

Antinomian on the Spot

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Many of you are aware that in recent days the Messianic community has made substantial inroads into mainstream Christianity. As a result of many Believers reexamining certain things they have been taught from the Scriptures, specifically as they relate to the validity or the abolition of the Torah, many have come to the conclusion that the Torah or the Law of Moses is to be followed as valid instruction for Believers today. They believe that the Lord gave Israel the Torah to make them the most productive and blessed people on Planet Earth. They believe it is imperative to understand the Torah and Tanach (Old Testament) to have a firm foundation in what the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) tell us.

There are many Christians who take issues with Torah observant Messianics today. They believe that the Torah of Moses was abolished through the work of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) and that it is no longer important. They believe their position is supported by the Scriptures. We have always been interested in engaging these people in a reasoned dialogue.

While we were not able to debate this topic specifically with anyone, the dialogue you will see is based on *actual correspondence* between TNN Online readers since 2001. Many of you in the Messianic community have heard the reasons against Torah observance before. As you read the debate below, we trust you will find it beneficial to defending your faith practice to those, who realizing it or not, could be propagators of lawlessness (or at the very least are not encouraging others to mature in faith).

1. What is your position on the Torah as Believer in Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ)? Do you believe that it is to be followed as valid instruction, or that it is not to be followed? Give three succinct Scriptures supporting your position with a brief explanation.

Antinomian: While the Law of Moses has valuable historical information in it for Christians, it is no longer to be followed today. It has been abolished by the work of Christ.

Jesus Christ's work terminates the need to follow the Law of Moses:

"Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4, NIV).

Jesus Christ's work abolished the Law of Moses and its regulations:

"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace" (Ephesians 2:14-15, NIV).

The Law of Moses is not made for righteous people:

"We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers" (1 Timothy 1:9, NIV).

Mr. McKee: I believe that the Protestant Reformers had it right when they stressed that we are to be *Sola Scriptura* or Scripture Only. This means that what we need to know is absolutely contained for us in the Scriptures, and we are to seek full compliance with *all* of God's Word: both the Hebrew Scriptures or Tanach, and the Apostolic Writings. As the Torah, the Pentateuch or the Law of Moses, is a part of the Bible, I believe that it is to be followed as valid instruction for Believers today.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) expressly states that His position was to fulfill the Torah, meaning to bring it to greater meaning, *not* to abolish or "destroy" (KJV) it. He says that those who teach the Torah and follow its commandments will be considered great in the Kingdom of Heaven, while those who teach against the Torah and its commandments will be considered least:

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 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. 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” (Matthew 5:17-19).

The Apostle Paul says that the Torah is not rendered inoperative or nullified through faith in Messiah Yeshua. It is to rather be upheld:

“Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law” (Romans 3:31, RSV).

The Apostle Paul says that the Torah is not sin, but rather it reveals the sin in one's life and thus defines what is right and wrong:

“What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COVET’” (Romans 7:7).

2. What do you believe the purpose of the Torah is, or was?

Antinomian: The Law of Moses was given to the Jews to make them a separated people. It was only given for the dispensation of Law until Jesus Christ would come and usher in a time of grace. “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17, NIV). Now that Jesus Christ has come, we have no need for the Law of Moses.

Mr. McKee: Our Father's words in the Torah itself define what the purpose of the Torah is:

“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6).

“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).

Our Heavenly Father tells His people that if we are to be holy, or set-apart, that we are to keep His commandments and obey Him. This is a critical part of our being a special people for the Lord's own possession. This concept is reemphasized in the Apostolic Scriptures:

“[W]ho gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:14).

“But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

3. What do you believe Yeshua's position on the Torah was? Did He come to abolish the Law? Explain.

Antinomian: Jesus Christ came to give us a New Covenant. This New Covenant completely replaces the Old Covenant and the Law of Moses. Jesus Christ only kept the Law of Moses so He could fulfill its sacrificial requirement and atone for our sin. By fulfilling the Law of Moses, Jesus Christ abolished it.

Mr. McKee: Yeshua the Messiah plainly tells us in the Sermon on the Mount what His purpose regarding the Torah was:

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 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. 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” (Matthew 5:17-19).

Yeshua directly tells us “Think not that I am come to destroy the law” (KJV).

Anyone who claims that Yeshua the Messiah came to abolish the Torah is speaking something that is inconsistent with His words on the matter. They are misrepresenting the Messiah. By “fulfilling” the Torah, Yeshua came to show us how to live it properly. If you have studied the Torah then it will be clear that Yeshua’s actions and deeds are evidence of His Torah observance. **Fulfill is by no means a synonym for “abolish.”** The New Covenant inaugurated by the work of Yeshua, prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34), promises that God will write His Law onto the hearts of His people (cf. Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:15-17).

4. What do you think the Messiah’s “commandments” are? What did He mean when He said “If you love Me, keep My commandments”?

Antinomian: The commandments of Jesus Christ are the instructions that He gave to His Disciples and early followers. If we love Christ, then we will do what He told us to do. The commandments of Jesus are not the Law of Moses.

Mr. McKee: The commandments of Yeshua the Messiah are the commandments of the Torah and the instructions that He gave to us in the Gospel accounts. Yeshua made it clear “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). There is no separation between the Father’s commandments and the Son’s commandments. What did Yeshua say? “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). This is not only a proclamation by Yeshua of His Divinity, but also that He and His Father are of one accord and one purpose. The Father and the Son do not contradict themselves.

Is Yeshua God? Yes, He is. If you believe that Yeshua is God then it was Yeshua who was giving the commandments of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai and who wrote the Ten Commandments on the tablets of stone. If you deny that the commandments of the Torah are Yeshua’s commandments, then are you denying His Divinity and committing gross heresy?

5. Concerning the validity or non-validity of the Torah, whose words do you think are final on the matter?

Antinomian: The New Testament is clear the Apostle Paul was apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13; 1 Timothy 2:7). The only instruction that is directly given to Gentiles is from Paul, and Paul is clear that he is an imitator of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:6). Paul’s words regarding the abolishment of the Law of Moses are final.

Mr. McKee: Yeshua the Messiah is the Word of God made manifest in the flesh (John 1:1). Because He is the Word, and indeed the Instruction of God personified, His words are final on this matter. The Apostle Paul himself says to disregard “anyone who advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness” (1 Timothy 6:3). Paul makes it clear that he is an imitator of Yeshua’s, and Yeshua’s example is of One who followed the Torah perfectly.

It is our responsibility to always evaluate Paul in light of Yeshua’s words. Paul’s epistles were letters to various First Century congregations that had specific problems. We must understand Paul’s letters in their original historical context to the original audiences they were directed. We must also take into account the various mistranslations from the Greek text that have occurred into English Bibles, presenting Paul as an antinomian who opposed the Torah. The Apostle Peter issued a warning that many take the words of Paul and twist them to their own ruin (2 Peter 3:15-16).

6. What is your interpretation of the Jerusalem Council's ruling in Acts 15? Did it or did it not have any foundation in the Torah? Explain.

Antinomian: The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 ruled that in order for the Gentiles to have table fellowship with the Jews they would have to “abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood” (Acts 15:20, KJV). It does not matter whether or not this had a basis in the Law of Moses. These requirements were for table fellowship only, and since Gentiles now dominate the Church, it is no longer necessary for these things to be followed. In writing the letter to the Christians at Antioch, the Jewish Christians wrote “Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law: **to whom we gave no *such* commandment**” (Acts 15:24, KJV). The Jerusalem Council plainly told the Gentiles that they were not instructing them to keep the Law of Moses. They who deny this are denying the New Covenant that we have in Jesus.

Mr. McKee: The issue that the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 faced had to do with a group of Jews that was requiring conversion to Judaism, circumcision, and Torah observance as prerequisites to coming to faith in Messiah and to be counted as members of God's people. They believed “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1).

Before we come to the false conclusion that the Jerusalem Council said that the non-Jews coming to faith were *not* required to follow the Torah, let us put ourselves back in the First Century. The non-Jews coming to faith in this particular instance were in Antioch, a Greek city of Asia Minor. They were coming out of a polytheistic, pagan religion. What we consider “mythology” today had been their **theology**. The Greco-Roman religion practiced Temple prostitution, consumption of blood, exposure (an early form of abortion), and other things prohibited by the Torah. The need to get these new Believers trained in some kind of godly instruction was absolutely imperative. But like all people, no one “changes overnight.”

What did James, the half-brother of Yeshua, rule? “Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 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” (Acts 15:19-20). They were to abstain from idolatry, fornication, meats strangled (i.e., not killed in a kosher method, unclean meats), and blood. These were the *minimum requirements* that had to be observed. Why? “For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath” (Acts 15:21). Once observing these four requirements, the non-Jewish Believers could go to the Synagogue and learn the Torah of Moses.

Some might not like the admonition of the non-Jews to go to the Synagogue. But consider this: there were no other Scriptures in existence at the time. All that existed were the Torah and the Prophets. Both the Hebrew scrolls of these writings, and even their Greek translation, the Septuagint, would have only been accessible at the local synagogue. There were no complimentary Gideon Bibles or Family Christian Bookstores in existence. There was no Jewish Publication Society. These people had to be trained up in some instruction, and they were required to change their lifestyles. They were not required to adopt Torah observance immediately, but Torah observance would come as they grew in their faith.

It is notable that when the letter to the Believers at Antioch is actually composed that the statement “***Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law**” (Acts 15:24, KJV), only appears in Bible translations that use the Greek Textus Receptus. Translations that occur from the critical Greek texts used in modern English translations do not have this. This is because older manuscripts and manuscript fragments *do not have this*, and it was likely added over time. Translations based on older manuscripts, like the NASU, read with “Since we have heard that some of our number to

whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with *their* words, unsettling your souls” (Acts 15:24). It does *not* have the statement “*You must* be circumcised and keep the law” (NKJV).

7. Do you believe that understanding the Torah is important to interpret verses when the Apostle Paul talks about “the Law”? Why or why not?

Antinomian: Before converting to Christianity, the Apostle Paul was a Pharisee. After coming to Christ, he ceased being a Pharisee and became a Christian. He says that his being a Pharisee was but “dung” (Philippians 3:8, KJV) to him. When Paul talks about the Law of Moses, he is representing it as we should see it: old, outdated, and useless to the Christian.

Mr. McKee: Is it important to have an understanding of the United States’ Constitution when dealing with constitutional issues? No, you say? Why? Are you concerned that the U.S. Constitution may not support what you are trying to do? Do you want to break the law?

It is absolutely imperative to have an understanding of the Torah when it is talked about in the Pauline Epistles. It is important to understand the historical background of Paul’s writings so we do not misinterpret the issues that he is addressing. We have access to a great deal of First Century Jewish and classical resources to assist us in developing accurate interpretations of his words, and how the communities who received them implemented his instruction.

Obviously, Paul addresses a great deal of legalism and/or misuse of the Torah in his letters. But does this mean that he disregarded it as relevant instruction? Consider what Paul says in Romans 3:31: “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law” (RSV). We are called to uphold the Torah as some kind of instruction by which to live. This does not mean that certain aspects of the Torah—namely animal sacrifices and the Levitical priesthood—have not changed. But to cast aside its moral and ethical guidelines, and those things that are to identify God’s people as separated unto Him, is going a bit too far.

8. Describe your understanding of “sin.”

Antinomian: Sin is to know something is wrong and not do it. God has placed a conscience in all of us to know right and wrong, but there was no transgression until the Law of Moses came.

Mr. McKee: “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). The KJV has “transgression of the law.” The Complete Jewish Bible says “violation of *Torah*.” Sin, quite plainly, is any violation of the Law of Moses. Sin is not just what a person believes is right or wrong, because human beings are prone to judge “sin” according to their own fallen nature, rather than the standard of the Holy One of Israel.

Proverbs 12:15 tells us “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.” Consider what occurred during the time of the Judges: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). When there was no one to enforce the Torah as the Law in the Land of Israel, the people did whatever they wanted. There was anarchy. There was gross sin.

If we are born again Believers, we should have the Holy Spirit to convict us as to what is right and wrong. The Holy Spirit will not contradict Scripture. Sadly, we live in a day and age where man’s judgments as to what is right and wrong somehow supercedes what God says is right and wrong. As the Prophet Isaiah warns, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20).

9. Describe your understanding of “lawlessness.”

Antinomian: Lawlessness is violation of Christ's Law and His commandments. Lawlessness is when we do anything that violates what our conscience tells us is wrong.

Mr. McKee: Lawlessness, as defined by 1 John 3:4 (quoted previously) is violation of the Torah. The Torah composes Yeshua's commandments (that is if we believe that He is God).

There are some serious admonitions in the Apostolic Scriptures that pertain to lawlessness in the Last Days. In His Olivet Discourse, Yeshua says "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12). Yeshua says that when He returns, "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness" (Matthew 13:41). He issues a strong warning, saying, "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS'" (Matthew 7:23).

The Apostle Paul forbids Believers from fellowshiping with those who are lawless (2 Corinthians 6:14) and calls the antimessiah/antichrist "the man of lawlessness" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He also writes in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, penned in about 50-52 C.E., "the mystery of lawlessness is already at work." If lawlessness, "this separating from *Torah*" (CJB), was already at work *then*—we can more fully understand the Apostle John's words in 1 John 2:4, penned between 85-90 C.E., about 45-50 years later: "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."

Lawlessness is multiplying exponentially in our day as Yeshua prophesied, because Believers who are seeking full Scriptural compliance are returning to the truths of the Torah. As a result, lawlessness is being exposed among those who refuse to submit to God's Word. Paul calls it a mystery, because lawlessness is occurring among those who you would *least likely expect* it to occur among: purported "Believers."

10. Describe your Biblical understanding of "freedom."

Antinomian: The Book of Galatians and numerous other New Testament Scriptures tell us that we have freedom from the Law of Moses. Whatever was forbidden in the Law of Moses is now allowed for Christians to do. We do not have to subject ourselves to the Sabbath, the old Jewish feast days, the dietary requirements, or any of that anymore. Christ came to free us from those regulations so that we would follow Him. Of course, in Jesus we will not murder or steal or commit adultery, but we do have a creative ability that did not exist in the Old Covenant. We have the freedom to take the New Testament and base our faith and observances on it rather than the Old Testament.

Mr. McKee: In my opinion, any definition of "Biblical freedom" must be tempered with examining freedom from *both* the Tanach and Apostolic Writings. Examine what the Psalmist tells us:

"And I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts. I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed. I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love. And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, which I love; and I will meditate on Your statutes" (Psalm 119:45-48).

The Psalmist tells us that by keeping the Torah, or the Law of Moses, that he will "walk about in freedom" (NIV). True Biblical freedom is enabled via keeping God's instruction in the Torah. It shows people the standard that our Heavenly Father wants us to live up to, so that we might be the most blessed people on Planet Earth. The Torah is not intended to be a burden, so that we might live legalistically in bondage to rules and regulations.

This is what James, the brother of Yeshua, means when he writes "But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25).

Biblical freedom is not the “liberty” to do whatever you want to do. It is knowing that you have been freed from a yoke of slavery to sin, and have the covering of grace by the sacrifice of Yeshua available when you falter. God did not give us the Torah to be a burden, but to be a blessing.

Think about this another way. If we did not have the constitution of the United States, none of us would be free. We would have anarchy in our society. We would have lawlessness. We would have no police, military, or system of justice to keep things in order. We would be in bondage to fear as we would worry about people breaking into our houses, or being robbed on the street, or worse.

The prohibitions that the Torah gives are not all outdated and taboo. They are to keep up within the limits of what our Heavenly Father considers acceptable and unacceptable. They are to enable us to be free *in Him*, not according to our own standards.

11. Do you believe that the Ten Commandments are still to be followed today? Why or why not?

Antinomian: The Ten Commandments were part of the Old Covenant and the Law of Moses. The Ten Commandments are not binding on us as New Testament Christians. Christians who say that we need to follow the Ten Commandments are legalists and are wasting their time trying to defend them. The Law of Christ is by far better.

Mr. McKee: Who wrote the Ten Commandments? “When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18). These Ten Commandments, were inscribed onto stone with the *etzba Elohim* (אֵצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים), “An expression for the ineffable sanctity of the Tables, and for the Divine source of their Message to the children of men” (J.H. Hertz, ed., *Pentateuch & Haftorahs*, p 356).

I believe that any “Believer” who says that the Ten Commandments were abolished has got some kind of spiritual and/or psychological issues. What is somehow wrong with the principles of “Thou shalt not murder” or “Thou shalt not steal”? What is wrong with “you shall have no other gods before Me” or “Honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy”? Are these commandments evil and burdensome?

Anything inscribed with the finger of God is important to follow. The Ten Commandments are the basis for the entire Torah, the entire Bible, and indeed fair and decent society. Those “Believers” who oppose the Ten Commandments, or say that they are not to be followed today, need to *join* the atheists, agnostics, homosexuals, and other liberals who want them removed from public buildings and from American society. Whether they realize it or not, they are all on the *same side*—not the side of the Lord.

12. How much of the Torah do you think should be followed, or not followed, today?

Antinomian: I do not believe that any of the Law of Moses needs to be followed today. We have the example of Jesus Christ to follow; we don’t need Moses.

The only exception that might be made to following the Law of Moses is those who are involved in Jewish evangelism, so the Jews will understand you. If you have to eat kosher or observe the Sabbath to witness to them, then I think that is “okay.” But if you don’t have to participate in Jewish evangelism, then it is not necessary by any means. Remember that Paul said that “all things are lawful” (1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23, NASB). This basically means that we have freedom in Christ to do whatever we want, provided that it does not violate Christ’s Law.

Mr. McKee: I believe that as much of the Torah that can be followed today should be followed. The three major areas of Torah observance that I believe must be observed by people

who call themselves “Messianics,” for there to be some “Messianic” consistency, is honoring the seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat*, the Biblical holidays of Leviticus 23, and eating kosher. These are the principal areas where our orthopraxy differs from that of most evangelical Christians. Once a Believer has adopted these three areas of observance, other “smaller” practices of the Torah often come naturally.

Much of modern Christianity has done an extreme disservice to the Word of God. Most modern Christians try to do *as little as possible* in regard to their faith. They are looking for loopholes. Are we not to be maturing? Are we not to be abiding or continuing in His words (John 15:7, 10; 1 John 2:28)?

If we truly follow the popular slogan “What Would Jesus Do?” then we will do what the Messiah did. The Messiah was Torah observant. The Messiah kept the Sabbath, the Biblical appointments, ate kosher, and followed a normative Jewish lifestyle. If we believe that we are to follow His example, we owe it to ourselves to live the way He would live were He among us today. Most importantly, the Torah admonishes us to love our neighbor (Leviticus 19:18; cf. Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9-10; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8), so our Torah observance is meaningless if we cannot follow this. We are to love those who hate us. We are especially to love those “Believers” who hate—or at the very least—misunderstand us.

13. Do you think that Christianity would have the problems that it does today, i.e., debates over whether or not issues like pre-marital sex, homosexuality, or abortion, are sin, if it did not teach that the Torah was abolished?

Antinomian: The Law of Christ contained in the New Testament teaches against these things. If Christians followed Christ’s Law then we would not have these problems, regardless of whether or not they are forbidden in the Law of Moses.

Mr. McKee: I was recently watching a PBS interview (2003) of several theologians in regard to their position of whether or not the Episcopal Church should have ordained a homosexual bishop. One of these theologians, a member of the American Baptist Church, said that the Scripture chapter in the Law of Moses that prohibited homosexuality also forbade the eating of ham. His belief was that since Christians have found ways around the prohibition of eating pork, that they would find ways around the prohibition of homosexuality.

Sadly, looking for loopholes is a tendency of most modern Christians. One hundred fifty years ago, most Christians believed in the validity of the “moral Law” of the Torah. They did not have the perspective that we Messianics have today about the validity of the *whole* Torah, but they honored what they knew to their best ability. Today, modern Christianity is trying to do *as little as possible*, and in so doing issues that those of yesteryear that would *never* have debated are being debated. Is today’s Church truly empowered by its widescale abandonment of God’s revelation in the Old Testament?

If modern Christianity taught that the Torah were still to be followed, we would never be debating whether pre-marital sex, homosexuality, abortion, etc., are sin—because the Torah plainly denounces them as such.

14. How do you respond to Jews who reject Yeshua as the Messiah, because they believe that He came to abolish the Torah?

Antinomian: The mission of Jesus Christ transcends the Law of Moses or any cultural barriers. Jesus Christ came as the Savior of humanity, not the Jews only. If the Jews reject Christ because His sacrifice abolishes the Law, then that is a problem that they have with Him and with His original Disciples, not with me. While Jesus was a Jew, it does not mean that He necessarily wanted to keep the Law of Moses. Christ came to free us from the ritual and bondage of the Old Testament, and give us new life and freedom in the Spirit.

Mr. McKee: Most Jews reject the Messiahship of Yeshua on the basis of Deuteronomy 13:1-5, and seeing some of the Christian theological handling of the Torah, reject Him. Examine these verses in their entirety:

“If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 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. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.”

The key in properly understanding the common Jewish handling of this Scripture is that they believe that if someone rises up performing signs and wonders, and leads people away from the LORD God and from His commandments in the Torah, then He is to be rejected as a false prophet. On this basis, Jewry rejects the Messiahship of Yeshua. If Yeshua taught against the Torah and came to abolish it, then on the basis of Deuteronomy 13:2-6, He is to be rejected. **But I do not believe this.** I believe that Yeshua came to fulfill the Torah by living it properly for us, and being our blameless sacrifice. I believe that Messianics have a responsibility to rectify the mistakes of Christians in the past who have falsely taught that Yeshua came to abolish the Law of Moses, not realizing that anyone who teaches against Torah is to be rejected.

15. What is your concern with those today who claim faith in the Messiah, but follow the Torah, or reject the Torah, as valid instruction?

Antinomian: Those who follow the Law of Moses today are in legalistic bondage and have not accepted that we have a New Covenant and do not have to subject ourselves to the Old Covenant ritual anymore. They need to get with the program and recognize themselves as part of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sure, while we need to study the Old Testament for its Biblical history, we by no means need to follow it. We have the Law and commandments of Christ to guide us. As Christians, we need nothing more. This “Messianic movement” uplifts the Torah over the commandments of Christ and Christ Himself.

Mr. McKee: I have concerns with both groups of people. The first regards those who claim to have faith in Yeshua, but reject the validity of the Torah, claiming that it is not valid instruction for Believers today. Are we not to be in a continual state of growth and maturity in our walk of faith? Are we not to seek full Scriptural compliance, Genesis-Revelation? Did not the Apostle Paul call the Law of Moses “spiritual” (Romans 7:14)?

The concern I have for those people who reject the validity of Torah for Believers today is that Yeshua warns us of the multiplication of lawlessness in the Last Days (Matthew 24:12). He says that when He returns all lawlessness will be cast out of the Kingdom (Matthew 7:23; 13:41). The antimessiah/antichrist is called “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The Apostle John says that “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).

It is my sincere hope and prayer that those who oppose the Torah are simply ignorant and are just complaining. I sincerely hope that they are not truly opposing the will of God, lest they suffer some severe consequences.

The second concern I have regards those who adopt a Torah obedient lifestyle. Many who become Torah observant do take their eyes off Yeshua and His atoning work, and whether they

realize it or not, *are practicing* works-righteousness or salvation by works. The Scriptures make it clear “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). The Lord calls our human righteousness “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

The Torah is to show us the need for a Savior, and the fact that we are all fallen human beings and fall far short of God’s high and holy standard. The Torah is designed to keep us on the straight and narrow path, and within the boundaries that the Lord considers acceptable and unacceptable. We are *not* to keep the Torah to earn our salvation. We are, rather, to keep it because our Messiah Yeshua kept it, emulated it perfectly for us, and because we want to be a holy and set-apart people. We are to keep the Torah to *maintain* our salvation, no different than how we maintain our houses, cars, or exercise our bodies.

There is a valid concern in that there are Messianics who uplift the Torah above the rest of Scripture. The Torah is the foundation of Scripture but is by no means all of Scripture. Christians today often make the reverse mistake of uplifting the New Testament over the rest of Scripture. It is *one Bible*. The Torah is the foundation of Scripture, but there is a progressive plan from Creation to the Exodus to the time of David and Solomon to Yeshua the Messiah to John writing the Book of Revelation. There is a mistake evident in the Messianic movement that if it is not in the Torah, then something must be rejected as valid progressive revelation. This is the reverse mistake of people rejecting instruction because it is not in the “New Testament.” We must treat Scripture as a composite whole. We must endeavor to follow all of the Bible. Yet, this needs to be tempered with the understanding that very few Believers have a strong Torah background.

edited for spelling/grammar
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