

Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith

Written by Perry Stone

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Those who studied biblical prophecy in the late 1930s believed an evil power of darkness had been unleashed in Europe. German dictator and tyrant Adolf Hitler, like a demon on assignment, was initiating his "solution" to the world's problems by planning what historians would later identify as the Jewish Holocaust.

When 1948 arrived, the world was missing 6 million Jews, including 1.5 million children who had perished during the Nazi "Final Solution." Most Holocaust survivors were without a permanent home, had few if any possessions, and had watched their paintings, antiques, gold and silver jewelry, and money being seized by Hitler's godless goons.

Yet the Jews have not only survived but also thrived since May 14, 1948, when the British Mandate over Palestine ended and a new Jewish nation with the name "Israel" was resurrected from the grave of history. They make up less than 1 percent of the world's population, yet 176 Nobel Prize winners have been Jews.

Twenty-five percent of the organizations that have received the Nobel Peace Prize were founded or co-founded by Jews. While 67 percent of American high school graduates attend college, 80 percent of Jewish high school graduates go to college, and 23 percent of them attend Ivy League schools.

Studies have shown that Ashkenazi Jews (those from Northern Europe) are highly intelligent, with a verbal IQ of 117-125, and that they score 12-15 points higher than gentile groups in this area. The No. 1-rated economically productive small group is Israeli-Americans, who, according to author Steven Silbiger, are "seven times more likely to have the highest concentration of higher incomes and lowest rate of dependency upon public assistance."

In the spiritual arena, the ancient Hebrew shepherd Moses gave us the Torah-the first five

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books in the Bible-and inspired Hebrew prophets penned the remainder of the Old Testament Scriptures. The majority of writers in the New Testament, along with the founder of Christianity, were raised and educated in Jewish families.

Historically, the Jewish people have been both the most successful and the most persecuted of any ethnic group. Their business expertise has exalted them to the highest positions in the global business community, producing top lawyers, skilled doctors and surgeons, and successful civic leaders.

They are the only people who were 1,939 years without a nation, a united language or a capital. Yet today they have returned to their original land (Israel), speak their original language (Hebrew), and pray at their original capital (Jerusalem). So what is the secret of their success?

I call this unique ability to not only persevere but also flourish the Jewish DNA of success and survival-and it all began with one man, Abraham. Abraham the "Hebrew" (Gen. 14:13) left the city of Ur (in Mesopotamia) with his wife, Sarah, and numerous servants, settling in a large, desolate, desert land called Canaan.

He dug wells, built a massive livestock portfolio, amassed commodities in gold and silver, and eventually turned the barren landscape into a blossoming desert. He made peace with surrounding tribes, who honored him as a man of God (see Gen. 20).

More than 400 years later, the descendants of Abraham had produced 600,000 men of war (see Exod. 12:37) who marched out of Egypt to reclaim the land called Israel, which God promised Abraham's children they would possess (see Gen. 15:18).

This piece of Middle East real estate was named "Israel" in recognition of the new name God gave to Abraham's grandson Jacob (see Gen. 32:28). After the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived at the Promised Land, dividing it among 9-1/2 tribes who settled in the land, leaving 2-1/2 tribes (Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh [see Josh. 22:9]) on the east side of the Jordan River.

The Israelites were marked as God's covenant people, and their daily guide for living was the

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Torah, written during Moses' 40 years in the wilderness. This divine revelation became the "God code" for social, moral, ceremonial, sacrificial, and civil laws and requirements that would forge the Hebrews' living standards and mold their moral ethics. By following this rule book of heaven, the Hebrew nation would enjoy abundance and success, and they would rise in influence above the surrounding tribes and nations.

Devout religious Jews, often called "Torah-observant Jews," have followed God's Torah code for 35 centuries, enriching their personal lives, families, health, and, in many instances, their finances. For centuries, gentile Christians have ignored or simply not studied the many important practical applications of the Torah code.

Many of its truths are important for our time, such as the significance of physical rest one day a week, the importance of eating the proper types of food, the blessing of moral standards and the life cycles for raising children. We need to examine these codes to understand why devout Jews often build strong families, live long lives and celebrate life.

Books have been written about Jewish wealth and why Jews have been successful, but many secular books leave out the significance of the Torah and the covenant as the spring from which all Jewish blessings flow.

There are hidden secrets encoded in the Torah, the Abrahamic covenant, and the divine revelations in the Old Testament that have molded Jewish thinking and lifestyles, making the Jews a people who cannot be defeated, a blessed ethnic group and a nation that survives against all odds.

The Torah

Fifty days after departing from Egypt, Moses ascended to the top of Mount Sinai in the Arabian Desert and returned 40 days later with the most detailed message from God in mankind's history (see Ex. 24:16-18). The words, carved on stone tablets, were spoken by God and recorded word for word. Later, the instructions were penned by scribes using large animal-skin scrolls.

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Called the Torah, meaning "teaching," these instructions were the rule book of heaven, revealed to the Jews. "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you ... the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them' " (Ex. 24:12, NKJV).

Although the Torah also contains history, much of it reveals specific guidelines and instruction for spiritual, social and moral living; sacrificial procedures; and ceremonial applications. The divine instructions in the Torah are often divided into four categories: the law, the commandments, the statutes and the judgments.

Students of Scripture often merge these four divisions into one package and call it "the Law of Moses" or "the Law of God." It is God's law given to Moses, but, more important, it is the revealed mind of the Creator concerning how His people should live, treat one another, eat and think, and how to be successful in the journey of life. This was literally the God code.

Levi, one tribe from among the sons of Jacob, was chosen to teach this code and pass it from generation to generation. Jacob's son Levi, whose name means "joined," was the third son of Jacob's wife Leah (see Gen. 29:34). Levi became a "connector," helping join the Israelites to God. When the tabernacle of Moses was constructed, the Levites were the full-time ministers, directed by Aaron the high priest and his sons, all of whom were Levites.

The amazing success of Jewish people has been a mystery pondered and studied for many generations. Of the many books and articles written, many ignore or omit the central heart of all Judaism—studying, reading and following the Torah code.

The Torah reveals detailed information that, when followed, can help extend your life, increase physical health, bring emotional stability, build strong families and provide wisdom for wealth opportunities.

This God code laid out in the Torah has been handed down from Jewish father to son for more than 40 generations. The unbroken link of reading, teaching and instructing each generation has brought success in secular, social, civil and spiritual life.

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Yet there must be particular keys that unlock the doors or foundation stones upon which religious Jewish society was built. When examining the Torah, one essential key becomes visible-understanding the message, meaning and manifestation of having a covenant with God.

The Abrahamic covenant is the spring that feeds the river, the beam that supports the building, or, simply, the secret to understanding why the Jewish people have amazingly endured centuries of persecution and grow where they are planted.

The Covenant

While Abraham (then called "Abram") was living in Ur of the Chaldeans, God appeared to him in a vision instructing him to leave Ur and move to the land of Canaan. At age 75, Abraham followed this vision. During his journey, God appeared to him several times, revealing His divine purpose for Abraham and his future children. God told Abraham that:

- he would become a "great nation" (Gen. 12:2)
- he would be a "father of many nations" (17:4)
- nations and kings would come out of him (see 17:6)
- in his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed (see 22:18).

With each step of obedience that Abram took, God increased the magnitude of His promises. The master key to release the fulfillment of these promises was obedience to the instructions demanded by God in His covenant.

Abraham's conditions of the covenant were, "Circumcise your sons on the eighth day" and "teach your children to follow Me." God revealed confidence in Abraham and knew he would follow through in keeping the covenant (see Gen. 18:19).

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If Abraham's descendants followed the agreement made by Abraham and God to mark their sons with circumcision, then God would bless them with land, prosper the works of their hands and make them great in the earth. If they failed to follow the commandment, they would experience great difficulties and lose their natural and spiritual blessings (see Gen. 17:14).

Many books explaining why many Jewish people are gifted with high IQs, creative genius, financial skills and the ability to survive against the odds omit the one feature that has separated the devout Jews from all other nations-their belief that they have a special covenant with God.

Believers, of course, are partakers of a new covenant with God, marked by the forgiveness of sin and sealed by the blood of Christ (see Heb. 8:8-13). Yet Gentile believers can receive amazing insight and practical knowledge by examining the roots of the Christian faith, which begin in the Torah code and extend to the covenant God made with Abraham so many centuries ago.

Perry Stone is the founder of Voice of Evangelism, a ministry that spreads the gospel through revivals, TV and other media. He is the author of numerous books, including Breaking the Jewish Code (Charisma House), from which this article is adapted.