

A Provocation To Jealousy

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¹¹ I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. ¹² Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! ¹³ But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.

Romans 11:11-14



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Preface

There has been a great debate and dissention in the Messianic Movement for quite some time now. It has to do with non-Jewish believers embracing the Torah.

The issue has come to the forefront and has been addressed by Dr. Daniel Juster of **Tikkun Network** and Russell Resnick of the **Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations** in their white paper *One Law Movements; a Challenge to the Messianic Jewish Community*.¹

As noted in *Wikipedia*²:

One Law Theology

One Law theology acknowledges the distinction between Ekklesia and Israel in principle, but in practicality the lines are blurred because gentile believers are considered to come under the Mosaic covenant, making observance obligatory. This theology actually has a long line of various sects that have popped in and out of history. One Law groups have many things in common with Messianic Judaism because of their belief in the ongoing validity of the Mosaic Covenant. Leaders of the Messianic community such as Dan Juster of Tikkun Network and Rus Resnick of UMJC have joined together to argue against One Law theology's insistence on gentile observance. Tim Hegg responded to their article defending what he believes to be the biblical teaching on the subject.³

While I will disagree with the part of the *Wikipedia* statement "...making observance obligatory" I would agree with another prominent Messianic leader and teacher on the matter: "A Jew should [keep the Torah] a Gentile could [keep the Torah]."

Keeping the Torah does not save non-Jewish believers any more than it can save Jewish believers.

¹ Russ Resnick & Daniel Juster, *One Law Movements; a Challenge to the Messianic Jewish Community*, <http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:KZJdeNdH7DwJ:www.torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/OneLawMovement.pdf+One+Law+Movements+Juster+Resnik&hl=en&gl=us&sig=AHIEtbQZ4DmJ-Nvvo0s1nvNoBG1kv3XYhA>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messianic_Jewish_theology#cite_note-8

³ Tim Hegg, *One Law Movements A Response to Russ Resnik & Daniel Juster*, <http://www.torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/OLMRresponse.pdf>



Even Kefa (Peter) admits this in Acts 15:7-11 –

"Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; ⁹ and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹ "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

Neither Jews nor non-Jews are saved by keeping the Torah. We are all saved by faith, and faith alone – and that by grace!

Nevertheless, after our being saved, we are called to a walk of sanctification: both Jew and non-Jew. To do that, we must walk as Yeshua (Jesus) walked.

Since according to Shaul's (Paul's) own words in Romans 7:12 about the holiness of the Torah – "So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good" and the "spiritual-ness" of Torah in Romans 7:14 – "For we know that the Law is spiritual.." we can conclude that Torah has a validity to both groups as they walk the walk of Yeshua – especially since Shaul is writing to his non-Jewish Roman believers.

In fact, he goes so far as to state in Romans 3:31 – "Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law."

Thus, keeping the Torah is a prerequisite to understand our walk of sanctification as believers in the Messiah.

In other words: Keeping Torah is reflective of a walk of sanctification of BOTH groups as they walk the walk of Messiah Yeshua (1 John 2:1-8): nothing more, nothing less.

On the obverse: NOT keeping the Torah are the characteristics of those who are NOT righteous!

It is worthy of note the words that Shaul wrote to Timothy (1 Timothy 1):

⁸ “But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers ¹⁰ and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, ¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.”

The Law will be used against the unrighteous to judge them. Will only the Jewish unrighteous be judged by the Torah? I don't think so...I believe Shaul was speaking about all the unrighteous – Jewish and non-Jewish!

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I wish to express my gratitude to God and His unfailing mercy and love who gave me the strength to write this book. It is He who made it clear to me that grace and Torah work hand-in-hand and are not in mutual opposition the one to the other. He also showed me that to truly love Him and to walk as Yeshua walked; we all (Jewish and non-Jewish believer) should keep His commandments.

Secondly, I wish to thank my wife Trish who had to persevere with me as I dedicated my time and energies to this book. Her faithfulness in being my “help-meet” allows me to be able to devote the time and effort necessary toward the work of the ministry.

“Jewish” Identifiers (Symbols)

There are many things perceived as “Jewish” Identifiers: the synagogue, the tallit, tzit-zit, circumcision, the Torah scroll, the shofar, the Star of David, the menorah, and the hannukiah are just a few of them.

Many non-Jewish Messianic believers have adopted them in their own lifestyles. Indeed, some of these “Jewish identifiers” have even been adopted by many Christians in mainstream (and some not so mainstream) churches who desire to get back to their “Jewish Roots.”

Dr Alan Poyner-Levison, at his website, *THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT AND ITS PERPETUAL IDENTITY CRISIS* asks the question:

“So why do these believers get caught in these non-essential snares? Well, I believe we can glean some insight from the book of Titus. Titus 3:8-11: *This is a faithful saying and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the Law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.*

“That is a very telling statement: *warped*, because something that is warped is bent out of shape. It is a twisted malfunction of its original position. What it tells us about these divisive people we are being warned about is they are taking that which was pure and making it fit what they see is correct, rather than what Scripture teaches is correct.

“Most of these folks are Gentile and are caught in an identity trap because they are not Jewish and feel the need to be Jewish, so they have to go overboard on kippas and shofars and tallits and everything else that has come to be understood to be the domain of Jewish people. Then they get so consumed with Jewish culture that they are sidetracked away from what is important: sharing the good news with the Jewish people. What Titus is

saying here is unless they get involved with the business at hand, namely to share the good news of the Gospel with Jewish people, they will get caught up in other non profit enterprises such as trying to be Jewish. What's more, Titus here states that they are sinning because they are self-condemned. They are Gentiles caught up in a Jewish world. But brethren, Jesus came to bring the way to life, and not the way to Jewishness. True Jewishness is not merely the external wearing of clothes or the speaking of Hebrew sentences. It's zeal in fulfilling the Lord's command to share the good news to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile."⁴

Since the "Jewish Identifier" argument keeps coming up by Messianic Jews in opposition to non-Jewish believers using them, I wish to ask the question: "Are non-Jews *forbidden* in Scripture from adopting these aforementioned 'Jewish identifiers'?"

Absolutely not! If so, we should clearly see it stated, but we do not.

Then there is the question: "Are they forbidden by Judaism?" Again, no.

For example, if ever there was a "Jewish" identifier, it is the kippah – a post-biblical head covering! It "identifies" the wearer as being Jewish, regardless of where he comes from, or what ethnicity or race he is.

Some Messianic teachers critical of non-Jews adopting "Jewish Identifiers" write:

"Even more, the One Law teachers often use non-Biblical Jewish symbols. One article on Biblical law was illustrated by a photograph of a family of four, the father and son wearing kippot (Jewish skullcaps) and looking at a Menorah. Neither kippot nor the Menorah is part of Biblical Torah. Another article in the same magazine mentioned Jewish liturgical directions, not found in the Bible, as somehow applying to "us," that is the Gentile readers of the magazine."⁵

⁴ <http://www.messianicassociation.org/ezone08-messIDerisis.htm>

⁵ Russ Resnick & Daniel Juster, *One Law Movements: a Challenge to the Messianic Jewish Community*

As noted in this article by Dan Juster and Russ Resnick, the kippah is not a part of Biblical Torah. Yet, does Judaism *require* non-Jews to wear kippot under certain conditions?

Absolutely!

“But then, for the first time in its history, iron barricades were placed in the forward part of the plaza, close to the Kotel itself. This was the first mehitzah, the first separation between men and women, in the history of the Kotel. There had already been such attempts in the past. At the end of Turkish rule and under the British Mandate attempts had been made to separate between the sexes in the area next to the Kotel, but they failed. During most of those years when Jews had access to the Western Wall and during those years when they did not, there was never a mehitzah at the Kotel. But now a mehitzah was put up, which put aside most of the area - and the best part thereof - for the use of the men; barricades were put up to mark the entrances; and ushers were placed to assure the separation and to distribute paper kippot to those men who wished to approach the Kotel itself.”⁶

I just returned from Israel for the third time and have visited King David’s Tomb and the Western Wall all three times. Every visit was the same insofar as *all males were required* to put on a kippah (a “Jewish Identifier”) or some sort of headcovering at both sites, no exceptions.

If the male does not have some sort of hat on to cover his head, he *will* be given a kippah to wear and he will not be asked whether he is Jewish or not!

This then, is a case then the Jewish authorities of Israel, no less, require non-Jews to wear a “Jewish Identifier” if they have no other head covering! So, for some Messianic teachers to say that “Jewish Identifiers” must not be worn by non-Jews is a fallacious argument.

⁶ Yizhar Hess, *Western Wall must be liberated from growing Orthodox takeover*, published January 22, 2010, Israel Opinion, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3836276,00.html>

What we have is a “straw-man” set up by those opposed to non-Jewish observance of what would be considered a Jewish practice – something that they believe only Jews should be doing.

But it is one thing, in my opinion, to make the distinctive with these non-biblical practices and say that non-Jewish people shouldn’t be doing them, it is quite another to say that Torah (as it applies to the individual) should be considered a “Jewish Identifier” and should not be practiced by non-Jews.

It saddens me that in the Messianic Movement that many Messianic leaders believe and teach this! Whereas once the Messianic Movement proclaimed, “Yeshua, the Torah made flesh” and said that we all must all walk like Him, today it has walked away from that position to say that for Jewish believers this is so, but that non-Jewish believers (i.e. Christians) don’t have to walk by the precepts of Torah in their lives.

Today, many Messianic leaders even say that Torah is a “Jewish Identifier” that distinguishes Jewish believers from non-Jewish believers.

I disagree with them in this regard because the Scripture paints a different picture. The Law given at Sinai was given to Jews and to **“sojourners”** (Hebrew: “gerim” – Gentiles who left Egypt along with the Israelites and attached themselves to the Hebrew people) – eventually to be known as “converts” or “proselytes,” Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 15:14-16). Anyone who joined themselves to Israel was subject to the same Law, and since Gentile believers are grafted into Israel (Romans 11), they technically are **“sojourners.”**⁷

In Yeshua/Jesus, those who were formerly “far off” are now “brought near” through His shed blood. They are no longer “strangers” and “aliens” but are now “fellow citizens” of the commonwealth of Israel.

Every nation there is on the earth has laws! While it is true that there are laws in the United States that pertain to specific groups of people within the nation, all of the common laws of that nation pertain to all the people equally – even aliens.

⁷ Bruce R. Booker, *A Call to Holiness*, copyright 2008, Bruce R. Booker, pages 89-91

An alien cannot say that because he or she is not a citizen of this nation that he doesn't have to obey the laws of the Land! That would be preposterous!

It is the same in God's Kingdom! As there are laws on the books in our country that apply only to specific people groups so, too, in God's Kingdom this is true. Not all laws pertain equally to all people! In the Torah there are laws that pertain to priests only, to the high priest only, to Nazirites only, to women only, to men only, to the Levites only, etc., yet all the common laws of the Kingdom pertain to all the people of that kingdom equally!

Thus, both the native AND the alien have to follow the law of the Land! Then when the alien becomes a citizen, all the more he or she would be obedient to the laws!

When in this country a person seeks to become a citizen, they begin to learn the laws of the new country they now seek to belong to.

They may not know what all the laws are, but they *do* begin to learn them. They start from the basics and go from there. The same thing happens in God's Kingdom with the new citizens!

Acts 15 says that Gentiles are to **“abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood.”** But that does not mean that is all that is non-Jewish believers will have to follow. Verse 21 of that chapter states that Moses is preached in the synagogue, where, by the way, the early Gentile believers went (Acts 17:4, 17; 18:1-4) every Sabbath. There were no Catholics, Methodists, Baptists or other denominations at that time. This means that since non-Jewish believers (sojourners) were there in the synagogue, they heard Moses speak through Torah and learned what it meant to be holy.

The question answered in Acts 15 is this – Do Gentiles have to first become Jews – observing the Laws of Moses – before they can be saved? The answer is a resounding, “NO!” Rather, Gentiles are to follow the principles of an earlier covenant than the covenant given at Mount Sinai. Once they are saved, they are to follow the covenant God made with mankind through Noah, known as the Noachide Laws (Genesis 9).

This is not to say that Gentiles are not required to learn from the complete Word, which at that time was *solely* the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old

Testament, so that they can move from a paganistic state of life to a holy life. The implication of Acts 15:21 is that since Moses (the Law) is read every Sabbath in the Synagogue, and since believing Gentiles had nowhere else to study the Word but the synagogue, they would hear the Law and begin to apply its principles in their lives. How far they went depended upon them and their relationship with God.

If the Acts 15 injunction were *all* there was for a Gentile believer to observe, why did Paul put even *one* single verse of the Torah, the Writings, or the Prophets in *any* of his writings to the Gentiles? For instance, in Romans 4:3 he cites Genesis 15:6; in Romans 3:10 he cites Psalm 53:3; in Romans 11:26 he cites Isaiah 59:20; in 1 Corinthians 9:9 he cites Deuteronomy 25:4; in 1 Corinthians 15:32 he quotes Isaiah 22:13; in 1 Corinthians 3:20 he cites Psalm 94:11. Get the point? If *all* a Gentile believer had to do was found in Acts 15, he or she wouldn't need to *know or do* anything more.

But just as Ruth, the Moabitess said to Naomi, **“Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God”** (Ruth 1:16); so Gentiles throughout the centuries have joined themselves to the people of God, worshipping Him as He desires to be worshipped, keeping His commandments alongside the Jewish people. God especially blesses the full convert to Judaism saving him separately from the **“God-fearer”** like Cornelius in the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Shavuot, or Pentecost (Acts 2:10). The full proselytes (alongside full-fledged, believing Jews) were baptized with the Spirit a full 10 years before Cornelius and others like him.

It is important to remember here that the intention of the Law was never to make one righteous (hence the sacrificial system). Instead, its teaching was two-fold: ***it taught how one became a part of the covenant community of God through grace*** (Deuteronomy 7:7-9; cf Ephesians 2:8-9) and ***how a person was to behave within this covenant community***.

Both Jew and Gentile alike are brought into covenant community by *grace alone* and not by works, yet, it is through a person's obedience to the commandments found within the covenant that he proves he is part of the covenant community. How many commandments a covenant person keeps or ignores does not make him more or less righteous than another covenant person. It is by faith alone that righteousness is imputed (Genesis 15:6; cf Romans 4:3, 9; Galatians 3:6, James 2:23).

The Jew is made righteous by the same standard as the full proselyte and non-convert: by the standard of faith found in Romans 9:30-33. Yet, obedience to God's commandments is *assumed* of the faithful (Genesis 26:5; cf James 2:14-26). All should be desirous of being faithful to God's commandments due to a sense of gratitude and love for Him (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). All should desire to move from a less holy behavior to a more holy behavior. This can only be accomplished by following God's commandments as laid out in the whole Bible.

Even the New Testament teaches that we were created for **good works** (Ephesians 2:10). What standard did they go by (remembering that no "New Testament" was available at this time)? Of course, it was the standard found within the Torah.

Jewish writings, in fact, teach that the Torah was offered by God to all nations:

"The Torah was written in seventy languages in order that the nations should not be able to plead ignorance as their excuse for rejecting it."⁸

Just as there were seventy nations⁹, the words of the Torah engraved on the Tablets on Mount Ebal¹⁰ were written in seventy languages¹¹ so that all the nations might read it. For the same reason, God's voice at Sinai divided itself into seventy languages.¹²

A famous story (*Peskita* 21) says that from the time of creation until the time of the Exodus the Lord offered the Torah to each of the 70 nations, but they all refused it. For example, God came to the descendants of Esau and said to them, "Will you accept the Torah?" They asked, "Master of the Universe, what is written in it?" He answered, "Do not commit murder." They replied, "The legacy our father left us; as it says, 'and upon your sword you shall live' (Genesis 27:40); therefore we cannot accept the Torah." God went from nation to nation and heard their excuses for not accepting Torah (He did this so that the nations might have no excuse to say, "Had the Holy One, blessed be He, desired to give us the Torah, we should have accepted

⁸ Tosef., Sotah 8

⁹ Targum Yonasan to 11:7

¹⁰ Deut. 27:2ff

¹¹ Mishna, Sotah 7:5

¹² Shabbos 58b; Shabbos 88a; Exodus Rabbah 5; comp. Acts ii. 5

it.” Finally the Lord turned to the children of Israel, the least of the nations, and asked them, “Will you accept the Torah?” They said to Him, “What is written therein?” He answered six hundred and thirteen commandments.” They replied in unison, *Na’aseh venishmah* – “All that the Lord has spoken we will do and be obedient” (Exodus 24:7).¹³

Though this is a Talmudic parable and not Scripture, it *does* indicate Jewish thought: 1) that Torah was offered to the nations at large. This means that God did not say that Torah was not for them – as do some Messianic teachers. 2) that it was the nations at large that rejected Torah. 3) that Israel received the Torah by saying, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do and be obedient.” The truth of the matter is: All Israel was not obedient to the Torah.

There are those within Israel, individuals, that were – but they are the exception, and not the norm. They are known as the remnant, as spoken of by Shaul in Romans 11.

If there is a remnant (individuals) within Israel who said, “All the Lord has spoken we will do and be obedient...” and *were* obedient to the Torah, why cannot there also be a remnant (individuals) of the nations who said, “No...” who would also be obedient to the Torah that was offered to them as well?

This recalls to my mind the parable of Yeshua about the two sons in Matthew 21:28-32:

“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said, ‘Son, go work today in my vineyard.’ He answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind, and went. He came to the second, and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but he didn’t go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said to him, “The first.””

Since the first son represents those who were once disobedient to God and said no, but repented to become obedient can we not also apply this parable to those of the nations who said no, yet repented and obeyed?

¹³ http://www.hebrew4christians.net/Articles/Oral_Torah/oral_torah.html

Though the non-Jewish nations at large are disobedient to Torah, yet individuals from those nations who recognize Torah and grasp onto Torah, seeking to be obedient to it – are they not doing the will of the Father?

And though Israel at large stated that they would be obedient to Torah, yet they too are overall disobedient to Torah, are they not like the second son, and violating the will of the Father?

To both groups, I believe Shlomo (Solomon) the wisest man in the world summarized it best in *Kohelet* (Ecclesiastes) 12:13-14:

¹³ “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person. ¹⁴ For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.”

The Torah of God is not just for the Jew, but to all men. Keeping His commandments is what loving Him is about.

We don't keep His commandments to gain our righteousness, or justification from keeping them; we keep them because we love Him!

Replaying the First Century Dynamic

Ever since Kefa visited the house of Cornelius as recorded in Acts 10, questions have arisen in the minds of Jewish believers regarding non-convert, non-Jewish believers. "What should we do with them?"

Though he came to this Gentile's house with some trepidation, he speaks to the people gathered there and says, "I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him."

And before he even finished speaking, it says:

⁴⁴ "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. ⁴⁵ All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶ For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*, can he?" ⁴⁸ And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days."

The very first "Jewish" act that Kefa performed upon these non-Jewish believers was the mikvah! Knowing what might have been in the minds of the Jewish believers who came with him to Cornelius' house, he challenges them, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*, can he?"

Surely, the parallel of what had occurred approximately 10 years earlier on Shavuot (Weeks/Pentecost) to the Jewish men and proselytes (Acts 2:11) when the Ruach haKodesh (Holy Spirit) came down upon them (Acts 2:3) must have come to Kefa's mind (Acts 2:37- 41):

"Now when they heard {this,} they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter {said} to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." And with many other

words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls."

Though the reaction of the Jewish believers at the house of Cornelius was one of amazement that God was pouring out the gift of the Ruach ha Kodesh upon the Gentiles, too obviously it brought some concerns on their part. Word spread quickly in the believing community about what exactly happened at Cornelius' house and some took issue with Kefa regarding his going to the house of uncircumcised men and eating with them.

Acts 11

¹ "Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, ³ saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." ⁴ But Peter began *speaking* and *proceeded* to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying, ⁵ "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me, ⁶ and when I had fixed my gaze on it and was observing it I saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air. ⁷ "I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' ⁸ "But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹ "But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.' ¹⁰ "This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky. ¹¹ "And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were *staying*, having been sent to me from Caesarea. ¹² "The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house. ¹³ "And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; ¹⁴ and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' ¹⁵ "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as *He did* upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶ "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, '**John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.**' ¹⁷ "Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as *He gave* to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they quieted down

and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance *that leads* to life."

As recorded in the ensuing chapters of Acts, through the work of Shaul and Barnabas, many Gentiles came to faith in Yeshua and before long, Jewish men (believers from the Pharisaic sect) from Judea came teaching the non-Jewish brethren that in order to be saved, they must be circumcised according to the custom of Moses, which required a council decision from the leaders of the Messianic Movement:

Acts 15

¹ Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." ² And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. ³ Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. ⁴ When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. ⁵ But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

⁶ "The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. ⁷ After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; ⁹ and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹ "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

¹² "All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles."

James's Judgment

¹³ After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. ¹⁴ "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. ¹⁵ "With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,

¹⁶ 'AFTER THESE THINGS I will return,

AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH
HAS FALLEN,

AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS,

AND I WILL RESTORE IT,

¹⁷ SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD,

AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,'

¹⁸ SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN
FROM LONG AGO.

¹⁹ "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, ²⁰ but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. ²¹ "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

²² Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas--Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, ²³ and they sent this letter by them,

"The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings. ²⁴ "Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with *their* words, unsettling your souls, ²⁵ it seemed

good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ "Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word *of mouth*. ²⁸ "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: ²⁹ that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

³⁰ So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. ³¹ When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement..."

Great debate over these passages has occurred in the Messianic Jewish community. Some say that non-Jewish believers in Yeshua only have to keep these four things: 1) abstain from things sacrificed to idols and 2) from blood and 3) from things strangled and 4) from fornication. According to them, a non-Jew has nothing more to do than these and he or she retains his or her salvation. Some liken these four to some of the seven Noachide Laws that are incumbent upon all the sons of Noah.

Others say that these four are merely starting points of behavior that a non-Jew has to observe once they are saved; that the other commandments will be observed when they "hear Moses" every Sabbath (Acts 15:21).

I hold that position, since Rabbi Shaul (Apostle Paul) gives citation to Torah commands, above and beyond the four of Acts 15.

For example, where is the commandment "Honor your Father and your Mother" in the four found in Acts 15? It is not there! But it IS found in Ephesians 6:2!

To those who argue that only the four of Acts 15 apply, is the Ephesians 6:2 commandment required to be obeyed by these non-Jewish Ephesians that Shaul is writing to?

Another Torah commandment not found in the four of Acts 15 is found in Romans 7:7, "Thou shalt not covet." Are we to assume that non-Jews are exempt from this command because it is not found in the four?

I believe that Shaul answers this dilemma in Romans 7 where he says in this verse that the Torah defines for us what sin is.

John would say it succinctly, “Sin is the transgression of the Law.” (1 John 3:4)

Simply put, the Torah, which is holy, just and good (Romans 7:12) and spiritual (Romans 7:14) teaches us how to live a life of sanctification (holiness).

This walk is a walk that is incumbent upon ALL believers, Jewish and non-Jewish! To his non-Jewish believers, Shaul asks the question, “So then, what are we to say, ‘Let’s keep on sinning, so that there can be more grace’? Heaven forbid! How can we, who have died to sin, still live in it?” (Complete Jewish Bible, Romans 6:1)

If sin indeed is the transgression of the Torah, then it is incumbent upon ALL believers NOT to sin (transgress the Torah) – including the non-Jewish believers!

Shaul also says to his non-Jewish believers: “Does it follow that we abolish Torah by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we confirm Torah.” (Complete Jewish Bible, Romans 3:31)

A New Family – Abraham's Seed (Romans 4)

"I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock {with} one shepherd.

John 10:16

As far as I can tell, Yeshua did not come to create two separate flocks; that all those who believe in Him are part of the same family!

Rabbi Shaul writes to his non-Jewish believing community that Abraham was their forefather, too:

¹ What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

⁷ "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN,

AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.

⁸ "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

⁹ Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." ¹⁰ How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; ¹¹ and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, ¹² and the father of circumcision to

those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

¹³ For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

¹⁴ For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; ¹⁵ for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

¹⁶ For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, *even* God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. ¹⁸ In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."

Ephesians 2

¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands-- ¹² *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. ¹⁷ AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; ¹⁸ for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy

temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

If there is anything we can say from these passages, there is NOT two separate families (groups) of believers: Jewish and non-Jewish – there is but one family (group).

According to Romans 11:16-24, BOTH groups are grafted by faith into the Olive Tree!

Even in our own legal system, the adopted child is as much a part of the family as is the natural child. Good households having both adopted and natural children treat all the children the same: same rules, same discipline, and the same love.

Families that do otherwise with their adoptive children face nothing but problems. If the natural children are treated differently or with preference, then the adoptive children feel like second-class members of the family.

I submit to you, this is what has occurred in the Messianic Movement ever since I have been a part of it in the late 80's. I believe that is why there are such reactive Movements such as the Two-House, or the Ephraimite groups!

The perception by these non-Jewish Messianic believers is that there appears to be a “wall of partition” rebuilt by Messianic Jews that separate off the non-Jewish Messianic believers into what amounts to almost a second class status.

The issue of Torah in the lives of these non-Jewish Messianic believers is just one of the many issues. The issues over “Jewish Identifiers” is just another.

There is the focus among some Messianic Jews that says to the non-Jewish Messianic believer, “This is Jewish, it doesn't belong to you.”

I think that perhaps the Messianic Jew's reaction is indicative of something deeper here. If Messianic Jews are so upset about non-Jewish Messianic believers doing these “Jewish things” could there perhaps be another dynamic at work?

Let me propose another way to look at it – the dynamic is jealousy. What the Jewish believers *should be* doing, is what the non-Jewish believers *are* doing! And the Messianic Jewish reaction is: “Mine!”

It is like two children in the same sandbox and wanting the same toy! One child grabs hold of a toy and says, “Mine!” The other grabs the toy out of the others’ hands and says, “No, Mine!”

There certainly is a provocation to jealousy here!

If this reaction by Messianic Jews is jealousy, then how much more would be the reaction of the non-Messianic Jews?

I remember when we were planting a Messianic group in Scranton, PA in the early 90’s.

Our landlady was a non-Messianic Jew. She came one Friday with her husband to look at the apartment and saw my wife Trish making challah. When she saw this, she nudged her husband (a Catholic) and pointed to Trish, who is not Jewish. The look on her face said everything: Trish was doing something that she was supposed to be doing!

This provoked a question from her to Trish and later conversations regarding the reasons why Trish was doing all these “Jewish things” when she wasn’t Jewish.

The provocation here to jealousy was obvious. As a result, Trish was able to share with her that her Messiah is Yeshua, He is Jewish, and as a result my wife said, “It should be natural for those who truly follow Him to be more like Him and His people too!”

This gave Trish the opportunity to share not only her Messiah Yeshua, but our Jewish landlady’s Messiah!

I believe this is exactly what Shaul was talking about in Romans 11:11, 14:

“I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation {has come} to the Gentiles, to make them jealous...if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.”

A Provocation to Jealousy – Romans 11

¹ I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about Elijah*, how he pleads with God against Israel? ³ "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE." ⁴ But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." ⁵ In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

⁷ What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; ⁸ just as it is written, "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY." ⁹ And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM.

¹⁰ "LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT,

AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."

¹¹ I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. ¹² Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! ¹³ But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.

Dr. David H. Stern, in his book *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, asks the question: "Is there anything about Gentile Christians that would make non-Messianic Jews jealous of them? Throughout most of the last two thousand years, the Church, to its great shame, not only has not provoked Jews to jealousy but has engendered repugnance and fear; so that Jewish people, instead of being drawn to love the Jewish Messiah Yeshua, have

usually come to hate or ignore him, remaining convinced that their non-Messianic Judaism or secularism or agnosticism is superior to Christianity.¹⁴

When my children were little, there were many incidents of jealousy between them. Any parent will attest to what I am about to say: you can only be jealous of another when they have something you want, or think you deserve.

One child would say, “Mine!” The other would cry out, “No, Mine!” BOTH children wanted the same thing!

When looking at Christianity over the last two thousand years, as did Dr. Stern, there is little for the non-Messianic Jew to be jealous of the Gentile dominated Church about.

Obviously, in the First Century, the Rabbi Shaul saw a provocation to jealousy with his non-Jewish believers and non-believing Jews – else, why should he mention it?

I submit to you: it is obvious that the non-Jewish believers of Shaul’s day were doing something different than they have been doing for the remaining 1800 some years since then!

We know that they were observing Passover (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)! It would not be until the Fourth Century under Constantine and the Council of Nicaea (325) that the whole Empire would come under the empirical decree to cease that observance in favor of the observance of Easter. We also know that it took an empirical decree in 321 that Sunday was to be the “Sabbath” instead of Saturday.

This means that the Gentile Church in the First Century was likely more Torah observant than in the centuries following.

Perhaps it has to do with the Apostles encouraging, not commanding, these non-Jewish believers to walk a holy life according to the Torah – and by so doing, the Jewish non-believers were being provoked to jealousy?

¹⁴ Dr. David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., Clarksville, Maryland, copyright 1992, 1996, page 408

At this point, some would say – “But that’s not what the New Testament epistles show!”

It needs to be noted that the Epistles of the New Testament are one-sided letters addressing specific issues in these various congregations. They are NOT complete doctrinal statements!

I have led congregations in the Messianic Movement for over 20 years. I have written over 15 books! My books do NOT teach everything I have taught over the last 20 years!

In the same way, the Epistles of Rabbi Shaul do NOT teach everything that he taught over his three Missionary Journeys!

We need to realize that one-sided, issues oriented letters to specific congregations are NOT full doctrinal statements!

It is obvious that Shaul did NOT limit himself in his Epistles to “the Four” determined by the First Jerusalem Council as found in Acts 15, but rather that he brought in other Torah commands as well.

This would coincide with Acts 15:21, where the non-Jewish believer would hear Moses (Torah) every Shabbat in every city. They would also understand that “it is not the hearers of the Torah that would be justified, but doers.” (James 1:22)

Obedience out of Love – John 14:15

“If You Love Me Keep My Commandments...”

"If you **keep** My **commandments**, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's **commandments** and abide in His love." (John 15:10)

God wants His people to love Him. This is evident from the many passages of Scripture that say so.

The question I raise in this book is not so much a question of, “Should we love God?” I believe most people of God can come to an agreement on this point, but rather of the question, “How *is* loving God to be *expressed* by us?”

I think this is where we would find a difference of understanding in our expression to Him. For example, in our expressions of love within the range of human experience we kiss, we touch, we hug, we say words of endearment, we give cards, flowers and gifts, we do good things for, and lastly, for the one we are most deeply committed in love toward, we express sexual intimacy with the person of our affection.

This is well and good when it comes to expressions of human intimacy because we have flesh and emotion to bring into this equation: We can actually *touch* and have intercourse (sexual and non-sexual) with the other person to express intimacy. Not so with God, for He is Spirit.

We cannot express our love to Him by kissing Him, or hugging Him, or giving Him a gift, or by saying words of love, or “climbing the highest mountain,” or “swimming the deepest sea”...or anything else we would use in our human love expressions to reflect and show our love for Him! They are inadequate, in fact, even impossible!

Yet, we need to express our love for Him in some way: but how? How can we give “hands” to someone who is incorporeal, who cannot be held, or touched, or embraced?

Well, He tells us how in His Word: “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

So, if you want to know how to express your love for Him, He has already told you.

Some believers think that all we have to do is simply praise and worship Him and pray to Him and this is all that we need to do to show our love to Him. Well, it is true that these expressions are ways of expressing our love to Him, but I need to remind you what Yeshua/Jesus said to the Pharisees about words and lip-service (Matthew 15:8):

¹³ Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*..." (Isaiah 29)

Many words do not worship make or love express – at least to God. Yeshua said (Matthew 6:7):

"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their **many words**."

The fact that you go to church or synagogue and sing songs, or pray prayers, or do religious things does not mean that God is pleased with your expression of love. Word expressions of love are not substitutes for the covenant-relationship one should have with Him!

And that covenant-relationship is expressed by Him in the passage that says:

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

Thus, if you truly want to *express your love towards Him*, keep His commandments.

Yeshua/Jesus asked in Luke 6:46, “Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?”

There are many in this world today who call upon the Name of the Lord, but Yeshua/Jesus said that not everyone who cries “Lord, Lord” will be saved, but he who does the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21):

"Not everyone who says to Me, '**Lord, Lord**,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does* the will of My Father who is in heaven {will enter.}

Here again, we have that pesky word “do.”

And just what is the will of the Father? The will of the Father is for us to *obey Him*:

“So you shall **keep** My **commandments**, and do them; I am the LORD.” (Leviticus 22:31)

"So you shall **keep** His statutes and His **commandments** which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time." (Deuteronomy 4:40)

“Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and **keep** all My **commandments** always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!” (Deuteronomy 5:29)

"Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and **keep** His **commandments**; (Deuteronomy 7:9)

"You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall **keep** His **commandments**, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him." (Deuteronomy 13:4)

"The LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should **keep** all His **commandments**..." (Deuteronomy 26:18)

"The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you **keep** the **commandments** of the LORD your God and walk in His ways." (Deuteronomy 28:9)

"Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and **keep** His **commandments** and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Joshua 22:5)

"The conclusion, when all has been heard, {is:} fear God and **keep** His **commandments**, because this {applies to} every person." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

"And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is {only} One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, **keep** the **commandments**." (Matthew 19:17)

"If you love Me, you will **keep** My **commandments**." (John 14:15)

"If you **keep** My **commandments**, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's **commandments** and abide in His love." (John 15:10)

"By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we **keep** His **commandments**." (1 John 2:3)

"The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not **keep** His **commandments**, is a liar, and the truth is not in him..." (1 John 2:4)

"For this is the love of God, that we **keep** His **commandments**; and His **commandments** are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3)

"So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who **keep** the **commandments** of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus." (Revelation 12:17)

"Here is the perseverance of the saints who **keep** the **commandments** of God and their faith in Jesus." (Revelation 14:12)

Evidently, as seen by these (and many more) Scriptures in both the Older and Newer Testaments of the Bible: *obedience* to His commandments *is* the *evidence* of your *love* for Him. It is evidence you have a relationship with Him.

It is not many prayers, speaking in tongues, lifting up your hands, many words, many songs, many good deeds (apart from the Torah – and even that is conditioned by your motives) that show that you have a relationship with Him! It is your obedience to His commandments that does!

So you may wonder, and the question you need to ask yourself: “Am I truly one of His? Do I truly know Him?”

The answer is found in 1 John 2, a passage which tells us how we can know that we truly know Him: “³By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: ⁶the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. ⁷Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.”

Do you think that you have a heart-felt relationship with Him? Do you want to know? Then obey His commandments. Do you really love Him? Do you really want to know? Then keep His commandments.

Not out of legalistic, self righteous observance to the commandments; but rather, out of love to Him! Not by the letter, but by the Spirit of the Law!

You will discover that the Torah is not a set of legalistic rules, of do’s and don’ts that you have to follow into bondage. It is as David expressed in Psalm 119 (I encourage you to read the whole thing. And, yes, we’re talking about what is often called “the Law.” It is better translated, “Instructions”:

¹ How blessed are those whose way is blameless,

Who walk in the law of the LORD.

² How blessed are those who observe His testimonies,

Who seek Him with all *their* heart.

³ They also do no unrighteousness;

They walk in His ways.

¹⁰ With all my heart I have sought You;

Do not let me wander from Your commandments.

¹¹ Your word I have treasured in my heart,

That I may not sin against You.

¹⁵ I will meditate on Your precepts

And regard Your ways.

¹⁶ I shall delight in Your statutes;

I shall not forget Your word.

¹⁷ Deal bountifully with Your servant,

That I may live and keep Your word.

¹⁸ Open my eyes, that I may behold

Wonderful things from Your law.

³³ Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,

And I shall observe it to the end.

³⁴ Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law

And keep it with all *my* heart.

³⁵ Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,

For I delight in it.

⁴⁴ So I will keep Your law continually,

Forever and ever.

⁴⁵ And I will walk at liberty,
For I seek Your precepts.

⁴⁷ I shall delight in Your commandments,
Which I love.

⁴⁸ And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments,
Which I love;
And I will meditate on Your statutes.

⁶⁶ Teach me good discernment and knowledge,
For I believe in Your commandments.

⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.

⁶⁸ You are good and do good;
Teach me Your statutes.

⁹⁷ O how I love Your law!
It is my meditation all the day.

⁹⁸ Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies,
For they are ever mine.

⁹⁹ I have more insight than all my teachers,
For Your testimonies are my meditation.

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.

¹⁰⁶ I have sworn and I will confirm it,

That I will keep Your righteous ordinances.

These (and many more) passages from this Psalm teach us that the Law of God is not, as some would think it, bondage! Instead, it is *liberty*, it is *delight*, it is *wisdom*, it is a *lamp unto our feet*, it is *good*!

Even the Apostle Shaul/Paul, from whose writings are most often used to disparage the Law, said in Romans 7:12: “So then, the Law is *holy*, and the commandment is *holy* and *righteous* and *good*.”

AND, it is *spiritual* (Romans 7:14)! “¹⁴ For we know that the Law is *spiritual*...”

We may not be able to, in a physical way, touch God or kiss Him, but we sure can love Him in a spiritual way:

We *can* keep His commandments!

A Walk of Holiness for All? (1 John 2:1-8)

¹ “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ² and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world.

³ “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: ⁶ the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

⁷ “Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. ⁸ On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.”

Kefa writes in 1 Peter 1:

¹⁴ “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”

In Matthew 28:19, 20 Yeshua said:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Romans 8

²⁸ “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For

those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become conformed to the image of His Son* [Emphasis Mine], so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

When Yeshua/Jesus comes back the Scripture says (1 John 3:2):

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like **Him**, because we will **see Him** just as He is.

God’s ultimate goal is to make and mould us into the image of His Son: As the Son is holy, so we are to be holy, as the Son raised from the dead, so shall we, as the Son is in a glorified body, so shall we. As the Son was lawful and kept the Torah perfectly as an Israelite, so shall we in our glorified, sinless bodies!

So saying, even in our current sinful flesh, believers who are made righteous through faith should not be lawless and rebellious to God and His Law because the new nature of Jesus is taking over in their lives even now enabling them to be *obedient* to God’s Laws.

This is because the Law is “holy, just and good” (Romans 7:12) and is “spiritual” (Romans 7:14); just as God is holy, just, good and spiritual.

Yeshua/Jesus did not come and do away with the Torah, He came to fulfill it. In Matthew 5 He says:

¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰ "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

No man has the authority to change God's Word. Even Jesus did not change God's Word or Law, though He had the authority as God Incarnate to do so! Matthew 5:17-19 affirms Jesus' position on the Law. He said that He did not come to abolish or destroy the Law, but to fulfill it:

Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or stroke will pass from the Torah – not until everything that must happen has happened. So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of Heaven. (**Complete Jewish Bible**, David Stern)

David Bivin and Roy Blizzard, Jr. in their book, *Understanding the difficult words of Jesus*, seeks to address a misunderstanding in the body of Messiah regarding the terms “abolish” and “fulfill”:

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus claims he has no intention of abolishing or suspending the Mosaic Law. For most Christians, this comes as a shock. After all, did not the Apostle Paul say, “Christ is the end of the Law” (Romans 10:4)? Jesus' statement seems such a contradiction that many Christian commentators have tried to explain it away by suggesting that his words do not really mean what they seem to mean. Their attempts are futile.

The meaning of Jesus' words is clear. As long as the world lasts, he goes on to say in verse 18, the Law will last. Here Jesus is in complete agreement with the Rabbis: “Everything has an end heaven and earth have an end except one thing which has no end. And what is that? The Law” (Genesis Rabbah 10:1); “No letter will ever be abolished from the Law” (Exodus Rabbah 6:1), “Should the world unite to uproot one word of the Law, they would be unable to do it” (Leviticus Rabbah 19:2).

... Undoubtedly, in trying to understand this passage, everything hinges on the meaning of the words “destroy” and “fulfill” In verse 17. What does Jesus mean by “destroying the law” and “fulfilling the Law?”

“Destroy” and “fulfill” are technical terms used in rabbinical argumentation. When a rabbi felt that a colleague had misinterpreted a passage of Scripture, he would say, “You are destroying the Law!” Needless to say, in most cases his colleague strongly disagreed. What was “destroying the Law” for one rabbi, was “fulfilling the Law” (correctly interpreting Scripture) for another.

What we see in Matthew 5:17ff is a rabbinical discussion. Someone has accused Jesus of “destroying” the Law. Of course, neither Jesus nor his accuser would ever think of literally destroying the Law. Furthermore, it would never enter the accuser’s mind to charge Jesus with intent to abolish part or all of the Mosaic Law. What is being called into question is Jesus’ system of interpretation, the way he interprets Scripture.

When accused, Jesus strongly denies that his method of interpreting Scripture “destroys” or weakens its meaning. He claims, on the contrary, to be more orthodox than his accuser. For Jesus, a “light” commandment (“Do not bear hatred in your heart”) is as important as a “heavy” commandment (“Do not murder”). And a disciple who breaks even a “light” commandment will be considered “light” (have an inferior position) in Jesus’ movement (Matthew 5:19).

“Never imagine for a moment,” Jesus says, “that I intend to abrogate the Law by misinterpreting it. My intent is not to weaken or negate the Law, but by properly interpreting God’s written Word I aim to establish it, that is, make it even more lasting. I would never invalidate the Law by effectively removing something from it through misinterpretation.

Heaven and earth would sooner disappear than something disappear from the Law. Not the smallest letter in the alphabet, the yod, nor even its decorative spur, will ever disappear from the Law.”¹⁵

¹⁵ *Understanding the difficult words of Jesus*, David Bivin & Roy Blizzard, Jr., CENTER FOR BIBLICAL ANALYSIS, Division of DESTINY IMAGE PUBLISHERS, Shippensburg, PA, Copyright 1984, pages 154-155

Furthermore He warns us against anyone who nullifies even the least of the commandments and so teaches others. “If anyone disobeys the least of these mitzvot,” He says, “he will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches others will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

If there is any New Testament passage that wholeheartedly supports what was written in the Law in the lives of believers, this is it. This means that no one (short of God Himself) has the authority to annul, abolish, destroy, change, or set aside the Law – not Kefa, not Shaul, not Yakov/James, nor any other man! And since Jesus didn’t do it, then no one else has the authority to do it either!

Those who say that Shaul’s writings support an anti-Nomian (anti-Law) stance have only to look back to Jesus’ statement in Matthew 5. If Shaul *was* against the keeping of the Law in the life of a New Testament believer, then he *is* least in the kingdom of heaven! (I personally do not believe that he is anti-Law, nor least in the Kingdom. Again, read my book, ***The Problem with Paul***)

Confirming Torah in a believer’s life, Shaul asks in Romans 3:

³¹ “Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.”

Shaul’s answer?

A resounding *NO!*

As believers we should want to be like Yeshua/Jesus! As He is, so must we be! We need to walk like Him, talk like Him, live like Him, teach like Him!

In short, we need to be His Disciples!

And a Disciple walks as does the Master! God’s intent is to make us like Him!

Did Yeshua walk a separate walk for His Jewish disciples and another walk for His non-Jewish disciples?

I don't think so!

So, the conclusion is - to all believers both Jewish and non-Jewish: we have only one Master who taught us to walk a walk of holiness and in the power of the Spirit. Let us begin to walk like Him!

He is our example – let's all follow Him!

Let us quit playing silly little doctrinal games that have the purpose of separating us and building walls of partition that the Master would not sanction. He is making one flock of all His sheep.

We all need to work together to incorporate the entire flock as one in Him.