The holy spirit's revelation to the early Church that gentiles could believe in the Jewish Messiah and receive the gift of the "ruach ha kodesh," the holy spirit, without being circumcised or taking upon themselves the law of Moses changed the history of the world. In Ephesians 3:4-6 the apostle Paul called this revelation the "mystery of Messiah." The NIV translates verse six this way. "This mystery is that through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Messiah Jesus." gentile believers in Messiah became co-heirs with Jewish believers and together become "one new man." (Eph. 2:15) The divine creation of this "one new man" also known as the "ekklesia-called out ones" or the "Church which is His Body" (Eph.1:22-23) has profound implications, particularly for its relationship with natural Israel. One significant question that demands a Scriptural and Spirit-led answer emerges. How should this "one new man" - the "Church" - the "Body of Christ" relate to natural Israel that remains in unbelief?

In order to answer this question, we must put aside all carnal feelings that have roots in any type of racial prejudice and allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse our hearts so that we will be able to receive the engrafted word of God. If we are unwilling to do that, God will pass us by as he looks for those believers who will follow Him fully, so that He can accomplish his purposes ( 2 Chronicles 16:9).

Paul the apostle had a number of significant truths to teach the Church about her relationship with natural Israel. In Ephesians 2:12 & 19, he taught that gentile believers are no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens (of the commonwealth of Israel) with the saints. In Romans 4:11 & 16, he taught the gentile believers that through their faith in the Jewish Messiah they could now claim Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, as their own father also. In Romans 11:17-24, Paul explained how gentiles are now literally grafted into the Jewish nation and are able to partake in the blessings that come from the rich root of Israel's Olive Tree. In Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6, Paul repeated the fact that the Holy Spirit within us cries out in the Hebrew language, the language of the Jews, that God is our "Abba" which means Father." [This is the same expression Jesus himself used in his hour of greatest spiritual need when he cried out to His "abba father" in the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36)]. God did not send his spirit crying out in Greek but in Hebrew. This is a point of no small significance. Because the gentiles now have Abraham as their father in the faith, they can enter into a family relationship with the God of the Jews and experience Him as their "Abba." From these verses we understand that Gentile believers become spiritual children of Abraham, the first "Jew." They also become citizens in the commonwealth of Israel, and are grafted into and are able to partake in the covenantal blessings promised to Abraham. By their faith in Israel's Messiah, they are able to "share in the nourishing sap from the Olive root" and call the God of Israel their Father.

It is very important for the Church to understand that she does not replace natural Israel in God's plan. God has made promises to natural Israel that the Church does not inherit. The grafting of the "wild olive branches" into Israel's "cultivated Olive Tree" does not exclude the "cut off natural branches" from the future purposes of God, for God is "able to graft them in again." It does, however, provide God with a platform to show to the natural unbelieving branches the riches of his mercy and grace. Gentiles "who were separate from Messiah, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise without hope and without
God in the world," are now by the blood of Messiah brought near (Ephesians 2:12-13). Gentile believers, by virtue of this grafting, should now love the God of Israel, love His Holy Scriptures, and love the Olive Tree into which they have been grafted and from whose roots they receive "nourishing sap." The church is called to demonstrate to the unbelieving natural branches that their long rejected Messiah is in fact the King whom they seek. The life, love, faith, power and holiness of these grafted in former wild branches should be provoking the natural branches to jealousy. This has always been God's plan. It remains his plan. The question we must ask is, will the Church fulfill it?

The call of the Church to provoke Israel to jealousy is one of the truths of the New testament that has historically been almost totally obscured. In thinking that they had to make the gospel more palatable to gentile audiences, men of good intentions, misdirected in their zeal to preach the Gospel, de-Judaized their message, and by so doing, opened themselves to "doctrines of demons" that had the dual effect of separating the Church from her roots in Israel's Olive tree and admitting a spirit of arrogance toward the natural branches. The Church no longer saw herself as part of the Jewish people or part of God's plan to provoke Israel to jealousy. Instead she grew into an "counterfeit imperialistic theocracy" that lost its authentic spiritual testimony and the ability to make genuine born-again disciples. Authentic spirituality was replaced by a hierarchical system of political and militaristic machinations that forced "loyalty" to a "Church" instead of genuine spiritual rebirth and new life. The true Church was tragically compromised. Once compromised, she came under the judgment of God for disobeying the apostolic command not to be arrogant toward the unbelieving natural branches.

God's judgment for such arrogance was the promised removal of the life of faith from the Church. The historic evidence of this is seen in the above mentioned steady decline and eradication of faith in the Church. I believe this was in direct proportion to her rejection of the natural branches and her own inherent "Jewishness." The more the Church rejected her Olive tree connection, the more she grew into institutionalized sacramentalism, spiritual darkness and unbelief. As time went by, what started as a Messianic Jewish faith based on the Scripture and the power of God, became a thoroughly gentilized "Christianity" based on political and militaristic power and Church traditions that were in many instances nothing more than a "christianized paganism." All things Jewish were slowly rejected and in some circumstances ultimately forbidden. The Jewish people themselves were branded in such ways as to sanctify their persecution, suffering, and even death. This was a satanic strategy to keep the true gospel away from the Jewish people and thereby keep Jesus from returning, because their re-grafting into their own Olive tree means the resurrection of the dead which takes place when Jesus returns (Romans 11:15).

The re-connecting of the Church to her Jewish root system and to the Jewish people is of profound spiritual importance. This connection is in fact central to the eternal purposes of God for the entire human race. The second coming of Messiah hinges upon this connection. This is why Satan so fiercely fights it. But what is this connection? How does it work? What does it look like? How can we enter into it and be part of re-establishing it in our churches? In order to answer these questions we must ask some questions. The first one is, what does "Jewish" mean? What does it mean to be a "Jew" and who is a "Jew"?
The reason I put quotes around these words is that they mean different things to many people. They are emotionally and spiritually loaded terms that can be very easily misunderstood and misapplied. We must use the biblical definition that God uses, so we all understand what God means when he uses these words. The English word Jew is derived from the Hebrew word Judah which means "Yahweh be praised." Most authorities agree that "Yahweh" is the correct pronunciation of the Hebrew consonants YHWH which are commonly but incorrectly pronounced Jehovah. This erroneous pronunciation is derived from placing the vowels from the Hebrew word Adonoi (Lord) with the consonants of YHWH ('Jehovah' is the result). The word Yahweh is the word that God has chosen as his personal name forever (Exodus 3:15). To be identified with this name is to be identified with the God of Israel Himself. To be a praiser of Yahweh is to be a Jew. Those who are in a genuine, authentic and life-affecting relationship with Yahweh, who by virtue of that relationship live a life of praise and experience the power of that praise, are "Jews." That is, they are "Praisers of Yahweh." In Romans chapter 2, Paul was declaring to the natural Jews that "...he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise (i.e. his Judaism) is not from men, but from God." When Gentiles come to faith in the Jewish Messiah, they are made part of the commonwealth of Israel. They receive the Spirit of Yahweh that cries out "Abba." They become the spiritual children of Abraham and are grafted into the cultivated Olive tree that is the true believing Israel. Gentiles become spiritually connected to the Jewish people, as those whose "Judaism" is from God, not from men.

The Judaism they practice is that which is revealed in the New Covenant Scriptures for all who will repent of their sins, receive the Messiah into their hearts, and obey His commandments. The natural Jew, whose "Judaism" is yet outward, has not been "cast away," but is being kept by the promises of God for a future time of national re-grafting. Beloved gentile believer, do not make the mistake of thinking that your "new covenant Judaism" has replaced the covenant promises that God has made with the natural Jew. You are called to see yourself as part of the Jewish people to complete the purposes of God. You are called to be able to provoke them to jealousy! Can you?

One major historic error of the Church is the erroneous belief that because they were now grafted into Israel's religion and adopted into this relationship of "Praise" through the Gospel, they were now the "true" Jews and had "replaced" the natural ones who remained in unbelief. The truth of God's plan to use grafted in wild branches to provoke the natural branches to spiritual jealousy was hidden by this replacement lie. If God was through with the Jew, and the church was now the "true Israel of God" then there is no need to have anything to do with them let alone need to provoke them to jealousy. The fruit of the doctrine that the Church has replaced Israel has been (1) the sin of rejecting the scriptural command not to be arrogant toward the natural branches, (2) the sin of actually becoming arrogant toward the natural branches that produced, (3) centuries of sinful spiritual darkness in the church and the horribly sinful persecution of the natural branches. In short, rather than a jealousy provoking testimony of the Gospel, this doctrine produced hatred in the church for the Jew, and in the Jew for the church.

Gentiles who through the gospel became "Jews (Praisers of Yahweh) by the Spirit" are to provoke the natural Jews - who lost their "Judaism of the Spirit" (i.e. their unbelief in, and
rejection of, the Messiah cut them off from the life of faith and the gift of the Ruach Ha Kodesh) - to jealousy by the quality of their spiritual life and the manifestation of the power and love of God. In other words their "Judaism of the Spirit" was to so shine with the demonstration of the love and power of the Holy Spirit that it would provoke the natural branches to enviously consider the Messiahship of Jesus.

The challenge that the natural branches present to the Church is a very important reality for all "spiritual Jews" (both the Jewish and Gentile believers) to confront. Their unbelief demands that we prove by our superior life of faith and love that we really do have something that can provoke them to jealousy. The natural branches are used by God to make us examine ourselves, and our churches. This system creates a "reality check" for all believers. It forces us to ask some hard questions. Does our life emanate the love, joy, peace, and power that Jesus promises? Does our Church? If not, why? God is looking for a people who truly represent him in the earth. He is looking for His Church to be true "Jews," i.e. true "worshippers of Yahweh" in "spirit and in truth" (John 4:23), with the evidence that will provoke natural Israel to jealousy. I know that some will argue that no matter what the Church does, the Jews will find a reason to reject the truth about Jesus. This argument is based on the Jews experiencing a gentile Church that seeks to "convert Jews to Christianity," rather than a Church that sees itself in its biblical framework, as those made partakers in the God of Israel's New Covenant with the Jewish people through faith in the Jewish Messiah. A church that sees itself as having been grafted into the Jewish Olive Tree and made part of God's purposes for the blessing of the Jewish people will act very differently to the natural branches than gentile Christianity historically has. When the Jewish people see genuine love and support coming from the Church, they will be more and more open to listen to the testimony about their own Messiah. Love has the power to break down every barrier. When the Church starts to see herself as part of the Jewish nation, it will begin to love and support her properly. When that happens, wonderful doors of witness will begin to open for the true testimony of Jesus to come forth.

I recently heard a testimony that beautifully illustrates this. A synagogue was badly vandalized and burned and the local churches rallied together to support the grief-stricken Jewish community. Money, political action, and physical help in rebuilding the synagogue poured in. Actual acts of love and support demonstrated something to this Jewish community that dropped centuries-old walls of suspicion and distrust. When asked why they loved the Jewish people in this way, the leaders of the Christian community simply explained what they knew about their connection to the Jewish nation, that the Jews really were their "spiritual cousins" and that their Messiah had put his love in their hearts for his natural brethren. One of the leaders of the Jewish community responded with these profound words full of prophetic implications: "You are taking away my reasons for not believing."

Love can overcome any and all barriers. Love is the beginning of the church's true testimony to the Jewish people. The death the Jewish people have historically received from the Church can be overcome as the adopted children of Abraham begin to fulfill their call to love, support and testify to their "spiritual cousins" in the Messiah.

Most Christians do not see themselves as having been grafted into God's new covenant with Israel. They have been taught that Jews and gentiles who "come to Christ" are "converted to
Christianity." The gospel has been so "gentilized" that its inherent "Jewishness" is virtually ignored or hidden. Because of the redirecting of the Church away from her Jewish roots, gentiles who in actuality receive Israel's Messiah, are made part of the commonwealth of Israel, and are grafted into the Olive Tree of Israel, never even hear about these biblical facts but are made to think in completely gentile terms that omit almost all of their connections with the Jewish people. I believe that God wants to redirect Christians back to their Jewish roots so that they will begin to think and feel like "spiritual Jews," like "citizens of Israel."

This issue of "feeling like a citizen of Israel or even feeling Jewish" is not an emotional plea for a carnal or romanticized response, but an expression of a work that I believe the Holy Spirit wants to do in the Church. God desires that the Church be fully reconciled to the Jewish people, so that she will be able to love, support and properly testify to them of their Messiah. The first step in accomplishing this goal is for the Church to see that she is Biblically and spiritually connected to the Jewish people. Quite simply, the blood of the Jewish Messiah and His grafting her into the Olive Tree of Romans 11 has made the Church part of the Jewish nation.

As the Church begins to recognize her "Jewish connection" she will once again partake of "a Jewish consciousness" that flows from her spiritual roots. The Holy Spirit is moving around the world causing gentile believers to "feel" their "Jewish connection." This is a supernatural work of the Lord! Because of centuries of anti-Jewish doctrines, "Christian" persecution, and the resultant mutual animosity and distrust, there are huge spiritual barriers that have to be broken down. I believe that the spirit of God fully intends to break them down. The question is, will you be part of the reconciliation or will you be left out? You can begin by praying and asking the lord about the truth of your Jewish roots and allowing him to make that real to you in any way that he desires.