

Who were the Galatians?

“Galatians were a branch of Gauls, originally from north of the Black Sea, split off from the main migration westward to France, and settled in Asia Minor, 3rd century B.C.”
(Halley’s Bible Handbook, p 608).

The Gauls had migrated from an area just north of the Assyrian Empire across Europe to the area we know today as France. The land we know today as France was Gaul. In fact the “DeGaulle” in Charles DeGaulle (the French general and statesman who led the Free French Forces during World War II) means “of Gaul”. These Gauls were also known as Celts... they migrated across the English Channel into the British isles... thus the Celts spoke “Gealic”.

These “Gauls” were GAL-aeens who had been exiled by the Assyrians to the land north of Assyria, As they passed through the area known now as Turkey they created a colony there called GAL-atia.

The prophet Ovadyah (Obadiah) speaks of the destination of the House of Israel in their exile as follows:

*And the captivity of this host of the children of Yisrael,
that are among the Kena’anites, even unto **Tzarfat**, and
the captivity of Yerushalayim, that is in Sepharad, shall
possess the cities of the South.*
(Ovadyah 1:20)

Where is Tzarfat? Tzarfat is the Hebrew word for “France”. In fact, if you were reading a newspaper in Israel today, and it referred to France, the word used would be “Tzarfat”.

Rashi’s commentary to Ob. 1:20 says: “Tzarfat is the kingdom of France.”

One of the modern Latin words for “France” is “Gallia”.

"Proclaim him among the Goyim (Gentiles)" (Gal. 1:16)

The Ancient Nazarene Commentary on Isaiah says:

The Nazarenes, who accept Messiah in such a way that they do not cease to observe the old law explain the two houses as the two families, viz. of Shammai and Hillel, from whom originated the Scribes and the Pharisees. Akiba, who took over their school, is called the master of Aquila the proselyte, and after him came Meir who has been succeeded by Joannes the son of Zakkai and after him Eliezer and further Telphon, and next Joseph Galilaeus and Joshua up to the capture of Jerusalem. Shammai then and Hillel were born not long before the Lord; they originated in Judea. The name of the first means "scatterer" and of the second "unholy", because he scattered and defiled the precepts of the Torah by his traditions and deutroseis. And these are the two houses who did not accept the Savior who has become to them ruin and scandal.

Now I want to clarify two things here. First of all the Nazarene commentary here is not giving the Pashat (literal meaning) of the passage but a MIDRASH (an allegorical meaning) for the passage. This Midrash draws an allegorical relationship between the two houses of Israel (the House of Israel and the House of Judah) and the House of Shammai and the House of Hillel. The basis for this Midrash is a wordplay on the names Shammai and Hillel which sound in Hebrew like the words for "scatterer" and "unholy". "Scatterer" ties the House of Shammai allegorically to the "scattered" House of Israel. "Unholy" ties the House of Hillel to the House of Judah.

Two things are important to note:

1. The Midrash is not identifying an allegory to the two houses themselves, but to the STUMBLING (see Is. 8:14) of the two houses.
2. The Midrash is not attacking Hillel and Shammai themselves but the Houses or schools of Rabbinic thought that arose after them in their names (as is clear from the lineage of Rabbis that came after them), The purpose of this portion of the Midrash is to link Rabbinic Judaism to the "stumbling" of the House of Judah discussed in this section of Isaiah.

This section of the commentary is purely midrashic (allegorical) and tells us little about the Nazarene understanding of the Pashat (literal meaning) of this passage.

But now lets look at the Nazarene commentary on Is. 9:1-4 (8:23-93 in Jewish versions) as cited by Jerome:

The Nazarenes, whose opinion I have set forth above, try to explain this passage in the following way: When Messiah came and his proclaiming shone out, the land of Zebulon and Naphtali first of all were freed from the errors of the Scribes and Pharisees and he shook off their shoulders the very heavy yoke of the Jewish traditions. Later, however, the proclaiming became more dominant, that means the proclaiming was multiplied, through the Goodnews of the emissary Paul who was the least of all the emissaries. And the goodnews of Messiah shone to the most distant tribes and the way of the whole sea. Finally the whole world, which earlier walked or sat in darkness and was imprisoned in the bonds of idolatry and death, has seen the clear light of the goodnews.

(Note: The "Jewish traditions" in the context of this commentary refer to Rabbinic Halachah of the fourth century CE with which the Nazarenes took issue.)

Now Isaiah 9:1-4 refers to "Galilee of the GOYIM (nations/Gentiles)" but identifies these "Gentiles" as the inhabitants of "the land of Zebulon and Naphtali". Here the House of Israel is being identified as "Gentiles". There are at least two other places in Scripture where the word "Gentile" is used to describe Ephraim (the House of Israel). One of these is Gen. 48:19 where (in the Hebrew) Ephraim is told his descendent's will become "a multitude of nations (GOYIM; Gentiles)" (compare Rom. 11:25 where the same phrase is translated in the KJV as "fullness of the gentiles"). The other case is in Rom. 9:24 which refers to "Jews" and "Gentiles" but then goes on (in Rom. 9:25-26) to quote Hosea (Hos. 2:23; 1:10) to identify them which the "Children of Judah" and "the Children of Israel" (Hosea 1:10-11; 2:23).

The Nazarene Commentary on Isaiah understands "you have multiplied the nation" (Is. 9:3) to refer to Paul "the proclaiming was multiplied, through the Goodnews of the emissary Paul... to the most distant tribes". Therefore the ancient Nazarenes understood the "Gentiles" to whom Paul primarily directed his message with the Ephraimite "Gentiles" of Isaiah 9:1-4 and with "the most distant tribes".

This comment in the Nazarene Commentary on Isaiah makes it clear that the Ancient Sect of Nazarene Judaism held that Paul was an emissary to the Ephraimites.

Three Years and Damascus (Gal. 1:17-18)

In Acts we read about Paul just before he became a believer in Messiah:

Now Shaul was yet full of the threat and anger of murder against the talmidim of our Adon. And he asked for letters from the Chief Cohen to give to Darm'suk (Damascus) to the synagogues, that if he should find any who follow in this way, men or women, he might bind and bring them to Yerushalayim.

(Acts 9:1-2)

Now why would Shaul want to go to Damascus to pursue the followers of Yeshua? As we learned in chapter one, the first followers of Yeshua were from the Essenes. We also learned that Essene Judaism was born in Damascus and that its followers, like the Nazarenes, called their movement "the Way".

Now while on his way to Damascus Paul encounters the resurrected Yeshua and himself becomes a believer in Yeshua as the Messiah (Acts 9:3-7). As instructed by Yeshua, Paul enters Damascus and makes contact with the followers of Yeshua there (Acts 9:8-19). In his letter to the Galatians Paul describes these events as follows:

And I did not go to Yerushaliyim to the emissaries who were before me, but I went to Arabia and again returned to Darm'suk (Damascus), and after three years, I went to Yerushalayim to seek Kefa and remained with him fifteen days.

(Gal. 1:17-18)

Why did Paul remain for three years in Damascus? Because it took three years to be fully admitted into the Essene community. As Josephus writes:

*But now **if any one has a mind to come over to their sect, he is not immediately admitted, but he is prescribed the same method of living which they use for a year, while he continues excluded**'; and they give him also a small hatchet, and the fore-mentioned girdle, and the white garment. And when he has given evidence, during that time, that he can observe their continence, he approaches nearer to their way of living, and is made a partaker of the waters of purification; yet is he not even now admitted to live with them; for after this demonstration of his fortitude, his temper is tried **two more years**; and if he appear to be worthy, they then admit him into their society.*

(Wars 2:8:7)

Paul went through the entire process of learning the ins and outs of Essene Judaism.

Circumcised by Force (Gal. 2:3)

“compelled” = The Aramaic word here is *IT'ENAS* literally “to be forced” from a root meaning “to act violently”.

The text is telling us not that Titus was not circumcised, but that he had done so voluntarily and not been circumcised by force as the Maccabeans had done:

*Then Mattathias and his friends went round about, and pulled down the altars:
And what children soever they found within the coast of Israel uncircumcised,
those they **circumcised by force**.
(1Macc. 2:45-46)*

In fact a comparison with Acts 15-16 will show that at this same time Timothy was also circumcised voluntarily and not by force.

What do You Mean... "Judaize"? (Gal. 2:14)

Many Christians have come to use the term "Judaizers" to describe Paul's oponents in the book of Galatians, who by their interpretation were wrongly teaching Gentiles to keep the Jewish Law.

Sadly many in the Messianic Jewish movement have brought this term into the movement with them as part of their "baggage" left over from Christianity.

I have talked to many in the movement who used this term and when I asked them they were CERTAIN the word "Judaizers" came right out of the Bible. When I have challenged them to find this word in the Bible they eventually come back and admit that this word is not there and are shocked because they were so sure that it was. This illustrates how completely this word and the thought behind it have been infused into people. In fact just recently I heard a speaker at a Messianic event use this word to attack those who would teach things Jewish to Ephraimites.

The truth is that the term "Judaizer" as it is used by Christians today is a HIGHLY anti-semitic term which I personally find offensive. The way in which this term is used today implies that that which is Jewish is bad.

To Christianize is ok, to gentilize is fine, but to Judaize is bad. Why should "Judaizing" be bad? Why should it be thought of as evil to teach Judaism?

The truth is that these persons are not even using the terms "Judaize" and "Judaizer" according to their proper meaning.

The term "Judaize"(ioudaizo) comes from Gal. 2:14 (which we will examine later). Let us examine the ancient usage of the words "Judaize" and "Judaizer".

The earliest usage of the word "Judaize" is to be found in the Greek LXX translation of the Book of Ester. In Ester 8:17 we are told that in the wake of the Jewish victory and the institution of Purim, many of the people in Persia "became Jews" (yahad) (Strong's Hebrew# 3054) The Greek translator of the Greek LXX version of Ester 8:17 renders this with the statement that they "were circumcised and Judaized (ioudaizo) (strong's Greek# 2450)".

Josephus writes of the Roman Commander Metilius who was commander of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem. Josephus writes that he "saved his life by entreaties and promises to Judaize (ioudaizo) and even to be circumcised" (Jewish War, 2.17.10).

Elsewhere Josephus tells us that when the Syrians thought they had brought the Jews to ruin, they "had the judaizers (ioudaizontas) in suspicion also".

In all of these contexts it appears that "to Judaize" means to convert to Judaism and a "Judaizer" is a person who has "Judaized" (i.e. has converted to Judaism).

Now lets look at Gal. 2:14 from the Greek:

"I [Paul] said to Kefa before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to Judaize (ioudaizo)."

Where the Greek has "Judaize" the Aramaic of Galatians has "live as the Jews".

It appears here also that to "Judaize" is to convert to Judaism. Here it is not Kefa that Judaizes but those he teaches. It is important to note that Paul is not accusing Kefa of causing Gentiles to Judaize, but of wrongly acting like an Aramaean rather than a Jew should because he was only associating with Jews and giving Gentiles the cold shoulder. He was judging people racially. Paul was not accusing Kefa of teaching Judaism of racial prejudice.

Next we see the term "Judaize" used by Ignatious of Antioch (c. 98 C.E.). Ignatious was the founder of the Anti-nomian Christian religion. His clearest statement of his split of what he termed "Christianity" from Judaism is to be found in his letter to the Magnesians:

*Be not deceived with strange doctrines;
nor with old fables which are unprofitable.
For if we still continue to live according to the Jewish Law,
we do confess ourselves not to have received grace...*

*let us learn to live according to the rules of Christianity,
for whosoever is called by any other name
besides this, he is not of God....*

*It is absurd to name Jesus Christ, and to Judaize (ioudaizo).
For the Christian religion did not embrace the Jewish.
But the Jewish the Christian...
(Mag. 3:1, 8, 11)*

"Judaizers" are not persons who teach Judaism, they are persons who have chosen to convert to Judaism. To "Judaize" is not to teach Judaism, but to convert to Judaism. Ignatious, the founder of the new anti-nomian Christian religion, was the first to characterize it as wrong to "Judaize".

The words "Judaize" and "Judaizer" as they are used by most Christians (and sadly even Messianic Jews) today to characterize the teaching of Judaism as evil are highly offensive and should not be used in that manner.

In closing, Judaism is the one true faith that was once and for all time given. Therefore I hope that any of you who are not already Judaizers will eventually make the choice to Judaize.