiven. As circumcised, ceremonial **Jews**, **they** were convinced **they** already had the full favor of **ADONAI** and were spiritually and morally acceptable to **Him** as they were. That common Jewish view is reflected in the argument in the book of **Hebrews**, in which the writer goes to great lengths to persuade his Jewish readers that **the Messiah** is superior to the prophets, to the angels, and to Moshe (**Hebrews 1:1 to 3:6**). **Jesus** was not simply another great Jewish teacher. **He** was completely different than any anyone else who had ever lived, the very **Son of God** and **Savior** of the world, whose saving sacrifice was necessary for anyone to be right with **the Father**.⁴

There are many groups today with beliefs/practices very similar to those of **the Judaizers** of the New Testament. The two most prominent would be the Hebrew Roots Movement (see [Aj](#) - **The Hebrew Roots Movement: Different Gospel**) and the Roman Catholic Church. The teachings of the Hebrew Roots Movement are virtually identical to those of **the Judaizers** whom Paul rebuked in **Galatians**. A primary focus of the Hebrew Roots Movement is to put followers of **Messiah** back under the bondage of the Torah of Moses for salvation.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches a doctrine similar to that of **the Judaizers** of the New Testament in this way: its doctrine is a mixture of works and grace. At the Council of Trent in the 16th century, the Catholic Church explicitly denied the idea of salvation by **faith** alone. Catholics have always held that certain sacraments are necessary for salvation. The issues for the first-century **Judaizers** were circumcision and Sabbath-keeping. The issues for modern-day Catholics are baptism, confession, etc. The works considered necessary may have changed, but both **Judaizers** and Catholics attempt to merit **God's** grace through the performance of ritualistic acts.

First Timothy 4:3 says that, in later times, false teachers will **forbid people to marry; they will command people to abstain from foods that God created for the faithful to share with thanksgiving, having come to know the truth.** This sounds suspiciously close to some of the teachings of Roman Catholicism, which requires priests to be celibate (**forbidding people to marry**) and proclaims some food to be off-limits during Lent (**abstaining from foods**). **The Judaizers** upheld the Torah of Moses as necessary for salvation; Catholics uphold man-made tradition as necessary; both view **Messiah's** death as being insufficient without the active and continued cooperation of the one being saved.

The Bible is clear that the attempt to add human works to **God's** grace overlooks the very meaning of grace, which is "undeserved blessing." As Paul said himself: **But if it is by grace, it is no longer by works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace (Romans 11:6).** Praise **ADONAI, Messiah has set us free - so stand firm, and do not be burdened by a yoke of slavery again (Galatians 5:1).**⁵